**Discouragement** by Charles Stanley

The Christian life isn’t always easy, but as children of God, we have special help for both good days and bad. I have faced discouragement as much as anyone and I know where and how to reach spiritual sustenance. Remember the grace of Jesus whenever your heart needs uplifting.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-5** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.”

At some point, discouragement comes to everyone—through bad news, worldly sorrows, or distressing circumstances. In those moments we can convince ourselves that we’ll be undone by our troubles. Or we can choose to lean on our kind and patient heavenly Father, who sees our struggle. He will never leave us to cope on our own. Instead, He comforts and strengthens us through the Holy Spirit.

When I need encouragement, I turn to one of my favorite Bible passages, **Romans 15:4-5** “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another, according to Christ Jesus.”

Perseverance is the determination to keep going and not give up. If you look carefully at verse 5, what do you see? It’s God Himself who gives us that determination. Doesn’t that give you hope today?

Let’s look at how He does this.

**The Spirit of God encourages us with the Word of God.**

 In Scripture, we discover what kind of God He is. **Psalm 119:68** says the Lord is good. He’s not only good in character and the giver of good things, but He’s also the one who determines what is good. He knows what’s best for us at each point in our life and can guide us wisely in every situation. When we understand that God allows difficulties because they are beneficial for us, we don’t need to be discouraged by them. In time we’ll look back and thank Him for the way He brought us through.

**God’s Spirit comforts us through prayer.**

The Lord doesn’t want us to be anxious but to come to Him with every concern (**Philippians 4:6**). When my granddaughter was 7 years old, she taught me one of the simplest and most effective prayers we can offer to the Lord in times of need. We were horseback riding while visiting a ranch, and suddenly her horse galloped away from the group. After we caught up with her, she told me she was afraid but kept praying, “Jesus, help me!”

Remember this short prayer next time you feel helpless in the face of trouble. No problem—not even yours—is bigger than our omniscient, omnipotent God, and nothing is too small, worldly, or ordinary for Him to get involved and reveal His love.

**God also encourages us through Christian music.**

I have some favorite hymns that remind me of God’s faithfulness and His purpose for trials. Think about the lyrics from old hymns, like this verse from “How Firm a Foundation”: *“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply; the flame shall not hurt thee; I only design thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”* There is great comfort in knowing and trusting God’s grace to sustain us in trials.

(And many of us are encouraged listening to contemporary Christian music)

**God’s people are another means by which He encourages us.**

In closing his letter to the Colossians, Paul listed the friends who worked together with him for the kingdom of God. What he wrote about them was, ***“They have proved to be an encouragement to me”*** (**Colossians 4:11**). A godly friend can lift you up when you’re down. This is just one of the many reasons to join a local church where you can participate in the body of Christ in a direct and personal way. Not only will you find courage for your own difficult times, but you’ll be there for others when they’re in need.

**Finally, the Holy Spirit will help you to notice God’s daily blessings.**

Discouragement keeps us from seeing all the good He provides. But when we consider His endless gifts, our attitude is transformed. Sometimes we need to take our focus away from the troubles of life and shift it to the awesome creation that surrounds us. The wonder of the seasons, for example, or the perfect order of the universe will always remind us that God is great, and He has everything under control.

What a comfort to know that the Lord is present and living within you! Actively look for Him and His comfort, and you’ll recognize His love, mercy, and goodness in every situation. And be reminded of the truth found in **John 14:27**, that the Lord gives to us “not as the world gives.” The peace of God is mysterious, remarkable, and effective. It holds us together in a way that nothing else can. We hope you’ll lean on His encouragement more every day. Till next time, God bless you.

For His Glory,

**Charles Stanley**