

In Search of Encouragement

Roger Kendall—November 14, 2015

How many of you had times when you get discouraged? or You may be a little bit depressed?

There are some people in the world that really just ‘go with the flow.’ They don’t really appear to get discouraged or negative about things. That’s great! Most people go through ups and downs in their life, including God’s people. Yet, we can read:

Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in *the* Lord always....” I read that and I say, ‘*Great!* Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could just be there and have that level of continuous state of joy, peace and contentment to the point where we’re just absolutely bubbling over with enthusiasm, zeal and not having a negative thought in our mind. It doesn’t work that way. In reality God knows who we are.

We’re emotional creatures, and yet, we deal with problems and issues that are disappointments. Things don’t go the way we would like them to go. We deal with illnesses and financial problems. We’re dealing with people that can be troublesome at times. There are so many aspects of life that sometimes some days just are hard! They bring you to tears at times; it does happen. It can lead to discouragement and in some cases even mild depression. In some people in the Church, it may even get worse.

Brethren, why I want to focus on this today is that *we all need encouragement* from time to time. I think we all would agree with that. We deal with our own personal lives with all of it’s difficulties that come along. Yet, *God gives us the encouragement in His Word!* We do know that, but a lot of times we do get stressed out. We get tired. We get fatigued and our emotions go into low gear. We start focusing on ourselves, perhaps, and it’s maybe a ‘woe is me’ situation. God doesn’t want us to do that!

Being discouraged is not a sin. However, if you’re in a state of discouragement or you’re depressed, that can lead to other issues, such as:

- loss of hope
- loss of faith
- loss of trust in God

Because if you’re focused on yourself when you’re in this state of discouragement and depression, it’s exactly where Satan wants to get you. Then, he can start working on your mind and bring other forces to work on you, which can be very debilitating as far as your relationship is with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

I won’t go through the full details, but I had a rough week. It was just that I was discouraged about some things that occurred, but God doesn’t want us to stay in that state of discouragement and getting depressed about life. He wants us to be focused on

- good thoughts
- His Word
- growing and overcoming

When you’re discouraged and depressed, what does discouragement mean? *The loss of courage!* It’s loss of zeal and determination. It’s a depressing situation where you don’t have the energy and you don’t have the excitement of being able to continue to do what you need to do. *It’s normal! We’re human beings!* We go through this, but the point is that when it comes upon you, you need to have the tools or the ideas in your mind of: I don’t want to stay here. I want to be able to understand, go forward and get back on top of life so that I can be a valuable instrument in God’s hands, in that sense.

To make matters worse, we live in an evil corrupt world and it doesn’t work out there, folks. It doesn’t work. You look at the news. You look at what’s happening now around the world. It’s depressing. It’s down right discouraging to see what’s going on in the world. Yet, we know the answer. We’ve read to the end of the Book and *we know what God has in store*. In fact, what’s happening in the world shouldn’t surprise us, not at all. It does discourage us at times, because we would like it to be better. We would like things to go in a much better way.

Guess what? *This is part of our training!* This is part of what God is doing. We need to understand these elements because we’re going to be dealing with people in the Millennium who are going to be very discouraged and depressed, when we come back with Christ to restore the Kingdom of God.

What Satan will try to do, then, when you’re in this discouraged mode, is to put negative thoughts in your mind and to say, ‘This is never going to get better. I’m in trouble, and I just don’t see any solution.’ Pretty soon you begin to get very negative about things. That’s not a good attitude to be in. We’ve all been there. It happens. The key thing is that God wants us

- to eliminate this discouragement and these negative thoughts
- to focus on the good things

- to recognize that God is with us

If ‘God is for you, who can be against you?’

What we’re going to do today is we’re going to cover the true sources of encouragement and to recognize that God has given us many tools and ways that we can overcome these ideas of discouragement and even depression.

About a week or so ago, I was home and I had a great day. Things went well, but that night I just had a negative, foreboding feeling. I don’t know where it came from. You’re sitting there and you just say, ‘Why am I getting into this negative mode?’ Sometimes it comes upon you when you really can’t point to any particular thing. What you need to do, and what I did was I focused on that and said, ‘God what is this? *I immediately went into prayer mode and I asked God to remove it!*’ It took about an hour or two but it did dissipate and it was gone. I just share that experience with you.

This message is not meant to be a negative message. It’s meant to be a positive message. Life is bad. Life out there, as far as the world is concerned, is in chaos and it’s getting worse. On the other hand, God wants us in fighting form. He wants us:

- to be strong
- to have courage
- to be able to go forward
- to accomplish His will

We never want to let discouragement get us down to the point where we are not able to go forward. It’s true brethren. We all need encouragement because we face a difficult struggle:

- we fight against the world
- we fight against Satan the devil
- we fight against our own human nature

That’s almost three strikes, *except* God’s given us a big bat. God has given us the tools to be able to overcome and be successful and go forward.

We all know in our heart and mind that the true source of encouragement is from God. We know that so I’m not trying to just remind you of things that you already know. We’re going to go through some of the Scriptures and we are going to see that this idea of encouragement is all through the Scriptures. ***The Word of God is encouraging to those who know the Truth, believe it and have faith in it!***

When you read the Bible, study Scripture and study the Psalms, it’s like God is talking to us one-on-one. God is teaching us and saying, ‘Roger—or your name—I know you, I love you as My child, and I’m going to help you and be with you.’ ***That is powerful encouragement! Powerful encouragement!***

I. Take Courage, Be Strong

Let’s consider what the word ‘encouragement’ can mean. There are different definitions you can put on it. We know what it means to ‘encourage,’ *to increase courage!* Understand that the meaning of ‘encouragement’ is, *to take courage or to make strong.* I’d like to give you an example of this particular form of encouragement. Joshua was given the responsibility after Moses died:

- to lead the children of Israel into the ‘promised land’
- to be able to conquer the nations that were in there
- to lead well over two million people

How would you like that for an assignment some day?

Even that situation could be discouraging. The first question is, ‘God, how am I going to do this? I’m limited. I’m just a single human being.’ Let’s read how God spoke to Joshua and He also speaks to us today these very same words. God speaks to Joshua and says:

Joshua 1:5: “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, ***so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you....*** [Wow! That’s encouraging!] ...***Be strong and of good courage,*** for you shall divide for an inheritance to this people the land, which I swore to their fathers to give it to them. ***Only be strong and very courageous*** so that you may observe to do according to all the Law, which My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may prosper wherever you go” (vs 5-7).

God was telling Joshua that He would be with them, but only as long as Joshua was with God. As long as Joshua looked to the Word of God and followed and was faithful, *then* he could be strong and he could be encouraged to go forth and do the very will that God wanted him to do.

Verse 8: “This book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night, so that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it, for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.”

What a passage here. This is the absolute pathway that we can use, lock into and understand that as God spoke to Joshua, He speaks to us. Notice v 9, for the third time God says:

Verse 9: “Have I not commanded you? ***Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid,***

neither be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you in all places where you go." This is an example of encouragement that comes by taking courage and being made strong.

II. Receive Consolation/Comfort

Encouragement means to *receive consolation and or comfort in time of need*. We see an example of this very aspect of encouragement:

2-Corinthians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and **the God of all comfort**." Our Father in heaven is a God of all comforts. He is an encouraging God and He is there to lift us up in time of difficulties when we need comforting.

Verse 4: "**Who comforts us in all our tribulation...**" Wow! All the troubles that I'm going through, the difficulties, God is right there comforting us and continuing to lift us up, giving us the courage and the strength that we need. We have to be doing our part, of course.

"...in order that we may be able to **comfort those** who are in any trial, through the comfort with which we ourselves are **comforted by God**" (v 4). This verse means God comforts us not only for our benefit, but as we are lifted up and encouraged, God wants us to reciprocate and to comfort others. It's a 'pay back' system. This is a wonderful thing to understand.

It's true that when we go through experiences in life and we have a really, really difficult time and we're able to overcome it and deal with the issues, and we come out in a much stronger attitude regarding a difficult loss that we might have experienced, we're able then to help others through the similar experiences that they're going through. You've been through that. You can comfort and help other people by not only praying for them, but going to them in just saying, 'I do believe I understand the pain, the anguish and the discouragement that you're going through.'

Verse 5: "For to the degree *that* the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also **our comfort abounds through Christ**. And if we are in distress, *it is* for your comfort and salvation, which is being worked out by *your* enduring the same sufferings that we also suffer; *and* if we are comforted, **it is for your comfort and salvation** (and our hope *is* steadfast for you); knowing that as you are partners in the sufferings, *you are* also *partners* in the comfort" (vs 5-7).

This is a beautiful Scripture and really encompasses this whole aspect of consoling and comforting others because we have been comforted. It's a powerful message. Part of this process will

lead to a greater hope and a greater hope in salvation in all that God is doing.

III. Be Lifted Up in Hope

By taking on a more positive frame of mind and spirit! The essence of hope is a key aspect of encouragement. Very simply so, because when we are discouraged, it can lead to depression and then depression can lead to loss of hope. When a person loses all hope, they're taken out. There is no fight left in that person. Let's read what Paul writes here:

Hebrews 6:18: "So that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible *for* God to lie, **we** who have fled for refuge might have **strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope that has been set before us**"

With encouragement, we are able to latch on to the essence of hope. What is hope? Hope is a *feeling or expression of a positive outcome*, not a negative one. So, hope gives us the energy, the vitality to seek for the positive outcome of any situation that we might be in.

Verse 19: "Which **hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and steadfast**, and which enters into the *sanctuary* within the veil." Again, a lot of information in this particular verse. Who is the Anchor of our soul? *It's Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is our hope!* The hope that indeed through Him we might receive salvation. That's why he says, "...enters into the *sanctuary* within the veil."

Verse 20: "Where Jesus has entered for us as a forerunner, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec."

We can see how all this comes together that overcoming the discouragement and depression allows us to focus on the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ; realizing that we are in 'school' as God's people. We are in 'the school of eternal life.' We need to recognize that through the struggles and the sufferings that we go through that we are actually learning, growing and becoming stronger by enduring these situations. Again, it's the kind of information to always be focused on overcoming negative thoughts and negative feelings. That is exactly what Satan wants to use against us and cause us to lose hope.

We might say, 'If you've got God's faith and if you are a true servant of God, why would you ever be discouraged?' Let me turn to an example of Elijah. You know Elijah was a mighty prophet for God. Elijah came to prophesy. He was sent to confront the 40 prophets of Baal. You can read through this in 1-Kings 18. He was successful. With strong faith, he basically called down fire from

heaven to consume the offering that he had made, which was completely saturated with water. He then followed up and eliminated the 40 false prophets from Baal. That was kind of a gruesome thing to do, but he did it. After all of that, look what happened next:

1-Kings 19:1: “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done...” That is Jezebel, his wife, who was the queen of Baal, a Baal worshipper.

“...and all whom he had killed, all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying... [‘All right, you did that.’] ...‘So, let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time” (vs 1-2). What did she do? She said, ‘I’m after you and I’m going to eliminate you.

- What did Elijah do?
- Did he immediately pray to God and say, ‘Protect me. I’m good and I’m safe? *No!*

Let’s see what happened here.

Verse 3: “And when he saw *that*, he rose and ran for his life, and came to Beersheba of Judah, and left his servant there. Then he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he begged for his life, that he might die...” (vs 3-4). He was depressed. He absolutely had the life sucked out of him.

“...And he said, ‘It is enough. O LORD, take away my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers.’ And as he lay and slept under a broom tree, behold, then an angel touched him and said to him, ‘Arise, eat.’ And he looked, and, behold, a cake *was* baked on the coals, and a jug of water at his head. And he ate and drank, and lay down again” (vs 4-6).

What did God do first? *God gave him physical nourishment because he completely had a loss of energy!* He was lifted up physically and then, that wasn’t quite enough. Elijah was still very much depressed.

Verse 13: “Then it came to pass when Elijah heard, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out, and stood at the cave entrance. And behold, a voice *came* to him and said, ‘What *are* you *doing* here, Elijah?’” In other words, God had something else for him to do. ‘Why are you standing there Elijah? Get going. I’ve got something for you to do.’

Verse 14: “And he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of Hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, have thrown down Your altars, and have slain Your prophets with the sword. And I, I alone, am left. And they seek to take my life away.’ And the LORD said

to him, ‘Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you come, anoint Hazael *to be* king over Syria. And you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi *to be* king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint *to be* prophet in your place.... [that’s quite a lot to do] ...And it will be whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill. And whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet, I have left seven thousand in Israel *for Me*, all who have not bowed the knees to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him” (vs 14-18).

God encouraged Elijah by first physically restoring him and then telling him that, no, he’s not alone. Let’s look at the real facts here. Seven thousand had not bowed their knee to Baal. ‘*You’re not alone because I am with you. Go and do what I have commanded you.*’ He was lifted up and he was helped by God to do what was required of him.

This is just an example. If we ever feel that maybe something is wrong with us when we get discouraged and maybe even depressed, we have an example here to show us that it happened to the best of us. We need to understand that we need to overcome it. Elijah did! He went on and continued to do the work that needed to be done.

We can see that encouragement encompasses a lot of different aspects, but it’s both a spiritual as well as an emotional uplift. That’s what it is; encouragement is an uplift. You’re edified! You’re lifted up! You can then function and accomplish the things that God wants you to do. It’s a process where:

- negative thoughts
- negative emotions
- ‘woe is me’

is replaced with:

- faith
- hope
- love

If you’ve got the love of God and you’ve got faith and trust in Him, you then have hope that you’re going to be able to accomplish the right things. That’s what encouragement is all about. It helps you to endure the difficulties in life without getting knocked down and being ‘taken out’ by negative thoughts.

As we have read and understand, God the Father and Christ is the greatest Source of encouragement through the Holy Spirit and through the very Word of God. Through the very Bible, God does help us and encourage us in many, many ways. Let’s read about this as Paul writes:

Romans 15:4: “For all the things that were written before were written for our instruction, so

that through patient endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Within this very verse you see elements of things we have already discussed. Encouragement:

- gives us courage
- gives us strength
- gives us hope
- gives us endurance

—so that we can keep on keeping on!

Verse 5: “Now may the God of **patience and encouragement** grant you to be likeminded toward one another according to Christ Jesus.” In other words, be encouraged through God, through His Word and through His Holy Spirit.

Verse 6: “So that with one accord and one mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There’s more there, but I’m just pointing out that God declares Himself to be a God of encouragement.

We are the children of God, brethren. We are not adopted. We are the truly begotten sons and daughters of God the Father and we need to understand that. If that one aspect of dealing with life, if that’s always before your mind, if that’s right there center focus in your mind, this will be a big help in overcoming those disappointments, those difficult hard days that we might face.

1-John 3:1: “Behold!.... [*marvelous, wonderful*] ...What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him.” Brethren, we’re privileged! We’ve absolutely been blessed to the ‘nth’ degree in being called in this at this time.

I don’t know about you, but I look at my own personality, my own temperament and I don’t know where I would be today if God did not call me. I just feel that I would not be in a good place as far as my life is concerned, just by my own nature and things. I thank God daily that I can call upon Him as being my Father in heaven. What a glorious encouragement it is just to read this.

Verse 2: Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is.”

This is not an ‘if’ or a ‘maybe,’ this is solid Truth. This is the Word of God and we can take this to the bank. There’s no doubt. There’s no fear. No anxiety here. This is the relationship that we have with God the Father. What a marvelous thing this is.

IV. Hope

God encourages us throughout the Bible in this very way. Our God is a God of hope (Rom. 15:13). Hope is a very important part of encouragement. We have to remember that no matter how difficult a trial, no matter how hard life comes at a time with sickness—with trials of pain or whatever we’re going through—**God always loves you** no matter what the circumstances are. The love of God is there always. It is never taken away in any way, shape, form or manner. Christ is our High Priest in heaven and as our High Priest we can call upon Him 24/7:

- for help
- for encouragement
- for better dealings with whatever we’re dealing with

He will be sympathetic and empathetic to what we’re doing. He will help us. How encouraging is this.

Hebrews 4:14: “Having, therefore, a great High Priest, *Who* has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, **we should hold fast** the confession *of our faith*”—*grab hold, believe and to absolutely let nothing turn from the understanding of what this Scripture means.*

Verse 15: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *One Who* was tempted in all things according to *the likeness of our own temptations*; yet, *He* was without sin. Therefore, **we should come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy...** [add encouragement or whatever word you want to put in there] **...and find grace to help in time of need**” (vs 15-16).

When you feel yourself just getting ‘down and out,’ the first thing we need to think about is:

- God loves me
- I am a child of God
- I’m going to pray to my Father in heaven to help me with this struggle that I’m dealing with

That’s what we can count on, brethren.

V. Take Action

What is the hardest thing for somebody who is depressed in being able to take right action? *The recognition that they **can** do something!* They’re immobilized; that’s the tough part, the difficult part. Even that can affect us. The point is, that we need to recognize that discouragement is something we really need to recognize when it first begins to come deal with it. Otherwise, it could be harder to turn around from your wrong thinking that comes upon

you. Jesus Christ is the Source of our help and encouragement in time of need.

Hebrews 13:5: “Do not allow the love of money to influence your behavior, **but be satisfied with what you have...**” This is a point that we need to recognize in perhaps overcoming discouragements. Be satisfied with what you have. Be thankful for what you have. Don’t be thinking that more money is going to solve your problem. I know none of us think that way, but that’s what he’s saying. “...**be satisfied with what you have...**”

“...for He has said, ‘**In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.**’ So then, let us boldly say, ‘**The Lord is my Helper, and I will not be afraid.** What can man do to me?’” (vs 5-6).

VI. The Source of Encouragement

We have the help we need. We just have to call upon it to overcome any form of discouragement and depression that might come upon us. We can come before God in prayer to seek that comfort and help. *He’s there!* Jesus Christ is our High Priest. He is our King, our Lord and our Master, but He is also a gentle Shepherd.

Matthew 11:28: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are *overly* burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (vs 28-29). This is the Savior God that we worship and what a blessing it is to be able to hear Him say to us:

- I care for you
- I’m going to bind you up
- I’m going to carry you through whatever struggles you’re going through
- be encouraged, for I am with you

The Holy Spirit—the very power of God and also the very essence of Who and What God is—is a Source of help and comfort. We can read that in Acts. The Holy Spirit, of course, is in us and that represents the very presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ in us (Rom. 8). The Holy Spirit is a Source of comfort.

Acts 9:31: “Then the Churches throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace indeed. And they increased, being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord and in **the comfort of the Holy Spirit**”—that dwells in us. Therefore, we’ve got this inner force, this inner power of God dwelling in us. That is a Source of encouragement and comfort.

Let’s remember that the Holy Spirit is referred to as being ‘the Comforter’ (John 14:16). In

other words, the Encourager. It’s from the Greek word ‘parakletos’—which means *intercessor, console, an advocate*, which provides the comfort and consolation in time of need. Again, God is covering our bases with the Source of encouragement. The Holy Spirit clearly is a force, the power of God that’s dwelling in us to give us comfort.

We just read some Scriptures, which describes our relationship to God the Father and Jesus Christ. It is a powerful message to us that:

- no matter what the world throws at us
- no matter what struggles we have
 - ✓ the pain
 - ✓ the sorrow
 - ✓ the struggles

God is with us. God is for us and He will lift us up and carry us through every woe and trouble that we go through.

The Word of God is the Bible. It expresses that in so many different ways. We can turn to God’s promises. We can say, ‘God said this and God does not lie. His Word is True.’ Therefore, we can go and we can read His promises in His Word and that provides us with the assurance that He is there:

- to protect us
- to provide for us
- to carry us through

—even in the worst of conditions. I know I say that with perhaps not having experienced it, but some of us in God’s Church have experienced very, very hard and difficult situations.

I called up a couple and I was calling them to encourage them, because I knew they were going through some very hard times. I said, ‘I’m calling. How are you doing. I hope things are going well with you.’ He went on to explain to me that:

- we’re doing just fine
- we’re doing great
- we’re reading the Scriptures
- we’re up-beat
- we’re doing good

They encouraged me! That was the beauty of that. I said, ‘That’s great.’ We talked a little bit more. This is the power that God has. That even in our worst conditions we can be strengthened.

VII. Prayer

We can read that Christ is our Rock. Many Psalms cover this. We’re going to see how we can be comforted and encouraged by the Psalms and all the Scriptures.

Psalm 27:1: “The LORD is my **light and my salvation**; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the **strength of my life**; of whom shall I be afraid?” *Wow!* That’s quite an acclamation!

Verse 2: “When the wicked, my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an army should encamp against me, **my heart shall not be afraid**; though war should rise against me, even then **I will be confident**. One thing I have desired from the LORD, that I will seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple” (vs 2-4).

David is writing these words and David had gone through so many difficult times. Here, he’s praising God and realizing that God is there for him.

Verse 5: “**For in the time of trouble He [God] shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me upon a rock....** [that Rock is Jesus Christ] **...And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me;** therefore, I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy in His tabernacle. I will sing; yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice; and be gracious unto me and answer me. When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, O LORD, will I seek’” (vs 5-8).

That’s what we need to do when we get discouraged. When we get down and feel that the world is crashing in around us, we need to seek God, enter into prayer and see God through prayer. He will shelter you. These verses are just powerful in terms of giving us the hope and encouragement that we need.

Psalm 30:4: “Sing praises to the LORD, O you saints of His, and give thanks to His Holy name, for His anger is only for a moment; **His favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning**” (vs 4-5).

I think we’ve all been there—haven’t we? We’ve gone through times at night where we’ve just cried out to God or just weeping in sorrow and pain. The Scripture says, ‘Yes the pain will come but also there’s going to be a time of refreshment. There’s going to be a time of renewal and ‘joy will come in the morning.’

Verse 6: “And in my prosperity I said, ‘I shall never be moved.’” *Powerful Scriptures!*

Psalm 31:1: “In You, O LORD, have I **taken refuge**, let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; **deliver** me quickly; be my strong Rock, **a fortress of defense** to save me; for **You are my Rock and**

my fortress; therefore, for Your name’s sake lead me and guide me. Pull me up out of the net that they have hidden for me, for **You are my strength**. Into Your hand I commit My spirit; You have redeemed Me, O LORD God of Truth” (vs 1-5). Again, the Psalms are a powerful, encouraging book.

David lamented some difficult times he went through, but you always can find that strain, that point that David always brings out: Trust in the Lord for He is your help in time of need.

Psa. 91 is a Psalm that many of us turn to perhaps quite often because of the profundity of the absolute assurance from God that:

- He will encourage us
- He will lift us up in time of difficulty
- He will see us through the difficult days that lie ahead

Psalm 91:1: “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” In other words, if you’re close to God, if you’re seeking God, then He is there for you. He is protecting you. He is looking over you.

Verse 2: “I will say of the LORD, ‘He is **my refuge and my fortress**, my God, in Whom I will trust.’ Surely He will **deliver you** from the fowler’s trap and from the destroying pestilence. **He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.** His truth shall be **your shield and buckler**. You shall **not be afraid** of the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flies by day, nor for the plague that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction laying waste at noonday” (vs 2-6).

- God is our protector
- He will sustain us
- He will be with us through all things

Verse 7: “A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand; it shall not come near you.” What powerful words these are to encourage us and to help us through a difficult time in our lives, knowing that God is there for us.

VIII. Humility

God says to us, ‘Don’t worry about the things in the world. Don’t get all ‘bent out of shape’ that things are going badly. Be strong in God. Be confident in the Word of God and I will settle you and I will give you peace.’ That’s what God tells us.

Peter recognized this and gave us some very encouraging words:

1-Peter 5:6: “Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due time*.”

In other words, being humble, sometimes, we go through some very difficult stress and difficult aspects. Humbling is like wearing down a rough stone and making it beautiful. That's what humbling does, and it's painful at times. It's not necessarily easy, but it does the job. Humility gets rid of pride. It gets rid of negative thinking, in that sense, about ourselves. "...in *due* time..." He will exalt you.

Verse 7: "**Casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you.**" Whatever your worries are, whatever your anxieties are, whatever you're discouraged about, God says, 'Give it to Me. I'll take it, because you don't need to carry that anymore.'

Verse 8: "Be sober! Be vigilant! For your adversary *the* devil is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour. Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in *the* world" (vs 8-9). We struggle with life, we battle the enemy, but what does God say?

Verse 10: "Now, may the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *you* have suffered a little while, Himself **perfect you**... [He's going to polish us and make us perfect in the resurrection. He now will]: **...establish, strengthen, and settle you.**" When we go through a tough time and read these words knowing that this is what God is going to do and help us with, we just have to have faith and trust in that:

- look to God
- look to His Word
- look to the Holy Spirit

IX. Encourage Each Other

We talked about that. God comforts us so we can comfort one another. This is a very important source of encouragement for us. Here we are today, fellowshiping with God and with one another. I find it most encouraging. It takes us out of the world. We're focused on our Creator God and that is so encouraging to be together. Paul says to be an encourager for others. We can seek encouragement from each other.

1-Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore, **encourage one another, and edify one another,** even as you are already doing." We need to build each other up. We need to help each other. Focus on the good things that are happening and taking our attention off some of the harder things.

Verse 12: "Now we beseech you, brethren, to acknowledge those who are laboring among you, and are overseeing you, and are instructing you in

the Lord... [encourage your leaders, your ministry] ...and to greatly respect them in love for the sake of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we encourage you, brethren, *to* admonish those who are irresponsible, console the fainthearted... [be there, comfort them, help those who are in need] ...support the weak, be patient toward everyone" (vs 12-14).

X. Gift of Encouragement

The Word is here. We have a job to do. In fact, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that God gives to different people turns out to be the gift of *encouragement*. Isn't that a fantastic thing?

God gives many gifts through His Spirit and we're going to read about some of those. Paul is speaking about the fact that the Body of Christ is one body but many members.

Romans 12:4: "For even as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function; likewise, we, being many, **are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another**" (vs 4-5). You can see the harmony, the unity of different parts working together to facilitate the working of the body.

Verse 6: "But each one has different gifts according to the grace that is given to us—whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the measure of faith; or service, *let us tend* to service; or the one who is teaching, *let him tend* to teaching; or **the one who is encouraging, let him tend to encouragement...**" (vs 6-8). That's a gift we should seek after, individually and collectively, to be like Barnabas.

Barnabas was, of course, the co-apostle with Paul, but his name means *son of consolation*. He was the *son of encouragement* (Acts 4:36). That was his nature. Barnabas tried to help and encourage people to serve and worship God properly. That's something we should try to do, as well, to be like Barnabas, to be an encourager and to help those who truly are in need.

XI. Look to a Positive Attitude

In our search for encouragement we need to look *within* ourselves to what we need to do to overcome discouragement.

I've given you a lot of resources in the searching for *encouragement*. When it comes to encouragement, we need to recognize that we have our part to play. If you're in a discouraged attitude and you're depressed, you need to turn your mind around. You need to acknowledge that this is not where you want to be and you want to change. Until you do that, you're going to continue to ebb down into more and more difficult thoughts.

The key aspect of overcoming negative thinking and discouragement is to ***replace it with a positive frame of mind, with right thoughts and with right focus.*** In other words, take a more positive, uplifting attitude and give focus on God. You don't focus on your failures. You don't focus on the things that are going wrong. You turn to God in prayer and ask Him to restore you to a more joyful condition. That's the first step. Ask God to restore you. He can exchange your negative thinking with positive thoughts about God's love, about God's mercy, His blessings and also, His coming kingdom. Focus on these!

I began speaking to you about the fact that God, through Paul, says that we should always rejoice; rejoice in all things. Let's start there. If we are accomplishing the purpose of overcoming discouragement, we can then say this:

Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in *the* Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your moderation be known to all men; the Lord *is* near. **Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...**" (vs 4-6).

Let's look at this. By prayer, by supplicating, by going to God with deep, sincere prayers *with thanksgiving*, you're thankful for what you have, not what you don't have. That automatically will shift your thinking toward a positive frame of mind. Count your blessings, not your woes. Count the fact that I'm a son of God or daughter of God and I'm heading for the Kingdom of God. *YEA! Yea, indeed!*

"...let your requests be made known to God in everything; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, **shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things**" (vs 6-8).

What Paul is saying is, chunk, toss out all of the negative junk and replace it with these positive areas of thought, which are pure, right, lovely and good.

XII. Focus on the Kingdom of God

Finally:

- focus on the Kingdom of God
- focus on your future
- focus on the fact that God has a plan for each and every one of us

'The eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love Him.'

Paul writes and encourages us to take our eyes *off* the woes of the world and focus on our future.

2-Corinthians 4:14: "Knowing that He Who raised the Lord Jesus *from the dead* shall also raise us through Jesus, and shall present *us* with you. **For all things are for your sakes**, so that the abounding grace may cause the thanksgiving of many to overflow unto the glory of God. For this reason, we do not lose heart; but if our outward man is being brought to decay, yet, the inward *man* is being renewed day-by-day. For the momentary lightness of our tribulation is working out for us an immeasurably greater *and* everlasting fullness of glory; while we consider not the things *that are* seen, but the things *that are* not seen. **For the things that are seen are temporary; but the things that are not seen are eternal**" (vs 14-18).

If we focus on the Kingdom of God, on the glory that God is going to give to us, that will lift our spirits. That will put us out of negative thinking and out of discouragement. '*God is with us and who can be against us!*'

There's more that I could say, but I want to go to one last, closing Scripture. I'd ask you to go through and read all of Rom. 8, and specifically focus on the Scriptures and the verses that give encouragement. It's the salvation chapter. It deals with our future in the Kingdom of God and the very love of God that He has for us.

Romans 8:31: "What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** He Who did not spare even His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, **how shall He not also grant us all things together with Him?** Who shall bring an accusation against *the* elect of God? God *is the One* Who justifies. Who *is* the one that condemns?" (vs 31-34). That's Satan the devil. That's the world. That's the way that we see around us.

"...*It is* Christ Who died, but rather, Who is raised again, Who is even *now* at *the* right hand of God, *and* Who is also **making intercession for us**.... [He's our High Priest; He's there day-by-day, 24/7] ...What shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" (vs 34-35). None of these can! You can say to yourself.

- none of these will ever break my faith
- none of these will ever break my trust in God

Verse 36: "Accordingly, it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for *the* slaughter.' **But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither**

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs 36-39).

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I don't know about you, but these verses have absolutely given me *joy, hope and encouragement!* No matter what happens in this world, it's going to be 'small potatoes' compared to what's ahead for us.

Brethren, I wanted to bring you this message and help you to understand, as I know you do, that there will be days of discouragement and dark days will come upon us. Take these words today and recognize that *we can be encouraged by God and all that He has prepared for us!*

We can be thankful that God is a God of encouragement and that we can look to Him for help in time of need!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Philippians 4:4
- 2) Joshua 1:5-9
- 3) 2-Corinthians 1:3-7
- 4) Hebrews 6:18-20
- 5) 1-Kings 19:1-6, 13-18
- 6) Romans 15:4-6
- 7) 1-John 3:1-2
- 8) Hebrews 4:14-16
- 9) Hebrews 13:5-6
- 10) Matthew 11:28-29
- 11) Acts 9:31
- 12) Psalm 27:1-8
- 13) Psalm 30:4-6
- 14) Psalm 31:1-5
- 15) Psalm 91:1-7
- 16) 1-Peter 5:6-10
- 17) 1-Thessalonians 5:11-14
- 18) Romans 12:4-8
- 19) Philippians 4:4-8
- 20) 2-Corinthians 4:14-18
- 21) Romans 8:31-39

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1-Kings 18
- Romans 15:13
- John 14:16
- Acts 4:36

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