

## Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, October 14, 2017

I've been playing the game of golf since I was nineteen and can still recall joining some of my freshman baseball buddies on the Texas A&M golf course playing my first nine holes without any prior golf instruction. Even young athletes would be wise to get a little instruction before heading out to a golf course for the first time. I do remember taking at least 50 strokes, but I was hooked and took up the game seriously that summer.

The game of golf was by far the most difficult sport I had ever attempted to play and I was determined to do it well. I can't remember my first birdie, but do recall my first eagle at Breckenridge Park Golf Course, the long-time site of the Texas Open in San Antonio. It came on the par five ninth hole and I snaked in a putt that was nearly 100 feet long for a three (two under par) with Preston Kuykendall, my shortstop on our St. Mary's University baseball team as my witness!

One of the major goals in golf is to "bounce back" from a bad hole to make up for shooting over par on the previous hole. You'll often hear television golf announcers talk about players bouncing back from a bogey (one over par) when they get a birdie (one under par) on the next hole. Bouncing back from a bad hole is critical in scoring even or under par in a round. The bounce backs I usually experience these days are more along the line of getting a par after several bogeys in a row, since my golf game has suffered as I've aged. I still love the game and bouncing back still gives me an exhilarating feeling.

We can all experience this bouncing back phenomena without ever picking up a golf club. I've experienced it in business over the past thirty-plus years. And, I've also faced my share of personal life experiences that have allowed me to bounce back from adversity as well. I've always found these occasions to be both memorable and significant in my endeavor to persevere. Quite often, we may have done nothing to deserve the negative position in which we may well find ourselves. In golf, as in life, sometimes the golf ball just takes an unfortunate bounce into a water hazard, bunker or some other difficult lie. Then again, we may be at fault, but we can still bounce back whatever the cause might be. The cause is truly irrelevant. We simply need to realize that dwelling on the problem does no good at all and the sooner we move on the better.

Jesus' disciples went through many trials and most of them died as martyrs, yet they persevered for Christ until their last breath. They knew how to bounce back from adversity. If you want to dig into this subject of martyrdom, the most complete work on the subject was written in the sixteenth century. *FOXES' BOOK OF MARTYRS* is a challenging read, but worth the effort, if you truly wish to understand the impact of the persecution that so many followers of Christ have experienced over the centuries. The cost of our salvation is found only in the cross and Christ' death, burial and resurrection, but the costs have been great as many even today in some countries continue to gladly sacrifice their lives to further the gospel message.

The words of Paul shared in his letter to the church in Philippi seem appropriate at this time. In Philippians 1:20-24, he declares *"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two; I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."*

That's exactly where I believe God wants us. He isn't looking for martyrs, but for devoted followers who will place Him and others before their own needs. He wants us to bounce back from whatever the enemy throws at us and be faithful to the very end. He wants us to have true victory as we deal with adversity in this world. Please join me in bouncing back for the sake of Christ!

Passages to Ponder: John 16:32-33; 1 Corinthians 4:10-13; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; Romans 8:35-39; James 1:2-4

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John 16:32-33 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>32</sup>“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

<sup>33</sup>“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

1 Corinthians 4:10-13 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>10</sup>We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! <sup>11</sup>To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. <sup>12</sup>We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; <sup>13</sup>when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup>We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. <sup>10</sup>We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. <sup>11</sup>For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. <sup>12</sup>So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

Romans 8:35-39 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

James 1:2-4 New International Version (NIV)

Trials and Temptations

<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.