

## 08/08/04 – “ENCOURAGING YOURSELF IN THE LORD”

We can't get too much encouragement – (en)courage(ment) - The root word of encouragement is courage

One way to get courage is to be encouraged – And a primary way to lose courage is to be discouraged

In the first chapter of Joshua the Lord repeatedly tells Joshua **to be strong & courageous** – The last time **to be strong & very courageous**

The Lord tells Joshua not to tremble or be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you as He was with His servant Moses

**We all need courage** – Many times when Jesus prayed for a sick person he would say, **“Take courage.”** (Lay hold of it)

Absence of fear does not mean we have courage – It takes courage to do the right thing despite fear

Discouragement can be a blessing in disguise – God calls us to **overcome** & develops His character in us

**“Consider it all joy my brethren when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance & let endurance have its perfect work that you may be complete, lacking in nothing.”** – James 1:2 The word **“complete” is mature**...achieved through a process

God answers our prayer but not necessarily according to all our wants – But my God shall supply **all my needs!**

### **“But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”**

After David slew Goliath, King Saul was jealous & made David a fugitive in Israel - Trials are God given opportunities to use courage

David went to the Philistines because Saul had chased him out of the country - Philistines could not trust David to fight against Israel

David returns to Ziklag & finds his family & possessions stolen – Caused great despair, discouragement & anger - I Samuel 30:1-6

His own men were greatly distressed - **wanted to stone him** & forgot previous victories...embittered in their soul... disillusioned & angry

David is near death but **strengthens himself in the Lord** – How did he do that? How do we strengthen ourselves in the Lord?

Do you know how to encourage yourself in the Lord...**to apprehend the strength of Christ regardless of the circumstances?**

There will be storms and **“we may feel”** our boat is going to sink; there will be battles which **“we think”** cannot be won – **Walk by faith not by sight**

**David encouraged himself in the Lord** & inquired of the Lord before making plans – Not rash, impulsive or self-directing – God centered

He went to the priests – Did not go off “half cocked” – David had been violated but was resolute to obey the commands of the Lord

David sought God's direction, not his own interest...was authorized to go after captors - Pursued victory regardless of circumstances

Courage does not come out of a vacuum – The Lord lines up circumstances & calls us to trust & obey

**We see** Daniel in the lion's den, **we see** Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-nego in the fiery furnace, **we see** Israel backed into the Red Sea, **we see** Jehosaphat overwhelmed & outnumbered leading out with the singers & dancers into the battle - **“The battle is the Lord's”**

Joseph's dreams & visions came to pass but **the word of the Lord tested Joseph** (Psalm 105:19) – Had great discouragement before fulfillment

He was betrayed, enslaved, imprisoned & forgotten, **“Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.”** – Psalm 105:19

What do we do when really discouraged & don't know which way to go or what to do? – **How can we encourage ourselves in the Lord?**

**Revelation 12:10** says they **overcame** three ways: **1) By the blood of the Lamb** – It is His wonderful cross that justifies us, saves us, adopts us & gives us eternal life through His shed blood; **2) The word of their testimony** – He builds a testimony in us & **we're strengthened** by the testimony of the saints who have walked before us - We can overcome & testify to our own journey & say, **“Look what the Lord has done!”** – Amazing grace...amazing love

**3) they did not love their life unto death** – Committed, sold out, bondservants of the Most High God! – “No plan B”

Courage is not your DNA, personality type, being a risk taker or some unique spiritual gift for a select few – Courage is our inheritance through Christ

**“The fearful flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”** – Proverbs 28:1