

How to overcome doubt – 02 /02/2017

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:7-9

Beloved in the Lord,

Do you sometimes experience doubt? Do you sometimes have a feeling of dread and uncertainty? We all do and it is completely normal. What is important is that we conquer these feelings and do not allow them to dominate our thinking.

The best antidote to fear and anxiety is The Word of God. The more we focus our attention on God and His Word, the less we worry. Focusing our attention on God, diminishes our fears.

The fact of the matter is, that most of our worries are ill-founded and most of the things that we are anxious about never actually eventuate. I read a survey that found that only 8 percent of all things people worry about happen. 92 percent are either imagined, don't occur, or are outside of the person's control anyway. I find this easy to believe.

So often we fret about things that have no real foundation to cause us to worry, or about things that are outside of our control.

Throughout Scripture, when God comes to man, very often the first thing He says is “Do not be afraid!” God does not want us to live in fear, but in faith. He wants us to trust Him. God is sovereign, He is all -powerful, knows all things and is ever-present. We need to remind ourselves of this truth often.

Paul writes: “What then shall we say to these things? ***If God is for us, who is against us?***” we need to let this truth sink deep into our heart. If God is for us, who can oppose us? God is on our side. If we believe in Jesus Christ, then we are God's children, and our Father protects and provides for all our needs. He never leaves us.

One of Satan's most powerful weapons is doubt. He sows seeds of doubt into your heart at every opportunity. He pounces when your life takes unexpected turns. When you suffer some misfortune, he is there saying: “Where is your God now? How could He allow this to happen to you? See He mustn't love you; see you are being punished for your sin.”

We need to deflect these thoughts as soon as they come, because they are blatant lies and they are designed to derail your faith and harm your relationship with God.

Personally, my go to weapon against such thoughts is Romans 8:28 where Paul reminds us of this vital truth:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

All things work together for good to those who love God. Do you believe that? I do! That doesn't mean that I always understand, or that I like the situations that I am in, but that in no way has a bearing on my faith.

As you know, a couple of weeks ago, I fell and broke my left arm. I can honestly say that not even once have I asked “why me?” I believe that God loves me and that there is a purpose, and that there are lessons that I need to learn. One thing that I have already learned is that I need to trust in Him even more and that I don't need to worry about anything, because God is perfectly in control.

I have been drawn to today's text repeatedly. God was encouraging Joshua and He is also encouraging us. Moses has died and the responsibility of leading Israel into the Promised land is now on Joshua's shoulders. No doubt he was experiencing anxiety at the enormity of the task. How would he cope? Would he be able to do it? God comes to the rescue:

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:7-9

God strengthens him and tells him to be strong and courageous. God is not asking him to rely upon his own strength and courage, but is calling him to trust in Him. Our strength is very limited, but God's is not.

I would like to zoom in on verse 8 where something very important is taught.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

How many of you know the importance of our confession? What we say with our mouth is very important. The Bible tells us that the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart. If you want to know what is in a person's heart, then have a listen to what comes forth from their mouth,

If all you hear is moaning, complaining, self-pity and bitterness, then you can be sure that the heart is not right with God. On the other hand, if there is thanksgiving and praise, then you know that heart is in a good relationship with God.

We can change our heart, by having the right confession. When we speak God's Word and make it our daily confession, then it fills our heart. I once heard some-one say that The Word of God is the best dry cleaner for our heart. The more we fill our heart with The Word of God, the cleaner our heart will be. Scripture is alive and it is powerful.

We read:

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."
Heb.4:12-13

You see, the Word of God is living and powerful. When we proclaim or confess God's Word with our mouth, then they are not just words, but powerful arrows that shoot down fear and anxiety.

Therefore, it is important that we know God's Word and know how to use it.

After the accident, I found it hard to reorientate myself in the first week. Not only was I experiencing physical difficulties, but also there was a spiritual side to it as well. I had to deal with negative thoughts and feelings and the only way to overcome them was through proclamation of God's Word. I kept saying Jesus said: ***"I, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*** (Mt.28:20)

He also said: ***"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."*** (Jn.6:37)

Another go to verse was and continues to be: ***"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."***

I also read these words every morning and every evening:

"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go."⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:7-9

I am sharing this with you today in the hope that it strengthens your faith and encourages you, as well as giving you practical guidelines to deal with fear and discouragement. May God help us. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

***Pastor Colvin MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.
All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***