

With Good Fathers, Hope Does Not Disappoint

II Corinthians 4:5-10; Romans 5:1-5

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Introduction: It's Father's Day, an important holiday because often fathers don't get the credit they deserve. They don't always get enough smiles and hugs. And they certainly don't hear "thank you" nearly enough. Today's passage is about growing stronger and the result of finding hope. I'm going to tie together ideas from this passage to how a good father helps his children.

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Prayer: Father God, teach us to endure so that we might grow in character and hope in the love of our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

I think most men get embarrassed when we draw too much attention to them, but good fathers make a huge difference in the lives of their children. A good father gives you the strength and courage to keep trying. The sequence in Romans five describes pretty accurately how character and hope evolve. It is a hard process. Suffering brings endurance, which brings character and hope. To have the strength to go through the process we need lots of encouragement and persistence. A good father teaches us to keep trying.

There are many true and legendary stories about Winston Churchill. Stories change and grow and sometimes they become better stories than the original stories. Here is one such story:

Churchill was invited to speak at his old school, Harrow, where as a boy he had almost flunked out. After a lengthy introduction, Churchill rose from his seat, strode to the podium and fixed his stare on his audience of new graduates. "Never give up!" he said solemnly. He turned, walked back to his chair and sat down. As the stunned students momentarily sat in silence, Churchill, with perfect timing, once again rose from his chair, returned to the podium and again announced, "Never give up!" Now terrified they might respond improperly, the audience never uttered a squeak as their speaker once again returned to his seat. Sure enough, Churchill returned to the podium again, and again, and yet again – five times – each time delivering his single-minded message, "Never give up!"

At last, feeling he had exhausted his audience and driven home his point, Churchill himself did give up and returned to the podium no more. Every graduate in that audience never forgot that speech and never forgot that he must “never give up.”

We sometimes forget that we have received the same message from God the Father. God promised never to give up on us. All of the scriptures – Hebrew and the New Testament together – are a record of how God, our Heavenly Father, never, never, never, never, never gives up.

- Adam and Eve disobeyed the very first rule, but God never gave up.
- Abraham wandered, and Sarah laughed, but God never gave up.
- Moses hid and shook with fear, but God never gave up.
- David plotted against Uriah, but God never gave up.
- Israel fell into pieces, but God never gave up.
- The Jewish people became exiles, but God never gave up.
- John the Baptist was beheaded, but God never gave up.
- Peter denied knowing Jesus, but God never gave up.
- The disciples all ran away, but God never gave up.

So the first lesson that our Heavenly Father and our earthly fathers teach us is never give up. What would the second lesson be? It is “never give up.” It is hard to over estimate the power and importance of persistence. You all know that my father was a fan of Norman Vincent Peale. Over the years, I have pulled out my father’s copy of Dr. Peale’s Treasury of Courage and Confidence. There are quotes in this book that I can remember my father reciting by heart. One of them is a quote from Calvin Coolidge.

Nothing in the world
can take the place of persistence.
Talent will not;
nothing is more common than
unsuccessful men with talent.
Genius will not;
unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.
Education will not;
the world is full of educated derelicts.
Persistence and determination
alone are omnipotent.
The slogan “Press On” has solved
and always will solve
the problems of the human race.

A good father guides his child consistently so that the child will be disciplined and productive. The second lesson that good fathers teach is “never give up.”

The third lesson is like the first two. Simply stated: “never give up.” Now there always has to be an exception to prove the rule, so let me tell you about the exception to never give up. Victor Borge was an excellent pianist who used his music as part of his comedy routine. He was terrifically talented. Irving Berlin once encouraged Victor Borge to stick to the classics. Victory Borge said, “But, Irving, every time I play Mozart, a hear a little voice whispering, “Don’t play it. Don’t play it.”

“Do you recognize that little voice?” Irving Berlin asked.

“Yes, Irving, It’s Mozart.”

So once in a while, we do need to give up, but surely much less often than we actually do give up.

The thing to remember is that determination makes such a difference in what we achieve. We think of ourselves as limited, small. But with the backing of a good earthly father and the Heavenly Father, we can do incredible things to the glory of God.

Let me end with a quote from a woman named Betty Reese. She says, “If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito!”