

Overcoming Discouragement Ephesians 3:13-19

Intro:

- Every year Christmas seems to come and go faster and faster. One day I am trying to get the energy to put up our Christmas tree after eating Thanksgiving Day lunch and dinner, and the next day I'm trying to get the tree out of the house with as few pine needles as possible on the clean floors.
- Have you noticed that after Christmas many people feel depressed and discouraged? They feel pressured to get gifts for everyone at Christmas, even those they don't talk to except at family gatherings and wouldn't recognize on the street if they bumped into them.
- Once Christmas is gone, and all the gifts are unwrapped and put away, a lot of people, Christians even, struggle with discouragement. Most is attributed to running up credit cards for gifts, saying good-bye to family until the next holiday, and worry or fear of the coming year.
- Whether it's Christmas or not, everyone will face discouragement from some situation or circumstance in his life. Satan uses discouragement to hold people back from serving the Lord.
- In Ephesians 3:1-12 Paul is explaining the great mystery that God revealed to him concerning the Gentiles and the church. Then in verse 13, his focus changes. Look with me at the verse. Paul encourages the Ephesians to not grow weary or discouraged by his own sufferings.
- Paul has spent some time in serious prayer, not just quick prayer, but on his knees in prayer for the believers at Ephesus. This was a real burden for Paul and he felt the need to share it here.
- We see from Paul's prayer four keys in overcoming discouragement. Based on this prayer, every Christian can overcome discouragement. How can you do this?

1. By trusting God to strengthen you

- Strength comes in many forms: physical, emotional, mental; but the strength that every believer must possess is the strength that God supplies by His Spirit to the inner man. This strength is what enables the Christian to endure trials and face opposition. Look with me at our text, starting in verse 16.
- **This strength is not an outward, barbaric strength, but an inner, divine strength that glorifies God!**
- I am so glad I don't have to rely on someone or something for strength; I can trust that God's power is more than enough for me to serve when I am weak, endure when I am suffering, and live unto Christ when no one else around me will!
- God's strength enables you to do anything according to *His* glorious power
Philippians 4:13; (turn to) Colossians 1:10, 11
- People can and will fall into Satan's trap of discouragement when they are calling on the strength of God to lead them through *their* own will or agenda.
 - o Discouragement comes when you seek *your own self-will*; God provides the strength to accomplish **His** will, which is clearly revealed to us in His Word.
 - o Many people blame God when they are discouraged because they are asking God to provide strength for *their* personal agenda and not according to the will of God that He has revealed in the Bible.
 - o God empowers believers so that they can carry the glory of God for others to see.
 - o Let's look at **2 Corinthians 4:7**. The power in the Christian is to glorify God and not the person.
- This way of thinking goes against what the world teaches. It teaches the strong will survive, and that in order to be strong, you have to rely on yourself and not worry about who you hurt. This way of thinking is discouraging enough.
- Satan has led the world to believe that success and happiness come from total self-dependence. Strong men or women are viewed as independent, successful, and having powerful influence on others. I view these kinds of people as in danger of a major breakdown as a result of depression.
- **God wants to strengthen you daily. 2 Corinthians 4:16**

- God doesn't want you to turn to anyone or anything else for strength.
- As you trust in God for strength to face trials that would normally bring discouragement, others will see the power of God at work in you!

So we see that every Christian can overcome discouragement by: #1, trusting in God to strengthen them. But let me give you the second way to overcome discouragement:

2. By **giving Christ control of your heart**

- Everyone has either been or knows someone who is a control freak. They have to be calling the shots, and if they aren't, then they are unhappy! Reality is that Christ died that **He** could have control of your life and call the shots! **2 Corinthians 5:15** (Who are you living for today?)
- Jesus needs to have control of his heart if you are going to overcome discouragement. Look back at our text at Ephesians 3:17.
 - o "Dwell" means to reside permanently. It is not a temporary dwelling, or a dwelling only when there is a need. My family and I dwell in our home, we control our home and all that is in it, but when we go on a trip, we become temporary residents or visitors. We have no control over the look and feel of where we stay.
 - o **Jesus wants control of every part of your life**, (your thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc.) **not just certain areas**. When you stay at a hotel, what part of the hotel is occupied by you and your stuff? Just one room out of 100+, but when you are at home, how much of your home do you and your stuff occupy? Every nook and cranny. This is what makes it home. How can the Christian expect Christ to be in control of his heart if He is only given a little room? He wants to be at home in your heart.
- **Letting Christ have control of your heart is a choice you, as a Christian, make every day**. The world tries to corrupt you and tempt you to take the reins of your heart out of the hands of Christ. **Romans 12:2**
- The world says you need to conform and take control, but the Bible says you need to be transformed into something new and different than the world, and it comes through the renewing of your mind, which God gives us the ability to do through the Bible.
- As you allow Christ to control your heart and you build your day around God instead of building God around your day, you will find that you now can view all things, good and bad, in light of your position in Christ, and His position on the throne of your heart.

Ok, so from Paul's prayer we have learned that every Christian can overcome discouragement by: #1, trusting God to strengthen you; #2, giving Christ control of your heart, and now #3:

3. By **growing in the love of Christ**

- Look back at our text in Ephesians starting in vs. 17b
- Paul teaches that only by being rooted and grounded in the love; of Christ will the believer be able to understand the magnitude of the love Christ possesses for them, yet His love will still remain beyond our human knowledge.
- The love of Christ comes from being rooted and grounded in **His** love; this gives the idea of having a firm hold on His love, and understanding what His love has offered for all men.
- Let's call a time-out. We see that they have already been rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. They chose to accept what God offered through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
- Understanding God's love is key to our faith. It was God's love that sent Christ to be our Savior, **(John 3:16; Romans 5:8)**
- It was love that led Christ through being crucified **(Galatians 2:20)**.
- Now that they have been grounded by faith, Paul desires to see them grow.
- For you to grow in your understanding of the love of Christ, you will have to be fed. Anyone can live a short time without food and water, but eventually his body will shut down.

- **You must seek to be fed from His Word**, and learn how to feed yourselves from His Word **in order to be grounded in the love of Christ**, and able to fight discouragement. It happens through His Word!
- As you grow in your understanding of the love of Christ, the things of the world have less ability to pull you down and discourage you. They will still be there, but because you are rooted deep into Christ, they will not be able to pull you down.

By now we know that every Christian can overcome discouragement by: #1, trusting God to strengthen you; #2, giving Christ control of your heart; #3, growing in the love of Christ; and #4.

4. By filling your life with the fullness of God

- Look with me at the last part of Ephesians 3:19
- **You get to choose what you fill your life with. However, with every choice there are results.**
- Filled means to be complete or satisfied. What fills your time, thoughts, ears, eyes, etc? If they are worldly, chances are they don't bring total satisfaction. Total satisfaction only comes from God.
- God fills with His fullness; **Colossians 2:9, 10** say that all fullness dwells in Christ, so if He dwells in us, we are made full. The believer must understand that God's fullness comes from His Spirit and not material possessions.
- God wants to supply to you what you need for His glory and His service.
- Look at **Philippians 4:19**. The word translated as "filled" in Eph. 3:19 is also translated as "supply" here. God will supply all your needs in accordance with His will.
- Many Christians find themselves discouraged. They feel God is short-changing them because they can't afford the things they *think* they need to *feel* satisfied. The truth is, you have God's promise that He will supply you the means and abilities to meet your needs for His glory
- Christians are subjected to the enticing lies from a world system that Satan controls. You, as a believer, must decide to be completely satisfied with all that you have in Christ. There is no reason not to be completely satisfied with what God has offered! It lasts for eternity!
- The grass is always greener on the other side, but the work hours are longer and the maintenance bills are higher.
- **When you are filled with God's fullness, this leaves no room for discouragement!**

Conclusion:

- When a believer has trusted God to give him the strength to do His will, give Christ total control and rein of his heart, seeks to grow in his knowledge and understanding of Christ's love, and is satisfied with the fullness of God in his life, he becomes a testimony of God's grace and power is able to overcome discouragement in his life.
- Discouragement can paralyze a Christian's ability to serve, honor, and glorify Jesus Christ. This is why I feel that discouragement is Satan's greatest weapon of attack on the Christian.
- Look at Eph. 3:20 with me...
- **When you are completely focused on Christ, He is able to do things in and through you that are beyond what you could imagine.**
- If you are going to overcome discouragement, you must seek to depend on, be satisfied with, grow closer to, and be filled with Christ at all times!