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Lakeland Hills Leader

"Discouragement" Part Two

By Chuck Richardson

Discouragement should not cause us to doubt the coming, presence or the return of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 11:2-3) *"...Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* (Verse 3b) Do you allow others to give you doubt about the Savior or His promises? When we see others prosper in wickedness do we become discouraged? *"I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness."* (Ecclesiastes 7:15) I believe this is more common than we like to admit. If man is a believer like John the baptizer, he usually does not give up on God, but will question His power, and more particular His power in our lives. God is great, but I'm not sure He will answer my prayers. (James 1:2-8) Our faith is shaken by the overwhelming onslaught of the evil. We feel imprisoned and therefore lack control over our circumstances, then discouragement sets in, and discouragement gives birth to doubt, and doubt when it is mature, overcomes our spirit. Marshall the strength of Paul! (Acts 16:25; 2 Timothy 4:6-8) Ask God's people for help to overcome discouragement.

And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage." (Acts 28:15)

The best of us become discouraged. We refer to those who seem to be happy all the time as eternal optimists. But all men, no matter how upbeat they are, will become discouraged sometime. We cannot live our lives in a perfect incline. We will have our valleys and peaks, sometimes the valleys last longer than the peaks. And if nothing else, the loss of a loved one will cause our countenance to fall. Some do not overcome such tragedies. For the most of us, we are easily brought down by the weight of trials. We sink into depression and if prolonged, not remembering from whence it came.

If discouragement is inevitable, does this mean we need to give up? No, we have biblical examples of discouragement to learn from. We will be caused by evil men to become discouraged. Family will discourage us. Brethren will discourage us. We need to limit discouragement's affect. God does not want us to become discouraged. The disciples were afraid of the tempest on the sea; they saw Jesus and believed Him to be a ghost. Jesus spoke to them saying: *"Be of good cheer!"* (Matthew 14:27b)

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) *"Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."* (Acts 23:11)

The Lord has given us the cure for discouragement. The ultimate encourager is the knowledge He has overcome the world. We are not alone in discouragement. The sages of old tell the story of discouragement that is common to man.

Discouragement should not cause us to lack confidence in God and take matters into our own hands. (Genesis 16:1-4) *"So Sarai said to Abram, see now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her. And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai."*

(Verse 2) Numerous times in my life I have become discouraged about a situation and instead of consulting God and showing confidence in His care, I made a decision without Him that I regretted. Either I was left to clean up the mess for days, weeks, and even months later, or I had to endure the consequences. Challenges give way to doubts, and doubts give way to discouragement, which conceives wrong decisions and sin.

Confidence in God, with an adequate dose of patience, is the prescription to cure discouragement. But too often, we do not want to take the medicine because we do not get an immediate cure. Relief eludes us because we cannot wait for the medicine to take its effect. We are not in control of the situation or its timing. There is no easy way to skip to an immediate cure, so we must simply take the medicine and have confidence that God will heal us. *"But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:8-9)