

# The Bulwark

MARCH 15, 2026

## ENCOURAGEMENT: A BLESSED GIFT

There is an old Merle Haggard song that bemoans the woes of a man who has lost his job just as the holiday season begins. The factory worker realizes that he can't provide for his daughter the way he would like; and what should be a happy time is anything but. The title of the song is "If We Make It Through December."



sense of overall encouragement one to another (see verses six through sixteen). Consider as well what is seen a few chapters later. "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that with one purpose and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(15:5-6)

A feeling of despondency can arise any time, but it seems to be amped up in December. Expectations seem to be a little higher, while disappointments seem to go deeper. A word of encouragement received can be a most welcomed gift. "If we make it through December everything's gonna be all right, I know it's the coldest time of winter and I shiver when I see the falling snow. If we make it through December got plans to be in a warmer town come summertime. Maybe even California, if we make it through December, we'll be fine." Bleak...longing for a little encouragement. Something to push back against the smothering angst.

In the twelfth chapter of Romans, Paul points out that as disciples of Christ we all have the capability to render service of exhortation and a

Joseph, who was a member of the early church, a Levite of Cyprian origin, was called "Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means 'Son of Encouragement') ..." (Acts 4:36) That name stuck as did his ways of encouraging the brethren. A while later, it was Barnabas who defended Saul (later to be known as Paul) as he sought to identify himself with the brethren in Jerusalem. The apostles were more than a little hesitant to accept him as he tried to kill and imprison members of the Lord's church. But Barnabas was staunch in affirming Saul had been transformed.

Paul (formerly Saul) knew the import of encouragement as he wrote to the brethren in Corinth. "Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2Corinthians 1:3-4) In short Paul is encouraging future generations of God's children to pay forward the encouragement we have all received at one time or another. What a blessed gift we can present to another by a timely spoken word or a hand written card received in the mail. "If there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion..." (Philippians 2:1) (wbe)

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