

Receiving Mercy and Fainting Not

“ . . . as we have received mercy, we faint not” (2 Corinthians 4:1).

To keep from dehydrating, a long-distance bicyclist usually carries water or other liquids in plastic water bottles or hydration packs. To drink from a bottle carried on the bike or in the pocket, the rider takes the bottle out with one hand and sips through the open valve. To drink from a hydration pack, the rider puts the tube from the pack in his mouth, bites down on the valve and sucks the liquid from the pack.

In the Tour de France bicycle race, a three-week race that takes place every year in July, the riders can only drink from bottles handed to them by team support personnel or other riders on their team. While they never drink from bottles given to them by spectators along the way, they do often take the bottles of water and pour the water over themselves. This temporarily cools them off as they continue the race.

As the cyclist riding for exercise or riding in a world-famous race is able to continue riding by receiving water, so the apostle Paul explained that we are able to continue working in the service of the Lord by receiving “mercy.” No Christian worker is consistent because of any inside or outside factor. Rather, it is as we receive mercy, or draw from divine mercy, that “we faint not.” Several conclusions may be made in the light of this text.

It is God’s mercy, not cheap motivation, that keeps us from fainting! It has been said that if we can stay motivated, we can be successful in life. Unfortunately, this has also become a factor in Christian service. Instead of looking to the Lord Jesus for His merciful enablement, many spend their time and money listening to motivational speakers to find new ways to remain hyped up for Jesus. In this text, however, we see that only God’s mercy can keep us steady in the vineyard.

It is God’s mercy, not capable maneuvers, that keeps us from fainting! While some are easily influenced by a motivational emphasis, others rely on leadership training and tactics that have apparently worked for others. It is possible to put in place the tried and proven maneuvers of great leaders and forget that even the best of leaders faint in the field of harvest. Again, we are told here that only God’s mercy can establish us.

It is God’s mercy, not constant ministry, that keeps us from fainting! For most of my ministry, I have heard good people explain that the answer for fainting and weariness is more activity and service. But take a busy man’s word for it—staying busy in the Lord’s work is not a total guarantee for not fainting. As is stated above, the only basis for continuing without fainting is His mercy. Oh, let us draw from this non-diminishing resource!