

Partners In Courage, December 2014

How to Pull UP when you are Dangerously Down

Sermon by Wes Daughenbaugh

INTRODUCTION: I heard a true story of an airplane crash. Everyone on board was killed when a large passenger jet flew into the side of a mountain. When the black box recorder was played you could hear the plane's alarm sounding and the alarm's recorded voice saying, PULL UP! PULL UP! However the pilots were from a non-English speaking country. Over the top of the sounding alarm came the pilot's voice, "WHAT MEANS PULL UP?" The next sound was the noise of the mega-crash.

Some times we just fly a little lower every day through lack of spiritual disciplines. We push on through the LOW feelings, as if they aren't bad enough to fix. At other times some event happens that is similar to a down draft hitting an airplane. The event takes us down FAST. And sometimes, it's a dreaded combination of allowing ourselves to get lower and lower AND THEN running into a down draft type of experience when we are already much to low.

1. IT'S NORMAL TO GET DOWN SOMETIMES, BUT IT'S NOT NORMAL TO STAY DOWN.

You are in good company when you have one of those "dark nights of the soul." It can make you feel better just to consider that even great Biblical heroes sometimes got terribly low and pulled up just in time. I could fill this whole message just with examples of some really bummed out Bible people. Among them would be Job, Elijah, the Apostle Paul, King David, the prophet Jeremiah and John the Baptist. Even Jesus, himself had one of these terrible dark, down times, because—HE WAS HUMAN! Matthew 26:37-38 **He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."**

Jesus did something to PULL UP. He told his closest friends how he felt and asked for prayer. Then He went to prayer, to communicate with His Father. In prayer He made His deepest commitment to do the will of God. Sometimes at our lowest point, God wants our deepest commitment. It was after saying, "**Not my will, but Thine be done**" that an angel from heaven came, and strengthened him (Luke 22:43).

Asaph, a psalmist, a Levite, and a close associate of King David wrote,

"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills (Psalm 73:1-4.)

Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning" (Psalm 73:13-14).

Asaph pulls up by saying, "**If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed your children (v14)**

**** From this we learn that it's one thing to THINK negative thoughts, but it's far worse to SPEAK them. When we SPEAK the terrible negative thoughts it's like a pilot pushing the stick farther down instead of pulling back to bring up the plane's nose!

Verses 16-19 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! V23-24 But I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

Asaph PULLED UP by going into the sanctuary of God and seeking God for HIS PERSPECTIVE. Once he saw it from God's point of view, he felt better. In fact, he felt great!

**** Corry Ten Boom wrote that crocheting is much like life. The pattern is obviously beautiful from the top-side. But from the bottom side, it looks like a tangled mess! It always helps to get God's perspective.

Dark times come from so many different things and each one calls for a particular response, appropriate for that dark time. For Jesus, it ended when he made His deepest commitment to do the Father's will. For Asaph, it ended when he saw things from God's perspective.

**** But one thing is the same in both cases. Both Jesus and Asaph DID something about it, and did not let the terrible down time continue. Both sought God and both obtained help from God. For Jesus, the help came in the form of an angel delivering strength to keep the commitment. For Asaph, the help came from seeing God's perspective.

Now what about you? When an airplane is flying at cruising altitude it is far above the clouds. If a pilot is sick of flying through clouds, he could curse the weather, and hope the clouds would go away. Maybe the weather will clear up, but that's not in his control. It would be smarter just to PULL UP and get above the clouds.

**** If your weather in life is stormy, and your "flight" is jarring from turbulent air, I won't judge you. But the air down there is going to stay cloudy and rough. You have to decide to PULL UP. If you are sick of flying through clouds, seeing nothing but rain, darkness and turbulence there is something YOU can do about it. You have to decide to do something about it. You have to decide it's not normal to go along through life feeling so bad. Decide to PULL UP!

2. THERE IS A DIVINE SOLUTION FOR EVERY DOWN TIME.

I've watched children catch the flu and marveled that the much older adults in the house didn't catch it. Why? They had caught it before and had immunity to it. For every virus, there is an antibody. When we get the solution to a particular down time, it cannot make us sick again. We won't get down unless some new situation comes along, something for which we haven't yet developed the proper response.

**** When I was twenty-eight I had a terrible dark night of the soul. I was so stressed and pressured that I was considering quitting the ministry and quitting my marriage at the same time. I was also considering ways to end it all, like—jump off a cliff. Because I really didn't like feeling so miserable I told God all about it.

In my mind's eye, I was like a horse loaded with a huge stack of boxes. The horse's back was about to break. At the top of the boxes was a BIG box labeled, MY WIFE. I told God, "I could handle it all if it just wasn't for my wife."

At that time we were traveling together, with our baby, living in church attics, RVs, pastor's spare bedrooms, and often driving 750 miles in one day. Bonnie was sick of it and was letting me know. We had a painful verbal exchange and I had walked down a long railroad track.

God spoke to me and told me to "label the boxes." At His prompting, I made a list of all the things that created a load of pressure. Next God said, "Now selectively UNLOAD some of the boxes." I knew I couldn't unload my wife. But I had my own printing press in those days, and making the payment on that was a huge burden. I decided to unload it. I decided to unload the traveling ministry and seek a pastorate somewhere.

Then God said, "Now RESTACK the remaining boxes." I thought, "What's wrong with the way I have them stacked?" God showed me the big box should be on the bottom to disperse the weight. If a little box was on the bottom it would feel so much more painful to the horse. In this way, God showed

me that my priorities were out of order. Since then I've endeavored to order my priorities according to His wisdom. This is only obtained by a moment-by-moment dependency upon the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. When the peace of God lifts, we are spending too much time in one area of priority to the neglect of something else.

**** I got through that dark night of the soul because I took my misery to God and received His kind and gracious correction. Sometimes our "dark night" is because other people in our lives are messing up. But sometimes the dark night is because we, ourselves, are messing up. God's gentle correction can literally save the day. If the dark time is because others are messing up, God can show us how to respond in a way that brings victory. Both Jesus and Asaph came to God in prayer. He's got your answer.

I'll always remember, "Priority #1 is time with God. Priority #2 is your health, because a dead servant can't serve anybody. Priority #3 is your mate. Priority #4 is your children. Priority #5 is your work. Priority #6 is the brethren you are supposed to serve. Priority #7 is the lost, because the focus of your life should be to make disciples of all nations." God also told me, "Number UP, not down." The lost aren't "last" but are rather the pinnacle of our focus in life. Time with God, priority #1 is our foundation.

PRIORITIES, when consistently messed up, are going to cause you to fly low through bumpy and stormy air. Fly low with wrong priorities long enough and you'll crash and burn.

**** SAY TO YOURSELF, *"This dark down time is unique. Therefore, God has a unique way of looking at it, responding to it, and living above it! I've got to have a meeting with God. I'm going to earnestly seek Him! He will show me how to get above this!"*

3. GOD KNOWS WHEN WE ARE DOWN AND SEEKS US.

Remember that Jesus refers to Himself as The Good Shepherd. Remember how he explained that a good shepherd would number the sheep and if one was missing he'd go looking for it. If you are on some dark ledge, about ready to fall, far off from the comfort of the secure place you've known in the past—JESUS IS LOOKING FOR YOU!

I'm so glad that He comes seeking us. Sure, we need to seek Him. But sometimes we are like a sheep all tangled up in brambles. We need the Shepherd to come seek after us.

****Lately, I found myself losing spiritual altitude. Nothing was a smooth ride above the clouds. I had to admit to myself, "I have no joy." That's bad, because one of my five main revival seminar sermons is called LIVING IN DELIGHT. I preach that we can make decisions that should be planted like a fruit tree. If kept alive with daily disciplines, they grow into spiritual fruit trees and fill our lives with delight.

One of those decisions came about because of God's counsel during a dark time. God said to me, "Take your joy primarily from what you give. Then you can never lose your joy." So I've lived that way, giving and giving. It worked great. It worked great until the present unique circumstances came along. Giving and serving helped some, but not enough.

I practiced something I learned long ago, and that is to thank God for little things when it seems He's not going to give you the BIG THING you need most. That's like the man who was digging a ditch. The ditch caved in on him but he grabbed his hard hat and put it over his face, creating a small bubble of air. His friends dug him out quickly, but that little bubble of air saved him. So I would thank God for little things, and it would help some. But frankly, every immunity I'd picked up to combat spiritual flu just didn't seem to help that much against this new mutated strain of darkness.

**** One day I got an email from a prophetic man whom I consider a friend. I rarely hear from him. He gave me two very key prophetic words in 2008. It had been six years since I'd heard from him. Then recently, I got this email:

Wes,

I wanted to write you and tell you that you are not forgotten. I'm sorry for not writing to you sooner or more often. When I get "...in the Spirit" I see you struggling so and I lift you up. I don't have answers

but almost every time the Holy Spirit moves in me you are there struggling. I sometimes feel your pain. I don't like it. The Lord comes along side you and walks along with you...I can see it (even if you can't). He sometimes lets me feel the ache in your heart.

In the Spirit I can see you and the Lord walking ahead of me. You're walking along a pathway through a grassy plain with mountains all around...kind of like a high plain. The wind is blowing. It's just you and Jesus. No one else. You are bent over slightly and the Lord is walking by your side. You are looking only at what's directly in front of you. The Lord is looking ahead to the horizon.

He whispers to you, "Wes, My loved one. Can you see it. Not much farther..."

You stop and look up.

"Do you see it?" He said.

You look ahead. "No" you say.

"Ah...its there...straight ahead. Just over the rise. Listen, you can almost hear it now."

You look at the Lord turning your ear to hear better.

"I don't hear anything." You say.

I could hear it. It was a low murmur just ahead. I started to feel something. Something was welling up in me. It felt so good...like nothing I've ever experienced before.

I came running up to you and the Lord. "I can hear it! I can feel it! Wes, can you hear it!" I was jumping up and down. "It's the Joy of the Lord! It's coming! Hallelujah!"

I threw my hands up in the air and starting dancing round and round. I was so happy. The Joy of the Lord was coming! What so many generations had longed to see was finally upon us! We were going to see the Joy of the Lord!

The Lord smiled. "My Joy is looking for My children. It will find you. It will find all who call upon My Name!"

He looked at Wes. "It will seek you out and find you, Wes. It will overtake you. It is coming for you!" The vision ended.

***** Isn't it wonderful that God, and the Joy of the Lord will seek us out and find us? This word can be as much for you, as for me. Perhaps you are looking down, feeling the wind of adversity blowing. We need to call earnestly upon the Name of the Lord.*

**** If a child was lost in the woods and a search party was sent to look for the child, it would help if that child would call out once in a while, "Help. Can anybody hear me?" The search team would be AIDED by the cry of the lost child and find them quicker.

**** Wow! This is really simple stuff! CALL UPON HIS NAME! "I'm over here, Lord! I want your joy to find me. I'm not trying to hide from you. Help me! Rescue me again." With David, we should cry out, "**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,**" (Psalm 51:12).

**** This vision shows us all several really key things, but the first take away is, CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD and that will help the JOY OF THE LORD find you! I'm not going to call upon the name of the Lord just a little. I'm going to call upon the name of the Lord a LOT, LOUDLY, with PASSION! So can you.

**** Again, this prophetic vision is not just for me alone, because it includes you when the Lord says, "My Joy is looking for My children. It will find all who call upon My Name."

4. SOMETHING BIG IS JUST AHEAD FOR THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST.

Examine a portion of this prophetic word with me: "I threw my hands up in the air and started dancing round and round. I was so happy. The Joy of the Lord was coming! What so many generations had longed to see was finally upon us! We were going to see the Joy of the Lord!"

It doesn't say we are going to see the "coming of the Lord," but, we know His coming is very near. My thinking is that this means something JOYFUL is going to come to the Body of Christ before His return in the clouds.

**** Look at this prophetic word given to Annie Schisler. It is in her newest book, Visions From

On High II. THE OPERATION OF THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF DARKNESS (Page 5-7)

“The Lord opened my spiritual eyes and I could view, with increasing clarity (how in the present time), evil spirits were released in an unprecedented way upon the Earth. *Note: These spirits exercised their powers only within the limitations pre-established by God. An example would be when Jesus allowed the demons to go into the herd of pigs.*

“I saw that any person not truly submitted to God or in real connection with Him was totally susceptible to domination by the demonic forces. It was evident the enemy would take over all that was not clearly defined for God. When the enemy took dominion of people’s lives, it produced a complete spiritual void.

Note: This has been personally confirmed during several trips abroad, which have allowed me to gauge the spiritual condition in various countries. I have seen how some societies are directly influenced and governed by the spiritual alienation caused by Satan.

However, in parallel to this increased manifestation of the forces of darkness, God showed me that He was releasing a greater and special grace upon his children. Consequently, they would abound in supernatural capacities, which would enable them to upset and completely overcome the onslaughts and assaults of the enemy.

The Lord gave me to understand there would be an outer manifestation of the inner divine enablement flowing from this special grace assigned to His people.

It was given to me to witness the realm of this divine operation, especially in relation to the exertion of the spiritual authority through His own (those truly surrendered to Christ). After being infused with the glorious power of Jesus, they were powerfully used on the Earth. In consequence, I saw the evil spirits of darkness withdrew from each one of the places where they had been operating.

However, the Lord pointed out that the opposition and resistance of the enemy against His Own would intensify as never before. Nevertheless, God’s people would be formed into a mighty spearhead (that while they have the ability to penetrate and open breaches, they would also have the power to absorb and dissipate the energy of the impact).

Even so, as His Own moved forward in this operation of God, that would bring a great harvest and many lives would be rescued, as the Spirit moved with singular grace and power.

In this hour of tremendous upheaval, the Lord urges His Own to run towards the provision of grace made available in to them. Thus, Jesus prompted me to share admonitions and promises declared in the vision to His people.”

**** As I compare this prophetic word through Annie with the prophetic word through my anonymous prophetic friend, I think they may be talking about the same thing. As I meditate on this, it seems that JUST AHEAD God is going to pour out such grace upon us that it will bring the very JOY OF THE LORD. The outpouring of Grace will bring JOY that is greater than any circumstance. It will be OVERCOMING JOY.

**** **If this is so, then TODAY would be a very bad time to GIVE UP.** You’ve heard all the stories about someone who spent a fortune digging for oil only to give up and sell the dry hole for a fraction of the expense it took to dig it. The new owner digs just a few feet and hits a gusher. Those kinds of stories have a basis in fact. It happens, over and over. We must take care that it does not happen to us. If we look at the world around us we see the increasing manifestation of evil. If we look to the Lord we will see the even greater manifestation of grace and spiritual power. Let’s look up, listen, and start to feel the JOY of a grace and outpouring so great that previous generations longed to see it! Say to yourself, “I’m not giving up now! I’m going to see what’s over the rise.”

5. WHY ARE YOU DOWNCAST, O MY SOUL? HOPE IN GOD!

Psalm 43:1-5 **Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men. You are God my stronghold, Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then I will go to**

the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

The spiritual person who wrote this psalm was in a dark time and realized he needed to PULL UP! He was crying out to God, calling upon the Name of the Lord. That's key—because His joy is looking for us! It's easier for His joy to find us if we are calling out upon His name!

But the Psalmist does more than just cry out. He's sick and tired of being sick and tired! Enough! He tells his soul, PULL UP! PUT YOUR HOPE IN GOD!

We can't just complain about the spiritual weather, how windy and dark it is, and how cold and threatening it feels. We have to DO SOMETHING.

**** In one of Annie's visions she writes, "The heavens opened to outburst a new and mighty river flowing from Jesus. While descending, it came down with a thunderous sound, like rushing of many waters, which testified about the abundant provision of His glorious person.

"I was shown that while some part of those waters flowed over the land, the rest of the torrent came to a certain height or a certain level and then remained quiet like a gigantic dam suspended over His Own. Jesus told me that His Children should eagerly seek to connect with this reservoir (which represented the constant revelation of Christ). *His children were required to stand up, reach and gain access to that glorious and great provision....Jesus told me that it required determination and a warlike spirit, willing to go up and take it in desire, love and faith. That kind of attitude would allow them to take from the fountain of glorious provision, the constant anointing and revelation of Him. The permanent challenge was to stand up, take, and become filled with it.*" (Pg.13-14 of VISIONS FROM ON HIGH, II)

**** The attitude of the Psalmist is what our attitude should be. Enough of this downcast stuff! Listen, O my soul, put your hope in God! And don't just hope for joy when the age ends, when Jesus returns, when we are caught up to meet him. The devil would like us all to think that everything will be misery until that very moment. But God wants His people to rise up and receive grace that will give us joy, superior and greater than any circumstance!

Psalm 27:13-14 I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

**** The devil will agree that you will see the joy of the Lord in heaven, but he doesn't want you to believe that you will see the joy of the Lord here on earth. If you lose faith in that, your faith might actually die—and then you'd be in jeopardy of missing heaven! So the devil will let you believe in finding God's joy in heaven, in the SWEET BY AND BY, no problem. But he will viciously contend against you if you strive to believe that God's joy will come to you in this life, in the dirty NOW AND NOW.

So contend for that belief! Fight for it! Reach out to the reservoir of grace just above your head!

6. IT HELPS TO LOOK UP AND ADJUST YOUR OUTLOOK.

Somewhere I read this little poem: "Two men looked out through the bars. One saw mud. The other saw stars." In the prophetic vision sent to me I was looking down, at things just in front of me, and I was feeling down.

Our OUTLOOK is critical. If we hold a small dime in front of our eye it will block out the huge sun. If our focus is on the wrong thing, it will bring us down.

The Apostle Paul had learned to keep his focus on the right things.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**** The discouraged person thinks, "Paul's trouble was achieving for him an eternal glory that far outweighed all the suffering, but MY trouble is only achieving for me a bunch of pain!" But if we will respond to our troubles as the Spirit directs us, then every stumbling stone will become a stepping stone.

What the devil means for evil, God means for good. (Remember Joseph, sold as a slave, but sent ahead to Egypt to save the lives of all his mean brothers and their families!)

Here Paul tells us that his secret to keeping hope, courage and joy alive is to LOOK at the right things and to FOCUS on the right things. He went around thinking that he was being renewed inwardly every day instead of lamenting over each new wrinkle of his aging skin. He wasn't looking at his troubles but was instead looking at the eternal glory those troubles were achieving for him.

**** Because of the prophetic vision sent to me I realized that I must be looking or focusing on the wrong things. I couldn't immediately discover just how my focus had gotten goofed up. I'm *still* asking God to show me all the ways I've been looking down.

Luke 6:27-36 has a principle that we all need to see. *Read this with me and then see if you are focused on your troubles or upon the glorious things the troubles are achieving for you.* You see, that IS the PRINCIPLE---STAY FOCUSED ON WHAT YOUR TROUBLES ARE ACHIEVING FOR YOU, LIKE PAUL. NO MATTER WHAT YOUR TROUBLES ARE, THEY GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACT TO THEM IN A CHRIST-LIKE WAY, AND THAT HELPS YOU GROW UP IN CHRIST. YOU GET REWARDS FOR RIGHT RESPONSES, BUT MORE THAN THAT, YOU *BECOME* SOMETHING MORE.

Jesus said, **“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.**

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:27-36).

You can focus on being hated, cursed and mistreated. You can focus on the blows you are receiving and focus on what is being taken from you. But that is guaranteed to bring you down dangerously low. Instead of looking at what someone is doing to you or not doing for you, learn to respond in the opposite spirit. This will give you a great reward. But more than that, it will help you to become a FULL GROWN CHILD OF GOD, just like Jesus.

**** To some God might give circumstances that are so sweet and gentle there are no difficulties of any kind. God may bless some people with such wonderful circumstances that they feel constantly blessed. But in those EASY PLACES there is no need to GIVE THE OPPOSITE, and thereby get a huge reward. We grow most in the difficult times!

We could think, “If God loved me, then He would take me far from difficulties, far from unkindness, far from the reach of any enemy.” But if God did that, you would not NEED to grow in Him. You would not have any place to PRACTICE being kind to ungrateful and wicked people. Then you'd never mature into a full-grown child of God. ***In order to have a great reward, a glorious reward, you must be placed in situations where you can respond mercifully as God would.***

If you think of people who hate you, it will bring you down. If you think of the good you can do for the people who hate you, you will PULL UP. If you think about who is cursing you, it will bring you down. If you think of how you can bless those who curse you, you will PULL UP.

**** This is a sure thing. When we are downcast and despair and darkness surround us with no ray of light breaking through—in every case—it means we are focused on the wrong thing or things!

**** David had many times when he was down and discouraged. He learned that he had to redirect his focus and that's why he wrote so passionately, **“Look to the Lord and His strength; seek his face always,”** 1 Chronicles 16:11

It was David who wrote, **“Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles”** (Psalm 34:5-6).

7. SELF-CONDEMNATION CROSS-DRESSES AS HUMILITY. BEWARE!

We get down when we get down on ourselves. A worrier looks at external problems and magnifies them until his or her expectations flow from the problems. Then the worrier comes under the dominion of the problems and serves them as a slave of fear. Finally, the worrier becomes a problem.

I’ve taught this all over America, training people to CHOOSE WORSHIP and REJECT WORRY. We must choose to 1. Look to the Lord 2. Magnify the Lord 3. Expect good things from the Lord 4. Come under the Lord’s dominion and serve Him as a slave of righteousness and 5. Become like the Lord.

Recently, as I was preparing to preach my sermon WORRY KILLERS, the Spirit of God showed me that we don’t have to look to a problem to lose the victory. We can just look at ourselves and that is enough to take our eyes off of the Lord.

**** Years ago the Lord taught me that self-focus creates a problem whether it is arrogant pride, mediocrity, or self-loathing. One day I was down because I was thinking how bad or stupid I was. I told God I felt like a zero. In my mind, a scale of value was in front of me, and an arrow pointed to me, but it had slid down to a value of zero on a scale of 0 to 10. I told the Lord, “I don’t think you want the arrow to be up on ten, where I think I’m the grandest tiger in the jungle. Just where on the scale would you like the arrow to be?”

God spoke firmly, “Turn that arrow around and focus on Me!” Then He showed me that the devil plays with us, sliding the arrow of self focus to a ten one day, a five one day, and a zero another day. In this way we are either in pride, mediocrity, or self-loathing.

**** The devil doesn’t have to get us focused on how difficult our circumstances are, or on how difficult other people in our life are. All he has to do to get us WAY DOWN is to get us focused on ourselves. From the devil’s perspective, self-focus works just as good as worry. It takes our eyes off of the Lord. Instead of putting our eyes on an external problem, like worry does, self-focus puts our eyes on ourselves.

**** Thoughts will say, “You aren’t much. Look at what others have accomplished. Here you are, at this age, and your achievements are so sub-par! You should have saved more money. You should have invested differently. You should have spent more time with your kids. You should have done this. You should have done that. You should have done more of this and less of that. Boy, you have sure made a mess of your life. You are so *SMALL* and so *INSIGNIFICANT!*”

**** Running yourself down is just fellowship with the devil. Fellowship is time spent together pursuing the same interest. Accusing the brethren is the devil’s favorite activity. When you put yourself down, it’s spending time with the devil doing what he likes best. You won’t feel very UP if you spend time helping the devil tear yourself down.

**** In the last two weeks of November I was only able to get Sunday morning services in two tiny churches. One of the churches had just twelve adults! The next week my schedule was open. There was no place to preach.

I started to feel badly about myself, but I PULLED UP as I began to say, “Lord, you’ve spent *years* working on me. I’m not going to belittle Your craftsmanship. You’ve made something beautiful out of my life. It’s different than any one else’s life; it’s totally unique. I’m one of a kind, and you’ve made me to be something of value. Thank you.” The next Sunday I spoke in a larger church and ten adults were joyfully saved. Dozens of people thanked me for the helpful messages. I thank God that He’s going to finish the good work He began in me and finish the good work He began in you! Paul wrote, **“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 1:6)

My friend, PULL UP! LOOK TO THE LORD. Stay the course. Joy is coming! I love you. God bless you!