

Altared!

“But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.’ As soon as Asa heard these words of the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.” – 2 Chronicles 15:7-8 ESV

As I was reading in the Bible the other day, I ran across this passage. I found this to be a very fitting scripture for me in trying to raise up a team. At times life is trying for all of us. It requires us to stay focused on God. It is so easy to focus on the money, or the deadline, or a variety of other things; but the most important thing is to remain focused on God. This season in my life is more than just a time of raising up finances and prayer partners, it is also one of ministry. I have always known this, but I have felt like I had forgotten. I was intent on starting my ministry when I left the US, but soon discovered that was definitely the wrong mindset. I found out that my ministry should have already started before I had ever reached Zambia. Fellow missionary friends of mine who started fund-raising at the same time as me have already been funded 100%. This has been difficult for me. I look at where I’m at and I feel so behind. It has been a bit discouraging for me; but then I read the above verse. *“But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”* Such a word is for me! There is no time in the world for me to feel discouraged; in fact, I have chosen to seize that courage. Take it for myself!

I needed to renew my mind. Fund-raising is a massive reward in itself. Every person that joins my team is another person desiring to grow God’s Kingdom. That’s a win to me. After any struggle, with any job, the end is always the best... it is the fulfillment and relief of knowing you have made it. I know that is how it will be for me when I reach 100%. I will be able to breathe and say ‘I took courage and did not let my hands become weak.’ There is so much opportunity for me to practice patience and to love because my ministry has already started. I am perpetually in ministry and I must never forget that.

I did feel down and discouraged, but when I seized that courage there was a new fire that lit within me, one that has caused me to put away those things that distracted me

from my ministry -- those detestable discouragements. I have had to remove those from my sight and truly begin now the ministry which has already been there. ‘Asa repaired the altar of the LORD,’ but the altar was already there. I have had to refocus onto my ministry. It has always been there. I just let too much dust gather on it; but it is starting afresh and going full force because my hands aren’t weak. I won’t let them become weak. My God, my teammates, and myself are partners and we pull this ministry from this point on and forevermore.

This Old Testament passage felt so personal to me. It was just what I needed to read; and of course, God knew that. I wonder if the writer of these specific verses ever thought his words would profoundly affect someone the way they have affected me? I will turn the focus to you, my friends. I tell you who are struggling with anything, any of you who are going through a rough patch at work, or home, I even speak to any of my fellow missionaries still fund-raising to listen and **Take courage! Do not let your hands become weak, for your work shall be rewarded.** Now remove those blinders and turn towards God. He has you and as soon as this period is over, you will see how you took courage and focused on God and how happy He is that you chose to rely on Him. This is so much more than just taking courage and being strong. The most important part of the scripture is at the end about repairing the altar. Fix your eyes back on Jesus. My eyes had turned away, but I have repaired my altar. I looked back to Jesus, my perfect Sacrifice. He is the reason I have to have courage and to not let my hands become weak. Jesus has been and always will be the reason why I chose to become a missionary! My hands become weak.’ There is so much opportunity for me to practice patience and to love because my ministry has already started. I am perpetually in ministry and I must never forget that.

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