



~ Persevering Against the Odds ~

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” – James 1:12

On February 6, 2011 scores of people around the country and around the world tuned in for sports’ biggest night – NFL Super Bowl XLV. This game brought together the Green Bay Packers and the Pittsburgh Steelers for what turned out to be a nail biting game. Green Bay hung on and kept their winning streak alive by winning the prized title of Super Bowl Champs over the Steelers.

Growing up in the State of Wisconsin, I am an avid Green Bay Packer fan. While, I don’t get many opportunities to watch or even follow football much these days, I am thrilled when I hear my team coming out ahead. Following their journey this year was both intriguing and inspiring.

The road to the Super Bowl was fraught with trials and tribulations for the Green Bay Packers. Many would say they took “the road less traveled” considering all they endured during the regular season. All season, they were losing players left and right to injuries. A total of 16 players were on injured reserve by the time they reached the Super Bowl – many of them injured in the first few weeks of the season. However, the guys that became injury fill-ins (many were rookies) thru the season stepped up as solid players and the Packers were able to keep on plowing thru. Green Bay made the playoffs as a sixth seed, but because of their teamwork and tenacity, they were the oddsmakers’ pick to win the Super Bowl, winning all three playoff games on the road.

Just watching the Super Bowl, you began to understand just a little of the obstacles this team faced all year. With 16 players already on injured reserve, they saw three more key figures fall during the game. It seemed like half of Green Bay’s secondary was out of the game and running to the locker room at one point, but those injury fill-ins played their hearts out and continued to pull out big plays. That is team-playing in all its glory. They stood fast despite the obstacles and received the “victor’s crown” in the form of the Vince Lombardi trophy.

Even though it’s only football I couldn’t help seeing some very real and tangible spiritual lessons from this experience. There are times in my spiritual journey where it takes a lot of perseverance to stay where I’m supposed to be. The warfare is intense and I can be easily distracted and prone to lose focus. At times, the battle is fierce and because my only weapons are prayer and God’s Word, those are the areas the enemy attacks in my life the most.

There are times that only thru much prayer do breakthroughs begin to happen. Yet, many times I am prone to let go of the arm of God too easily. I don't persevere in prayer enough. Just like the persistent widow in her distress (Luke 18), I am to come before God holding on to His promises that will sustain and keep me. I must not let go too soon.

Teamwork played a huge role in the Packers' success in the midst of all the difficulties they faced. I too am part of a large team – God's team. I am not alone in my battles. Sometimes I am tempted to remain alone and apart. But, it's during the battle that I need encouragement and support from my "family" the most. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up." We are to support each other in this battle towards heaven. We are to come together in our work so we are not alone and able to stand.

James 1:12 gives us a promise, a goal to look forward to and achieve. We are promised victory if we persevere, if we don't grow weary or give up. God's strength is ours and His ability is what this promise is based on. We aren't promised a rosy journey, but we are promised that all our effort will be worth it in the end and we will (not maybe) receive the victor's crown of Jesus. We must keep our eyes on the prize.

"I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious." - Vince Lombardi

Kimberly Mills

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