

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO FROM TOM WHEELER
recorded March 20, 2024

Well, good morning (or afternoon or evening - whenever you're seeing this)! Our autumn video informed you of our impending move to another community a little farther up, Cefn Fforest [sounds like: Kevin Forest]. In the run up to Christmas we blitzed the community with personal invitations on the street (and leaflets through doors, notices in shop windows, and speaking with customers on the premises) to our special Christmas carol services. It resulted in five first time visitors, and we had a glorious celebration of the God who stooped to become a helpless baby in order to save us from our sins. Yet, none of those five have returned; and most - not all, but most - Sundays not one visitor from Cefn Fforest darkens the door.

We've had this longstanding joke amongst our folks about being the congregation of the canes and walking sticks. We have now, in 2024, progressed to the walking wounded as serious illness has stricken some of our key people in the work. There is no denying that it has taken an emotional toll, but the love and prayer of these people for one another is beautiful to behold. The sufferers are fully persuaded that, with the loving support of church family and the everlasting arms of the Lord Jesus to support them, whatever the outcome of the trial, they are blessed. I pray the Lord to make me more the tender hearted under shepherd these dear folks require.

A question was asked Monday on social media about our own personal take concerning what to do, practically, when emotional lows and discouragement comes our way. Here's my view and how I approach it.

Discouragement, I believe, is one of the chief weapons wielded by the arch-villain, Satan. Two pieces of the Christian's battle kit are chief in the fight with discouragement: the shield of faith, if discouragement comes as a fiery dart, and the sword of the Spirit, if discouragement is thrust at me like a flaming sword. And how do I maintain both of those in working order? I acknowledge the presence of the enemy's weapon, but I must not fixate upon it. We are told to look unto the Lord. Our gaze must fall upon Him. Where do we see Him? **IN HIS WORD!** And therein is the shield of faith and sword of the Spirit maintained. "...faith *cometh* by...the **word of God**" (Romans 10:17). And, according to Ephesians 6:17, what is the sword of the Spirit? "...which is the **word of God**". Get in the *Bible*. Practice with the sword of the Spirit until you can parry the sword of discouragement thrust at you - and with plenty of practice, maybe even disarm the adversary. Get in there and let the words of the Saviour ring in your ears: "...be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." So, that's one practical thing for me.

A second thing that I personally use is a bit of historical perspective. I was a student of history before I was a student of the *Bible*, or for that matter, before I was a believer in Jesus Christ. So, for me to not try to make application of lessons from history or find analogies between past and present situations would be to waste an asset at my disposal.

For example, it is sometimes easy to feel a bit daunted by the enormity of the mission before us. We are up "...against spiritual wickedness in high *places*." Sometimes it can feel overwhelming. And then I think about how the Allies felt in the early part of the Second World War, especially the morale of the civilian population. The enemy ran amok, and their losses were few and small by comparison. Victory over the enemy was not a foregone conclusion in the public consciousness. Even as late as D-Day, General Eisenhower had two reports at the ready, one in case of defeat at the Normandy beaches and one for success. But that generation persevered, trusting in the justice of their cause, even without a book to tell them of the outcome of the struggle. On the other hand, we *have* an ancient Book that reveals the outcome of *our spiritual* struggle. The Captain of our salvation has already won the decisive victory and we face only the desperate malice of a defeated foe. The Quartermaster General of our forces has an unlimited supply that makes Franklin Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy" look empty by comparison. It makes our perseverance seem easy by comparison, with all these great advantages that we have. This is a strategy that gives me practical help. Perhaps you could come up with your own version to help counter discouragement.

But even better is having the right spouse to bolster you. Those of you who know Patti, know that she is the right helper for me. Would that God might give me half her gift! But God distributes His gifts as He sees fit, and I will be satisfied with that.

In about three weeks or so, Joey and Julie Bacon are planning to be here with us all the way from Texas. (BTW, it was Joey who posed the question online, so I thought I'd share my answer with all of you; for how others answered, see Joey's post on Facebook.) We are looking forward to having a good time of fellowship in the Lord...and have some face-to-face encouragement.

Beloved of God, thank you for partnering with us all these years...every prayer on behalf of us and the people here - the ones who know the Lord and the lost...every love offering...faithful support for the Lord's work...you continue to be such a blessing. And I hope this video has been a blessing to many of you. Grace and peace to you all. Amen.