

A word of Encouragement

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the chapter of God's Word, which we read, the epistle to the Hebrews, the last chapter, chapter 13.
- And as God would help me, I'd like to concentrate on part of verse 22. Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 22.
- I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.
- I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation. Every time I'm asked to preach in another minister's pulpit, I usually ask them, what sort of message should I preach?
- And invariably, it doesn't matter where, it doesn't matter who, the answer always seems to be encouragement. Just encourage them.
- [1 : 14] The word exhortation, translated exhortation here, means encouragement. Bear with my word of encouragement.
- The original word is also translated elsewhere as comfort or as consolation. Aren't we strange people, we Christians?
- Bear with. Here is the writer saying, I appeal to you, brothers. Bear with a word of encouragement.
- Put up with a word of encouragement. What kind of people are we, Christians? We need to be so often encouraged to be encouraged.
- Is there another group of people in the universe who have been left such a legacy as Christians? And yet, we so often need encouragement.
- [2 : 21] The previous chapter, chapter 12, verse 5, we're told, You've forgotten the encouragement. Eh?
- You've forgotten it. We, so blessed. We, Christians, so assured of eternal life. We need to be encouraged.
- Isn't that amazing? Now, what does the Bible mean by encouragement? When you ask, when you want to go and encourage somebody, what do you do?
- You just pat them on the back and say, don't worry, Fred. Don't worry. It'll be all right. Is that real encouragement?
- It is friendship. It is nice. It is good. But is it encouragement? When God encourages someone, he gives real encouragement.
- [3 : 27] When God encourages, he gives three things. First of all, he gives a solid reason for the encouragement.
- He gives you a basis, a solid basis for encouragement. He gives you a reliable foundation for being encouraged.
- A real hope, a certainty that will encourage. That's the first thing he does. A solid, gives a solid reason. Second thing he gives when God encourages is directions what to do.

Because most of the time we're discouraged. We're in a dilemma. We don't know what to do. When God encourages us, he gives us direction what to do.

Now, when he does that, be ready. We will probably need a lot of faith. Do you remember when God called Gideon to a great work?

[4 : 41] He was the one he was raising up to lead Israel against the Midianites. And Gideon couldn't believe it. He was the weakest of his clan.

And he said, I can't do it. How can I do it? And there he was with 32,000 men of war, if that's what they were.

Men of war. He had to fight the Midianites with 135,000 if I remember right. And God was encouraging him to go ahead.

I'm with you, Gideon. 32,000 against 135,000. You can imagine why Gideon felt overwhelmed.

What did God ask him to do? He said, I'm with you. But what did he ask him to do? What were the directions he gave him? Gideon, you're far too many. Reduce the 32,000.

[5 : 44] What was going through his head? Against 135,000? You're telling me to reduce 32,000 to 10,000? Ah, God says, you're too many.

Reduce the 10,000. And he whittles it right down to 300. He's encouraging him. So if God's encouraging you, be ready to exercise faith.

You see, one can have faith, but it can lie dormant. That was the charge which the Savior gave to the disciples in the boat.

He said, where is your faith? You've got faith. Try using it. Try exercising it. So God gives solid reasons. He gives directions.

And the third thing about God when he encourages, he gives strength. Now, I don't know how it works. But somehow, when God speaks a word, it strengthens.

[6 : 52] Just hearing God's voice strengthens and empowers one. So as God would help us, let us look at these three things which God does when he encourages his people.

First, the solid reasons. He gives a good hope. Now, a good hope in the Bible is not something uncertain.

In the Bible, a good hope is something absolutely certain. When you see, especially in the New Testament, you see the word hope.

Replace it with the word certainty. God gives a solid foundation upon which one can credibly rely upon.

Do you remember when Moses died? Now, Moses was probably the greatest leader of Israel. What a knock it must have been to them.

[8 : 03] Looking for after 40 years in the wilderness. They're on the edge of the promised land. But Moses has to be taken away before he sets foot in it.

Now, what did God say to the Israelites? When they were, as it were, so shattered with their bereavement of their great leader for 40 years being taken away.

Well, remember what he said. He said to Joshua who replaced them. Now, he said, Moses is dead.

Now, therefore, arise. Now, therefore, arise. It was, of course, after a proper due period of mourning.

You see, it is illegitimate to mourn. The Savior himself wept. But listen, you don't mourn forever. To refuse to be comforted is sinful.

- [9 : 08] And here were the Israelites. And God was encouraging them. He said, look, Moses is dead. Now, therefore, what? Arise. Get on with the work.
- Moses is dead. But God is not dead. Who made Moses great? God. Moses in himself wasn't great.
- But God made him great. It was God who was great. Moses is dead. But God is not dead. Moses is dead.
- But God's word is not dead. Have you got God's word? My friend, you have God.
- If you've got God's word, you have God in front of you. Moses is dead. Moses is dead. Moses is dead. Moses is dead. But God's power is not dead.
- [10 : 13] Moses is dead. But God's mercy is not dead. God's plan is not dead. Oh yes, Moses is dead.
- God's power is the same. It was God who made Moses great. It was God's plan which Moses was following. Moses didn't know what to do.
- But God gave him a plan. Direction. As we've been saying. God is all powerful. God is all wise.
- God is all truthful. God is all good. God is all good. And in this letter to the Hebrews, at least 11 times, you find the phrase, let us therefore.
- Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Therefore, let us therefore. Because a promise has been left us.
- [11 : 19] Let us therefore. All these things are given to us to stimulate us and move us to action. To arise and serve God.
- Which leads us to the second thing that we should note. When God encourages, he gives us solid basis for encouragement. I am with you.
- And we read that in the beginning of chapter 13. I will never leave you nor forsake you.
- Never. And it is interesting. You see, that's a quotation from Joshua who was leading the children of Israel into the promised land after Moses died.
- And you see, you find people saying, look, I can't take that promise to myself. Because God said it to Joshua. Not to me. Not to Christians. Oh, well, here is the writer of the Hebrews inspired by God, the Holy Spirit.
- [12 : 24] And the Spirit of God, as it were, jogs the writer's arms. Put down that quotation I gave to Joshua. Put it in writing in the New Testament.
- It applies to Christians today. And our authority for that is here. The best commentary, the best commentary on the Old Testament is what?
- The New Testament. The most reliable commentary in the Old Testament is the New Testament. And here it is seen. So that we can confidently say what God said to Joshua.
- The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me? Well, the directions. Let us therefore.
- Let us therefore. Well, there's too many to go through. But we'll mention just a few. Therefore, let us therefore be diligent to enter.
- [13 : 27] Now, the land was promised to the Israelites. But they still had to enter it. They still had to drive out the Canaanites.
- They couldn't just sit back and wait for God to cheer them over. They had a work to do. I will be with you. I will help you.
- But you obey me. You follow me. You carry on. Now, God empowers us to obey Him. God empowers His people.

Be diligent to enter. In other words, it's not going to be easy. Oh, it will be possible. I'll be with you. I'll do it on your behalf.

But you have to be involved. It's a big mistake Christians make. Because in one moment, because by one act of faith, we are instantly forgiven all our sins past, present, and future, we go and make the mistake of when it comes to our sanctification, we think all we do is one quick prayer and we'll be made holy.

[14 : 43] If you're here and you're unconverted, will you gather this? in one moment, you can be made a new creature. In one moment, you can be forgiven all your sins.

With one act of trust on Christ who died on that center cross that Friday afternoon, one act of trusting Him, all your sins can be forgiven and you are on your way to heaven.

That can happen in one moment. that you cannot be made holy quickly. It will take the rest of your life to be made holy.

Justification, bless God, instant. Sanctification, the rest of your life. the rest of your life being made holy.

You cannot become holy overnight, but you can become forgiven instantly upon repentance and trust in Christ.

[15 : 59] another direction he goes. Therefore, let us therefore hold fast our confession or profession.

Very interesting. At the very point where you just might say, well, at the very point where you feel like giving up, isn't it wonderful in the Christian race?

I find the Christian race so wonderful. All you have to do is finish the course. That's all you have to do.

Finish it. Never, ever, ever throw in the towel. Never. Carry on.

All you have to do is carry on. Finish the course. Finish the race. All receive a prize.

[16 : 58] Isn't that wonderful? Therefore, let us hold fast our profession or confession. You know, Satan hates to hear confessions of faith.

He hates it. It disturbs him. It unsettles him. It reminds him of his biggest mistake ever at a place called Calvary. He hates professions.

Now, you're on Christ's side against Satan. Let us, therefore, let us, therefore, go on.

Let us, therefore, go forth. Let us, therefore, draw near in full assurance of faith. I think it's chapter 6, verse 1 we have that.

in Hebrews. Let us, therefore, draw near in full assurance of faith. Now, that's very interesting to the Hebrews. To the Hebrews.

[17 : 57] Now, they were Jews. Converted Jews. Now, for a Jew, just about the most dangerous thing you could do was to draw near to God.

Do you remember Mount Sinai with the thunders and the smoke? They had to put a fence in case an animal went near.

So, the Jew had it in his bloodstream, in his psyche, in his DNA, if you like. The Jew had it. Don't go near. Don't go near.

Keep away. That is all changed in the New Testament. Draw near. with a full assurance of faith.

James tells us, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. If you feel God is far away, guess who's moved?

[19 : 05] Not God. I will be with you all the way, every day. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy.

Let us come boldly to receive mercy. Did I mention already, never ask God for justice.

Never ask God for justice. If you're here and you're unconverted and you don't know much about the things of Christianity, never ask God for justice. Ask God for mercy and be bold.

Be bold in asking God for mercy. at the end of the day, it seldom matters what predicament we Christians get ourselves into and we get ourselves into some predicaments but the bottom line in almost all of them is the same.

Faith in God. Faith in God's mercy. He delights in mercy. Judgment is something he hardly ever does.

[20 : 33] Mercy is what he delights to do. But we'll move on to the third thing. When God encourages, he gives solid basis for encouragement.

He gives direction of what to do. Go on. Persevere. Let her therefore be diligent. Hold fast. Go forth.

Come boldly draw near to God. And thirdly, God, when he encourages, strengthens. Have you noticed how often the Bible refers to a word, a word of encouragement?

And you might say, how can the word strengthen? God creates God creates by speaking. God destroys by speaking.

God strengthens by speaking. A word of encouragement. Hearing good news, it can make all the difference.

[21 : 53] I remember when I was applying for the ministry, I was watching and looking at all the students and all the young ministers.

I remember one minister, when he finished his course in the denomination I was in, he actually received seven calls. And he had a clue where to go, what to do.

He didn't know. And he cried out to him, Lord, I won't go anywhere, but just tell me where. And this went on for quite a long while and people were saying, have you seen him recently?

He's so thin. He's looking awful. He's so burning. And I remember at that time, I was walking down Academy Street in the Renaissance and here he was coming up in a car.

It wasn't a one-way street then obviously. He was coming up, he was as bright as anything out the window waving to me. And I remember saying, I must have got word from the Lord.

[23 : 02] And sure enough, phones were going when I got home. He knows where he's going. It's been made very clear to him. The word of God spoke so clearly.

What a difference it makes just to hear what God now. one would say, hey, wait a minute. You know what he's called you to.

You know where you're going. Doesn't matter. God spoke. What a difference it made. He heard God's voice. Wonderful.

God's voice strengthens. Now, there's lots. God strengthens. see all the energy, all the power that's in the North Sea in these oil wells.

Who put them there? God. Who led people to discover these oil wells? Christ.

[24 : 06] All the energy, the power in the world, there's God's. and he knows exactly where it is. But God in his mercy has delegated power, energy, here and there.

All strength in the last analysis comes from God. And I often think, I cannot remember did I hear it in a sermon or not, but you remember that mock trial which Christ went through.

Do you remember in the Sanhedrin, one of the men slapped Christ, or was it the soul, slapped Christ in the face? Isn't it salutary to think, where did that person get the strength to lift his hand and smite the Son of God?

Where did he get that strength? He got it from the one he was smiting. all strength comes from God.

How are we using the strength God has given us? God commands strength and distributes it where he will.

[25 : 28] Psalm 68 verse 28 your God has commanded your strength. God commands strength by word.

Waiting on God strengthens. We sang it. We sang it.

wait on the Lord and be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart. And you know, it's not one psalm that says that.

It's two psalms. Psalm 31 verse 24 says it as well. Waiting on God strengthens. Taking courage strengthens God.

Taking courage strengthens. My friend, it's not a gamble. It is not a gamble to trust God.

[26 : 38] To take a chance on God. It's not a gamble. If God has made a promise, it's as certain as done.

Be of good courage and promise and he shall strengthen your heart. Be of good courage.

Taking, as it were, respectfully and a chance on God strengthens. Psalm 46 verse 1.

I always remember somebody who had said to me years before it happened, I'm telling you now, she said, when my father dies, I will be in an awful mess.

Warned me for years before it happened. And when it did happen, she said to me, I don't need strength.

[27 : 43] God is my strength. Psalm 46 verse 1. God's my strength. Isn't it wonderful to be a Christian? God's our strength.

Well, when you go home, read 1 Samuel chapter 30. You'll find David saying in verse 6.

Sorry, you'll find the Bible, the Holy Spirit saying, but, this wonderful word, didn't we speak about but this morning? but David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

I think that's a wonderful verse. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. But, so what came before when there has to be a but and not and?

But, well, he lost everything in battle. He lost his two wives.

[28 : 55] He lost everything he possessed. Everything he possessed could go in a plastic bag. He lost everything. His enemies were attacking him and threatening to come, they had already attacked and were threatening to come back.

worse than that, his own people. David's own people were talking of stoning him. You can read it all, 1 Samuel 30.

Mutiny in his own ranks. Talk about depression. But you know the worst thing of all about David then? he was backslidden. For two years he hadn't composed a psalm.

For two years he had added to his wives. He was backslidden. Isn't it wonderful then to read at the end of verse 6? Despite all that against you David, yet but David strengthened himself and the Lord his God.

wonderful, wonderful, absolutely wonderful. Now listen, you as God's people be encouraged.

[30 : 17] But listen, be encouraged in God. Don't just be flippant. Have a basis.

Lean upon God's promise, what he has said. I will be with you. Be encouraged in God. Be encouraged in him.

Look at David. He could do it. He could do it. David could do it in such a condition after backsliding. God's did God turn around to David and say, wait a minute, what about the last two years behavior?

I'm not your God. He was with the Philistines fighting against Israel. My friend, God is not into that. You turn to God.

You call upon God and he will hear you. Irrespective of your past, irrespective of your condition, despite the situation you're in.

[31 : 23] He will hear if you call and turn to him. Now, our time's up. One last word from Christ.

Let Christ have the last word. Our Bible tells us about Christ. That he will not fail nor nor be discouraged.

Do you want to be Christ-like? Do you want to be like Jesus? Well, you can't be discouraged.

You can't be like Jesus if you're discouraged. Now, please, I'm not preaching to you, but I'm preaching to myself.

It's so easy to be discouraged when you look out, when you look at things. It's ten times worse when you look in. Don't worry about looking out or looking in. Look up.

[32 : 28] Look up and see Christ and see Jesus and listen to his promises. He was never discouraged. Oh, he was heavy laden.

He was heavy laden. Oh, he was sorrowful. He was the man of sorrows. he was tempted 40 days, 40 nights in a waste howling wilderness, ravaged by Satan and his demons.

Oh, he was tempted. Oh, he was a man of sorrows. Oh, he was heavy laden. But he was not discouraged. He was not discouraged.

Be Christ-like. Be like Jesus. Hear him. See him. Follow him. Be like him.

Encourage yourselves in the word. And as our Bible tells us, bear with my word of encouragement.

[33 : 41] God speaking, the Holy Spirit speaking, not me. and may God, that Holy Spirit, make his truth, his word, effectual to every one of us.

Let's bow our heads. Let's bow our heads.