

## Dealing with Discouragement

### Psalm 23

Troubles come to all of us, this is part of human life on a fallen world. These troubles often leave us discouraged. **James 1:17** lets us know that the source of every good thing every perfect gift is God. *He knows how to bless us in every circumstance of life.* His word gives us wisdom that cannot fail. If we listen closely to what God teaches and apply it to our lives, we will find the answer to our problems and struggles.

In **Proverbs 15:13** we read, *“A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.”* And in **Proverbs 17:22** we read, *“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.”* Maybe some event or series of events have broken your spirit and caused you to lose heart.

Discouragement is a common experience. Never imagine that you’re the first to face some difficult struggle. Know this, others have faced and will face your struggle. David once remarked in **Psalm 55:4-8**, *“Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be a rest. Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness.”* Like David many if not all of us have had a time when we wished we could just disappear or go somewhere all alone where we would be far away from all our troubles. But brethren, *we cannot run away from life* – it always finds its way back to you. Jesus put it this way in **Mt. 6:34**, *“Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

Sometimes our troubles overwhelm us, and we suppose God has somehow forgotten us. David felt like that in **Psalm 42:9-10**. He put it this way, *“I will say to God my rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’ As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”* In **Verse 11** David answers his own question, *“Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed with me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, My salvation and My God”*

Several of God’s people have gone through periods where they felt lost, alone and abandoned – discouraged by the circumstances. *When Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah, he fled to the wilderness.* He finally sat down under a juniper tree, waiting and wanting to die. He said, *“it is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers”* (**1 Ki. 19:4**). God however, had more work for Elijah to do. *Jeremiah the prophet preached to the people of Jerusalem for forty years and suffered rejection and persecution.* In **Jer. 15:10** he said, *“Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me as a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land! I have not lent, nor have men lent money to me, yet everyone curses me.”*

*Even Jesus had times that were extremely difficult.* When Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, (**Mt. 26:37-38** says) *“And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.’”* Jesus went a little beyond them, and

fell on His face and prayed. Have you ever felt so discouraged, you wish you could die? Jesus felt that way, but He put His Father's will first. He said, ***"Not my will but Yours be done."***

*Paul and Silas had a bad day in Philippi.* They healed a young lady who was demon-possessed. And the owners of that slave girl saw that they were going to lose money, so they had them arrested and accused them of teaching customs that were unlawful for good Romans. Paul and Silas received many blows with rods and were thrown into prison, and had their feet fastened in stocks. What did Paul and Silas do? Did they sit there and dwell in self-pity, Woe is me? No, what they did was *they prayed and sang hymns to God (Acts 16:25)*. There is no doubt that they in pain and suffering at that moment, but they never gave up on God.

When Jesus traveled through Israel, He saw the discouraged people. Mt. 9:36-38 says, ***"Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"*** **Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray for workers who could teach the people the truth about God.** He saw this as the cure for their distress.

If this morning you are distress and discouraged, **consider what God can do to encourage your heart.** Brethren, there is hope!

*God can make a difference in the lives of people,* Psalm 147:3 puts it this way, ***"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."*** You may think you are facing your problems alone, but God sees and knows what is going on. He is there with you!

Paul found himself troubled with a painful problem. A problem he had to live with. God wouldn't take it away. He describes the experience in 2 Cor. 12:7-10, ***"Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh a messenger of Satan to torment me-to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefor I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."***

You might think God was cruel for not removing Paul's thorn in the flesh – what ever that thorn might have been. But God was keeping Paul humble and teaching him an important lesson about problems. Christ's power shines the brightest when we are at our darkest. His power is greatest when we are at our weakest. *Paul changed his attitude about problems.* **They were opportunities to see the power of God working in us.** God doesn't have to work a miracle to work in our lives. *His grace is powerful enough to show His love and favor toward us.*

*Discouragement often comes when we focus on all the things we don't have, rather than recall all the things we do have. **James 1:17** says, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation of shifting shadow." Remember who you are. **You are God's child.** **1 Peter 2:9-10** puts it this way, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of GOD; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." **There is no greater blessing than to be God's chosen people – His children!***

Let us remember that we have a future that is much better than our present situation. Troubles today doesn't mean that you won't have God's blessing in the future. *The apostle Paul suffered greatly for his faith.* The apostle Paul revealed to the Corinthians how much he had endured for Christ. In **2 Cor. 11:23-28**, "Are they servants of Christ? – I speak as if insane – I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."

*But there is more than this in the life of Paul and his thinking.* In **Romans 8:18** he says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." It is in **Psalms 27:13** that we can read these words of David, "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." Heaven still awaits, and nothing can stop the promises of God.

And know this **your troubles are not all bad.** **James 1:2-4** says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." *Your troubles may be the very thing strengthening and making you the complete person God wants you to be.* Attitude makes the difference. Things happen that you didn't choose, but you can choose how you react to them. You can get angry, you can feel defeated, *or you can look for what they teach you and feel a blessing.* Stay faithful to the Lord, and He'll use your struggles to make you stronger, a more complete Christian.

In **Psalms 119:71** David said, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." Sometimes it takes a period of humbling before we see the need to repent. Sometimes it takes opening our hearts to a problem that makes us want to find a solution and comfort. The down times educate us for the victories.

**And there is more to learn from your personal struggles.** Your experiences of overcoming or living with a struggle can lead you to help others who face the same problem. You understand what God has done for you. God has enabled you so you can give hope to someone who is discouraged. **2 Cor. 1:3-5** says, ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”***

We all struggle when we face a problem for the first time. We want to handle it wisely. If you don't know how to deal with your struggles, then study God's word and remember **James 1:5-8**: ***“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”***

God knows all our problems, and with God's help we can stay faithful. Nothing is too big for God to handle; and when you hold to God, you're in His hands. Brethren, **we walk by faith and not by sight.** In **Isa. 40:30-31** God told Israel, ***“Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait on the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”*** Again in **Isa. 41:10** He said, ***“Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”*** If you hold fast to God, He will hold fast to you.

When I am down from facing bad news, I like to remember **2 Cor. 4:16-18**, ***“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”***

Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote a poem that speaks true to life. *“One ship sails east, and another west, by the self-same winds that blow, tis the set of the sails and not the gales, that tells the way we go. Like the winds of the sea are the waves of time, as we journey along through life, tis the set of the soul, that determines the goal, and not the calm or the strife.”*

In what direction have you set your soul? Do you have faith in God, or have you given up on God? Do you still hope for a home in heaven? I'm praying that you are prepared to live with God forever. **To be prepared you must have faith – (Hebr. 11:6) - in Jesus Christ as the Son**

of God and be willing to **confess** it (**Rom. 10:9**). Repent **of your sins, turn from evil** – **Rom. 6:2-4**, and follow the Lord Jesus – **Mk. 8:34**. Then as commanded by our Lord in **Mark 16:16**, **be baptized**, immersed in water, for the forgiveness your sins – as commanded and told by the apostle Peter in **Acts 2:38**. As a Christian we have been commanded to remain faithful – faithful until death – **Rev. 2:10**. If you have not obeyed, what then is stopping you. Obey the Lord today. (**Hebr. 4:16**)