

Where Does Encouragement Come From? by Carl McMurray

We hear much of “encouragement” today. Everyone wants some and there never seems to be enough. Many have equated encouragement with “good times” and as a result some have decided that picnics, fun and games, and entertainment are the way to encouragement. This is dangerous thinking in that it sets us up for other misleading ideas. If good times are the way toward true encouragement then what does that say about “bad times”?

To help understand where real spiritual encouragement comes from consider when the early Christians (and others) were encouraged. Here is just a sampling list from Acts from which we might draw some conclusions.

Encouragement came from teaching. Acts 11:23; 14:22. That’s what Barnabas was doing when he came to Antioch, i.e. confirming the faith of those new Christians. He and Paul were warning the Christians of tribulations ahead and the scriptures call it encouragement. Likewise, in Acts 15:32 when two prophets brought a lengthy message, it was described as encouragement and strengthening.

Encouragement came from understanding. Acts 15:31. When word came back to Antioch that the doctrinal division they struggled with was discussed and settled by the word of God, there was encouragement and rejoicing. Unity based upon understanding is encouraging.

Encouragement came from reassurance and concern. Acts 16:40. That’s what Paul and Silas gave the brethren at Lydia’s house after their prison release.

Encouragement came from verbal support and recommendation. Acts 18:27. That’s what Apollos received when he wanted to cross over to Corinth and preach.

Encouragement came from good news with a confident example. Acts 27:36. That’s what the sailors on Paul’s ship received from the apostle.

Romans 15:5 speaks truth when it says God gives encouragement. He gives it in teaching, understanding, loving concern, verbal support and speaking well of others, and in the confidence and examples of good brethren. When we seek ways to encourage others or receive it ourselves (and there are many ways indeed) let’s not forget these ways in which God encouraged His children in the difficult days of the beginning kingdom.