



28 March 2025

## Running on Empty

I pay attention to the gas gauge on my car. When it gets below the half full mark I plan when and where to fill up.

Some years ago as I was making a long drive home in an unfamiliar rural area with long stretches of empty prairie on a Sunday afternoon after a conference. I didn't follow that pattern. I passed a gas station thinking there would be another one well within range. There wasn't.



As the gas gauge kept sinking toward empty my discomfort kept rising. And then, it was on empty. Fortunately before long I was able to coast into a gas station *on fumes*. Running on empty was not a nice feeling. It never is in any aspect of life, your car, physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Let's think about running on empty spiritually, the times when our souls are on empty. Times when we feel the blahs, weary, worn out, even hopeless. God doesn't seem to be present, listening, let alone answering our pleas. Running on empty.

Sometimes these times come because of not paying attention to the gauge of our spiritual life, our relationship with God. At other times because of pressures, strains, losses, disappointments in life. The question is, *what do we do?*

We start with the basic truth that God created us with a desire for meaning and fulfillment. The Bible tells us we truly experience that only as we seek God, are in a right relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

As believer we can become careless and not maintain a close relationship with God. We see an example of that in an Old Testament account of Judah. God spoke to the people through Jeremiah, telling them they and their fathers "went far from Me" and as a result "walked after emptiness and became empty" (2:5). The priests did not look to God, the teachers of the Law did not know Him, the rulers rebelled against God and the prophets prophesied by man-made gods. They were searching and following "things that were of no benefit" (2:8). Emptiness. They were running on empty.

As it was for them, so it is for many people today. It doesn't take much effort to be there. The words of the hymn ring true, "The world is ever near. I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I

hear. My foes are ever near me, around me and within.” And so we need to follow the answer in that hymn, “Jesus, draw thou nearer ... speak, and make me listen, Thou guardian of my soul ... give me grace to follow, my Master and my friend.”

Whether the cause is being careless and wandering or the circumstances of your life, there are some things you can do.

First, do not succumb to fear, do not be intimidated. God is still, He is forever the Sovereign God. Later Jeremiah wrote,

“Oh, Lord GOD! Behold, You Yourself have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (32:17).

Then, don’t focus on the negative, evil, the sinful. Be aware of what is going on but guard your focus. This can be challenging with what is going on in your life and all the views and news of things in the world. Remember God’s word through the apostle Paul,

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:7-9).

As well, be committed to knowing and living by the inspired word of God, which never needs to be revised or updated, which cannot be “nullified”, or broken (John 10:35).

Also, be committed to focusing on God, on His kingdom, our certain hope in Christ, our mission to people around us and around the world.

And, finally, reject the pull to withdraw, to isolate yourself from fellow believers. The Bible tells us to encourage each other (see, for example 1 Thessalonians 5:11). That includes not only reaching out to encourage others, but also to reach out to, be open to others so they can encourage you. Let them help bear your burdens (see, for example Galatians 6:2).

Don’t run on empty.

Pastor Lyle