A Time for Courage

SUMMARY

Fear is a crippling emotion.

It causes anxiety, divides our minds, and drains our energy. Unnecessary apprehension can hinder us from accomplishing God’s will for our lives. The Lord never intended His followers to dread the future. Although we may feel afraid at times, we should never let fear control us.

One of my favorite passages on overcoming fear is found in the story of Joshua. God said: “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9). The promise that God gave Joshua that day is no less true for us today. There is no need for fear when we lean on the powerful presence of the Lord.

SERMON POINTS

Why did Joshua need courage?

As second in command, Joshua had seen how the people had rebelled against Moses. On more than one occasion, they had even wanted to stone their leader when they disagreed with him. After Moses had passed away, Joshua was in charge of leading these disobedient people into the Promised Land. Even more frightening were the battles they would have to fight against skilled warriors in order to take possession of the territory.

In challenging Joshua to be courageous, God reassured him of His presence: “Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them” (Josh. 1:5-6). The Lord also promised Joshua that he would find success if he faithfully meditated on and obeyed Scripture (Josh. 1:8-9).

What did God command Joshua about being courageous?

Courage is more than a tough determination to succeed. I define it as “a quality of mind or spirit that enables us to meet danger, opposition, or the challenges of life with fearlessness, calmness, and firmness.” Someone who has courage may still feel afraid, but through the power of God, can act with confidence.

In just a few verses, God tells Joshua three times to “be strong and courageous” (Josh. 1:6, 7, 9). What is the reason for such repetition? He knew the people of Israel would try to control how Joshua led them. But the Lord wanted divine wisdom, not human logic, to guide the nation. For example, to defeat Jericho, God told Joshua to have the army march around the city once a day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day. If Joshua’s confidence had been in himself and his military experience, he may have resisted God’s unorthodox, but highly successful plan.

God also told Joshua to obey the law of Moses: “Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you . . . so that you may have success wherever you go” (Josh. 1:7). This is the key to our success too. We no longer have to obey the laws given to the Jews in Exodus and Deuteronomy about sacrificial rituals and dietary rules. However, we should follow the moral commands given to Moses and the other biblical writers. When making decisions, rather than consulting primarily our feelings or friends, we need to seek to abide by the
clear instructions in God’s Word. He is also faithful to speak to our hearts with specific guidance if we are careful to listen.

The Lord made a marvelous promise to Joshua: He would be with him no matter what happened (Josh. 1:5). As followers of Jesus, we have the same reassurance. Our Savior is always with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-20). He has promised us, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). If you have accepted the Father’s gift of salvation, Christ Jesus is your constant companion.

What can we do to develop courage?

- **Meditate on God’s Word.** The Lord told Joshua to meditate on the book of the law. Instead of just quickly reading a large section of the Bible each day, choose a shorter passage and really think about it. Ask God what it means and how to apply it to your life.

  Meditating on God’s Word will do several things: 1) Quiet your spirit. As you focus on the Lord and His goodness, your fears will dissolve. 2) Sharpen your perception. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The Bible will give you a discernment you didn’t have before. 3) Purify your heart. Scripture penetrates our deepest being, revealing to us our innermost thoughts so that we can deal with sin (Heb. 4:12). 4) Clarify your direction. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (NKJV). In any challenge, burden, or heartache we face, God is willing to show us how to walk through it successfully (Prov. 3:5-6). Focusing on Scripture makes it easier to hear our heavenly Father’s guidance.

- **Recall God’s faithfulness in your life.** What happened in the past when you faced difficulties with His help? You cried out to Him. You spent time reading His Word. You chose to believe the promises you found there. And God gave you strength to overcome despite adversity.

Remembering such experiences can give you courage when you feel afraid.

- **Observe the courage of others.** Believers who face tremendous challenges emerge victorious if they rely on God’s strength. As others share their testimonies of the Lord’s faithfulness, let their stories reinforce your faith in Him.

- **Ask the critical question.** If I don’t obey God, what will happen? Every action, whether good or bad, has a consequence. We reap what we sow, more than we sow, and later than we sow. Rebelling against God may seem easier now, but it ultimately will be painful. Trusting and obeying Him always brings blessing.

- **Recall His promise to be with us at all times.** The Lord told Joshua that He would never forsake him. Scripture says you and I have the same assurance today. Our omnipotent God has all power to guide us and give us success in life.

**RESPONSE**

Unless you experience genuine affection, you will never know true joy and contentment in life. To love and be loved—that is God’s best for us.

Maybe you feel all alone. Remember the Father’s love is always available if you have accepted His gift of salvation. Because Christ laid down His life on the cross, you and I can be reconciled to our Creator and have constant fellowship with Him. There is nothing more fulfilling and meaningful than experiencing His divine affection. Draw near to God, and let Him fill your heart with His perfect love.

- Can you name a person whom you have loved sacrificially?
- Has anyone ever demonstrated God’s love towards you? In what way?

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