**STAY FOCUSED AVOID DISCOURAGEMENT**

**Scripture reading….**1**1 Pet. 4:12-13**

**2Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:13But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.**

**Intro.**

 **A. Beloved, All of us get discouraged from time to time, especially as we**

 **face problems of various kinds. It sometimes gets so serious that in**

 **many cases it causes us to lose heart!**

**The Galatians had this happening to them and Paul was communicating His advice to them, relating to their sufferings, which was that they should not think them strange, nor be surprised at them, as if some unexpected event befell them; for, though they be sharp and fiery, yet they are designed only to try, not to ruin them, to try their sincerity, strength, patience, and most of all their trust in** God.

**Paul also wrote to the Galatians in order to comfort them…..**

**Gal. 6:9 9And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.**

1. **It is hard for some to understand all of this but the question is …How can we keep from "losing heart" or becoming discouraged in the midst of trials?**

**I want to challenge us all today in the face of adversity as to what we can do in order to keep us in line with God… Amen!!!**

1. **I belive a good place to start is we need to KEEP OUR MINDS focused ON**

 **THE BETTER WORLD TO COME.**

**Paul said….**

1. **In due time, we will reap a bountiful harvest of blessings.**

**Here is how the book of Rev. says it……**

**Rev. 7:17; 16They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.17For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.**

**Rev. 21:4 4And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

**BELOVED BE ENCOURAGED!!!!! BETTER IS UP AHEAD!!!**

**STAY FOCUSED AND AVOID DISCORAGEMENTS!!**

 **1. There is a better place beyond the grave, and we need to**

 **keep our eyes focused on it.**

**1 Pet. 1:13; 13Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

**So with this in mind we ought to do the following…….**

**Col. 3:2… 2Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**

**II. STRIVE TO BEAR UP UNDER TRIALS & HARDSHIPS.**

1. **- Rejoice under the fiery trials.**

 **1. Everyone will face a certain amount of adversity, some more**

 **than others.**

 **2. But Fiery trials can serve a good purpose.**

**James 1:2-4****2My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;3Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.4But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.**

1. **Let hardships become an aid rather than a hindrance in your walk with Christ!!!**

**Paul wrote to the Corinthians…..**

**2 Cor.12:7-9****And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.8For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.9And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

 **1. Paul suffered many hardships, yet, he called them a "light**

 **affliction."**

**2 Cor. 4:1616For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.**

 **a. He could only do this by keeping his mind focused on**

 **the eternal glory that was to follow.**

**III. Next I want to Encourage you to CONTINUE IN THE FAITH NO MATTER WHAT LIFE MIGHT BRING.**

1. **We can have victory through our faith.**

**1 John 5:44For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

1. **Don't doubt, but have faith.**

 **a. Peter's faith wavered when he saw the strong waves.**

 **b. We may not walk on water, but we will walk through**

 **some tough situations.**

 **c. If we focus on the waves of difficulties and hardships,**

 **without looking to Jesus for help, we, too, will despair**

 **and sink we will become discouraged and lose hope!!!**

**IV. ALWAYS LOOK TO JESUS.**

**Heb. 12:2****2Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

 **A. Jesus said, the following encouraging words……**

**John 16:33****33These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**

 **1. Even as Jesus spoke these words, He was in the shadow of**

 **death.**

 **a. Jesus knew that He was about to die a very**

 **excruciating, painful death.**

 **b. He was able to face it by looking at the joy that was to**

 **follow, the joy of being back with the Father in His former**

 **state!!**

**John 17:5 5And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.**

 **B. Remember, Jesus Himself received a lot of unjust criticism.**

**He was called a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinner, and a glutton!!!!**

**Today I encourage you to …….**

**V. CONTINUE TO HOLD TO THE TRUTH AT ALL COST.**

**2 John 9-11;****9Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.10If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:11For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.**

**John 8:31-32****31Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;32And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

**True discipleship requires lots of sacrifice, lots of commitment, lots of hardships, lots of anquish, lots of devotion, the list is long, be encouraged if you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour you already know the truth and are set FREEEEE!!!!!!!!**

**HOLD ON NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!!!**

**STAY FOCUSED AND AVOID DISCORAGEMENTS!!**

1. **Remember all churches will have problems, and we must try to**

 **deal with them as best we can.**

 **1. Some say, "If only I could attend a church like the New**

 **Testament churches. *"CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR!!!***

 **2. If that be the case, how about the church at Corinth. It,**

 **too, was a New Testament church.**

 **a. It had at least ten major problems, and those brethren**

 **needed to deal with and correct those, if they wished to**

 **be pleasing to the Lord.**

**Today the Spirit of the Lord says..ENCOURAGE YOURSELF LIKE DAVID DID!**

**VI. WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OURSELVES IN THE LORD. 1 Sam. 30:6**

1. **Think of the situation David and his men were in when they got back to Ziglag,they found everything burned to the ground and everything missing, family, stock, and their Mercedes Benzes.**

**1 Sam. 30:1-5**

1. **How did David strengthened himself in the Lord?**

**Psalm 18:6;****6In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.**

**Psalm 40:1-3** **I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.2He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.3And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.**

**David called on Abiathar, to bring him the Ephod, a worship and prayer Garment….**

1. **Pray continuously and fervently.**

**Prov. 18:10..****10The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.**

**Heb. 13:6 6So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**

**VII. TURN TO THE BIBLE FOR STRENGTH, AND COMFORT.**

**Rom. 15:4 4For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.**

**HOLD ON NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!!!**

**STAY FOCUSED AND AVOID DISCORAGEMENTS!!**

 **A. 1. All human beings have their weakness, but God's power and**

 **strength never diminishes.**

 **a. He is never too tired or too busy to listen and help. He**

 **is the source of our strength.**

 **b. When you feel all of life crushing you and you cannot go**

 **another step, remember, you can call upon God and**

 **renew your strength.**

 **2. Waiting on the Lord, is patiently relying on Him**

 **to give us strength.**

**Ephesians 3:20-2120Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,21Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.**

1. **Our God is able to give life to a whole valley of dry bones.**

 **2. God's purpose of the vision is stated in verses**

**Ezek.37:11-14**

 **TO inspire, comfort, and encourage us just**

 **when we need a word from the Lord.**

 **3. The valley of the shadow of death denotes the most severe**

 **and terrible affliction one could undergo. Yet, "I will fear**

 **no evil, for thou art with me."**

**HOLD ON NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!!!**

**STAY FOCUSED AND AVOID DISCORAGEMENTS!!**

**VIII. THE N.T. SCRIPTURES GIVE US COMFORT AND STRENGTH.**

 **A. 1 Pet. 5:8-11**

 **1. Satan is the source of all evil and suffering.**

 **2. God is able to "perfect" (mend or repair) us and make us**

 **strong.**

 **3. Whatever pain we might have, the Eternal God is the God of**

 **all comfort.**

 **a. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain help**

 **in our time of need.**

 **We too are living in the last days, much closer to the**

 **end than were the original readers of this letter.**

 **4. Although there is much iniquity around us, we need not be**

 **afraid or give up in despair. God is able to keep us from**

 **falling, and to bring us into His presence and give us**

 **exceeding joy.**

**Concl.**

 **A. Disappointments, discouragements, and hardships will come.**

 **B. We need to be steadfast and unmovable ourselves.**

 **C. The Eternal God is perfectly able to comfort.**

 **D. Someday we shall reap if we don't give up.**

 **E. Let us continue to strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God.**

AND MOST OF ALL……

**HOLD ON NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!!!**

**STAY FOCUSED AND AVOID DISCORAGEMENTS!!**