

Fainting Spells

By Ben Godwin



My first hospital visit to pray for a patient was a disaster. I was a teenage evangelist at the time and had never been in an Intensive Care Unit. The man I visited was recovering from open heart surgery and was on a ventilator. After I prayed for him, not used to all the sights and smells of ICU, I became lightheaded and dizzy. With the room spinning, I stepped out into the hall to gather myself and saw his wife walking toward me. I extended my hand to shake hers when I literally fainted. I blacked out and landed on the floor. A few moments later I regained consciousness thanks to smelling salts. So much for being God's man of faith and power.

Fainting is a loss of consciousness due to abnormal blood circulation. In a spiritual sense, to faint means "to lose heart or courage, to give up" or "to quit." Many believers today suffer from fainting spells—they are simply abandoning their faith and giving up on God. Here are a few of the culprits:

- **Hardship:** "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and *faint in your minds*." (Heb. 12:3) Considering the unimaginable hardships Jesus faced, our problems seem petty. Jesus never promised us trouble-free living. Quite the contrary, He predicted, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33) Paul instructed Timothy to "*endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*." (2 Tim. 2:3) The Christian walk is difficult at times because your going against the current of the world. Any dead fish can float down stream, but it takes someone with true determination to go against the grain of what is popular in society. When the straight and narrow way gets tough, remember, by comparison, "*the way of the transgressor is hard*." Enduring the cross is made easier when we, like Jesus, look ahead to the awaiting crown.
- **Prayerlessness:** In Luke 18:1, Jesus told the Parable of the Unjust Judge "to this end, that men ought always to pray and *not to faint*." Maintaining our prayer life is the best prevention for giving up. Prayer enables us to tap into a supernatural power source that makes us invincible. Isaiah 40:29-30 describes the importance of staying in close fellowship with God and how that translates into spiritual strength to endure. It is in waiting on the Lord that we summon the strength to carry on.

"He giveth power to *the faint*, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Even the youths shall *faint* and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;

they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary;

and they shall walk, *and not faint*."

- **Slow Progress:** "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, *if we faint not*." (Gal. 6:9) Sometimes spiritual progress is painstakingly slow. In an instant society like ours, we are accustomed to getting *what we want when we want it*. With the advent of drive through service, ATM's, one hour photo, microwave ovens, instant coffee, etc., we have become an impatient people. We are used to getting things done with the push of a button, the click of a mouse or the swipe of a credit/debit card. Thus it is easy to succumb to feelings of despair when we don't see immediate results when we pray. Don't expect to become a spiritual giant overnight. A farmer doesn't plant seeds in the soil one day and curse the dirt the next day because no progress is visible. No, he knows something is happening beneath the surface. There are many weeks between the planting season and the harvest. Even so, God is patient with our growth process and we must be patient with ourselves and others (Jam. 5:7-8). The Christian walk is

a process of becoming. An old saying captures this idea, “I’m not what I *want* to be, but Thank God I’m not what I *used* to be.” Becoming Christlike is a life-long journey. In time, the plowing of the ground (heart), the planting and watering of the seed (God’s Word) will pay off. Hold on, friend, don’t get discouraged. Harvest time is on the way!

- **Malnutrition:** Jesus said of the multitude that followed Him without food for three days, “*I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*” (Mt. 15:32) Without proper nutrition for the body, the tendency to faint increases. The same is true in the spiritual realm. Many of the same people who flocked to Jesus’ signs also fled from His sayings. John 6:60-66 tells how many disciples defected from the faith and stopped following Jesus because of His stern message. They became offended and backslid because He told them what they needed to hear not what they wanted to hear. Just as a healthy diet keeps us physically fit, a steady diet of God’s Word keeps us spiritually strong. Otherwise, we will become weak and susceptible to the temptation to give up. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus prayed, “*Give us this day our **daily** bread.*” God has something fresh in store for us on a daily basis that He wants to speak to us through His Word. This spiritual nutrition gives us the strength to go on. To avoid a fainting spell, we should, in the words of one commentator, “apply our whole self to the text and apply the whole text to ourselves.”
- **Correction:** “*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*” (Heb. 12:5) Occasionally, God must prune our tree to ensure maximum fruitbearing. Like surgery, God’s discipline is short-term pain in exchange for long-term gain. As a skilled butcher trims the fat from a choice cut of meat, God removes the carnal things that stunt our spiritual growth. The Good Shepherd will often “*make [us] lie down in green pastures*” because He knows what is best for us and He loves us enough to give us what we need. Chastisement isn’t a pleasant experience but it is necessary. If a habitually wandering sheep isn’t corrected, he will fall prey to a lurking wolf. That’s why David wrote in his most famous psalm, “*thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*” The staff (crook) was used by shepherds to retrieve sheep that wandered from the flock. The rod (club) was used to fend off predators and to break the hind leg of a persistently wayward lamb. Afterwards, the shepherd would carry the lamb until the leg healed. This painful experience might very well save its life in the future. So don’t faint when God brings correction to your life. It’s for your long-term good.
- **Wrong Focus:** David admitted, “*I [would have] **fainted** unless I believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*” (Ps. 27:13) Every day we have a choice—we can focus on the goodness of God or the badness of our circumstances. What we see in life largely depends on what we’re looking for. If we dwell on the negative, we’ll walk in defeat; if we accentuate the positive, we’ll live in victory. The choice is ours. At David’s darkest hour, when his city (ziklag) was burned, his wives and children were taken hostage and his own men turned mutinous, what did he do? He “*encouraged himself in the Lord.*” He focused on *who* was for him rather than *what* was against him. We all know what happened to Peter when he took his eyes off Jesus. When he focused on the boisterous wind and waves, he sunk. The author of Hebrews reminded us where to fix our gaze, “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...*” (Heb. 12:2) Quit looking at how big your mountain is and start focusing on how big your God is.



When questioned about his greatest speech, Winston Churchill recalled a time during World War II when England seemed headed for certain defeat. He marched into parliament and exclaimed, “*Never give up! Never give up! Never give up!*” Churchill turned and exited to a thunderous ovation. Shortly thereafter, the allied powers defeated the Nazis regime. While many are defecting from the faith, may we instead earnestly contend for the faith. The true test of character is what it takes to stop you. Friend, don’t give up. Don’t be the victim of a fainting spell.