

DISCOURAGEMENT

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Romans 8:31

Someone once said, "To hatch despair, brood over troubles." Troubles have a way of getting our attention. We all look at the difficulties we face and wonder why this is happening or how it will turn out. These are often our first responses. Sometimes we close our eyes and pretend it's not happening. But one of our bad habits is to brood over a thing. I know in some cases it's hard not to when you have a knot in your stomach! But how we face a thing and what we focus on while we endure is very important.

I like the story of the little boy playing baseball. A man stopped to watch a little league game and asked a boy on the end of the bench what the score was. He replied, "18 to nothing." The man gasped and said, "Wow that's not good, but you don't seem discouraged!" The little boy said, "Why should I be discouraged, we haven't gotten up yet." I think sometimes we see the enemy of our souls winning a great victory over us or our children or our country. The score is way off balance. But...we serve a God who gets to bat in the last inning and we are on the winning team. Paul says in the verse above that God is for us. He is the One routing us on and giving us the power to win.

He is also leading us. What happens in our lives matters and I sure don't want to minimize what you are going through. But what I find as the main culprit is not the war on the outside, but the battle within. Discouragement endeavors to conquer the soul. We open the door to discouragement when we stop trusting. Trust is a big issue with this generation. All of us have seen the things we are leaning on or depending on fail. It leads us to question whether God is really in control. I love what Paul says in II Corinthians 2:14, "But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession."

Recently Parker and Lauren got married. The wedding began with the processional. Parker and I came out and stood in front of their friends and family and waited for the bride. She came in the side room all adorned and looking like a million bucks. When they both got in front of me I looked at them and then everyone in the room and said, "Praise the Lord!" Parker and Lauren had been on a journey of getting to know one another and asking God what his plan for them was. When they knew that it was the Lord's will for them to get married, we did marriage counseling and they started with the wedding plans. There was a lot of work and there were a lot of challenges along the way, but when they came to stand before me they sure did not look defeated. They were radiant with the presence of the Lord and their love for one another. This is how you and I are to look. We are in a triumphal procession! The Lord is going before us and leading us to certain victory over our adversary. We are the bride of Christ. He is not going to let the devil get the best of his beloved.

In closing I want you to read these two verses from Proverbs 3:5 & 6 slowly. Mary Lou reminded me of them last week. "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not to your own understanding; in all of your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." What a promise! And you can trust him to fulfill what he says. Discouragement causes us to quit. Don't stop the processional! Keep trusting the Lord and walk with dignity!