

MAY *God's Leaders are Encouraged*

Read Jeremiah 15:15–21, Matthew 28:20b and John 10:11–18. What similarities do you see?

"We have been at this for years," said the congregation president. "We brainstorm new ministries, we dream dreams and every time we try to put our plans into action, something gets in the way. We always seem to be stuck in the rut of doing the same old thing and we can't get out of it."

"You know," said farmer Arnold, one of the older council members. "I love to start to work my fields in March, to get a head start. But almost every time I try that, I get stuck in the mud. But when I wait on God's time—when the fields are ready—everything goes just right. I think maybe we'd better see if we can move in God's time instead of our own."

Sometimes doing God's work can be discouraging. We see the way we need to go; we see the actions that need to be taken and nothing happens. We push and prod and still nothing happens. And like the council president, we begin to think that almost anything we want to do is beyond us.

Jeremiah felt like that. He'd done what he was called to do. He boldly spoke God's word. For his trouble he was scorned and rejected. In his discouragement he seems to cry out "Why? Why does all this trouble come my way? I'm doing my job. Why the pain?" God's answer is powerful. "I am with you," comes the word. It is the promise that comes to all those facing a great or discouraging task. To

Moses and Gideon, to Jeremiah and the disciples, the promise is the same: "I am with you."

Jesus makes us that same promise. No matter how discouraged we may become, no matter how difficult the task or how often we are tempted to despair, God promises to be with us. We can be certain that even though things don't go according to our schedule, God is with us and at work in us. For we are the sheep following the shepherd's lead. And he leads us to the blessing that God has in store for us. It's a promise.

Jesus said and continues to say, "You did not choose me but I chose you. . . ." (John 15:16) In that promise, we are encouraged to keep on keeping on by the Spirit's power.



For reflection and discussion

When have you become discouraged or frustrated in your attempts to serve? What did God's promise mean to you then? How can you help each other in times of discouragement?

Prayer

Lord, help us to see past the dark clouds toward the bright light of your promise. Give us your Spirit, your presence, and your power so that all that we do can be done in your time and according to your will. In the name of the one who overcame every testing for us. Amen.