

Let's Go On

by Anton Bosch

We must learn to handle discouragement by pressing forward towards perfection, rather than turning back or standing still.

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:3

Topics: "Perseverance Of Faith", "Overcoming Discouragement"

Description

Anton Bosch preaches about the common experience of feeling discouraged, tired, and frustrated in the spiritual journey, drawing parallels to moments of despair in the lives of biblical figures like Elijah, Paul, and Jesus. He emphasizes that becoming discouraged is not a sin, but how we handle it determines victory or defeat. The sermon highlights the options when feeling disheartened - turning back, stopping, or pressing on - and stresses the importance of not turning back to a life of sin or gracefully bowing out of the race, but instead continuing to move forward in faith and perseverance towards the goal of eternal life in Christ.

Transcript

When hiking, I have often come to a point where I felt like not going on and either camping just where I was or turning back. This often happens when the path becomes too steep, too long or when the end just does not seem to be within reach.

So in the spiritual life, we all come to times when we become so discouraged, sidetracked, tired or frustrated that we just don't feel like going on. The temptation to simply sit down and rest or even to turn back becomes overwhelming. You may remember that the children of Israel often felt like this while in the wilderness. After the Cross, even Peter decided to go back to fishing. Discouragement comes to all of us. Can you hear the dejection in Paul's voice when he writes: "all those in Asia have turned away from me..." (2Timothy 1:15)? I am sure the classic example of despair has to be Elijah - right after he had brought fire and rain from heaven (1Kings 19:3-10).

It seems to me that Jesus also became discouraged at least a few times. Remember how he wept at the grave of Lazarus, not because he sorrowed for Lazarus, but because of the unbelief of those at the tomb. He definitely felt sorrow and frustration at Jerusalem who consistently refused God's appeals for a relationship and rather, chose to kill the prophets (Matthew 23:30). And when the whole multitude turned their backs on Him and walked out on His sermon, He turned to the Twelve and asked them "do you also want to go away?" (John 6:67). I have no doubt that he felt the pain of disappointment and discouragement

at that point.

You see, becoming discouraged is not a sin but it is how we handle the discouragement that will either lead to victory or defeat.

The first thing we need to do when we become disheartened is to take stock of the options. These basically boil down to turning back, stopping, or going on. For Israel the choice always seemed to fall on returning to Egypt. Even as they came to the border of the Land, they lobbied to return to their former slave masters. But returning to the bondage of sin with all its emptiness and purposelessness is just not a good option. Anyone who is honest with himself will have to admit that no matter how hard the way, slavery to sin was much worse. If we turn back, we will not only have to deal with the bondage and aimlessness of a life without hope. We will also have to live with the guilt of knowing that we once had a better life which we simply threw away for the passing pleasures of sin.

Jesus said: "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62). Hebrews 10:38-39 says: "But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." Let's remember Lot's wife who looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Let's determine then, that turning back to our former aimless conduct is just not an option.

The more attractive option is to gracefully bow out of the race and to sit beside the way. I see people take this option all the time. At first they begin to forsake the assembly of the saints from time-to-time until their conscience gets used to watching television rather than being in fellowship. Then their absence becomes more protracted until they feel too guilty to get back into fellowship. Off course at the same time their prayer life and Scripture reading becomes more and more sporadic until that also dies. No one skips that first meeting with the intention of "backsliding". The reasoning is always the same: "I just need a break for a short while". And the results are always the same - permanent absence from the Lord's house, and His presence!

Taking a break from serving the Lord, for just one minute is not an option. The very moment we stop pressing towards that mark of the upward call, we begin to slide. Standing still always leads to regression. Standing leads to sitting and sitting leads to sleep and sleep to death. We have to keep moving forward if we are to remain spiritually alive. The problem is that too many are deceived into thinking that standing still is not a problem or dangerous. But it is. It is the worse thing you can do.

Micah's warning to Judah still holds true for us today: "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy [you]" (Micah 2:10). There is no place to rest in this world, it is infested by sin and it will destroy anyone who tries to make his home here. Our only hope is to keep moving onward and forward that we may escape the pollutions of the world (2Peter 2:20).

The Bible does not depict the way to glory as a sofa, a bed or a cruise. It is rather pictured as a race, a battle and a walk. The only way we will get there is to resolve that we have no other options but to keep moving forward, no matter how many the hurts and how weary we may feel. The problem is that few have come to the point of realizing that they have no other option. When the crowd walked out on Jesus He turned to the Twelve and asked them if they were also going to leave. Peter replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68). Friend, there are no other options, Jesus alone has the words of eternal life. Why don't you renew your resolve today and say: "let us go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1).

May I plead with you to stand up and say these words with Paul: "but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14)

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