

Words of Hope and Encouragement

By

Mark A McGee

Chapters

Endurance	3
Encouragement	10
Unity	13
The Greatest Encouragement	16

Chapter One

Endurance

“May the God who gives **endurance** and **encouragement** give you a spirit of **unity** among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

Let’s look at three words: “**endurance**,” “**encouragement**,” and “**unity**.” I believe an understanding and application of these words will change our lives for the better.

First, look at what the end result of these words should be: “... so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It would do every Christian good to understand this one thing: **we exist to serve God, enjoy God and glorify His Name.**

That’s a basic mission statement for Christians. If we woke up every morning with a desire to serve God, enjoy God and glorify His Name, we’d have a better start to the day. If we went through every hour of every day with a desire to serve God, enjoy God and glorify His Name, we’d have a better day. If we ended each day rejoicing about how much we served and enjoyed God and glorified His Name during the day, we’d have a better outlook for the future.

Unfortunately, we allow too many other things to get in the way of that desire. We get caught up in the struggles, problems and disappointments of the day. We often wake up with little desire to face the world. We go through the day wishing it were over. We end the day wishing we had done a lot of things differently but not knowing how to do it any other way. Check out the desires of your heart. What's important to you? Is it serving God, enjoying God and glorifying His Name? Or something else?

That question is not meant to bring you guilt. The question gives each of us an opportunity to consider our lives and evaluate our behavior in the light of **Christ in us**. God's Grace doesn't heap guilt. It **frees** us from guilt so we can accomplish great things for Christ and others.

God wants us to be free. He wants us to succeed. He sent Jesus to die on the Cross so we can be free; **not** so we can feel guilty and fail. God wants us to succeed – for His glory! To do that God is honest with us and wants us to be honest with Him and with ourselves. He gives us the freedom to do that knowing failure doesn't doom us. It points us back to the One Who knows what works. God's Word is a guide to success. Failure reminds us we need to read the directions again and do it God's way. Being a "forgiven one" means we can try and fail, try and fail without fearing God's judgment. God judged us in Christ. God placed us "in" Christ. He looks at us now and sees "righteousness." We're free!

It will help us to look at the context of Romans 15:5 & 6. Paul wrote about working with brothers and sisters who were weaker in the faith

(Romans 14). It led him to say this in chapter 15:1-4:

“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

Paul wrote often about “endurance.” He was an amazing example of endurance. However, it wasn’t Paul’s natural endurance that got him through the tough times of being the Apostle to the Gentiles. He wouldn’t have made it if he was on his own. He would have faltered, stumbled, fell and failed if he was going on his own strength. Christ “in” Paul is what made the difference in Paul’s life. Christ is why Paul succeeded and Paul knew it.

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those

who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” 1 Timothy 1:12-16

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.” 2 Timothy 3:10-11

“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!” 2 Timothy 4:16-18

“But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true; as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making

many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” 2
Corinthians 6:4-10

Paul knew where to go to get strength for his daily work. He knew Who would give him endurance to face the tough fight of faith. He went to Christ “in” Him and to God’s Word. Paul knew God would give him everything he needed to succeed.

The Greek word for “endurance” is *hupomones*. It is used 31 times in the New Testament. Translators use the following English words to explain its meaning:

- perseverance (13 times)
- endurance (7 times)
- patient endurance (4 times)
- great endurance (1 time)
- patiently (1 time)
- persevering (1 time)
- persistence (1 time)
- standing firm (1 time)
- to endure patiently (1 time)
- to persevere (1 time)

The ancient Greeks understood it to mean someone bearing up courageously under suffering. Some today might translate it as “hanging tough.” The idea is of not giving up, not letting things defeat you, sticking with it until the job’s done.

All of us need that, but where do we get it? “May the God who gives endurance...” We get it from God! He is the power behind every Christian who has ever endured the hardships of this life. God is the One Who gets the job done through His people. He made it happen for Paul. He will make it happen for you and me.

It’s good to remember what Paul said at the very end of his life about enduring to the end.

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:6-7

What struggles are you facing right now? What hardships? What battles? What “tough” things face you today? Tomorrow? How will you get through it? **“May the God who gives endurance”** give you the strength and hope to bear up courageously. **“May the God who gives endurance”** help you to do the right things and not give up. **“May the God who gives endurance”** help you face every test, every rough place in your day and come out a winner! Our prayers are with you.

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious

power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” Colossians 1:9-12

Chapter Two

Encouragement

“May the God who gives endurance and **encouragement** give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

“Great job!” “You certainly work well with others.” “That was a great way to handle that problem.” “Great idea!” “Thanks for all you do for us.” “Way to go!” “Keep up the good work.”

Those are words of encouragement. If you’re like most people, you don’t hear them often. People rarely say things that encourage others. That’s too bad since we need encouragement to give us strength for the demands of life.

God understands our needs. That’s why He gives us encouragement through His Word. The word “encouragement” is an English translation of the Greek word *parakleseos*. The King James translators sometimes used the word “consolation” to express the meaning. It comes from the root words *para* (by, besides, near) and *kaleo* (to call, invite, give) and carries the idea of coming alongside of someone to give them comfort and encouragement. The Holy Spirit is referred to in Scripture as the *parakleton* – the Comforter.

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Romans 15:4

God gives us eternal encouragement through His Grace.

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

If we listen to God, we'll hear His constant encouragement. He's always saying nice things about us. He's always telling us how much He loves us. He's always reminding us of the great things He has in store for us - if we'll just listen to Him.

You and I need encouragement. So do others. It's what “charges us up” to keep going, to feel good about ourselves and others. Paul reminds us that “encouragement” is a main part of our ministry to others. It is a primary ministry of Pastors and Elders (2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9, 2:6, 2:15). God has even given some Christians the “gift” of encouraging others (Romans 12:6-8). Whether you have that gift or not, it is the responsibility of all Christians to encourage one another.

Here are a few examples.

“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly,

comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” 1
Thessalonians 5:14

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift,
so that you may be established— that is, that I may be
encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and
me.” Romans 1:11-12

Yes, we all need encouragement. Paul needed it. I need it. You need
it. God gives us encouragement to make us strong. He wants us to
share that encouragement with others to help make them strong. I’ll
close this chapter about encouragement with one of the clearest
portions of God’s Word about the relationship He wants us to have
with others. It reminds us of what we have “in” Christ. May
it encourage you today and all the days of your life.

“Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of
love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,
fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of
one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish
ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem
others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for
his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippians
2:1-5

Chapter Three

Unity

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of **unity** among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

Unity, being like-minded toward other Christians, is a primary theme of the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Greek words translated as “unity” are *to auto phronein*. They literally mean “to mind the same thing.” It means to have the same mindset, be of a similar opinion. It carries the idea of affecting the will, the affections, and the conscience.

Unity among Christians has to start inside. It has to be something God does in us, for us, with us. It’s something we have to believe is true; something we want because we believe it’s right and best. The internal belief will lead to external action.

Paul prays that God will give us a spirit of unity “so that **with one heart and mouth** you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s the external action that flows naturally from an internal belief. If we truly believe in our hearts that we should have the same mindset with other believers, we will show that through our actions. Our actions and words will follow. A unified mind brings forth

unified actions.

We have great reasons to be of the same mind with each other:

“*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*” Ephesians 4:4-6

The same Christ Who is “in” us is “in” all Christians. We all have the same God and Father. He is over, through, and in all. What a bond of unity!

Having the same mindset does **not** mean Christians won’t disagree with each other. We are free in Christ to think for ourselves and come to different conclusions about some things. However, if we have a spirit of unity, we will strive to have the same mindset, to be of similar opinions with other believers. We will demonstrate our love for God through our love for fellow Christians. We will be able to put aside petty differences for the purpose of following Christ and having His mind.

What is the Christian “mindset?” It should be this:

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and

became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 4:5-11

I know this isn't easy, but the Christian life was never supposed to be easy. Jesus made that quite clear. So did Paul. They both demonstrated and taught that bringing a wide variety of minds and lives together into One Body was a challenge. That is one of the great mysteries of Christianity.

Think about your relationship with other believers. Ask God to help you have a spirit of unity, to demonstrate that unity, for the sake of His Glory.

“... endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3

Chapter Four

The Greatest Encouragement

I've been sharing with you about the importance of encouraging people. Let's take a look now at the greatest **example** of encouragement.

Jesus Christ is the most encouraging Person Who ever spoke a kind word. He was always saying things to other people for the purpose of making their lives better. Even when Jesus was blasting the religious leaders of Israel, He did it to encourage His followers by pointing to the Truth. Christ is the Master of Encouragement.

Jesus was able to take any situation and use it for encouragement. He always found the best in any situation. An example is when Christ told His disciples about His impending death. Where's the encouragement in that? Telling someone that you are going to die doesn't seem to be a time for encouragement, but Jesus knew why it would be a blessing to His disciples. Look at how the Lord encouraged His followers as they heard the news of His death.

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be

also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.’ Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My*

Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.’ Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do.”

John 14

Amazing! All that encouragement in just a couple of minutes of dialog between Christ and His disciples.

Jesus was always honest. That's part of a **ministry of encouragement**. We can't help anyone by keeping the truth from them. Look at what Christ told His disciples.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you ... If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you ... I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ... When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ... But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.” John 15 & 16 (KJV)

Jesus **ALWAYS** told the Truth. He never lied. He never hedged about the Truth. He just said it.

One of the most encouraging things Jesus ever said is at the end of John 16. He summarized everything He'd been saying to them.

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

The NIV reads: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Isn't that wonderful? God wants us to have peace! We can all relate to having trouble in this world. I don't know what specific trouble you're going through today, but the fact remains that Christ has overcome the world. That means we also are “overcomers” - not because of our strength or genius or cleverness, but because of Christ's Strength, Genius and Cleverness. We overcome through Christ! We have victory through Christ! This world is full of trouble and much of it spills over onto Christians, but Christians have something no one else has and that's Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit living in them. No matter what the world throws at us, we will overcome it through Christ. No matter how mean the world is to us, we will have victory through Christ. No matter how hard the battle against evil may be, we will overcome!

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:21

What great thing do we have to do to overcome the troubles of this

world? What mighty act must we perform? What words of power must speak? What sacrificial gift must we give?

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:4-5

Faith. Believing God. Taking Christ at His Word. Trusting that the Lord will do the Mighty Acts and speak the Words of Power. Jesus already gave the one Sacrificial Gift acceptable to God. We believe Him knowing He has already overcome the world.

Whatever your trouble, whatever you're facing right now, believe God, believe what He says in His Word. Don't let the evil of this world overcome you. Don't let the problems and stress and pressure of life in this world defeat you. Believe in the One Who has Overcome this world. Trust Him. Rely on Him. You trusted Him with your eternal soul. Now give Him your body and your mind. Give Him all of you. Let Christ live His Victorious Life in you!

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