

“BE OF GOOD COURAGE”

Of all of Satan’s weapons, his favorite may be discouragement. It is certainly one of his most powerful weapons. He has used it relentlessly on the Lord’s finest servants to try to neutralize their effectiveness. Paul well knew what it meant to be discouraged and depressed. He was so discouraged about preaching in the wicked city of Corinth that the Lord spoke directly to him and told him He had many people in that city whom Paul needed to seek (Acts 18: 9–10). After Paul had written the first letter to Corinth and had received no response, he became both anxious and discouraged. He was greatly encouraged by the report Titus brought him in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5–7). After being unjustly imprisoned for a long period in Caesarea, Paul was finally sent to Rome by the Imperial authorities. An extremely long and perilous voyage must have left him both physically and emotionally exhausted. What a welcome sight it was when the brethren from Rome came out to meet him some forty miles from the city. Luke described what this did for the discouraged apostle: “He thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:15).

Discouragement comes to all, small and great. Even the sinless Son of God must have been greatly discouraged when he wept over Jerusalem (Mat. 23:23; Luke 19:41). It is not abnormal to become discouraged, but those who will be most successful in any endeavor (including the Lord’s work) are the ones who do not let it defeat or destroy them. When a brother or sister accepts an assignment and then neglects it, it is discouraging. It is not always easy to keep on going when others around us have thrown up their hands and quit. When short-sighted, selfish brethren are trying to destroy a good work that may be a source of strength to many others it is difficult not to become discouraged. However, let us not become so disappointed in a brother or sister that we let it destroy us. Let us not allow the pessimistic, cynical spirit of others to

cancel our initiative or sour our perspective. Those who eventually accomplish great things in any area of life (including the Lord's kingdom), are the ones who persevere in spite of discouragement.

Have you noticed that the more we try to do as a congregation, the harder it seems to get it done? The devil does not worry much about a church that is self-satisfied and doing nothing. He gets concerned only when the Lord's people get serious about serving God. The more we do and attempt to do, the more we can expect him to engage in his nefarious efforts of discouragement. It must bring a special delight to his malevolent heart when he can enlist some of the Lord's own people to become discouragers of their brethren. With Moses and Joshua of old, we say, "Be strong and of good courage" (Deu. 31:6; Jos. 1:9).

—Dub McClish

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