

ENCOURAGEMENT

A. **Where** do you go for *comfort & encouragement*?

1. Maybe you go to the Father in prayer. Sometimes, we just need to let Him speak to us.

Rom 15:4 – For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience & **comfort of the Scriptures** might have hope.

Acts 15:31 – When [the apostles wrote the churches] **they rejoiced over its encouragement**.

COMFORT, ENCOURAGEMENT (paraklesis) – To call alongside of; to help; to summon for assistance; to strengthen much; to ease, encourage, enliven, cheer. It indicates the dispelling of grief by the impartation of strength.

B. **Today**, let's bring a little bit of that *comfort & encouragement*.

1. Does life seem empty & unpleasant?
2. Are you uncertain about tomorrow?
3. Do you feel lonely & unappreciated?
4. Do you have physical pain?
5. Has someone disappointed you?
6. Have you disappointed yourself?
7. Is your family far from perfect?
8. Are your relationships the same?

[These questions show that we all need encouragement, because, life is not ideal. In this lesson, we notice a few things that will lift our spirits.]

I. WE ARE HIS LITTLE FLOCK

Luke 12:32 {Context} – Do not fear, *little flock*, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:1 – [There was] an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He [Jesus] began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

A. **Jesus** & the disciples were surrounded by hypocrisy: *false disciples*.

1. The Lord’s church has always been troubled by those who wish to use her for personal ambition.
2. But Jesus said, “*Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*”.

Isa 40:11 – He will feed *His flock* like a shepherd; He will gather the *lambs* with His arm, & carry them in His bosom, & gently lead those who are with young. (**Lk 15:4-6**).

John 10:27-28 – *My sheep* hear My voice, & I know them, & they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, & they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

[Jesus will *lead* them, *protect* them & *give* them eternal life—because they follow His voice & no other—and this is what makes them HIS “little flock”. I’m encouraged by that—aren’t you?]

II. THERE IS A REWARD APPROACHING

1 Cor 15:58 – My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your *labor is not in vain in the Lord*. – Why?

Gal 6:9, 8 – And let us not grow weary while doing good, for *in due season we shall reap* if we do not lose heart [reap what?]. 8...*he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life*.

A. **But** it can be discouraging, at times, to be a Christian, especially when in doing our best we see so few results.

1. This is when we need the heart of a farmer.

James 5:7-8 – Therefore *be patient*, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how *the farmer waits* for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early & latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish [to fix or set] your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

2. Farmers are always at a disadvantage.

a. They have so little control over so many things:
weather, pests, soil content, seed quality, prices, etc.

b. But PATIENT they MUST BE!

[The advantage a Christian has over a farmer is that a Christian KNOWS his reward is forthcoming IF he will be “patient” & continue “doing good”. I’m greatly encouraged by that—aren’t you?]

III. THERE ARE OTHERS WALKING IN TRUTH

2 John 1-4 – The Elder, to the elect lady & her children, whom I love in truth, & not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which abides in us & will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy, & peace will be with you from God the Father & from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth & love. 4 ***I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth***, as we received commandment from the Father.

A. **Do** your actions give your brethren here joy? Will your life supply them happy or sad memories?

1. The type of joy that we should strive to give one another is the joy that comes from “walking in truth”!

Ed Harrell: in New Orleans on a business trip for a university - hotel room on French Quarter near Bourbon St. - out late one night to buy Pepto Bismal - carried it in a brown paper sack - runs into a young lady from his home congregation. She said, “*Brother Harrell what are you doing here, & what’s in that sack?*” He said, “*Pepto Bismal, & what are you doing here?*” -- “*I don’t belong here do I?*” she said, to which he replies, “*I think you know the answer.*”

“WHAT IF OUR FEET ARE WALKING WHERE SINS ALLURMENT IS?” CAN WE HOPE TO HELP HIM...& WELCOME HIS RETURN”?

3 John 4 – I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

[Christians who “walk in truth” are a great source of encouragement.]

VI. GOD’S PROMISES GIVE CONSOLATION & HOPE

A. **Jude** wrote his epistle to Christians who, like us, were vulnerable to false teaching & immoral living.

1. Jude INSTRUCTED Christians of his day to build up their faith – How? (20-23).
2. He also ENCOURAGED Christians of his day by reminding them about the nature of God's power & care for them (24-25).

CLOSING

A. Disappointments will come; we cannot prevent most of them.

1. We MUST realize that through every dark cloud of discouragement there shines a ray of consolation from God, & it shines to give us hope beyond this vale of tears.

2 Pet 3:13 – Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens & a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1 John 2:25 – And this is the promise that He has promised us--eternal life.

Titus 1:2 – in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,

Paul's prayer for us:

1 Thess 3:12-13 – And may the Lord make you increase & abound in love to one another & to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God & Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

2 Thess 2:16-17 – Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, & our God & Father, who has loved us & given us everlasting consolation & good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts & establish you in every good word & work.

FOUR STATEMENTS FROM GOD TO US – FOUR REASONS TO BE ENCOURAGED.