

13 HEART FAILURE

Psalms 40:12 For innumerable evils have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me.

Psalms 73:26 My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

The heart of failure is the failure of the heart. The first and fundamental failure is always that of the heart. The heart fails when success is no longer in sight, vision has vanished, and the spirit is vanquished. When hope is lost, all is lost. The real failure is not so much an external outcome as an inward heart condition.

But it is possible to not lose heart or hope despite being dogged by suffering, or bogged down by sickness. One can bear it patiently by embracing the Cross, abiding in God's will, depending on His grace, and refusing to be drowned in hopelessness or resigned to helplessness. We may falter, but we have not failed. Only when we succumb to defeat and stop fighting do we truly fail.

Of graver significance is the inward state of our heart. The Christian's watchword is not 'success' but 'victory'. Even when things fail outwardly, there can be victory if our hearts fail not. We should therefore not be unduly concerned about the external state of affairs. Sometimes, behind an apparently unpromising turn of events may be a latent victory. On the other hand, what appears favourable on the surface may in fact mask something merely superficial. This is why the prophet Habakkuk could say with a keynote of trust and triumph that *"though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labour of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls – yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation"* (Habakkuk 3:17-18). The harvest may fail but the heart need not fail, and therein is the victory. True success lies in a victorious spirit, while true failure lies in a vanquished spirit.

When the giant Philistine champion Goliath challenged and defied the intimidated armies of Israel, young David said to King Saul: *"Let no man's heart fail because of him"* (1 Samuel 17:32). When the hearts of all the men of war in Israel failed and melted like wax in the face of Goliath's taunts, young David was unfazed. His heart did not fail him because he was a man after God's heart. He had the victory within before he stepped out into the combat zone. Battles, whether physical or spiritual, are always won or lost in the hearts and minds before the actual action on the field. Satan knows this and so must we.

"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). We do well to keep diligent watch over our hearts and minds with the peace of God. This happens by keeping our minds fixed on Him and putting our trust in Him. *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You"* (Isaiah 26:3). To have a mind stayed on God means to be sustained and supported by Him. Let us do the trusting and let God do the keeping. His perfect peace is the best safeguard against spiritual heart failure.