



Love-Slaves

Chapter 15 – Encouraging One Another

Over and over again when Moses was preparing to give up his command to Joshua, he encouraged Joshua and exhorted him to 'be strong and of a good courage.' And so important was this matter, that when Moses was dead, God Himself spoke to Joshua and said, 'Be strong and of a good courage'; and again, 'Only be thou strong and very courageous'; and a third time, 'Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' (Joshua i. 6, 7, 9.)

Centuries after, we hear David chanting his glorious psalm and singing, 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.' (Psalm xxvii. 14.)

Hundreds of years later we hear Jesus saying to His little flock, confronted by a proud, fierce Jewish priesthood and a world weltering in sin and heathenism: 'Fear not, little flock,' 'Be of good cheer.

Later still we find Paul, a prisoner of the Lord, when waiting to face the monstrous Nero, writing to Timothy from Rome, and saying, 'My Son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' And to the Ephesians he wrote, 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.'

We get a most impressive lesson from the story of the twelve spies sent by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. Caleb and Joshua returned with cheery hearts, full of courage, and exhorted the people to go up at once and take the land; but ten of the spies gave an evil report; and the people said, 'Our brethren have discouraged our heart,' and they, disheartened and afraid, turned back into the wilderness, and wandered to and fro for forty years, till all of them perished there, except Joshua and Caleb and the children who were not responsible for the unbelief and disobedience of the multitude.



Thus we learn from the example of our Lord, of Moses, David, Paul, and from the bad effect of the spies' gloomy report, the importance of encouraging rather than discouraging one another. How shall we do this?

1. By keeping in such close touch and communion with God that our faces shine with inward peace, and that the joy in our hearts bubbles out in hearty, happy, helpful testimony, not only in Meetings, but wherever we meet a comrade.
2. By talking more about our victories than our defeats; by thinking and meditating more upon our triumphs than our trials; by counting our blessings, naming them one by one, and praising God for what He has done and what He has promised to do.

We should not ignore the dark side of things, but we should not magnify it and refuse to see the silver lining to the cloud that is so dark. God is not dead nor dying, and He does not forget His people who cry to Him night and day, who wait upon Him and do His will. He can open the Red Sea for His people and drown their enemies in its floods. He can make Jericho's walls tumble down before His people who go faithfully about their work and who shout when the time comes. He can make the valley of dry bones teem with an army of living men. (Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-14.) Oh, He is a wonderful God, and He is our God! There is nothing too hard for Him. (Jeremiah xxxii. 17.) Therefore, we should trust Him, and encourage our comrades to trust Him and to make their prayer unto Him in faith and without ceasing.

3. By dwelling more upon the good than the bad in other people. If we would encourage each other, we should talk more about Sister Brown, who is always in full uniform, who sells 'War Cry,' asks for an increase in her Self-Denial Target, and teaches a Company every Sunday, than about Sister Bangs who won't do anything she ought to do, wears feathers in her hat, and goes to moving picture shows.

We should think and talk more about Captain Smith, who by much prayer to God and visitation of the people and faithful dealing, is having souls saved at his Corps, than about Jones who has



got embittered in his heart and has left the Work.

4. By trying to comprehend something of the vast responsibilities and burdens which press upon our leaders. What a multitude of perplexities harass their minds and try their patience! Therefore we should not be too quick to criticize, but be more ready to pray for them and give them credit for being sincere and doing the best they can under the circumstances – probably as well or better than we ourselves would do if we were in their place. They are helped by encouragement even as we are.

I know an Officer who received his target for a special effort and, without praying over it or looking to the Lord at all, immediately sat down and wrote to his Divisional Officer a sharp letter of protest and complaint which discouraged him and made it much harder for him to go happily about his work. I know another old Officer in that same Division who got his target, which seemed fairly large. He saw his Divisional Officer, and said, Major, 'I think you ought to do me a favor.' The poor Major's heart began to get heavy, but at last he asked, 'Well, what is it?' To his amazement and joy, the dear Officer replied, 'Major, I love The Army and its work, and I think you ought to increase my Target.' He encouraged his burdened brother, the Major. He is an old Officer, who goes from one average Corps to another, but through all the years and amid all the changes and trials and difficulties, he has kept cheery and trustful and sweet in his soul, and God makes him a blessing.

'They helped everyone his neighbor and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.' (Isaiah xli. 6.) Shall you and I not take that text for a motto, my comrades? We shall save ourselves as well as our brother from discouragement if we do.

The influence of one gloomy soul can throw a shadow over a whole family. One Soldier in a Corps who persistently represents the difficulties of every undertaking can slow down the pace of all. At best they go forward burdened with his weight, rather than quickened by his example. The glorious work of encouraging others is within the capacity of all. The weakest of us can at least say with loving zeal, and earnest testimony:



'Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.' (Psalm xxxiv.) Hallelujah!

Always he was the dullard, always he Failed of the quick grasp and the flaming word That still he longed for. Always other men Outran him for the prize, till in him stirred Black presage of defeat, and blacker doubts of love and wisdom regnant; and he styled Himself disciple of the obvious, Predestined failure, blundering foot, and smiled.

But with the smile went heartbreak. Then one day A little lad crept wailing to his knee Claspng a broken toy. 'I slipped and fell and broke it. Make another one for me.' Whereat the answer: 'I am but a fool, I can make nothing.' 'You can mend it then.' 'At least I'll try.' And patiently and slow He wrought until the toy was whole again.

And so he learned his lesson. In the world, the bustling world that has no time to spare for its hurt children, all compassionate He sought, and seeking found them everywhere. And here he wove again a shattered dream; And there bound up a bruised and broken soul; And, comrade to the fallen and the faint, He steadied wavering feet to reach their goal.

Forgotten were his dreams of self and fame; For ever gone the bitterness of loss; Nor counted he his futile struggles vain, Since they had taught him how to share the cross Of weaker brother wisely; and henceforth He knew no word but 'service.' In it lay Ambition, work, and guerdon, and he poured His whole soul in the striving of the day. And when at last he rested, as Love led, So now it crowned him. And they came with tears Those sorrowing hearts that he had comforted Bearing the garnered triumphs of their years. 'Not ours, but His, the glory. Dreams come true. Temptations conquered, lives made clean again, All these and we ourselves are work of him Whom God had set the task of mending man.'