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Rising Back Up In Hope

I've seen it, many times over the years I have witnessed it over and over. I am talking about seeing people right on the edge of destruction, seemingly in a place they will never recover from. Some failed in their choices, and everything seemed to be over for them, while others went through something dramatic and crushing, and it looked like it was impossible for them ever to recover. Maybe it was a health crisis or a marriage that imploded; it could be a financial explosion that happened, but over and over, I have personally witnessed people of all circumstances rise up above the ashes of all the destruction and stand stronger than ever before.

I remember in our church when a young teenage girl ended up pregnant outside of marriage, and it seemed to her that she had destroyed her life and now was marked forever. As her belly grew and she could no longer hide her moment of weakness now exposed to everyone around, and it seemed to her that she would never rise above the stigma. It felt as if she was under a microscope built of others' expectations, but Jesus didn't think like them. He helped raise her up, and a few years later, she had a beautiful young son and a marriage to a great guy with not even a stain of her past left on her. Washed in the blood of Jesus and cleansed of all her past.

I can share stories of men sent off to prison and marked by the world as forever tainted. They were even laughed at and judged as useless, but a few years later, you find them living a strong and resurrected life in Christ. This is Hope. This is the power of the Gospel for the broken-hearted. This is the power of our future, that with God, we can rise above our struggles and past.

In the moment, it may feel that everyone, including God, has abandoned you, but that's not truth; that is false. It is written in Psalms 34:18, "*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*" God doesn't run from us when we need Him the most; He stands right close to us to save us and lift us up!

I enjoyed playing many different sports when I was in my youth, and every once in a while, I would have the wind knocked out of me- usually in hockey or rugby. I would get hit, and it would take the oxygen out of my lungs with such force that I couldn't breathe, and it felt as if I was going to die. Maybe you are in that moment unable to catch a breath of life or hope, but please remember that you are not alone, and just because you are feeling something, it doesn't make it Truth. God believes in your restoration and victory. He has laid out a path for you to rise back up stronger than ever before. He is the deliverer of all of His people as it says in 1 John 4:4 "*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*"

Beyond our battles, we can find the need to overcome that same emotion of turmoil in the midst of our victories. Moses, while following God, had his back up against the Red Sea, and only God could rescue him from the Egyptian Army with a miracle. Joseph went from pit to prison before he ever saw the completion of his calling. Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son

after years of waiting for his miracle. Joshua was seeing the promised land but being required to wait forty years to conquer it because of others' unbelief. The Apostle Paul was shipwrecked and stoned as he followed God's path.

These and so many more faced devastation, disappointment, doubt, discouragement, and destruction but ended up in victory. What thoughts did they think, and what emotions did they feel as they refused to abandon God's path even if it forced them to be completely reliant on God for their answer? What patience and trust was developed between their heart and the Heavenly Father in their obedience through all things? The enemy is a master at stirring up our emotions in times of stagnation, especially when you are waiting on God's direction and standing in faith for promises that have not yet come to pass. The devil is trying to convince you to change course, yet these emotions are liars and based on opinions that do not come from God!

Listen to David's heart to the Lord, "*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.*" Psalm 42:11. Here is a man who followed God into killing Goliath with a sling shot and then, after this huge victory, was belittled and hunted by King Saul, the man whose life he spared. David also served God but then fell into sin and became a murderer and an adulterer of the worst kind, but yet he made a comeback and rose above his past to the point that God said of David "*He is a man after my own heart*" Acts 13:22.

Many years ago, I had a dear pastor friend who found himself amid devastation where he had lost almost everything. I asked him, "How do you get through something like this?" and his response was, "Alan, I get up each day and go to work." By work, he meant seeking God, praying, and staying the course. Today, He has everything back and more! I hope to encourage you today that no matter what it looks like or what it feels like, you have a right to believe in the Truth of your future. You are walking alongside the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, our Father full of mercy, forgiveness, power, and love and "if God is for us then who can stand against us."

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