

***** DISCOURAGEMENT *****

By Anne Chapman

One of the primary tools at Satan's disposal is discouragement. It is a powerful way for him to either stop us in our tracks or sidetrack us. It causes us to take our eyes off God, to feel down, defeated, worthless and hopeless. One might think it would only occur after a major crisis, such as a death, a terminal illness, job loss or divorce. That would seem to make sense; however, there is more to it.

The reason it is so insidious is because it comes by way of an attack of the evil one, often through the back door or even when things are going well. We need to be especially aware when we are either coming up to a victory in our lives, or when we have just experienced one! Halfway points in an accomplishment are also vulnerable time frames. These are prime times for Satan to strike! Discouragement may overtake us and we may not even be aware as to why.

We are not alone in this battle. Consider Elijah, the willing prophet - after following God and being used by God for numerous miracles and victories that the Lord chose him to be part of, Elijah suddenly became terrified of Jezebel, and feeling so discouraged and like a failure, he ran away, plopped down under a Juniper tree, set up a pout and asked God to kill him! Then there was Jonah, the unwilling profit, who still did as God commanded to save the City of Nineveh. Afterwards he became angry with God's grace to Nineveh, started complaining and moping and hoped to die. And there was Moses, who after leading the Israelites from Egypt and across the parted Red Sea, became so discouraged at their whining, he asked God to end his life.

Then there's Nehemiah who when he set out to build a wall around Jerusalem to protect the returning Jews from local enemies, faced overwhelming obstacles and discouragement. Yet, he didn't quit. He didn't ignore the discouragement or put on a fake happy face. He kept his vision on God and refused to get close with the enemy. For us today, the example of Nehemiah's pursuit of victory demonstrates the value of us coming together as Christians, and being assured God will fight for us.

There may be various situations behind discouragement, but God is never the one to send such a distraction. The evil one uses it as a tool to distract us or to try to take away our victories in Jesus. We, ourselves, can sometimes fall into it from our own selfishness. That too is not from God.

Whether we are facing an individual battle of discouragement, or one involving a group or even an entire Christian community, when we call upon the Lord, He will help us overcome it for His glory and our good.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are also here for one another, to listen to, to pray for, and to come together and encourage each other. I love to go back to what Charles Stanley says:

HALT !

Don't get too HUNGRY
Don't get too ANGRY
Don't get too LONELY
Don't get too TIRED

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.: Psalm 25-5

(Ref: Pastors Mike Schnase, Charles Stanley, David Jeremiah, Michael Youssef)