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SOVEREIGNHOPE
bible presbyterian church

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Biblical Foundations for Christian Encouragement during Trying Times

Heb 10:25 *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

Discouragement is a real concern for many Christians during this pandemic, robbing us of pure peace and comfort in the Lord. David, the psalmist, experienced it in Psa 40:1-2. It steals our vitality, zeal, joy and even our contentment. Many have suffered at the hands of this formidable foe and often been vanquished by it If discouragement continues to plague them. It can be fatigue, a sense of hopelessness, despair, self-pity, depression, doubt and even anger, hatred or bitterness against others. Discouragement in an extreme case can be so strong that one may even not want to go on living and can be suicidal .as in the case of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10 which says, "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." and even Jonah is so depressed and discouraged in Jon 4:8 which says, "And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live."

Causes of Discouragement

Discouragement can be caused by many factors including serious illness, failures, quarantine, relationship problem, loss of a job or income or dissatisfaction with people or past events, distaste for the present and distrust of the future. It can be the result of spiritual ignorance of God's mercy and grace and it can include even ingratitude for the blessings of God and spiritual indifference to the opportunities God gave to us each day, or insecurity regarding our strength for tomorrow. It is also an unawareness of the presence of God, unconcern for the needs of our fellow man, and unbelief or doubt in the promises of His Word. One may forget our divine protection and blessing and

look at our dismal circumstances during this present crisis, that is when discouragement begins to take hold. Instead, what we need is spiritual encouragement from the Lord. We need to cherish the hope, peace and the knowledge that comes from the Lord who knows our troubles, His loving concern and compassion edifies us and He is not leaving us unprotected or uncared for. (Psa 55:22)

We have a duty as Peter in 1 Pet 5:7 says, "*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*." and Psa 55:22 reminds us, "*Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*." We need to keep our eyes on Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith. This is paramount to fight off discouragement. In Him you can have comfort, peace and encouragement. We need, by faith, to cast our cares and to trust and rest fully in Him. King David in1 Sam 30:6 says, "*And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God*."

We need to learn to encourage ourselves and others in the Lord as David had advised us above.

Practical Tips on Encouraging One Another.

Below are some insights in combating the discouragement when it hits us or any of our loved ones.

1. Be encouraged because God is a God of Mercy and Comfort.

2 Cor 1:3 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort* "

A. God is called the Father of Mercies. In the Greek the word "*mercy*" means compassion, pity, mercy. In God's very heart, is mercy toward us. He is the author of mercy. His mercy toward you brings salvation, the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from eternal damnation and this, because of Jesus, because of His sacrifice, because of His shed blood for you. God is the God of mercy when we humbly seek Him: Psalm 86:5 "*You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you*."

B. The word in Greek for "*comfort*" means, exhortation, solace, consolation and encouragement. This is why the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter in John 14:26, which says, "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*."

- All this shows you that God is a God of Comfort, of exhortation, and of encouragement. All comfort comes from God who is the God of comfort, of mercy and love.
- The Holy Spirit, the Comforter (who indwells us, 1 Cor 6:17-20) is not an angel or a cosmic force, an anti-depression pill, or worldly psychotherapy, or a quick fix that warms your heart and lifts you up temporally. It is the Almighty and Sovereign God who cares and who can fully help us out of our troubles and woes. The Comfort is received from God By faith. God says He is the God of comfort. We need to believe it and act upon it; and trust Him and receive His comfort as He provides it. We can receive this through prayer and the meditation of His word John 14:13 says, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

C. God can also use His people to care for and comfort you. When you experience bereavement or have a problem, the Lord can send someone with an encouraging word, a helping hand or a shoulder to cry on from a pastor, elder, deacon, caring mother, sister or brother in Christ. Share with the church and unburden your care to God and to one another, and to Christ above all. Do not be given to harsh criticism of your church or family but be appreciative of one another in the Lord. Remember what Paul says in 1 Th 5:12-14 "*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men*."

2. Comfort from God and Brethren

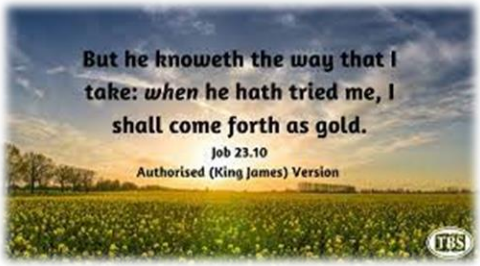
As comforters we encourage by our presence, sincere and fervent prayers, words of comfort from the word of God, our testimony of faithfulness and trust in God. This can take the form of our writings through email, WhatsApp, a note, a card or even through songs that we sing in an appropriate situation or in a tangible way when we give a love gift to encourage someone who is in need financially, or the quiet presence as in a funeral to comfort and encourage the bereaved. There is much that we can do for one another to exhort, edify and build up one another in the fear and strength of the Lord. Paul in 1 Th 4:18 says, *"Wherefore comfort one another with these words*."

- The sabbath service and reading and hearing of the appropriate word of God is also a balm of Gilead and is a real source of consolation and solace for our instruction and encouragement. Rom 15:4 says, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*."

- By the Holy Spirit. He is called the Comforter. He indwells within us and hence gives us a inner peace and joy and comfort and hope. (1 Cor 6:19,20)

3. God and our Afflictions/Distresses

The word 'tribulation 'in 1Cor 1: 4 can be translated as trials, trouble, anguish, persecution, burden and affliction. It can come in different ways.



- From a pandemic comes possible sickness, or financial difficulty, loss of a loved one, failed exams, troubles with kids, workplace, concerns of an unsure future, a car accident. But also, and this is something very important, affliction can occur in the heart, where we get very frustrated, confused and hurt. We live in a fallen world with trouble which can be used of God to train Christians for their high calling as children of God and to carve upon their souls after the image of Christ. Paul in Gal 6:2 says, "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*."
- So then, afflictions can be God's way of making you grow and be a better person. And the testing may strengthen our faith in the end through the comfort and mercy of Jesus. We are more valuable than sparrows and He cares for them. (Mt 6:25-33)

4. God Uses Us as Instruments of Comfort

2 Cor 1: 4 says, "*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*." This verse tells us that we can glorify God when we encourage and comfort others in the Lord. Being used by God makes you feel good but that is not the only reason to help someone. It is a joy and blessing when the Holy Spirit uses us to encourage others and do good. We need to praise God that we have even had afflictions so that we can be able to help others. How many of us, because of a trial in our lives, have been able to help another better because of that similar trial? (ie. death of loved ones, loss of jobs or children problems, etc.)

God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters, to be a blessing to others. He suffered first on our behalf and understood the pain and sorrow of it all. Are you a blessing to others today and have you spoken a word to edify and exhort others?

5. The Comfort from God and its Use.

2 Cor 1: 5 says, "*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ*." This means that all comfort, encouragement and hope that we receive through people, through the Word as we read or hear it on the sabbath during worship are possible because of what Jesus Christ had done for us at Calvary.

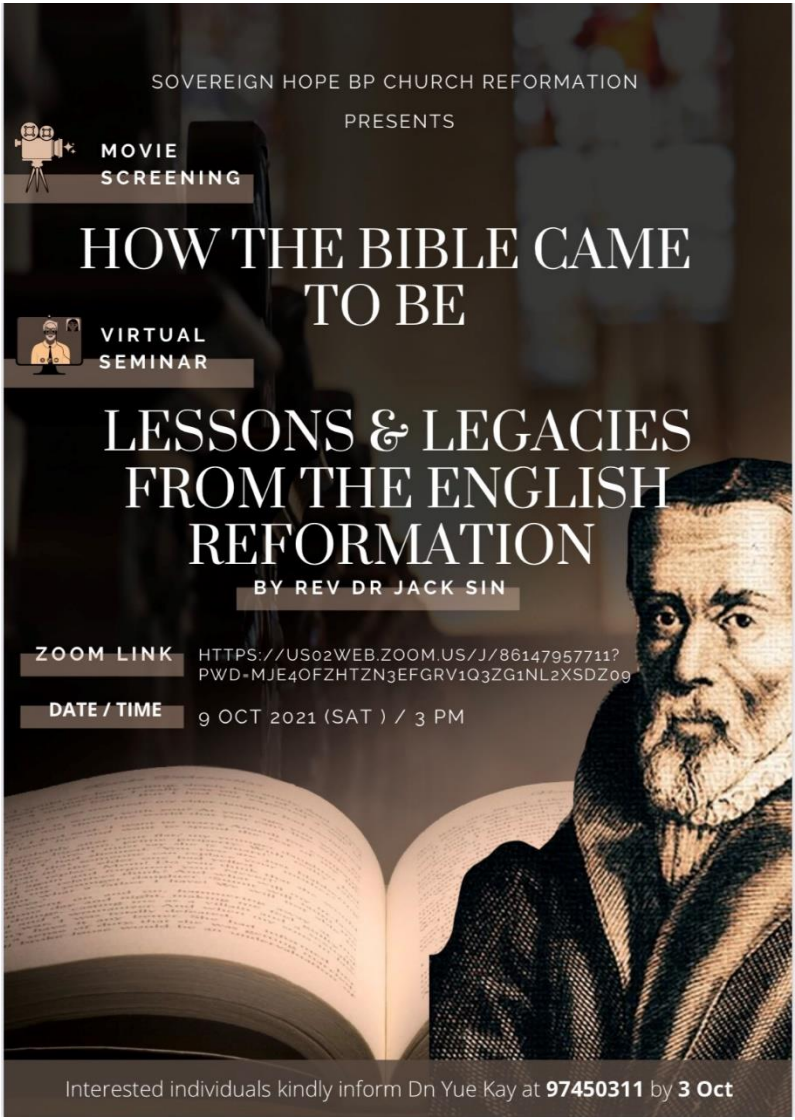
This source of comfort is pure, good and right. It is received by faith. Where our sufferings are abundant, so is our comfort from the Lord. This comfort is a spiritual comfort from heaven and is to be received by faith in the Lord. As experienced by many who have been and are still suffering for their faith in Vietnam, India, China, Iraq, Indonesia and elsewhere (as shared by open doors). Paul encourages us in 2 Cor 12:9 says, "*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*." Paul in Rom 8:35-39 exhorts. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*."

Conclusion

The year 2021 has been a challenging time for many all around the world due to the global and raging pandemic and in Singapore, we are not spared either. We live in a depraved and fallen world that is full of despair, distress and troubles. Often, we feel like giving up and going into depression. Practical Christian encouragement founded on Christ is to reach out and help others that goes a long to strengthen one another to look up to the Lord in times of crisis in these trying times. One does not have to live in a world of sorrow, hurt, distress, fear and doubt. We have the Lord, His word, prayer and the body of Christ in His church to support, visit, pray for us and lift us up before the throne of grace.

The Word of God can comfort and strengthen us. When you meditate, read and apply it, the Holy Spirit indwelling in you will warm your soul with strength, hope and peace. As redeemed men, we beseech the Almighty God to show us His mercy and everlasting love. But let us remember that we need to do our part as well and seek, pray and trust the Lord first, remembering the Lord's sovereignty and we are fully dependent on Him. Let us keep focusing our eyes on Jesus alone, and not men or circumstances, and be strong in the Lord, especially in these depressing last perilous days and let us strengthen others to do the same too.

Jack Sin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DATE / TIME
9 OCT 2021 (SAT) / 3 PM
Interested individuals kindly inform Dn Yue Kay at 97450311 by 3 Oct

SOVEREIGN HOPE
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A Biblical Paradigm for Triumphant Christian Service

Lord's Day Programme
October - December 2021

OCTOBER

- 3 A Love for God and the Brethren (Neh 1:1-11)
- 10* A Heart of Prayer and Action (Neh 2:1-20)
- 17 How to Renew & Repair our Lives (Neh 3:1-10)
- 24 The Elements of Healthy Church Life (Neh 4:1-9, 16-23)
- 31 **REFORMATION SUNDAY**
  The Call & Convictions of the Reformers (Phil1:12-27)

NOVEMBER

- 7 Dealing with Opposition Wisely (Neh 5:1-19)
- 14* When the Enemy Closes in (Neh 6:1-15)
- 21 Lesson from the Genealogy (Neh 7:1-6, 73)
- 28 Awakenings from the Word (Neh 8:1-18)

DECEMBER

- 5 The Exemplary Fervent Intercession (Neh 9:1-21,35-38)
- 12* Why we Need to Keep the Covenants (Neh 10:28-39)
- 19 Serving with Accountable Stewardship (Neh 12:31-47)
- 24 **CHRISTMAS EVE GOSPEL SERVICE**
  When God became Man (1 Tim 3:16)
- 26 Biblical Separation Learnt & Practiced (Neh 13:1-31)
- 31 **WATCHNIGHT COMBINED SERVICE**
  A Better Heavenly Place (John 14:1-6)

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Memory Verse

Neh 1:4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Pastor speaks today on "***"A Love for God & the Brethren" (Neh 1:1-11)***, commencing the new quarterly theme of "***A Biblical Paradigm for Triumphant Christian Service***".
3. Pastor speaks next Sunday on ***"A Heart of Prayer & Action" (Neh 2:1-20)***.
4. Sunday School classes continues after worship service:
   - WCF Shorter Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
   - Understanding Biblical Eschatology & related Topics – Joseph
   - Studies in Numbers – Dn Kwong Leen
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren.
6. **Reformation Video cum Webinar** will be held via Zoom on **Sat 9 Oct 2021 at 3pm**. Refer to the e-brochure for details.
7. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The Sep prayer list is available in church.
8. Neighbourhood Bible Class meets monthly on the first Friday of each month in church on the study of 2 Samuel.
9. The Pandemic book can be purchased through Dn Yue Kay (Hp: +65 97450311) or via email at sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com.
10. Do kindly observe the safety measures of the church and assist with the weekly cleaning of the premises.
11. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
    - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
    - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
    - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

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