

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Lost and Found Series, Sermon #7

Sermon Title: What To Do When You've Lost Your Will to Live: The Story of Many, Psalm 118:5-21; Matthew 10:38-39

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INTRODUCTION: Last week, I know the sermon struck a heart chord with many of you because of the response I got about what to do when you lose your courage. It leads me to believe many people here have experienced down times in life. It's normal to have down times. It's *completely* normal. A person who says he or she never has a bad day is either lying or is on some type of drug.

There is a whole market of Christian books which make it sound as if the Christian should be happy all the time, and if not, then something must be wrong. Those books seem to be going away, and that's a good thing.

As you've heard me say numerous times, the Book of Acts tells us the default emotion of the Christian should be joy, and yes, because of what Christ has done for us, the Christian should have many joyful days. But, if you have down periods of time in your life, it does not mean you are not a Christian. It doesn't mean you are a second-class Christian. What it means . . . is . . . you are normal.

Last week, I also mentioned the story of our lives, and this, too, struck a heart chord. Many people do not realize every life has a story. If you reflect upon your life, you'll see the story of your past. You'll see yourself as a child in elementary school learning how to get along in society. You'll see yourself as a member of a family. Each family is different, so each family's story is unique. If you think about the story of your life, you'll see a novel or a movie telling the story of who you are, which brings you to today. You'll have times of joy and despair. Where do you find yourself today?

During those down times, you might have been to the point where you may have lost your will to live. Let me confess, I feel terribly inadequate bringing this message to you today. Many of you here have suffered great losses. You've lost a spouse or a child, and you know exactly what I am talking about. I've been with a number of people who, in the pit of despair, said, "I really don't want to live anymore."

Here are the four points to the message:

1. If you've lost your will to live, remember those in the Bible.
2. If you've lost your will to live, start telling what the Lord has done.
3. Losing your will to live might be the best thing ever.
4. There is a time to lose your will to live, physically.

First, IF YOU'VE LOST YOUR WILL TO LIVE, REMEMBER THOSE IN THE BIBLE.

Moses:

- Disturbed with the sinful condition of his people, he said, "But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written" (Ex. 32:32).

Job:

- "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" (Job 3:11)
- "I have no peace, no quietness, I have no rest, but only turmoil" (Job 3:26).
- "I loathe my very life, therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1).
- "Terrors overwhelm me...my life ebbs away, days of suffering grip me. Night pierces my bones, my gnawing pains never rest" (Job 30:15-17).

Jonah:

- "Now O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3).

- And even after God reached out to Jonah again with great compassion, he responded, "...I am angry enough to die" (Jonah 4:9).

Jeremiah: lived alone, ministered alone...had great success, but suffered alone—

- "Cursed be the day I was born...why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" (Jer. 20:14,18)

Elijah: a great prophet who became afraid and ran for his life—

- "I have had enough Lord, he said. Take my life, I am not better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

Jesus: He didn't lose his will to live, but I want you to realize he struggled in his final hours:

- Isaiah prophesied Christ would be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3).
- "And He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.' And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will'" (Mark 14:34-36).

Review—

If you've lost your will to live, remember those in the Bible.

Second, IF YOU'VE LOST YOUR WILL TO LIVE, START TELLING WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE.

ILLUSTRATION: Two men I know were traveling. One of them was reading a book he'd written many years ago. His friend asked why he was reading his own book, and he replied because I want to remember those great times [Freddie Gage].

APPLICATION: A big part of your life story must include narratives of what the Lord has done. These narratives are important because if you do not remember them, you will not have the reservoir of memory to sustain you when times are bad.

Many of the Psalms were written by people in deep despair, especially King David. We believe King David is probably the author of Psalm 118. As you know, David had remorse for his sin, and several times, he found himself in the pit of despair.

In the early part of the Psalm, we see the Psalmist found himself in a terrible situation:

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 118:5-7 ⁵ *When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place.* ⁶ *The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?* ⁷ *The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies.*

Next, the Psalmist tells us about the terrible situations he found himself in.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 118:8-16 ⁸ *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans.* ⁹ *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.* ¹⁰ *All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.* ¹¹ *They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.* ¹² *They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them down.* ¹³ *I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.* ¹⁴ *The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.*

¹⁵ *Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: “The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”* ¹⁶ *The LORD’s right hand is lifted high; the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”*

Underline the next scripture:

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 118:17-21 ¹⁷ *I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.*

¹⁸ *The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.*

¹⁹ *Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.*

²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.*

²¹ *I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.*

ILLUSTRATION: What the Lord has done for us should be enough to sustain us through tough times. A man I baptized went through several years of despair and claimed to be an atheist. After a period of time, he told me he knew there was a God, because he couldn't shake him. He had too many memories of what God had done in his life to continue saying there was no God. The truth was he was angry at God because of something terrible that happened in his family. In time, his anger passed. But, memories of what the Lord had done and awareness of the Lord's continual presence nursed him through the toughest time of his life.

Listen to this verse of hope from Psalm 34:18.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 34:18 ¹⁸*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Review—

If you've lost your will to live, remember those in the Bible.

If you've lost your will to live, start telling what the Lord has done.

Third, LOSING YOUR WILL TO LIVE MIGHT BE THE BEST THING EVER.

I believe someone is listening to me who has lost the will to live. Perhaps someone is watching by TV who spent last night partying for the thousandth time, only to have the same terrible feeling every Sunday morning. Someone is listening to me who has suffered a great loss of some sort—perhaps the loss of a family member, the loss of a job, financial loss, or the loss of good health. You may be at the end of your rope, and you see no benefit in going another day.

If you feel you've lost your will to live, then you may be in the best place you've ever been. Yes, that sounds crazy, but listen to this—God only wants people who are wholly committed to him. He does not want any unwilling followers.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 10:38-39 ³⁸ *Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* ³⁹ *Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.*

Perhaps, just perhaps, if you've lost your will to live, it's because you've spent your life living for yourself. If you find yourself losing your will to live over and over, now is the time to lose your life and find it through the person of Jesus Christ.

Billy Graham has mastered the art of stating things in simple terms. He said, “...*in every way imaginable, life is better with Jesus. He not only gives meaning and purpose to life, He gives direction and makes a difference. If you are depressed by the smallness of your life, you can find encouragement through Jesus! If you are defeated by life's struggles, you can find hope through Jesus.*”

For a few minutes, think of a calendar. How many days does it have? Each month has 28 – 31 days. Every four years there's an extra day, too. There are twelve months in the year. Some of you need to start a new book...a book by You, the author.

Your book this year has 365 pages. Every four years you have the privilege of extending your book by one page. Your book has twelve chapters. Each chapter has 28 to 31 pages.

You are the main character of your book. You choose what type of character you want to be. The only rule is that your book will tell all. There are no secrets.

Probably your book will not be read in its entirety, because no person will be with you every moment of every day for a year. Your readers will only take glimpses at

your book, some reading a page or two, and some reading several chapters.

You decide the genre, style, and format of your book. You decide how you react to situations around you, how you relate to others, how you view the world.

Ultimately, you decide if your book has meaning or not.

Will you write a book that inspires, stirs anger, or makes others laugh? You could include all these things and more, because it's your book. You do not have to follow preset writing rules.

It's important for you to write carefully because there will be a grade. You'll be held accountable for the quality and content of your book because there is One who will watch you write it. He'll help you write it, if you so choose. He'll give you tools, but you can throw them away. He doesn't force you to use them.

You could be very clever and write with such intention that no one knows you are the author. In this style, you will actually remove yourself as the main character.

Your first book will be your most challenging undertaking. At first it will be difficult to hide, but in time you'll get better at it. People will see themselves as the heroes. They will get all the praise and you won't get any at all, because you'll become the master of crafting situations where others get the accolades. In your older years, when you have nothing to do but read the books of your life, you'll find satisfaction in reading great stories.

Or, you could write as many people do, with random, disconnected, selfish thoughts about how to use others for one's own gain. You could document page after page about topics such as insecurity, jealousy, bitterness, greed, and the flaws of others. Such authors find difficulty writing new books because they keep reflecting on past ones and inserting more information.

It's possible for you to start a new chapter in the middle of your book that goes in a completely new and fresh direction. It takes much effort, and few actually do it, but those who do find a captive audience.

It's your book. Write well.

Review—

If you've lost your will to live, remember those in the Bible.

If you've lost your will to live, start telling what the Lord has done.

Losing your will to live might be the best thing ever.

Fourth, THERE IS A TIME TO LOSE YOUR WILL TO LIVE, PHYSICALLY.

I've been with numerous people in hospice care. For those who can talk while in hospice, I've had many private conversations about their lives. Some are unsatisfied with their lives; some are satisfied. I've been with people who sought Jesus for salvation in their deathbeds as well as others who did not as well as others who lived long Christian lives and did all they could do to please the Lord.

One thing I've learned about hospice care is there comes a time when people surrender to the fact they are dying and there is nothing more they can do. For the non-believer who refuses to surrender spiritually, it's terrible. For the believer who is ready to meet Jesus, it's wonderful—because they've accepted the fact they are in God's hands, and after they take that final breath, they'll hear the words: *Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*' (Matthew 25:21)

In the story of lost and found, if you've lost your will to live, you can find it in Jesus Christ.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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