

Facing Discouragement

American psychologist Mark Goulston once said, "Being alone with fear can rapidly turn into panic. Being alone with frustration can rapidly turn into anger. Being alone with disappointment can rapidly turn into discouragement and, even worse, despair." Life as we know it is not all sunshine and rainbows; there are times when things become tough, and it's difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Christians are not immune to this fact of life. Each of us have had disappointments arise; whether from squandered opportunities, failed relationships, actions of those around us, decisions that we regret making, etc., and as stated from the quote earlier, disappointment can turn very easily into discouragement. The sad truth is that many people, Christians included, don't understand how to face being discouraged and move past it.

Most importantly, I need to remember that God loves me. Yes, that is a very common phrase, perhaps so common that I forget truly what it means by God loving me. American pastor Charles Stanley said, "God would never discourage me. He would always point me to himself to trust him. Therefore, my discouragement is from Satan. As you go through the emotions that we have, hostility is not from God, bitterness, unforgiveness, all of these are attacks from Satan." This statement is very true, God will never tear you down in any fashion. His entire focus is on how He may convert me to follow His will. Peter tells us of the long-suffering that comes from God's love in 2 Peter 3:9. God "... is not slack concerning His promise, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish, but that all come to repentance." We have another example from what is mentioned in Romans 5:8: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Therefore, if God has immense love for us, and will never discourage or bring us down, we should put our hope in God. Because of what God has done for me, I can actually have hope, and look forward to the future. I can trust that whatever happens, things will be fine because I have a home waiting for me not on this finite world. The writer of Hebrews mentions in Hebrews 6:18-20, "So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Paul likewise calls to memory in Ephesians 2:12 how we can have hope now because of Christ: "Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

So, things may be rough, and I may not see the light at the end of the tunnel. I may feel that I am truly alone and unloved in the world, and that there is nothing to get me by. However, I have a God, THE one true God, who no matter what I have done continues to love me and work to pull me back to Him! Because I have a God that is so loving, that has done so much for me, I can have hope that something better than what this

life has to offer is waiting for me, and no matter what man may do to me, he cannot take it away from me. On the other hand, if I give up on remaining faithful, then I lose that hope. No man can pluck me from the hand of God, but I can pull myself away. So please brethren, hold on just for a little while longer! For God is coming swiftly, He tells us this in Revelation 22:7, 12: "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book ... Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." If He is coming soon, then I ought to continue to move forward, and keep the faith. Brethren, don't forget the words of Paul in Philippians 3:14, but rather live by them when he says, "I PRESS on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

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