



Take Courage!

By Vincent M. Newfield

I command you—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. —Joshua 1:9 NLT

It was late October, 1992. For the first time in my Christian walk, God had prompted me to fast for seven days on behalf of our country. It was the week just before the national election, and there were many key leadership positions at stake. The purpose of the fast: for God to have mercy on America and fill every vacant office from the local level to the federal level with godly men and women who would hear and heed His voice.

Unfortunately, the outcome of many of the races was a great disappointment. So much so that I became discouraged and wondered why God had asked me to fast in the first place. I felt like I was alone in my stand or at best, there were very few people whose heart's cry was the same as mine.

Thankfully, God didn't leave me in despair or allow me to lounge in the lap of self-pity. He encouraged me, much like He did with Elijah (see 1 Kings 19). He informed me that I wasn't alone—that there were countless other Americans who were praying and fasting for the same thing. And then He said something I'll never forget. He said, "I saw you on that green carpet in that small closet in Louisiana, pouring out your heart to Me in prayer. It was not in vain. I've taken note of your obedience, as well as the obedience of others. Be at peace. I am still in control."

That was nearly twelve years ago, and there have been many other discouraging things that have taken place in our country to further the moral decline. You and I could talk for hours about them, but it would only serve to bring us further down.

AMERICA HAS EXPERIENCED TIMES OF DEEP DISCOURAGEMENT BEFORE

It's in times like these I'm reminded of America's condition in years past—particularly the era of Abraham Lincoln and the years prior to and including the Civil War. Americans had become polarized into two distinct camps—one in support of slavery and one against it. There were even many Christians who took sides on the issue. There seemed to be no reasonable solution to the problem without making enemies.

President Lincoln was discouraged and distressed as he watched the country being ripped apart at the seams. In the midst of the mess, Lincoln proclaimed a *National Fast Day*, March 30, 1863. In his address, he uttered these timeless words. As you read them, imagine they are being spoken to us today in 2007:

*We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. **But we have forgotten God.***

We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

EACH TIME, SHE HAS TAKEN COURAGE AND RETURNED TO HER ANCHOR OF HOPE

I'm so glad Lincoln and the American people didn't allow discouragement to immobilize them and keep them from seeking God's face and taking action. I'm so glad George Washington and the Continental Army didn't allow discouragement from seemingly insurmountable circumstances to cause them to quit. And I'm so glad the Pilgrims didn't allow discouragement from religious persecution, disease, and famine to make them throw in the towel.

Where would we be as a nation today if these God-fearing men and women would have allowed discouragement to stop them? Would we still be a nation at all?

Think about it in terms of where we're at today. Where **will we be** as a nation if we allow discouragement to knock us out of the game? Will our children and grandchildren still have a nation if we choose to throw our hands up in hopelessness?

Just like you, I sometimes look around and say, "What's going on? Are my prayers and times of fasting really making a difference? Are my letters and phone calls to my congressmen, the media, and business owners having any impact at all?"

The answer is **Yes, we are making a difference**. I believe God is impressing on His people today the same thing He impressed on my spirit twelve years ago—"Don't give up, regardless of how bad the situation looks. I see you seeking My face on behalf of America. Keep doing what you know is right. I am in control. It's *not* time to give up—it's a time to *press in*."

I'M TAKING THE CHALLENGE—WILL YOU?

Now more than ever, it's time to press into God's presence on behalf of our country, repenting for our sins and requesting His renewal. It's time to press into the political scene and the public arena and let our voice—the voice of righteousness—be heard loud and strong. It's not an option; it's our duty.

Will you join me? I'm going to *keep on* praying for our elected officials that their hearts would be turned toward God and become pliable in His hands. I'm going to *keep on* going to the polls and voting for righteous candidates. I'm going to *keep on* praying that the pulpits of America to be set on fire with purity and that our pastors will proclaim the truth without compromise. I'm going to *keep on* learning about our true Christian heritage and sharing it with others. I'm going to *keep on* keeping on, and I invite you to do the same!

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