

ENCOURAGING WORDS

Proverbs 25:11; 12:25; 15:23

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Notice the proverbs of the wise man concerning words of encouragement:

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." (Prov. 25:11).

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad." (12:25).

"A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (15:23).

A. It is certainly true that the right word at the right time can do much good.

B. The sorrowful can be made to rejoice; the lonely can be encouraged; and the one suffering disappointment can be strengthened.

C. **Encouraging Words** are beneficial to both the hearer and the speaker of those words.

D. The apostle Paul wrote that we should refrain from speaking worthless words, but speak that which is *"good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."* (Eph. 4:29)

E. **Encouraging Words** are necessary!

2. It is no secret this world is full of sin and an abundance of evil.

A. Every day, we read of crimes and ungodly activities (e.g., war, murder, hunger, political upheaval and corruption, etc.) and read and see of wars and killings, international conflicts (e.g., ISIS) and we begin to wonder why it must be so.

B. Of course, the Christian knows these things are merely the consequences of man's sinful habits, brought about by his sinful desires.

C. But, after a while, we may consider all the evil in the world, the small number of believers, and the apparent lack of success in preaching the gospel to our community and become discouraged; become weak in the faith.

D. In those times, wouldn't it be nice to hear some **Encouraging Words**?

3. **3** Today, let's consider a few **Encouraging Words** given to us in God's word. If you are discouraged about your spiritual condition, doubtful about your ability to overcome trials and temptations, or doubtful about what lies ahead, pay attention to the words we will consider today, for they are **Encouraging Words** from the *"God of all comfort."* (2 Cor. 1:3)

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** *"Be still, and know that I am God."* (Psa. 46:10)

A. We live in a world that either doubts the existence of God or blatantly denies it. We live in a world that really cannot answer the three biggest questions of life:**

✓ **How did I get here?**

✓ **Why am I here?**

✓ **Where am I going?**

B. ** But we need not be discouraged or disillusioned. God is real! And the God who is our Creator is worthy of knowing, for He is the source of true comfort and encouragement. I offer three reasons why this is so...

(1) **"GOD IS LOVE."** (1 Jn. 4:8)

(a) There is great comfort in knowing that God is, greater comfort in knowing we have a God who loves us (Jn. 3:16), and even greater comfort knowing that He *is* love.

- (b) His very character is love and everything He does emanates from love; everything He does in regards to us is done out of the motive of love (1 Jn. 5:3).
- (c) He created the world and mankind because He wanted our love.
- (d) He wanted to be able to call us His children and demonstrate the love of a Father.
- (e) Even when we sinned, He did not turn away from us, but provided a plan — because of His love — that we might be saved (Rom. 5:8).

(2) **“GOD IS A JUST JUDGE...”** (Psa. 7:11)

- (a) Even though we live in the best country in the world when it comes to justice; we still live in a society where there is precious little **true** justice (e.g., U. S. criminal justice system; rich/political powerful flaunt the law! e.g., OJ, Hilary Clinton).
- (b) But, God is a “just judge” (**Job 8:3**: “Does God subvert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice?”; **Deut. 32:4**: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.”).
- (c) Wherever we may be [spiritually], we may wonder how we will fare in the presence of the Creator of all things (2 Cor. 5:10; **Heb. 10:31**: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”; **Heb. 12:29**: “For our God is a consuming fire.”; Heb. 4:11-12).
- (d) We may, like the psalmist, say, “If You, LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?” (130:3; NIV) And we would be right!
- (e) But, at the same time, we can have the confidence and comfort of knowing He **is** a just judge and will not convict us of that which we’ve not done, nor revive a memory of a sins already forgiven, nor does He expect what is beyond our ability to do.
- (f) What God commands, we are able to do; and what we are able to do, God expects us to do (Deut. 30:11-14; Rom. 10:6-8; 1 Jn. 5:3).
- (g) When we stand before Him on the Day of Judgment we will have to answer for the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10) but we will be judged righteously (1 Pet. 2:23); if we have obeyed the gospel and remained faithful Paul says:

Col. 3:3-4: “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

(3) **“HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER.”** (Psa. 136:2)

- (a) Knowing that God will judge us, and the fact that nothing will be hidden, should be intimidating to us, for we all have sinned and we all fall short of His glory (Rom. 3:23).
- (b) But, let us not forget, though, that this same God is the God of immeasurable mercy! (**Psa. 103:8**: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.”)
- (c) It is one thing to know God exists, but another to know and trust His character!
- (d) The God of love, the just Judge, is also a God of unfathomable mercy (**Psa. 103:10**: “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.”).
- (e) We need to remember that God did not destroy mankind for our sin, but provided the very means of our forgiveness.

2. **5 “...it is impossible for God to lie,...”** (Heb. 6:18)

- A. We live in a world where the truth is a rare commodity. In politics, business, and personal relationships most in our society see how far can we “stretch” the truth and still be “legal.”
- B. But we can find comfort and encouragement in knowing not only that God exists, but that we may fully trust in Him and His promises.

- C. We can put our full faith and trust in God, because He will not and cannot lie — it is impossible!
- D. We have full assurance that every word we read in God's book is true and will be accomplished; we aren't left to wonder!
- E. This is a source of great comfort. We do not have to worry about God changing His mind, changing the requirements for salvation, or renegeing on His promises. Consider...

(1) **“FOR I AM THE LORD, I DO NOT CHANGE.”** (Mal. 3:6)

- (a) Our great confidence in God comes from the fact that He Himself does not change.
- (b) God will never cease being the God who is love, the God who is a just judge, the God who is merciful beyond measure, or the God who desires our salvation.
- (c) This also means that God, who is spirit (John 4:24) was **always** spirit. He did not start out as a man and 'progress' into what He now is. When God said, “*I am*,” that indicated His eternal existence and nature.

(2) **“JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER.”** (Heb. 13:8)

- (a) Further comfort and encouragement comes in the knowledge that the Son — Jesus Christ, our Savior — does not change, either!
- (b) The One who died for our sins and who gave the terms of discipleship will not one day decide to change the rules.
- (c) He will not go back on His word; will not cease being the Savior to the obedient (Heb. 5:9).
- (d) What Jesus was 2,000 years ago, He is today, and will be tomorrow and forever!
- (e) We can find encouragement knowing Jesus will always be the same merciful and loving Lord and Savior (**Heb. 4:15**: “*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*”).

(3) **“FOREVER, O LORD, YOUR WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN.”** (Psa. 119:89)

- (a) We can be further comforted and encouraged when we consider that the word of God and the words of Jesus will not be changed, amended, or updated.
- (b) What Jesus required for salvation in the first century is what He requires now, and will require tomorrow and as long as the earth stands.
- (c) This is a matter of great consternation for many in the religious world today because they are seeking to make God's word conform to current social mores (e.g., homosexual “bishops”, gay “marriages”).
- (d) As much as man wants to change God's word, it is forever settled in heaven and we can find great comfort in knowing that the word we obeyed while we lived here on earth will be the same words that judge us in the last day (**Jn. 12:47, 48**: “*And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*”).
- (e) Can you imagine the terror we would feel if we stood before Christ on that day and He said, “Oh, I changed my mind about that. Didn't you get the memo? Well, I'm sorry you're just out of luck!” Won't happen!

3. 6 “The Lord is...longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9)

- A. When we come to the knowledge that God does, in fact, exist, we may stand in fear before Him, doubting the possibility of salvation because of our numerous sins. Who could stand before Him? Well, no one. All are guilty.
- B. But let us not forget that this is the God of love and mercy, and He has not simply left us to our own devices; expecting us to initiate a plan by which our sins can be taken away. No...
- C. ***This is the God who does not want us to be lost...not willing that any should perish!***
Consider...
- (1) “...**GOD...DESIRES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED.**” (1 Tim. 2:3, 4)
- (a) God is not willing that any should perish because **He wants us to be saved!** What a source of encouragement!
 - (b) Consider the expanse of God’s love (Jn. 3:16); how could we doubt that He would want all men to be saved?
 - (c) God has not chosen certain men to be saved and condemned others to eternal punishment with no opportunity for salvation, but has offered His grace to all men (**Titus 2:11**: “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,*”).
 - (d) We do not need to fear or be discouraged in thinking we may not be one of the chosen ones; we can find great confidence in knowing that God wants each one of us to be saved (**Matt. 11:28**: “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”; **1 Jn. 2:2**: “*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*”).
 - (e) And we can also find encouragement knowing He finds no joy in the destruction of even one soul (**Ezek. 33:11**: “*Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'*”).
- (2) “[**THE PLAN OF SALVATION**]...**HAS NOW BEEN REVEALED.**” (Eph. 3:4-6)
- (a) We could find no comfort simply knowing God exists and even to know His character without also knowing the way of salvation.
 - (b) If we found that we were in sin and did not know the way out, there would be no comfort, no encouragement; nothing but despondency!
 - (c) But the plan **has been** revealed and we may have the comfort and encouragement of knowing we can understand it when we read (v. 4; 1 Jn. 5:3).
 - (d) God sent His Son, and then He sent the Spirit to guide the apostles to reveal this plan, to write it down, that all men may have the evidence to convict us of our sins and to believe that Jesus is the Christ and be saved (John 20:30, 31).
- (3) “**HE WHO BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED.**” (Mark 16:16)
- (a) Within God’s revealed plan of salvation are the clear commands of our Lord Jesus Christ of what man must do to be saved.
 - (b) And look at these words: **[Read]** Who could not understand them?
 - (c) Many have argued over these words and tried to dismiss the necessity of baptism. But let’s read them again. **[Read]**
 - (d) They still say the same thing, don’t they?
 - (e) Remember the confidence we may have in knowing the word of God is forever settled in heaven? These words are part of the revelation of God’s plan. They will not change!

4. 7 **“God...will not allow you to be tempted beyond that which you are able.”** (1 Cor. 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”)
- A. Many — with the knowledge of God, His unchanging word, and His desire for our salvation — do not take the initial step of obedience fearing they will not be able to live a ‘perfect’ life after obedience. I can certainly identify with that...can’t you? But such fear is misplaced.
- B. Mark it down, we will not live a ‘perfect’ life after our initial obedience:
1 Jn. 1:8, 10: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” **But, that does not mean we have no chance!**
- C. In fact, we may have **great confidence** about our life after conversion. Part of that great confidence is knowing God will always provide a means of escape [His word, cf. Matt. 4]. But what if we fail?
- (1) **“...IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS...”** (1 Jn. 1:9)
- (a) The great confidence we have as Christians is **not** that we will never sin again, but that we will have the assurance of forgiveness when we confess and repent of those sins (**1 Jn. 2:1:** “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”).
 - (b) We do not start back at square one, we do not have to crucify Jesus again, and we do not **have** to lose our salvation.
 - (c) God has provided the means for forgiveness **after** conversion, too!
 - (d) We can have great confidence and encouragement as we appeal to the God who is faithful — who cannot lie! If He said He will forgive, He will forgive!
- (2) **“YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN.”** (Luke 7:48)
- (a) Jesus told this the woman in who washed His feet with her hair and tears (Lk. 7:36-50).
 - (b) And when we come to God in the same contrite spirit and in prayer, we may come “**boldly to the throne of grace to find grace and help in time of need.**” (Heb. 4:16)
 - (c) We can do so because Jesus knows what we have been through, and because He is willing to forgive (**Heb. 4:15:** “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”).
 - (d) When the sinful woman came to Jesus, she did so with the full assurance her need would be fulfilled. And it was. She was forgiven!
 - (e) We too may know that when **we** come to God in prayer He will also say “Your sins are forgiven” when we confess and repent.
- (3) **“[GOD IS]...GOOD, AND READY TO FORGIVE.”** (Psa. 86:5)
- (a) We can have full confidence because our Lord is good and He is ready to forgive.
 - (b) He stands, like the father of the prodigal son, waiting for his return (Lk. 15:20).
 - (c) When we sin He always waits for us to “come to our senses” and return to Him.
 - (d) He will not drag us back, but neither will He make us crawl on our hands and knees; because He longs that we should return to Him (**Lk. 15:20:** “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”).

- (e) We can be encouraged by knowing that when we are wallowing in the mire of sin and feeding on the slop of worldly pleasures, He is awaiting our return, and will welcome us back with great joy if we turn to Him.

5.8 “I will come again.” (John 14:3)

- A. For the child of God who has to live in this world so full of sin, it is discouraging to look around seeing ourselves outnumbered and as just a tiny minority in a godless and worldly-minded society.
- B. It becomes discouraging when our efforts to reach our friends, family, and neighbors with the gospel meets constant refusal. But let us not be discouraged and let us not feel alone.

1 Kgs. 19:14: “And he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.’”

1 Kgs. 19:18: “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

1 Cor. 15:58: “Therefore, 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.”

- C. We have the promise of something greater, and yet to come. We have been promised Jesus will come again!

(1) “...THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN...” (1 Thess. 4:16)

- (a) There is great encouragement in knowing that this world is not all there is.
- (b) One day, we won’t live in a world of ungodliness and sin, but we can be encouraged to know Jesus will one day come and take us away from all this to a better place.

Jn. 14:1-3: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

1 Jn. 3:2: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

- (c) Remembering that Jesus does not change, God does not change, and God’s word is settled forever in heaven, we may be confident He will come someday, though we do not know when (**1 Pet. 1:4:** “...an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...”).

(2) “...HE IS ABLE TO KEEP THAT WHICH I HAVE COMMITTED...” (2 Tim. 1:12)

- (a) The encouragement we have in our future reward rests in the surety of God’s promises. A glorious promise that, “...He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that Day.”
- (b) In confidence the apostle Paul came to the end of His life, knowing the reward awaited him, because He **knew God**.
- (c) He knew God’s word was sure, his hope in God was **sure**. He could boldly say, “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:8)

(3) “...WE HAVE A BUILDING FROM GOD, A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS, ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS.” (2 Cor. 5:1)

- (a) Part of our encouragement is knowing what lies ahead. One day, we will not have to worry about hunger or pain, sorrow or death, cold or suffering. One day, all that will disappear (cf. Rev. 21:4).

- (b) The temporary home we have now — the body in which we all dwell — cannot compare to the one awaiting the saved in the eternal home of heaven (**1 Cor. 15:51-53**: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”).
- (c) No more will we have to worry about our bodies wearing down and struggling with pain, sickness, or fatigue; we will throw away our eyeglasses, canes, wheelchairs, etc.
- (d) One day, we will think nothing of these things, for they will have passed away and we will awaken in eternity where all we will do is serve the Lord in praise and worship, our voices ringing with untiring words of honor and glory for all He has done for us.

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. Are you discouraged? You need not be! God has given us great words of encouragement that remain today for us to read and be built up in the faith.
2. The Bible’s encouraging words tell us of our Creator and His love for us, how he sent His Son to die for us that we might be saved:

Rom. 5:8-11: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

3. These words tell us God has remedied our greatest problem! So we need not worry about everything else!

Rom. 8:31-32: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

4. God’s encouraging words extend to each of us the promise of forgiveness and the readiness to hear us when we call on Him.
5. They tell us of the hope and glory that lies ahead.
6. Do not be discouraged, but be **encouraged**.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3)

7. If you are outside His fold of safety...won’t you come today and find comfort and rest for your soul?

Adapted from an original sermon by Steven C. Harper.