

Great Expectations

Ready:

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.” -1 Corinthians 1:25 (NIV)

Set

Everything in me wanted to be the fast marathoner that my bib number said I was. The big “B” on my bib, which indicated that I had qualified for a fast start corral, got tons of comments from other runners and made me feel pretty special. I even started to believe that my month off from running wouldn't matter and that I'd be blessed with a 3:30 marathon simply because I'd done it before. Let me explain...

Several years ago, with about five weeks of training left to go before the Chicago Marathon; I came down with a debilitating case of bursitis in my left ankle. It forced me out of running for almost a month. I tried to maintain fitness by cross training, but as we all know, there's no substitute for good, old fashioned running. Still, in God's amazing healing and provision, I returned to the road, even completing a 10-mile run without pain, and decided to go for the whole 26.2. And that truly wasn't a rash decision. I prayed about it and felt God's blessing on the event.

When race day came, however, my mentality wasn't exactly rational. The logical side of my brain knew that I'd have to take it slow, while the over-zealous, prideful half wanted to race with the big boys again, despite my setback. I somehow forgot how long 26 miles really was, and thought that I'd just be able to mentally push myself through it because I'd done it before.

That did not work. By mile 10 I knew it was going to be a long day. By mile 17 I was mentally singing praise songs trying to force back tears. By the time I crossed the finish line I WAS in tears. It had been the single most exhausting experience of my life. And I was broke.

As I walked back to meet my friends, I started giving in to disappointment. I'd missed my PR by 20 minutes. I dwelled on my time and sang the “Woe is me” song over and over in my head.

Man, did I miss the point! A couple hours later, it finally dawned on me what had taken place that day. Not only had the Lord given me back an incredible experience—one that I'd thought I would have to give up because of injury—but He'd also carried me through the entire event! I never had to walk. I never felt any injury pain (just the normal pain that comes with a marathon). And the sub-four finish was complete icing on the cake. Wow. What a HUGE blessing! It was almost tragic that I was so focused on my own prideful expectations that I nearly missed His amazing handiwork.

So, here's my question to you: What "loss" is God trying to tell you is a "win"? Maybe you competed this weekend and got beat. Maybe you "lost" in some other area of life (relationships, work, health) and are wondering where God is. Well, the truth is that He's right there, blessing your socks off. Who are we, as humans, to declare what is good and bad in our lives? Are we God? We have no idea what He wants to do with the results of our efforts. All we can do is give it our best shot and then thank Him for being faithful throughout it all. We have to approach life without expectations of what good things we think we deserve, and instead, trust the only One who sees the whole picture and has promised good things to those who love Him.

I'm not saying we have to enjoy getting beat, but I am saying that we sometimes get so focused on the numbers that we miss God's blessings. For me, the good of the day was being able to finish one of the marathon majors on what should have been a sidelining injury. I'd say that's a victory.

Today, ask yourself what the real victory is in your own struggle. Once you give up your expectations, you'll see clearly to understand what God's were all along.

Go

1. What "defeat" are you wrestling with right now?
2. What were your expectations going into this trial?
3. Now, take away those expectations and ask God what He wants from this time/experience. Ask Him to bring about His victory instead of your own.

Workout

Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28

Overtime

Lord, thank You for Your faithfulness. Make the expectations that I have for my team Yours, and not my own. Amen.



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