

When the Children of Israel first came to the promised land the Lord said to them; “Go up and possess it,” and then added, “Do not fear or be discouraged.” Deut. 1:21 Then the spies came back from checking out the land and told them about the strong walled cities and the giants that lived there, and their hearts were discouraged and they refused to enter in to take possession of the land that God promised to give them. You see how destructive discouragement can be. It drains you of the zeal and desire to do something. It can prevent you from doing the things you need to do or make you do them very half heartedly. As we see with the Israelites, it can even lead us to give up on God’s promises, and quit doing the work God has given us to do. Therefore, we need to know and use

God’s Cure for Discouragement!

In our Epistle Reading today God urges us to “Run with endurance the race that is set before us,” comparing the life of a Christian to running a race. Hebrews 12:1 If you get discouraged in a race, it becomes very difficult to keep going. You just want to quit and drop out of the race.

So what is the solution? The next verse tells us, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” Looking to Jesus is the cure for our discouragement. We can sure see that as we view our Saviour on the Mt. of Transfiguration. We will read Mark’s account of the transfiguration for our text today. **Mark 9:2-13**

“2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”— 6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. 7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” 8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. 9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. 11 And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” 12 Then He answered and told them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Throughout this Lenten Season, a part of our midweek services has been to read from Isaiah 42 where God promises that His Servant “will not fail or be discouraged till He has established justice in the earth.” Isaiah 42:4. Isn’t that incredible? Jesus didn’t get discouraged and give up. He did satisfy God’s justice for us and for our salvation. How could Jesus not get discouraged? Think about it. The Apostle John said, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:10-11) He came to save people, but the people only wanted the miracles. He explained to His disciples very explicitly what He had to do to save them and they didn’t understand or even want to hear about it. How could He not be discouraged feeling like all His work was for nothing? For the last five weeks we have been taking a closer look at all of Jesus’ trials and all the terrible injustice done to Jesus in utter hatred. How could Jesus not get discouraged and think, what’s the use? These people aren’t worth dying for. Even more so when Jesus was hanging on the cross in agony and the Jews kept on mocking and laughing Him to scorn. How could He not get discouraged by that?

We can find some answers on the Mt. of Transfiguration. There we will also be able to see **God’s Cure for Discouragement.**

So what types of things cause you to be discouraged? Do you get discouraged by things that go wrong in the world and in your life. Do disasters, lingering illness or injury get you down and discouraged? How about the wickedness of the world? Do you get discouraged when you see and hear about all the ungodliness of the world; even more so when you feel the attacks of unbelievers against you, does that get you down? Then look to Jesus and you will know

-I- Know What to Expect on Earth.

Jesus faced more hatred and opposition than anyone. We have really seen that in our Lenten services. How could Jesus not get discouraged by all that? He expected it! He didn't enter this blind or naive. He didn't come to earth imagining that it would be easier or that people would receive Him gladly. He knew all the corrupted hearts and minds, all the cruel thoughts and devices. He knew exactly what lay ahead of Him. He told the disciples plainly in great detail exactly what was going to happen. So Jesus was not surprised by anything. He was prepared to face all the hatred and rejection.

So it is for us. God tells us exactly what to expect in this world. We should expect disasters, sickness, pain and death because we are sinners living in a fallen, sinful world. If we expect those things then we won't be surprised or discouraged by them. Instead we will turn to God for help in time of need. He also tells us that we should expect the world to be very evil and to know that people will despise and reject God and His word and therefore you can expect people to turn against you when you speak His word.

Our Epistle reading from Hebrews 12 goes on, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls." We should not only expect hostility from unbelievers, but look at Jesus. He endured far more hostility than you ever will, and He endured it for you. When we remember the great hostility that Jesus endured for us then we will be ready and willing to endure some hostility of the world for Christ.

On the Mt. of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Luke tells us what they talked about. They "spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Luke 9:31. That is a wonderful example of the blessing of our fellowship and why God repeatedly tells us to gather together in our worship. Moses and Elijah were there to talk about what was about to happen to encourage Jesus before the worst began. If Jesus needed that encouragement how much more do we? Our fellowship is a great blessing where we gather together to talk about the things that can be discouraging so that we can encourage each other in the faith and facing discouraging times. We also encourage each other by reminding each other of God's promises and of His will for our lives. That is the next cure for discouragement to.

-II- Know Your Father's Will

This is so much stronger than simply knowing what to expect in the world. Jesus knew it was His Father's Will for Him to endure all of the abuse and suffering. Moses and Elijah came from heaven. They were sent by God to talk to Jesus about His upcoming death. This was God's will. This was the whole reason Jesus came to this world. Then God the Father confirmed that when He spoke from the cloud, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!" God was giving His stamp of approval to Jesus and everything He was doing. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter thought he could defend Jesus with the sword, Jesus stopped him and said, "Shall I not drink the cup My Father has given Me?" John 18:11 Jesus was committed to His Father's will.

Hebrews 12 also reminds us of the Father's loving will in all our suffering, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons." Hebrews 12:5-7

We receive great power against discouragement when we know that every trial and suffering that we may face is from the loving hand of our Father, who disciplines us in love. If it is God's will, then it will be for our good, which brings us to the next cure for discouragement.

-III- Know What Lies Ahead in Christ

The writer to the Hebrews gives us even more insight into why Jesus did not get discouraged and

give up. And that gives us an even greater strength against discouragement. He says to look to Jesus, “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Jesus could endure the horrors of the cross because He could see beyond the cross to what He would accomplish.

Notice how Luke says Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about his death “which He was about to ACCOMPLISH at Jerusalem.” That is a funny way to talk about one’s death. But in Jesus’ case He would accomplish wonderful things through His death. Moses and Elijah themselves were a visible reminder of what He would accomplish. They were already with God in heaven because Jesus would surely complete everything necessary for their salvation. Jesus could see the millions of people who would be saved. That knowledge brought Him great joy and so Jesus could endure anything to make it happen. Jesus He knew the suffering would soon be over and then an eternity of Joy with all the saints.

Oh what powerful encouragement we receive when we know what Jesus has accomplished for us and therefore what lies ahead for us. We know that we have a loving Father who is looking out for us every day. Paul put it this way, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32 We also know that the trials of this life are short lived. That one day we will be with Jesus in paradise. Moses and Elijah are visible proof for us. Look at them standing there with Jesus in glory and know that because Jesus paid for all our sins and has taken them away, we will one day be there with them in paradise.

Do you ever get discouraged when you think about friends and neighbours you have witness to and they just are not interested? Do you feel like there is no use in witnessing? Or do you get discouraged by the small size of our congregation and think, how can we survive? Look to Jesus. Jesus didn’t get discouraged because He knew that billions would never receive the benefit of all His work and suffering because of their unbelief. He didn’t say, “It’s not worth dying for the few that will be saved.” No, He kept His mind and His heart focused on those who would be saved, picturing them with Him in heaven. So don’t be discouraged by those who don’t believe or who reject your witnessing, we can expect that. But know that God still has His elect that He will bring to faith. So keep witnessing and pray that God will bring someone to you who will believe. And find joy in all the thousands of people in our foreign mission fields that are being brought to faith in Jesus.

Finally, if you are like me, the thing that is most discouraging is to see your own weaknesses and failures; to see how we always come up short of what we should be and want to be. But God provides the perfect cure even for that.

-IV- See Your Saviour’s Glory

There on the Mt. of Transfiguration Jesus’ face was shining like the sun, and even His clothing became brilliantly white and glowing. He was shining with the glory of God. That was very encouraging and strengthening for those three disciples. Peter’s reaction was, “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” He wanted to stay there with Jesus in His glory. But that is not the greatest glory that we need to see. We will one day see Jesus in all His glory, but more important for us now is to see the glory of His Grace and Love. We see that Jesus came down from the Mountain and did go to the cross for us. He did endure all the hatred and abuse. He did bear our sins and the wrath and punishment of His own Father against our sins. When we see Jesus in that glory we receive great strength against our discouragement from our own failures, for we know that He died to pay for all our failures and now He works blessings for us in spite of our failures and sins. All our failures are overcome by the glory of our Saviour. Rather than being discouraged by our failures and sins, we can turn to Jesus for forgiveness and learn from those failures. With the power of the Holy Spirit we can learn to serve God more faithfully.

You want to know the cure for discouragement? It is in the Father’s words, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” Listen to Jesus He alone has the words of life and peace. Truly it is Good to Be Here!

Amen