

The Encouragement of the Scriptures

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In the familiar words of 2 Timothy 3:16, the apostle Paul tells us the inspired Scriptures are profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. In the less familiar words of Romans 15:4, Paul gives us another important feature of the word of God:

*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and **the encouragement of the Scriptures** we might have hope.*

Romans 15:4 (Emphasis Mine)

While we all need teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, we are also greatly in need of encouragement. Life has its difficult days, dark moments, and times of discouragement. How wonderful it is to know that we can turn to the Scriptures to find the encouragement we need.

Who hasn't had a really bad day, one of those days when you really blow it and give in to temptation? How encouraging to read the words of Jeremiah, who, while standing amidst the ruin and rubble of Jerusalem, after they really blew it with God, wrote:

*This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. **They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.***

Lamentations 3:21-23 (Emphasis Mine).

Today may have been a really bad day, but tomorrow is a new start. Through confession and repentance of sins, we find forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

We all struggle with worry from time to time. How encouraging to read these words of Jesus:

*"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; **for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**"*

Matthew 6:31-33 (Emphasis Mine)

Worry will drain our day of power, and is devastating to our faith. Listen to these encouraging words of instruction from Jesus:

"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Matthew 6:34

If we will follow these words of instruction, we will be able to overcome the discouragement of worry.

Perhaps you are discouraged, thinking no one understands you. Once again, encouragement can be found in the Scriptures. David wrote:

*O Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And **are intimately acquainted with all my ways.** Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all.*

Psalm 139:1-4 (Emphasis Mine)

How encouraging to know that God knows everything about us! In a similar way, the Hebrew writer tells us:

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

Once again, how encouraging it is to know that Jesus can sympathize with us!

Like any number of Christians, perhaps you feel like there is not much you can offer the local congregation. Encouragement for you can be found in the account of Gideon, who saw himself as small and weak (Judges 6:15ff). However, through God, Gideon accomplished great things.

There is encouragement to be found in all the nameless people of Scripture who contributed great things: The nameless servant girl who inspired Naaman to get help (2 Kings 5:2ff), or the nameless youth who offered his five loaves and two fish to Jesus (John 6:9). When that young boy gave his lunch to Jesus, a multitude of people were fed!

Could it be that your need for encouragement comes from feeling unloved? All through Scripture, encouragement can be found in the message that God loves you! The most famous verse expressing such love are these words of Jesus:

“For God so loved [insert your name here], that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

John 3:16 (Change in brackets mine).

There are so many places where encouragement can be found in the Scriptures. Who hasn't been encouraged by the familiar and popular words of the twenty-third Psalm? Encouragement is found in Paul's joyful letter to the Philippians, or the powerfully encouraging letter to the Hebrews. When Paul spoke of the encouragement of the Scriptures, he pointed all who will listen to a powerful source of encouragement.

Our constant need for encouragement, in one area or another, speaks to our need to spend more time in the Scriptures. Increase your daily reading. Spend more time meditating on the word. God's word is a treasure chest of instruction and encouragement.