

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, June 5, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

BIBLICAL LESSONS FROM OLD HYMNS OF FAITH WHEN THE MORNING COMES “Trials Dark on Every Hand, And We Cannot Understand” *Selected Scripture*

Charles Tindley was born near Berlin, Maryland, in July of 1851, the son of a slave, Albert Tindley, and a freewoman, Hester Miller Tindley. Charles’ mother, Hester, passed away when Charles was only four, and a year later he was separated from his father. When he became old enough to work, he was hired out to work with slaves, although his status as “freeborn” was recognized. Little did the people of Berlin realize that a theological and musical giant was springing up in their midst. Tindley is often called a founding father of American gospel music. In 1902, after finishing his educational ventures and pastoring several churches in Philadelphia, he became pastor of the church where he had served as janitor 25 years earlier. After bearing eight children, his wife Daisy, passed away in 1924, the very day the congregation entered the new sanctuary for the first time. Initially struggling with her death, he would later explain, “one day I will understand it better by and by”. Tindley based this great song on **1 Corinthians 13;12, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”** We can get so down and discouraged by the things that happen in this life but one day we will gain a new perspective on those things that discourage us. “When The Morning Comes” is one of the great negro-spirituals that still encourages the hearts of the down trodden even today. The music for the this old hymn of faith was written by the great Oklahoma song writer, B.B. McKinney

HYMN LYRICS:

Trials dark on every hand, and we cannot understand all the ways of God would lead us to that blessed promised land; but he guides us with his eye, and we'll follow till we die, for we'll understand it better by and by.

***By and by, when the morning comes, when the saints of God are gathered home,
we'll tell the story how we've overcome, for we'll understand it better by and by.***

Oft our cherished plans have failed, disappointments have prevailed, and we’ve wandered in the darkness, heavy-hearted and alone, but we’re trusting in the lord, and according to His word, we will understand it better by and by.

Temptations, hidden snares, often take us unawares, and our hearts are made to bleed, for a thoughtless word or deed; and we wonder why the test, when we try to do our best, but we'll understand it better by and by.

By and by, when the morning comes, when the saints of God are gathered home, we'll tell the story how we've overcome, for we'll understand it better by and by.

The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life, we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. The Apostle Paul write in 2 Corinthians 4:16, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."* No one is immune discouragement at some point in their life, not even the Christian. It usually hits us at surprising moments, yet there are times when we can almost predict it. Fighting it is never a pleasant experience. Some discouragement that comes in our lives can be are deep and complex – lasting for months, where we feel so low and down that it may even dip into deeper depression. On the other hand, sometimes discouragement can be come on us and really last for only a few hours. Sometimes discouragement can have a lasting impact on our life and faith if we aren't careful, and actually paralyze and cripple our walk as believer and stunt our growth. Let's begin by considering three of God's men who suffered from very real bouts of discouragement in their lives.

I. WHAT IS DISCOURAGEMENT

Discouragement is the lack of courage or confidence. It's easy to become discouraged when we are disappointed or tired. At such times, we feel we cannot or do not want to go on. We also become discouraged from time to time, just like many of God's great servants in the Bible. James tells us in James 5:17 says, *"Elijah was a man just like us."* Have you ever wondered what James is telling us? What does he mean by that. He is telling us that everyone has emotions, vulnerabilities, and physical limits... including the greatest men and women of God, like Elijah. We all get discouraged sometimes!

What causes discouragement? We become discouraged for many reasons. Oftentimes, the cause of our discouragement is a combination of emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges that make the situation seem impossible. We may find ourselves held captive by despair and doubt. Some of the challenges that can cause discouragement include the following:

3 Common Causes to Discouragement:

- (1) **Emotional challenges** - such as feelings of loneliness and abandonment, lack of self-confidence, fear of persecution, and personal loss and grief.
- (2) **Physical challenges** - such as illness, lack of sleep, a gloomy environment, and even clinical depression.
- (3) **Spiritual challenges** - such as lack of prayer, lack of time in God's Word, neglect of genuine time of worship both corporately and individually, feelings of abandonment by God, and often times unrepented sin in our lives

But we can overcome discouragement in our lives because of God. No matter what obstacles we face in our lives, God is bigger than those obstacles.

II. VICTIMS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Though each man suffered discouragement, each one's struggle was different: Abraham faced discouragement from promises unfulfilled and old age that in his own mind perhaps hindered the possibilities of fulfillment. Add to that the stress and anxiety of all the changes in his life, he had the perfect storm for discouragement. Moses faced discouragement perhaps from feeling of insecurity and inferiority... maybe from worry and concern for God's people back in Egypt who were suffering so... perhaps from his own downfall from committing murder and then being forced to flee his homeland; Elijah's discouragement came from extreme persecution and from being a martyr... being a hunted and threatened man. In reviewing each man's case, we will note physical, emotional and spiritual reasons for their discouragement and how our faith helps in the midst of them.

1. **Abraham (Genesis 15:1-20, 21:1-20) *black** – God called Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldeans and move his entire family to an un-named place, among an unknown people... at least to him, and that God would make a great nation from Him. God's promise was not only for a new home that He would provide for Abraham and his family, but a family so great and so vast... with so many descendants that they would outnumber the stars of the sky and the sand of the desert. So by faith Abraham moved and obeyed God. All of these changes coming about in Abraham's life at one time were enough to bring much stress and anxiety... a big move to an unknown location, years of childlessness, and now a seemingly impossible promise of not one but many children and descendants. Abraham, according to some Biblical scholars, was perhaps as old as 75 when he moved his family from Ur and Sarah may have been about 65 compounding the stress and difficulty of such life change. All of that in and of itself was enough to perhaps cause discouragement. In chapter 15 of Genesis, God begins to speak to Abraham further about His promises to him and in Abraham's response we can see something of the discouragement and frustration. Notice the first three verses of Genesis 15, *"¹After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.'* ² *But Abram said, 'Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?'* ³ *And Abram said, 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'"* In God's words of promise and encouragement to Abraham, Abraham showed what nagged and discouraged him so. How could God's promise of many descendants and of a great nation possibly come about when he had no children? Abraham expresses like this in verse 2, *"What can you (God) give me since I remain childless?"* To Abraham, God's promise had stalled, so adoption of a servant as the male heir (Eliezer) – a well known Mesopotamian custom of Abraham's day when there was no descendant – was the best officially recognizable arrangement to make it come to pass, humanly speaking. Notice that the question, *"What can you give me...?"* becomes an accusation in verse 3 when Abraham says *"You have given me no children..."* or as the New King James put it, "Look, You have given me no offspring!" Do you see the discouragement? In other words Abraham was discouraged with God's failure to do what He had promised.

Abraham was past 75 years of age now and getting older by the day... still no fulfilled promise. “God, I have done everything You have told me to do. You keep making these absurd promises to me that I don’t understand and that can’t possibly make sense for me and by barren and aging wife! I’m keeping my end of the bargain, but you are not! You have given me no descendant... no child!” You can see the frustration and discouragement in Abraham’s words. By the way, it would be another 25 years before Abraham and Sarah would see their first child born. Abraham was 100 years old when Issac was born and Sarah was perhaps 90.

“Trials dark on every hand, and we cannot understand all the ways of God would lead us to that blessed promised land...”

- (1) **Physically – stressed and aged (vv.1-3, 12)** Abraham has to be physically exhausted after this kind of life changing move especially given his age and the age of his wife, Sarah. He was tired, his bones ached from his wearing body. I believe that physically he was under tremendous stress from it all! In chapter 15 we get this picture of this dialogue going on between Abraham and God. The discouragement in Abraham shows in the conversation. God has Abraham prepare a sacrifice, which would be a physically demanding project itself. He apparently works all day on it and in **verse 12** Abrahams’s physical exhaustion catches up to him, *“¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.”*
- (2) **Emotionally –frustrated and dejected (vv.2-3)** You can almost hear Abrahams’s emotional state in his words in **verses 2-3**, *“² But Abram said, ‘Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? (the servant male heir)’ ³ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’”* Do you see it? Abraham’s words reflect his frustration emotionally and his feeling of despair at having no children. Given his age and the age of Sarah, he knew the improbability of such a thing happening.
- (3) **Spiritually – disillusioned and doubtful (vv.2-3)** Again verses 2 and 3 are our clearest indication of how Abraham may have been feeling spiritually at this point. His words seem to indicate that he was somewhat disillusioned with this continual promise from God of descendants and great masses of family, given the fact of his childlessness and quickly aging body. Again at 75 it would be another 25 years before Abraham and Sarah would have their first child. Moses felt distant from God. Once again in **verses 2-3** you can hear Abrahams’s disillusionment and doubt perhaps even with God, *“² But Abram said, ‘Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’ ³ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’”* Do you hear the implication spiritually? What do you think Abraham’s words reveal about how he felt about his relationship with God at this time?
- (4) **How God handled him – (vv.4ff)** God continued to speak to Abraham. He reaffirmed His promise to Abraham, then he gave Abraham sleep (though a fretful sleep considering verse 12)... rest. Finally God allowed Abraham to experience

His presence in a very real and tangible way so that his faith was renewed and God's promises to him reaffirmed.

- (5) **What God says to us - (v1) You can trust and depend on God. His promises will not fail you.** *“^dAfter this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’* When God makes a promise to us, He never goes back on it. He is a shield... He will protect the promise and see it to fulfillment. He will reward us with completion of what He said He would do. Therefore, whatever we are going through we do not have to be “afraid” as God says. He will be faithful to us.

2. **Moses (Numbers 11:1-15) *red** – Moses had been miraculously used by God to lead the Israelites from Egypt. The people knew little else than a life of miracles – safe passage through the Red Sea, steady diet of nourishing manna, ample water, Divine guidance (cloud by day, fire by night) – yet they griped and complained about everything. It was neither the Promised Land nor the promising future on which they focused, but Egypt. Weary of their God-given daily diet, they longed only for the leeks, garlic, and onions of the land of their bondage. The text in **verse 10** reports, *“Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance of his tent. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled.”* (NKJV/KJV “displeased,” NLT “very aggravated”) *literally the words translated as “troubled.” In other words Moses got very discouraged from this constant murmuring and complaining and nagging of the people he was trying to lead... that, by-the-way, he saw God blessing and delivering in miraculous fashion every day. Interesting! He was so despairing and discouraged that in **verse 15** he asked God to kill him says, in speaking to God, *“If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now...”* (v.15). Why was he discouraged, do you think?

“Oft our cherished plans have failed, disappointments have prevailed, and we’ve wandered in the darkness, heavy-hearted and alone...”

- (1) **Physically – tired and frustrated (vv.16-17)** He was exhausted and overworked because he had not learned to delegate his work load. He tried to handle it all by himself (see Ex. 18:13-23 where his father-in-law, Jethro, advised him to delegate so that he would “be able to endure.”)
- (2) **Emotionally –inferior and inadequate (v.15)** Moses had an inferiority complex; he held low view of his self-worth. Remember that he made many excuses for his own feelings of inferiority and inadequacy when God originally called him to lead His people to freedom. He took the situation here with the people personally... as one of personal failure. They were really rejecting God not him. Moses was diligent in his leadership, and yet had as his reward griping and complaint.
- (3) **Spiritually – distant and out of favor (v.11)** Moses felt distant from God. He said to God in **verse 11**, *“... why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?”* Do you hear the implication spiritually? What does Moses’ words reveal about how he felt about his relationship with God at this time?

- (4) **How God handled him** – (vv.16-25) Moses as instructed by God to spread his work load, to slow down. He was to find seventy men to do the work he alone was trying to do.
- (5) **What God says to us - (v.17) You don't have to carry your burdens alone** “... *They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.*” We do not have to carry the burden alone. God, Himself, and other that He provides will help carry the load. When we are discouraged and depressed seek the support and encouragement of God and others.

3. **Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-21)** – A series of events tracked Elijah's life, including a famine that he himself had prophesied, and a confrontation on Mt. Carmel where he defied 450 prophets of Baal. After seeking out a solitary retreat next to a juniper tree, his reward was a threat on his life – issued by Jezebel. His words were like Moses' in verse 4, “*While he (Elijah) himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life...'*” Again we have an exhausted, discouraged, and downtrodden man of God. Why?

“Temptations, hidden snares, often take us unawares, and our hearts are made to bleed, for a thoughtless word or deed; and we wonder why the test, when we try to do our best...”

- (1) **Physically –exhausted and fearful** (v.3) In fear for his life, Elijah had just run approximately 30 miles. Not only was he weary from running, but also from relating to the cultic prophets on Carmel. He had missed sleep and meals... he was worn out.
- (2) **Emotionally – used and abused** (v.10) Whereas Moses struggled with an inferiority complex, Elijah suffered from a martyr's complex. Note his words in verse 10, “... *I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too.*” He felt all alone, like there was no one else by him. Not so. God soon reminded him of that, saying that he was joined by 7,000 others in Israel who had refused to bow to Baal.
- (3) **Spiritually – shrinking and shriveling faith** (v.3) His fear was an indication that his eyes were not on God, but on the enemy. Jezebel was anxious to take his life, and it seemed all were against him – Jezebel, the world, even God.
- (4) **How God handled him** – God didn't rebuke Elijah. Instead, God fed His servant and allowed him to sleep (vv.5-8). The food which the heavenly men delivered to him was so adequate that it kept his strength sustained for 40 days, until he reached Mt. Horeb. Not only was he well fed and well rested, but God also supplied him with a friend – Elisha (vv.19-21).
- (5) **What God says to us – (vv.11-13) God is at work, behind the scenes even when we don't see Him** The 3 phenomena, wind, earthquake, and fire, announced the imminent arrival of the Lord. The Lord's self-revelation to Elijah came in a faint whispering voice (v.12). The lesson for Elijah was that Almighty God was quietly,

sometimes imperceptibly, doing His work in our lives and we can trust and rest in Him.

III. HOW TO OVERCOME DISCOURAGEMENT

Given the commonality we all share with discouragement, even as believer, the problem begs the question, “How do I overcome discouragement in my life?” If it is sure to come how do I deal with it when it does? The following are 5 keys to overcoming discouragement in your life.

5 Keys to Overcoming Discouragement:

1. **Remember there are seasons to everything** - Abraham Lincoln told a story about an ancient king who asked his wise men to find a saying that would always be applicable, no matter the situation. After much searching, the wise men presenting the king with a simple sentence: “And this, too, shall pass away.” The king paused to think about the statement, and then rewarded his wise men for discovering a truth that was relevant in both good times and bad. When we are discouraged because of difficulties in life, we need to remember that the trouble will pass. God allows us to go through difficulties in order to help us grow as Christians, but He also gives us times of rest and refreshment. God can use any difficulty to teach and train us. Hebrews 12:10-11 reminds us, *“Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*
2. **Remember God will never leave nor forsake us** - God will never leave nor forsake us in the midst of our trial. There is a popular Christian poem titled “Footprints in the Sand” that beautifully illustrates this truth. *“One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only. This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow, or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, “You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life, there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?” The Lord replied, “The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.”* God is faithful to us and will be with us as we go through the storms and low points of life. He will never leave us or forsake us. We need to realize He is there, giving us support and protecting us, even in the midst of trials.
3. **Repent of any known sin in your life** - Sometimes, when we are discouraged or feel distant from God, it is because there is something in our life that is hindering us spiritually. If you read Isaiah 30, you can see how Israel relied on human wisdom to solve their problems, but God told them to repent and make sure they are right with Him first—then He will save them from their enemies. Isaiah 30:15-16 says, *“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: ‘In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses.’ Therefore you will flee! You said, ‘We will ride off on*

swift horses.' Therefore your pursuers will be swift!'” In the same way, when we are worried and looking for help, we need to make sure there is nothing separating us from a right relationship with God. If we try to take care of things on our own but ignore our relationship with God, things will only get worse. Remember to keep short sin accounts. Stay prayed up and confessed up in your life!

4. **Focus on Jesus** - To overcome discouragement, you need to look to Jesus. It's easy to get discouraged when we put our trust in people or focus on our troubles. But if we keep our feet planted on the solid rock of Jesus, we can remain steady in the midst of life's storms. Remember **Psalm 23**, *“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.”* Throughout the psalm, the writer keeps the focus on God and not the blessings, difficulties, or enemies. God is the one who leads him and feeds him, who guides him in paths of righteousness, who protects him in the valley, and who promotes him in the presence of his enemies. In the same way, when we are discouraged or face trouble, we need to keep our hope fixed on God. Paul basically said the same thing in his letter to the Corinthians, where he explains how he and his companions can carry on in the ministry despite such difficulty. In **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** Paul writes, *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*
5. **Fan the flames** - Everyone faces discouragement, but we can overcome discouragement through the power of God. Christians have the Holy Spirit that lives inside them and works in them, to change them to become more like Jesus. We can think of the activity of the Holy Spirit like a fire that burns inside of us. When we feed the fire and fan the flames, it burns brighter. The increased activity of the Holy Spirit inside us will give us boldness and courage to love people, speak the truth, deal with difficult issues, and persevere in our mission. But if we ignore the Holy Spirit and aren't careful to consume spiritual fuel, our fire will die down so that just embers are left. How can we feed our spiritual fire? The following activities are examples of how a believe can build themselves up and fan the flames of the Spirit in them:

Suggestions for Fanning the Flame Spiritually:

- (1) **Persevere in prayer** – In other words, although in times of discouragement you may find it hard to pray, pray anyway. Keep on praying. Keep on crying out to God. Though in times of discouragement we many feel the heavens are silent and that our prayers are going unheard, the truth is God always hears and answers prayer. Keep the lines of communication and communion with God open by praying unceasingly.
- (2) **Stay in Scripture** - Pour over the Word of God. Spend time daily in God's Word. Read it, meditate on it, memorize it, study it! In times of discouragement it is especially helpful to spend time in the Psalms. The Holy Spirit speaks through God's Word and will minister to your spirit through it.
- (3) **Welcome Worship** – Do not neglect worship both individually and corporately! By that I mean, keep your quiet time or private worship times with God as well as your church attendance at worship times. Sing hymns and songs of praise and worship to Him. Read Scripture. Pray! Listen to other teach and preach God's Word. Do those things that make for a true worship experience in your life. The Holy Spirit of God works powerfully during these times. As God's Word tells us in

Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

- (4) **Feast on Fellowship** – We really do need one another! When we speak of fellowship we often think of fun times, food, church socials or potluck dinners, but that is not the idea here... though those times may be a part of it. The idea is that we need the body of Christ to edify, encourage, support and come along side of us. The Holy Spirit uses other believer in your life to move you along in your walk and growth.

**Through these things the Holy Spirit will remain vital and alive in your live. These are the disciplines and tools the Holy Spirit uses to get a hold of your heart and minister His soothing balm to a troubled soul.*

IV. VICTORS OVER DISCOURAGEMENT

Five significant lessons emerge from this study which, if applied can help us to not only win over depression and discouragement, but to actually grow in their midst.

5 Lessons for Growing through Discouragement and Depression:

1. **Realize that discouragement is not a sin, it is a symptom** – Even Godly men and heroes of the faith get discouraged sometimes.
2. **Maintain a consistent program of relaxation and rest** – You may have to delegate some of your work load to do this.
3. **Guard against those subtle complexes that may contribute to the problem (feeling of inferiority, doubt, and abuse/martyrdom)** – Keep your eyes on the Lord and away from yourself.
4. **Remember that God is for you, not against you** – It is not His design to make your life miserable, but meaningful.
5. **Don't forget, Satan and his demons may bring discouragement** – It's one of his sharpest darts.

Christians will experience times of doubt and discouragement, but we can overcome by remembering and trusting in the promises of God.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the emotional, physical, and spiritual causes of discouragement?
2. Why do you think God allows us to go through periods of discouragement?
3. What are the benefits of going through these experiences?
4. Why do you think unrepented sin can cause discouragement? What is the effect of unrepented sin?
5. How do you feed your spiritual fire?

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him my Savior and my God." –Psalm 42:5