



DEALING WITH DISCOURAGEMENT

We all know what discouragement is like – there is a loss of zest and a mood of pessimism. The difficulties and problems which had been there before are now blown out of proportion and are intimidating by their pressure. It was discouragement which kept Israel from entering Canaan. Their attitude lacked courage and strength. The defeat at Ai caused “their hearts to melt and become as water.” (Joshua 7:1-5).

A Definition

Perhaps a good definition for discouragement is “lack of courage.” A more inclusive definition would be that state of mind which is marked by a fear of failure and a loss of hope. Discouragement unchecked can become a sin because it leaves out faith.

The Dynamics

Freedom from discouragement is not the absence of problems. It comes from a proper approach to the routine and not-so-routine pressures of life. In Nehemiah 4:10-23 the Jews who were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem struggled with discouragement.

- they were ridiculed by their enemies
- rumors of attack and invasion abounded
- God was blasphemed in the presence of the builders
- they were mentally and physically fatigued

The pattern of discouragement was as follows:

- 1) RESPONSIBILITY – Israel had an objective – the walls were to be rebuilt

- 2) DIFFICULTY – Disappointments arose
- 3) DISCOURAGEMENT – Dispair set in as there was a fear of failure
- 4) DEMORALIZATION – Discouragement unchecked leads to escapism and occupation with less important matters

Deliverance

The builders compared their work to Solomon's temple. They were not seeing what they wanted to see and so became dejected. Haggai was sent to help...

- 1) Identify the occasion for discouragement. Haggai 2:3 *"Who is left among you who saw the temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?"* Responsibility must be accepted if recovery is to occur. Israel allowed the past to overshadow the present and the future. Many times a discouraged person will have his past with its failures and its successes out of perspective.
- 2) Clarify discouragement by putting it into biblical perspective. The past, present, and future must be placed within the framework of God's plan. Haggai reminded Israel of God's plan by saying, "the promise which I made to you when you came out of Egypt..." "I am with you" ...and "I am going to shake the heavens and the earth" (Haggai 2:4-6). These facts were designed to establish an atmosphere of hope and stimulate action.
- 3) Rectify discouragement by taking action. Haggai admonished Israel to "work" (Haggai 2:4). The vise-like grip of discouragement can be broken by laying aside the things in which we seek "escape." Establish a plan of action- "Go up to the mountain and get wood to build the temple" (Haggai 1:8). Procrastination is an enemy of defeating discouragement.
- 4) Resolve not to quit. Reuben and Gad were going to do so. The character of God is enough to keep any of His children moving forward.