

YOU CAN DEFEAT DISCOURAGEMENT!

Are YOU discouraged — depressed? Do you feel “blue” and full of despair? What can YOU do to defeat discouragement?

by William F. Dankenbring

The problem of discouragement is very real to many! But YOU can *defeat* mind-wrecking discouragement.

First, you need to know *what* makes people grow discouraged — what causes them to feel GLOOMY and full of despair.

There is a reason!

The greatest enemy ALL people have — including God's people — is their own HUMAN NATURE! Human emotions often fluctuate, and it seems to be “normal” for people to feel “positive” at certain times, and “low” at other times. But, most people, when they begin to feel “low,” allow mere feelings to totally drag them into a self-pitying gutter of despair!

And countless thousands COMMIT SUICIDE!

Millions of people in the world allow their human nature, and its emotional fluctuations, to guide and rule their lives. They have NOT learned to master or rule over their emotions. They don't even understand WHAT their nature is like — naturally vain, selfish, egotistical!

They don't realize that their own HUMAN NATURE causes them to feel depressed, discouraged at times!

Many of YOU reading this article have not yet learned to RULE OVER your emotions and thoughts! For this reason, many of YOU become bogged down under a cloud of discouragement!

The downward pulls of human nature, then, are one major cause of discouragement.

How to CONQUER Discouragement

The Word of God gives vital information regarding CONQUERING every

human problem, every spiritual problem, including the problem which faces so many from time to time — depression and despair.

What does God say?

In order to conquer these feelings, the first thing to do — as we have already read — is to be alert to them, and RESIST them. The place to begin is in the MIND. Do not allow yourself to even begin THINKING negatively!

Solomon wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). This scripture illustrates a basic principle. As people think in their heart, they ACT — whether negatively, positively, or however. Moods and attitudes begin with thoughts in the heart. The thought is reflected in the personality, the bearing, the manner of expression, the eyes.

Therefore, every thought itself needs to be brought under control. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting DOWN *imaginations* [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity EVERY THOUGHT to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:4-5).

God wants us to bring every single thought into CAPTIVITY — control, rule over our very thought processes! In this way, we can learn to control and RULE OVER our moods, attitudes, and emotions!

The way to cast wrong, negative thoughts OUT of the mind is to place good, POSITIVE thoughts IN the mind.

The way to get air OUT of a milk bottle is to pour milk IN!

God explains what kinds of thoughts His people should have. They should concentrate, think, ponder on “... whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS” (Phil. 4:8).

Paul told the evangelist Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an EXAMPLE of the believers, in word, in conversation [conduct], in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” He commanded him, “MEDITATE upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (I Tim. 4:12, 15).

A person's thoughts are VERY IMPORTANT! They must be ruled over, and brought into subjection! In this way, negative feelings and discouragement CAN BE DEFEATED!

There is no excuse for a person to feel “down in the dumps” and whipped — discouraged and beaten. He must learn to RULE his thoughts, and subdue his human nature! He must WORK at it!

WHY Discouragement?

Sometimes trials and tests bring discouragement. Sometimes personal problems, faults and weaknesses contribute to depression.

But all these factors concern the one great problem which people have — they get their eyes off the GOAL, begin thinking about THEMSELVES, and lose

sight of the PURPOSE God is working out in their lives.

The POWER of God

God created the Universe. He made the worlds, the seas, the skies, the mountains and valleys. Surely, then, He can enable us to conquer mental problems and discouragement.

And He promises to DO SO, if we call upon Him. Jesus Christ declared, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give *good gifts* unto your children: HOW MUCH MORE shall your heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:11-13.)

The Spirit of God is NOT the Spirit of discouragement, moodiness, and negative feelings! "But the fruit of the Spirit is" — what? Notice it! — "LOVE, JOY, peace, longsuffering [patience], gentleness, goodness, FAITH, meekness, temperance [or, *self-control*]: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Did you read anything there about "sorrow, guilt, depression, moodiness, sulkiness, negative feelings" or "discouragement, despair and hopelessness"? Did you read anything about God's Spirit being the Spirit of a "what's-the-use, who cares?" attitude?

Of course NOT!

It is the Spirit of LOVE, JOY, FAITH — the positive emotions!

Notice what Paul wrote Timothy — "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of FEAR; but of POWER, and of LOVE, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:6-7).

A SOUND mind is not plagued by fear complexes, phobias, negative attitudes. It is HOPEFUL of the future! God's Spirit gives a *sound* mind. It is the Spirit of *love*.

God says, "There is NO FEAR in love; but perfect love [imparted by the Holy Spirit] *casteth OUT fear*: because fear hath torment" (I John 4:18). The Holy Spirit of God CASTS OUT such

negative feelings as fear, worry, moodiness, faithlessness, discouragement. It replaces them with real love, JOY, faith — brimful confidence in God, and supreme HOPE in His Word and promises!

God's Spirit imparts POWER to overcome negative discouragement! Before its immense power, such minute, weakling attitudes and moods scamper like thousands of jackrabbits before a tornado. They don't stand a CHANCE!

The Holy Spirit will impart that power to YOU, if you "stir it up," as Paul told Timothy. But you must draw close to God, and USE His Spirit according to His will, if you wish to be FILLED with it! You must rekindle it, and make full use of it — not let it die out. It is SPIRITUAL POWER!

A Few Discouraged Men

Some of God's greatest servants suffered periods of blackest depression and discouragement. Some of them were so depressed at times that they wanted to DIE. Life became too much of a struggle. Their problems grew too weighty and overpowering. Death seemed to be the "only out."

Job was so discouraged when God chastised him that he groaned in deepest self-pity. "Oh that my GRIEF were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea" (Job 6:2-3).

Moses, the man of God, once felt so overwhelmed he exclaimed to God, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?"

Moses groaned, and moaned, "I am *not able* to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, *kill me*, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness" (Num. 11:11-15).

Discouragement! Depression! Fortunately, God did *not* answer that particu-

lar request — or YOU might never have been born!

Elijah, also, once knew bitter discouragement. Fearful of his life, he fled from Jezebel who sought to kill him. He wandered into the wilderness and requested to die (I Kings 19:1-4). He felt like giving up — quitting! God had to rebuke him, to straighten up his attitude (vs. 9-15).

Elijah, too, was human. At times he had problems with his attitude. But because he yielded himself to GOD, as an instrument in His hands, and drew near to God, and prayed FERVENTLY, he was mightily USED of God and worked miracles (see James 5:16-18).

Discouragement did not drag Job, Moses, Elijah, or other servants of God down into the muck and mire. It did not lead to their RUIN. Why? Because when they saw their human weaknesses and failings, they did not allow a terrible depression to take over. They did not grow sour and bitter. They did NOT "give up" and QUIT.

Rather, they REPENTED of their discouragement, their negative attitudes — and they turned to God. He forgave them, and imparted spiritual strength to them — and mightily USED them in His Work.

How are YOU dealing with the problem of discouragement? Are you allowing it to lead you off into a ditch — the gutter of hopelessness?

Or are your problems and discouragements causing you to turn away from yourself, and turn to GOD to receive spiritual HELP from Him?

So many are tempted to give up the fight and quit, just before achieving success! Many, for lack of a little more perseverance, have come short and FAILED!

Rather than face up to their problems, they hid their faces, ran from the problems. They allowed clouds of depression to be fog their vision, lost sight of the GOAL of human life, and began to wander aimlessly, groping in spiritual darkness, getting nowhere fast.

Where do YOU stand?

Was Paul Discouraged?

What about the Apostle Paul? He was used to write more books of the

New Testament than any other man. Was he ever discouraged? Depressed?

Paul was human, and undoubtedly he suffered many discouragements. When old friends and long-time converts fell away from God's truth, Paul must have suffered great personal pain and heartache. Paul's life was filled with troubles, trials, turmoils and narrow escapes.

But did he ever allow discouragement to reign in his life?

Let Paul speak for himself. "We are troubled on every side, *yet not distressed*; we are perplexed, *but not in despair*; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the LIFE also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Cor. 4:8-10).

Although beset and buffeted by circumstances beyond his control, Paul was not discouraged. He was not a quitter. He declared, "For which cause WE FAINT NOT; but though our outward man perish, *yet the inward man is RENEWED day by day*" (v. 16).

Paul shared intimately his sufferings as a minister of God with the Corinthians, writing, "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in *afflictions . . . behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway REJOICING; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*" (II Cor. 6:4-10).

Surely, if any man had anything to be discouraged and disheartened about, Paul did! But yet, as we just finished reading, he REJOICED in his trials and afflictions, problems and sufferings!

Paul had suffered — personally. Therefore he was able to write the Corinthians and say, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; *who comforteth us in ALL OUR TRIBULATION*, that we may be able to comfort them which are in *any trouble*, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (II Cor. 1:3-5).

Paul had been tempted, so he was able to succor and help others who were

suffering, distressed, and even discouraged. Paul could comfort and sympathize with others who had trials and problems.

Paul stayed CLOSE to God.

Discouragement did not have a chance around him! His life was totally DEDICATED, *devoted* to God! Whether he lived or died did not matter with him (Phil. 1:21-24). Whether he abounded or was abased did not count with him (Phil. 4:11-12).

His eyes were always Godward (Col. 3:1-2). His affection was on things above, not on earthly, sensual, fleshly things. His MIND was centered, concentrated on forgetting past events, and past failures or discouragements — and his attention was focused on those things which were before, pressing FORWARD to the high calling of Christ Jesus in the Kingdom of God (Phil. 3:13-14).

Paul had totally CONQUERED discouragement! Toward the end of his life, he wrote Timothy in absolute faith and assurance, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: *and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

Here is an example of resolute faith, determined hope and assurance. Paul had no room for doubt, discouragement or despair. His life was FILLED with radiant hope and faith toward God.

Yours can be also, if you will draw CLOSE to God through DAILY prayer and diligent Bible study, drinking in of His inspiring, encouraging Word. Your life can be filled with HOPE, and joy, and you can have a POSITIVE approach to every problem, by drawing near to your heavenly Father who gives every good and perfect gift!

But you must be willing to do YOUR part.

Change Your OUTLOOK

Have you allowed despondent, gloomy thoughts to occupy your mind in the past? Even now, do negative thoughts trouble you? Are you discouraged?

You can change!

God says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man *his thoughts*: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For *my thoughts* are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa. 55:7-8).

Change your THOUGHTS! Learn to rule over them!

Through drawing close to God and His Holy Spirit, begin to think positively, as GOD HIMSELF THINKS! Be FILLED with God's truth, His thoughts, through the study of His Word!

There is no need for any of you to feel depressed or discouraged. YOU can DEFEAT DISCOURAGEMENT before it gets started!

Jesus Christ did not come to bring sorrow and depression. Rather, Jesus Himself said, in unmistakable terms, "... I am come that they might have LIFE, and that they might have it MORE ABUNDANTLY" (John 10:10).

The abundant life is not one filled with worries, frowns, anxieties, depressions, concerns, or negative despondency! It is filled with the fruits of God's Spirit: LOVE, JOY, FAITH!

It is not self-centered, but God-centered. It is not worried about the affairs of this temporary, short, physical life. It is concerned about the TRUE GOAL of life — the Kingdom of God! It is not occupied with material matters. Such things are counted as "dung" (Phil. 3:8).

The abundant Christian life is filled with SPIRITUAL CONCERNS — and is centered on the things of GOD! It is the truly positive, hopeful, happy life! It can — *and should* — be YOURS!

To help you overcome discouragement and to tap the power of God, we suggest you send for the following FREE booklets and articles: *Seven Laws of Success, What Is Faith?* "How To Be An Overcomer," "How You Can Be Imbued with the Power of God."

Also request your free subscription to TOMORROW'S WORLD — a magazine of Biblical understanding published under the supervision of the Graduate School of Theology of Ambassador College. □