The Ministry of Encouragement | Quidnessett Baptist Church

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Pastor Jim Sole January 9, 2024

> HEBREWS 3:12-13 – Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

THEME OF THE DAY: THE MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGMENT. George M. Adams once said, “Encouragement is oxygen to the soul.” Oh, how true such words! There are so many Christians “suffocating” from life’s difficulties, challenges and trials that are longing for a good shot of “oxygen” in the form of encouragement from a fellow believer. And such ministry extends to the church. Fred Catherwood commenting, “The church should be a community of encouragement.” Yet, something else about the ministry of encouragement that needs to be taken very seriously. In today’s scripture, there is the command to encourage, the who and when to encourage, and the consequences of not encouraging.

First, encouraging other believers is a command to obey, not an option to weigh – encourage one another. The word “encourage” has a variety of meanings such as to “call for, exhort, and comfort.” It is easy to see the idea behind encouragement is to lift up, to strengthen, inject courage, and we might even say, “Brighten someone’s day.” As we move into the next element of the ministry of encouragement, remember this one. It is a command.

After the command, we are given the who we are to encourage as well as frequency of obeying the command – one another day after day. Notice the ministry of encouragement is not selective or partial. All believers without prejudice are to be the people we encourage. Yes, even the difficult believers in our lives. When we find this difficult, remember how Jesus encourages each of us. That will settle the difficulty. As for the frequency? We are instructed to encourage other daily. Now I know some of us might think, “What? Jim, do you know how full my life is? Okay, I can do this a few times a week but daily? I don’t think so.” Be careful justifying disobedience to this command. We cannot say, “My life is so full. I don’t have time to encourage other believers daily. Maybe weekly.” When God gives a command, He gives the ability to obey it. Disobedience of any kind is never a time issue, but a heart issue. As for encouraging other believers? Easy. Phone call, email, text, card, messenger. There is no end to the convenient ways to obey this command.

Finally, be aware of the consequences of not obeying the command to encourage other believers – But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The worst condition believers may ever find themselves in is with a hardened heart toward the things of God. And the chief way we get into this God-dishonoring, backslidden state is by neglecting to obey known commands. Start a path of passivity towards obedience; allow life to be consumed with self that always leads us away from self-denial and obedience, and a hard heart will result. We will be like “the walking dead” spiritually. All the outward look of a Christian without the inward spiritual reality of Christ. And all those dangerous spiritual paths began with failing to encourage other believers! So simple, yet, so destructive.

PRAYER: “Father, help me to be an encourager to Your people, always looking at ways to strengthen others.”

QUOTE: “Encouragement is a ministry all believers are called to and the only hindrance to our disobedience is ourselves.”

In the affection of Christ Jesus,

Pastor Jim