

Overcoming Discouragement

Introduction. The best of people will become discouraged and frustrated. We call it having the blues or blahs, being down or being in the dumps. Some of the very finest biblical characters were victims of discouragement. Correspondingly, elders, preachers, members, teachers, parents will all, at one time or another, become discouraged.

Life cannot be lived exclusively on an incline. It will have its valleys and peaks, its downs and its ups, its highs and its lows. The problem is getting down, getting low, getting into a valley and not getting out; therefore, depression sets in.

The Lord does not want us to become discouraged and despondent. His message is, "Be of good cheer" (Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33; Acts 23:11; 27:22, 25), and "Be of good comfort" (Matthew 9:22; Luke 8:48; Mark 10:49).

I. ***Biblical Characters Who Became Discouraged***

A. Elijah (1 Kings 19:4).

1. Elijah just had come away from perhaps the greatest demonstration of God's power as opposed to idols in the Old Testament.
2. However, physical exhaustion and a loss of faith in others accompanied and contributed to his discouragement.

B. The psalmist (Psalm 42:5-11; 43:3-5).

1. He had definite ways to overcome discouragement.
 - a) He put his hope and trust in God.
 - b) He counted his blessings.
 - c) He prayed to God.
 - d) He wanted to go to the house of God.
2. If we will practice these, we will remedy discouragement.

C. John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 7:19-23).

1. Although expositors have been baffled by these verses, the plain, unmistakable inference of the text is that John's faith wavered.
2. The Bible never presents the saints as free from imperfection. Inspiration is not omniscience and visions and miracles do not remove doubts.

II. ***The Causes And Occasions Of Discouragement***

A. Illness and handicaps.

1. The best of God's people have had to suffer the loss of health or have had handicaps.
 - a) Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 - b) Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9).
 - c) Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30).

- d) Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23).
 - e) Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20).
 - f) Job (Job 2:7).
2. Suggestions for when you lose your health.
 - a) Be patient and pray (2 Corinthians 12:8).
 - b) Resolve that you will not become bitter (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- B. Death of loved ones.
1. There are several examples of those who lost loved ones in the Bible.
 - a) The Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:20).
 - b) David (2 Samuel 12:18).
 - c) Mary and Martha (John 11:14).
 2. Suggestions for when you lose loved ones.
 - a) Remember that God is a God of comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-5; Psalm 147:3; Isaiah 66:13).
 - b) God took care of Mary and Martha (John 11:1-44), the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-18) and the friends of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43).
- C. Material losses.
1. Job lost all his worldly possessions and his children (Job 1:21).
 2. The loss of prosperity will either make one bitter or better.
 - a) None of our prosperity was ours in the first place (Haggai 2:8; Psalm 24:1; 50:10-12).
 - b) We will leave it all behind one day (1 Timothy 6:7).
- D. Insecurity.
1. God has promised to provide for our every need (Genesis 28:20-22; Psalm 37:25; 84:11; Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 13:5).
 2. God has shown that He will do this; therefore, we should not fear.
 - a) Elijah (1 Kings 17:1-7).
 - b) The widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16).
 - c) Israel in the wilderness (Psalm 78:23-29; Nehemiah 9:21).
 - d) The multitudes (Matthew 14:20-21; John 6:13-14).
 - e) The twelve (Matthew 10:9-10).
 - f) Christ (Matthew 4:11).
- E. Fickle friends.
1. Christ's own familiar friend lifted up his heel against him and Demas forsook Paul (Psalm 41:9; 2 Timothy 4:10).
 2. Neither gave up in despair and despondency. Fix it if you can (Romans 12:18), but if not, count your many friends who are still loyal and helpful.

III. ***How One Can Overcome Discouragement***

- A. Remember the promises of God.
 - 1. Let us never stop trusting God and His promises (Isaiah 26:3; 40:28-31; 2 Peter 3:9).
 - 2. God has wonderful promises applicable to all who are troubled.
 - a) Parents (Proverbs 22:6).
 - b) Teachers (1 Corinthians 15:58).
 - c) Elders (1 Peter 5:4).
 - d) Preachers (Isaiah 55:11).
 - e) The downtrodden (1 Peter 5:7).
- B. Do something for someone else.
 - 1. Most discouragements will be found in an overactive mind and an underactive body. The ten rules for getting rid of the blues are go out and do something for someone else -- and repeat it ten times.
 - 2. The Lord said that we find life by losing it, losing it in a cause beyond and bigger than self (Matthew 10:39). Dig someone else out of his troubles and you will make a hole in which to bury your own.
- C. Remember that you will not be tempted beyond your ability.
 - 1. God promised this and also promised a way to escape the temptation that we might be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - 2. Paul was assured of enough of God's grace to endure his trial (Psalm 138:3; Ephesians 3:16; Hebrews 4:16).
- D. Conquer self-pity.
 - 1. Self-pity is born of self-concern and self-esteem, but Jesus said we must crucify ourselves (Matthew 16:24; Galatians 2:20).
 - 2. General William F. Dean was a prisoner of war in Korea. When asked what upheld him during his captivity, he said, "I never felt sorry for myself and that was what defeated it. Self-pity whips more people than anything else."
- E. Remember that you are of intrinsic value and are needed by the Lord.
 - 1. If your thought is, "Nobody cares about me," or "I am of no value to anyone," the Lord's message is, "The Lord hath need of thee" and "ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Mark 11:3; Matthew 10:31).
 - 2. Not understanding that even his one talent was needed in his master's economy, the one talent man buried his (Matthew 25:14-30). Do you remember his destiny? Every member in the body of Christ is important (1 Corinthians 12:14-27).
- F. Pray.
 - 1. David encouraged himself in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:6).
 - 2. It will greatly help if you take your discouragements to the Lord (Philippians 4:6-7).

Conclusion. Trying times are no time to quit trying. Abraham Lincoln failed in business twice and was defeated in eight elections before becoming President. Robert E. Peary, after seven failures and twenty-three years of fruitless searching, discovered the North Pole.

The love of God will not let us down, will not let us go, nor will it let us off. Wherefore, let us lift up the hands which hang down and take courage, always putting our trust in Him (Hebrews 12:12; Acts 28:15).