

## ARE YOU AN ENCOURAGER?

During the Boer War (1899-1902), a man was convicted of an unusual crime. He was found guilty of being a “discourager” and sentenced to prison. The South African town of Ladysmith was under attack, and this discouraging traitor would move up and down the lines of soldiers who were defending the city and do everything he could to discourage them. He would point to the enemy’s strength, the difficulty of defending against them, the inevitable capture of the city. He did not use a gun in his attack. It wasn’t necessary. His weapon was his tongue and the power of discouragement.

The word “encouragement” is defined in Webster’s Dictionary as follows: “To inspire with courage; hearten; cheer on or up; to give help. To give hope, inspiration or favor.” The Hebrew word is “*chazag*” and means “To strengthen, harden, fix; to become strong.” The Greek word is “*aparakateo*” and means “To encourage, to exhort, to admonish, to teach, to cheer up, to console, to comfort.”

J. Oswald Sanders, author and missionary statesman wrote, “This ministry of consolation and encouragement is not to be regarded as inferior and of secondary importance. Did we but discern it, we are daily surrounded by lonely, aching and sometimes broken hearts.” The Christian encourager is a person who has one primary purpose in mind and that is to help build up others by a kind word or deed.

Dr. F.B. Meyer, English pastor, said that if he had his ministry to live over again, he would “preach more sermons of encouragement to God’s people.”

One of the greatest missions we can have in life is to lift the spirits of fellow pilgrims on the road to Heaven. With dis-couragement taking its deadening toll, all of us need encouragement to spur us on. However, discouragers are many, encouragers are few. One is a foe, the other a friend. A pat on the back and a kick in the seat of he pants are only eighteen inches apart but there is a world of difference between their meaning!

Do not wait for someone else to encourage you but do as David did as recorded in 1 Sam 30:6 - “David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” And, whether you take the initiative to encourage yourself or someone else encourages you, determine that you will not be like the bore in the Boer War! You may not be arrested and convicted for being a discourager but is there enough evidence to brand you as an encourager?

John Henry Jowett, well known pastor and author of years gone by said, “God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.” See II Cor. 1:3,4

Encouragement takes place when one person reaches out to another through a loving gesture or a kind word. Are you an encourager? Encouragement is not a crime!

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