

Hebrews 12:13 (D. Lamb) 169733

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Encouraging Each Other - "Consider Him." (12:13)

"Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." (See Hebrews 12:13 and Hebrews 10:22-25.)

These two passages assure us of our divine resource while emphasizing how important each Christian is in the encouragement of others. Put simply, these are inspiring scriptures. We count on our Lord being in the midst and see the examples of His life on earth (Heb. 12:3). We also have human examples throughout God's Word for our inspiration (Heb. 12:1) as well as fellow-believers to help in time of need (Heb. 10:24-25).

Everyone Needs Encouragement

We all need godly encouragement to properly fill our roles in the assembly, our families and the community. In these spheres of responsibility we keenly feel the quiet support of prayer warriors in the assembly. But they too need our prayers and encouragement.

As Joshua and his army fought Amalek at Rephidim, they were strengthened in knowing that Moses was making supplication to God for them. They had but to look up on the hill to see him there, hands extended toward heaven (Ex. 17:11-14). But Moses had need too. When his arms grew weary, the enemy prevailed against Israel. It is then that Aaron and Hur provided a seat for Moses (for rest) and held up his hands (for support).

Like Moses, we can strengthen those in "battle" by praying holding up our hands in supplication to God on their behalf while, like Aaron and Hur, we can also encourage and support those serving in prayer or other ministries. "Encourage... and build up each one the other" (1 Thess. 5:11 JND).

Encouragement Through Actions

David, in the confidence of faith that Jehovah would overcome Goliath (1 Sam. 17:26), ran to meet him with his sling and five smooth stones (vss. 45-51). When Saul and Israel saw his faith and the victory God gave as well as the subsequent scattering of the enemy (vs. 51), they were inspired to come out of hiding and help in the battle (vs. 52).

But such encouragement was not the result of David's talking about the Lord's power and victory in his personal battle with the lion and bear (vss. 34-37). Rather, it was his faith and confidence in action that spurred them and touched Jonathan's heart.

Perhaps some truth or principle the Lord has revealed individually seems as though it ought to transform the lives of others also. But we soon learn that truth has little effect on others until we act on it for ourselves. When individual faith thus acts, it may seem to put one at risk, as David's bravery before Goliath seemed to put him in harm's way. But "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Encouragement and Growth

Daniel's godly exercise to abstain from eating the king's meat was individual "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8). The Lord had ordered circumstances in which Daniel's faith was tested, resulting in his being brought into Melzar's favor (vs. 9). Yet, when Daniel desires Melzar to prove him, he includes his three friends. This encouraged their faith, for later (ch. 2:17-18) they join with him in prayer for deliverance from certain death. "Daniel... made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret."

The Lord's perfect ordering of events, which strengthened Daniel's personal faith and commitment to godly principles, inspired and encouraged his three friends. It was after this that the Lord allowed Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah's personal faith to be more severely tested and that without the presence of Daniel (see ch. 3:17-27). Sometimes those who lack courage to act individually in faith are motivated to do so through the encouragement of other brethren the Lord provides. Later, having been reinforced by others' faith and collective support, that one becomes inspired to act alone in personal faith and confidence in the Lord.

Conclusion

God's Word contains countless inspiring examples. Perhaps the most incredible summary is found in Hebrews 11:33-40. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (vs. 37), and "these all, having obtained a good report through faith" (vs. 39).

Let us not neglect the privilege of supporting our brethren with godly encouragement while being willing to accept that same support for ourselves.

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