

The Wickedness Of Being a Discouragement To Others

by James Jennings

This sermon focuses on the wickedness of being a discouragement to others, emphasizing the impact of discouragement on faith and courage. It highlights the importance of trusting God's promises and not being swayed by what is seen, encouraging believers to have confidence in the Lord despite trials. The message warns against causing discouragement in others and urges listeners to be sources of encouragement by being rooted in the Word of God and prayer.

Scripture: Numbers 32:6, Numbers 13:17, Deuteronomy 20:8, Colossians 3:21, 2 Chronicles 32:7, Acts 4:13

Topics: "Encouragement", "Trusting God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to Numbers 32. I want to think about the wickedness of being a discouragement to others. The wickedness of being a discouragement to others.

So I hope this is an encouraging sermon. Unless you're a discouragement, then you won't leave encouraged. You'll be discouraged about not being an encouragement.

And then my only plea to you is don't get caught in some cycle where you're back and forth analyzing yourself and you fall into self-pity. No one will be encouraged by you if you're having a pity party. Numbers 32.

Let's just start in v. 6. The first five verses just speak about these tribes wanting to stay in this land. They don't want to keep going further. They want to stay and take this land as their possession.

As v. 5 says, do not take us across the Jordan. V. 6, But Moses said to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, Shall your brothers go to war while you sit here? Look at this statement. Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the Lord has given them?

Amazing, right? There's land the Lord's given that they've yet to take, but it's given to them.

It's incredible. V. 8, Your fathers did this. So now, he's bringing in history.

You want to give someone a really firm reproof on an action they're about to do? Can you appeal to something in history? Your fathers did this. Wow, appealing to their fathers. When I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land, when I sent them.

V. 9, For when they went up to the valley of Eshgal and saw the land, here we have it again, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the Lord had given them. So you see here two times, right? You guys presently are discouraging the hearts of these Israelites if you don't go into the land and wage war with them. And then remember your fathers.

Your fathers were a discouragement to the hearts of those people back then when the spies came and the report that 10 of them gave. It was a real discouragement. How do you think God views this discouraging the hearts of these people? How does the Lord view it? Well, let's find out.

V. 10, And the Lord's anger was kindled on that day, and He swore, saying, Surely, none of the men who came up out of Egypt from twenty years old and upward shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me. None except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Chazanite, and Joshua the son of Nun. For they have wholly followed the Lord.

V. 13, The Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years until all the generation that had done evil on the side of the Lord was gone. And behold, you have risen in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel. For if you turn away from following Him, He will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all this people." But you see it there, two times, discourage their hearts.

Discourage their hearts. Right there, v. 7 and in v. 9. They discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land. And to be discouraged, it's to have a loss of confidence.

You lose confidence. Instead of having courage, you lose confidence about moving forward. Instead of pressing forward, you get discouraged and what happens? You shrink back.

You don't go forward. You shrink back. And these men are discouraging the hearts of the people as their fathers did in the previous situation from many decades ago.

And as I mentioned, what does this discouragement bring about from the Lord? Yeah, His fierce anger is brought about. And you could say, well, yeah, but that's because they're not wholly following Him. Right.

But why is that happening? Their hearts are being discouraged. The discouragement leads to a lack of confidence where you don't wholly go on after the Lord and God's fierce anger is brought about, verse 14 says. And to me that's interesting because kind of like a sin like self-pity or anxiety, do you look at how sinful it is to be a discouragement to others? Do you look at how does God view me when I am a discouragement to others? God is angry at these people, right? When in their own belief, they drag others down and they cause those other individuals to lose courage.

That increases the fierce anger of God. That's what, I mean, do you guys see that in the passage here? Right, He's reproofing them. You discourage their hearts.

And then He says, it says the outcome of this is the fierce anger of God, verse 14. It increases still more and more. And then look at verse 14.

It says these men have risen in their father's place, a brood of sinful men. So let's consider their fathers. Let's go to numbers 13.

This is where we're going to spend our time. Numbers 13, by them not moving forward, fully trusting the Lord, their discouragement to the other individuals of Israel, and this is provoking the fierce anger of God, the God who is fully trustworthy, the God who's given us every reason we have to trust Him. And yet, people are not trusting in the Lord here.

So number 13, let's start in verse 17. Moses sent them, and the them is referring to the chiefs of the tribes. He sent them out to spy out the land of Canaan.

And he said to them, go up into the Nagab and go up into the hill country and see what the land is and see whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, whether the land they dwell in is good or bad, whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. And then he commands them in a positive way, be of good courage, right? The opposite of being discouraged and full of discouragement is you're full of courage, right? You're not stepping back, you're stepping forward. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.

Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes. Now go to verse 25. At the end of the forty days, they returned from spying out the land.

And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, we came to the land to which you sent us.

It flows with milk and honey. And this is its fruit. Verse 28, However, however, the people who dwell in the land are very strong and the cities are fortified and very large.

And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Emittites dwell in the land of the Negev. The Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites dwell in the hill country.

And the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the Jordan. So here, these ten of the spies are given a very, very negative report. They've been told to go in the land and be of good courage.

They come back. They start with something positive. Then they bring in the statements, however, besides.

They bring in these two statements. They put all this negative, discouraging content forward. And Caleb tries to make an attempt here to steer things in another direction.

Verse 30, But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are able to overcome it. This is faith speaking. Then the men who had gone up with him said, we're not able.

He got Caleb. We are able. He got the other guys.

We are not able. We're able. We're not able.

We're able. We're not able. You've got this debate here.

One thing you've got to remember is their accusation about we're not able ultimately reflects their view of who? Of God. They're ultimately accusing God of not having the ability to give them that which He has promised. That is an incredibly deadly accusation to make against the Lord.

What verse were we in here? Verse 31, Then the men who had gone up with him said, we are not able to go up against the people. Why? For they are stronger than we are. So, they brought to the people of Israel a bad report.

Or you could say this, a discouraging report. Very discouraging what they're saying. Their whole tone is just... Talk about a wet blanket.

I mean, it just totally discourages you on moving forward when these guys are saying what they're saying. They spied out the land. The land through which we have gone to spy out is a land that devours its inhabitants.

Wow, they must have forgot that our God is an all-consuming fire who devours His enemies. Forget about the land devouring its inhabitants. And all the people that we saw in it are of great height.

And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak who come from Nephilim. And we seem to ourselves... This is their perspective, right? You know what? You want to get discouraged and not go forward for the Lord in some area? Just get an incorrect perspective. View yourself in a way, or view your circumstances in a way that is not according to the Lord.

We seem to ourselves like grasshoppers. And so we seem to them. Let's keep reading a few verses in chapter 14.

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry. And all the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

The whole congregation said to them, would that we had died in the land of Egypt. Or would that we had died in this wilderness. Why is the Lord bringing us into this land? To fall by the sword? Our wives, our little ones, will become prey.

Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt? And they said to one another, let us choose a leader and let's go back to Egypt. Verse 5, then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun and Cadle the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, they tore their clothes.

They said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, the land which we passed through to spy it out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into this land and He will give it to us. A land that flows with milk and honey.

Only do not rebel against the Lord. Do not fear the people of the land, for they are bred for us. Their protection is removed from them.

And the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. Then all the congregation, they didn't agree with him.

You want to talk about being encouraged? Imagine standing there and you hear Caleb. That would be encouraging to hear everything Caleb is saying. And what do they do to the encourager amongst them? Yeah, let's stone them.

Verse 10, they said to stone them with stones, but the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of the meeting to all the people of Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, how long will this people despise Me? How long will they not believe in Me in spite of all the signs that I have done for them? I will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they. Amen.

Well, that's the Word of God. So, if you just came in before what I've stated at the beginning, what we're going to look at right now is the wickedness of being a discouragement to others. And it's interesting to me, in the account we just read, as we saw in Numbers 32, the way the Scriptures describe what just took place here is that they discouraged the hearts.

They discouraged the hearts of the nation. That's how Numbers 32 describes it. And as we saw, that discouraging the heart, the hearts of these people was something that brought about God's fierce anger, right? Because rather than having courage, which the Lord told them to be of good courage, to go forward trusting Him, people make statements that cause discouragement internally in individuals' hearts where they doubt the Lord and they shrink back.

And what I'm calling that is something wicked when you and I do that, right? I want us to view it as the Lord views it, because it brought about His fierce anger. It brings about people not wholly following the Lord as they should. And I feel like even just studying this is hitting me in a fresh way.

Do I view the times that I'm a discouragement to you all from wholly following the Lord in some specific way? Do I see it for what it is? It brought about the fierce anger of God. Right? This isn't some little neutral thing there where you being a discouragement has no effect. It has an effect.

We saw the effect it had on all of these other individuals. So that's what we're going to consider. The spies were going out to the land that is called the promised land, as we call it.

The promised land. It's not the unpromised land. It's not the land that was up for auction.

It is the land that is said was given to them by the Lord. Given prior to them even conquering it. And even given to them even after they didn't enter the first time and they've got to wait 40 more years, it's still that secure of a thing for them to take that the Lord has promised.

I mean, there's every reason to believe the Lord, and yet here people doubt the Lord in unbelief and they bring about discouragement upon the nation. And we saw there how they should respond. Numbers 13, verse 20.

He just made multiple statements. Whether the people, verse 18, whether the people are strong or weak, whether few or many, whether the land is good or bad, whether the cities they are in are camps, or it's a city with massive stone walls and it's a stronghold, whether the land is rich or poor, whether there are trees, or whether it's a barren desert. His point is all those things are irrelevant.

Whether it's this or that or that, don't get consumed in the circumstances. I want you to be of good courage and I'm going to give you the land. Those things don't matter is what the Lord is telling them.

And yet they let these things, obviously 10 of the spies let this factor in to a point where it stripped them of their courage. It stripped them of their courage. And it says right there in verse 13, 18, and see what the land is.

See. I mean, you're commanded to go into the land. You don't know what you're going to find out.

You go in there and what changed their perspective on God's ability? What ultimately allowed unbelief to enter in and cause them to lose courage? Say again? How did they know there were giants there? They didn't send 12 blind spies. They sent men in who had two things you've got on your head. Eyes.

And their eyes and what they saw with their eyes determined their perception of the situation. Oh, this is bad. That guy is huge.

We're small. I feel like I'm a grasshopper and he's going to come over here and crush me. What happened to what the Lord said? You know what happens often? Your eyes, what you see, leads to you losing heart and falling into discouragement.

Brethren, we are a people who walk by faith, not by sight. Yet, we are a people who have to continue to be reminded of this reality because we're living in the realm of the sight. We're seeing things.

You might have seen something this week that discouraged your heart. We're going by faith in the Word of God and His promises, not by sight. And so you have this dynamic inner here of what you see affects them and not going forward.

And this is a continual theme throughout the Bible, the Old Testament. Everything's going a-okay. You're following the Lord, and then you face a trial, and what you see with the physical eye looks like this is an impossibility.

But what do we find often happens? You don't see the thousands of angels that are surrounding you. You don't see the power of God and His ability to absolutely conquer in that situation. And there are certain people the Lord lets them see into that realm, but often, you and I, we don't see into that realm.

We've got to take it by faith. And you know, these guys were gone 40 days. They had time to think about what they were going to communicate to the people.

This wasn't them running into a five minute video on YouTube about what is the land like, and they come away with a knee-jerk reaction. They had time to fight the thoughts of discouragement and unbelief. Did Caleb and Joshua even know what the other ten spies were going to say? Did that just catch them off guard? We don't know some of those details.

Look at v. 28. I emphasize this, but look at this. This is a very interesting word.

However. Have you guys ever used that word before? This is true, this is true, this is true, this is true. However.

It doesn't matter. All this is true. However, look at this.

Right? That's what unbelief does. I should believe God, but however, this is here, so now I lack an ability to trust the Lord. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong.

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You're worshipping the Lord who you've already seen do what up until this point? Divide the Red Sea. I mean, who's got strength destroying Pharaoh and his men? Who picked up a sword for that battle? God did.

And He used creation to consume His enemies. Who has strength? He does. There's every reason to be courageous because you have the Lord with you.

But the people, however, we saw. We saw. We saw the descendants of Anak there.

You know, it flows with milk and honey. However, we saw something. Tall people.

Therefore, we're going to disregard all that we've seen God do. We're going to disregard what God has said. We're just going to fall into the state of discouragement and we can't move forward because we're too weak and God's too weak and God's not going to be with us.

Unbelief, brethren. All this does is it stinks of rotten unbelief. We saw it there.

Look at 14:11. The Lord said to Moses, how long will this people do what? Despise Me. How long will they what? Not believe in Me.

In spite of all the signs that I have done among them. Isn't it amazing? You see, unbelief leads you and I to lack courage, and therefore we could be a discouragement to others. And when we're a discouragement to others, it actually increases the fierce anger of God because our being a discouragement to others is preventing them from following the Lord in a direction they should be going because we make a statement to them that causes discouragement to enter their heart and they stop moving forward for Christ because of something we said.

Brethren, how many spies spoke negatively? Ten. How many people heard what the spies spoke? Millions. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands.

And look how it affected all of them. How many people does it take to cause great discouragement? It could take ten people to discourage a million Israelites to not trust the Lord. It's incredible.

That's very weighty, right? The very words I'm saying right now could be used to encourage, discourage, cause unbelief, help create faith. I mean, some dynamic could be happening right now. Obviously, I'm hoping it's a positive dynamic from the text.

So, are they of good courage like Moses told them? No. They've not. They've lost confidence based on what they saw.

It's amazing, isn't it? God can just become irrelevant in your present circumstances because you get too caught up in what your trial looks like. God help us. The Lord is never irrelevant.

The Lord is never far off. The Lord is always there. Does what you see cancel God's promises for you? No.

My confidence in persevering to the end by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what I see, whatever comes my way, that can't cause doubt to enter in that the Lord will not do as He has promised. It's not like the Lord's lied here. It's not like the Lord's misrepresented things.

I mean, the Lord even said, whether it's this or that, the Lord wasn't telling them exactly what they would find. I mean, in a way, this was going to test them. It was going to test them to see do they trust the Lord? The Lord could have said, you're going to run into giants in there.

The Lord didn't do that. He didn't tell them ahead of time exactly what they would find other than the fact they'd find fruit. Because He wanted to see when they faced what they faced with their eyes, would they believe Him or doubt Him? Same thing in our lives.

The Lord has not told you what the next ten years of your life will look like. That would defeat the purpose of the test of faith. As you enter trials, as I enter trials, we've got to trust the Lord no matter what we see with our eyes.

But we clearly see it takes faith to trust God when the odds are stacked against you in the physical realm. And the prevailing way that you and I interpret our circumstances can't be based on what we see with our eyes. Because that's what these guys did and it didn't end up well at all.

Notice Caleb's confidence there in v. 30. He says, let us go up when? At once. This guy's got no delay.

Let's go. Let's go. Why could you have such a confidence? And he has that confidence even after all these people are doubting.

You'd think he'd say, let's wait a week for them to think it through. No, because who's the victory belong to? The Lord. You've just got to take their next step.

Believe God. And the Lord's going to come through. He's going to help you, believer.

He's going to strengthen you. But they brought a bad report. V. 32 says, they report full of unbelief, full of discouragement.

Just so discouraging compared to everything that Caleb says. And they lost their confidence based on what they saw. Based on what their eyes witnessed.

And it's interesting here, the other word, it's not just however, but look later at the end of v. 28. He just finished saying the cities are fortified and very large. And he says, and besides.

Why would you say that? What's he mean? And besides. I mean, he just stated all these things are true. And it's kind of like he's saying this is the final nail in the coffin.

Like we wouldn't encourage you all to go just based on all of these things being true, but to top it off, besides all of that, we saw the descendants of the antichrist there. Kind of like that totally does us in where we can't go. And isn't that how it is with us sometimes, Christian? You're going along.

You feel courageous. You're believing the Lord. And all of a sudden, it's like everything that seems maybe doable, and then, oops, the Anak get thrown in.

And all of a sudden, now, you really struggle with believing God. You know, it looked like it was going to work out. Just as long as this one thing doesn't happen, the Anak aren't there, then maybe we'll do it.

And then boom, the Anak are there. It's like, oh, man, I thought I wouldn't be discouraged if this one thing didn't happen. Then it happens.

Right? Think in your life. Has you ever had anything like that happen? You kind of reason like that? Caleb, he doesn't let these things faze him. He's by faith trusting the Lord.

Look at v. 33 again. The whole thing of perspective at the end there. He says, we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers.

Where else does the Bible talk about grasshoppers? Isaiah. Listen to this. Isaiah 40, verse 21, Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like what? Grasshoppers.

Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, spreads them like a tent to dwell in. Who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. I mean, newsflash, you think you're like a grasshopper.

I mean, the reality is all of humanity is ultimately like a grasshopper before the Lord God Almighty. Brethren, we need to get rid of the howevers. We need to get rid of the and besides this thing.

We need to have faith. We need to be encouraged in our hearts to be obedient to the Lord, to follow Him, to trust Him. Don't let there be one thing that gets added on and it tops it off where it's like I can't go on.

I could have went on, but then that one thing happened. Is that what your faith is like? That's unbelief. You've got to trust the Lord.

Like I said, ten spies discouraging over a million people, the women and children included. Ten chiefs of the tribes. What they said had a massive impact.

Do you realize the negative impact of discouragement you could have on the brethren? Do I realize that? I mean, there's something there to be gripped with. You know what talks about death and life are in the power of the tongue? One of the ways you could bring death is with a discouraging word. You could strip someone of their courageousness to by faith press on to the Lord.

You could go, I appreciate your faith, brother, but don't you see that? Do you see? Do you see what I see? The anchor over there. You see, it doesn't matter the faith you have. Let's dump water on the coals of the burning faith.

Let's go look at what things look like. Then you lose heart. And now, God's fierce anger is against you for being a discouragement to them and stripping them of the confidence that they were having as they were trying to plow on for Christ.

So we shouldn't say besides the anchor there, we should always say besides, God is with us, so we go forward. If He's with us, who could be against us? Isn't that Paul's argument in Romans 8? What an argument of faith that we've got to believe. So Joshua and Caleb, we saw it.

They sought to encourage the people. They tore their clothes. They desperately said what they said.

But the people wanted to stone them. The people wanted to stone them. And then we read in chapter 14, verse 11, we saw the Lord's response is how long are these people going to despise Me? How long will they not believe Me? They're rebelling against the Lord.

They feared man. They don't have a fear for God. Think of this, by fearing what they saw and not acting on what God said, they're despising the Lord Himself.

Anytime I don't act on what God has said because of what I've saw, the Lord says I'm despising Him. I'm treating Him as little because I'm not going forward. I'm not having courage there.

It's an act of unbelief. So think of this, this whole giving into discouragement is giving into what? Not just unbelief, but to use the words of the text, giving into discouragement is giving into despising of the Lord. They had a clear path.

The Lord commanded them. Yet, they fell into discouragement, which is unbelief, and they didn't go forward. And ultimately, the text says they despised the Lord Himself.

I mean, do you think of discouragement like that? You being discouraged to go forward and be courageous for the Lord means you're not trusting His power for you to go forward. In other words, you're despising Him and viewing the Lord as small and insignificant with whatever it is that you're facing on the path ahead of you. So I think it's interesting.

It's one thing to say, you know, I'm really discouraged. It's another thing to say, I'm really despising the Lord right now. How do we tend to word it? We don't say, I'm really despising the Lord.

We use the phrase, I'm really discouraged right now. You really lack the courage and the confidence to believe God in the midst of your trial and move forward because of something you saw. And you're not moving forward.

The Lord looks at you and says, how long will they despise Me despite all the signs and the wonders that I've done? You guys see what I'm saying? Perspective. I'm wanting to think, according to this passage, correctly about the seriousness of being a discouragement to you brethren. I don't want to be a source of discouragement.

I want to be a source of you finding courage to believe the Lord and follow Him wholeheartedly. And what's that going to take? We've got to believe God in His power, right? Look at 14 v. 9. This is an amazing statement. He gives a reason why not to fear the people of the land.

And he actually gives a perspective there. He says they're like bread for us. Isn't that an interesting way to look at it? And then what's the next thing he says? Their protection is removed from them.

What's that? What's that imply? Any protection anyone has is put there by who? And that protection, if it's removed, is removed by who? The Lord. Pretty simple. And that's one of the reasons He gives to not fear.

So obviously, if you don't go forward and you're not courageous, what does that imply? They don't believe what about the Lord. They don't believe the Lord is the one who gives protection and removes protection. I mean, if you really believed that, you would keep marching, right? You would trust Him in faith.

The ironic thing is their disobedience, not going forward believing the Lord has removed the protection of the people of the land and they will get victory, what's that now done to their protection? The Israelites' protection. Where's their protection gone? It's now being removed and the fierce anger of God is now being against them because they're despising Him and not believing Him. So the very move they thought they took to protect themselves ended up doing what? Endangering themselves.

It's kind of like that story, that antidote we keep repeating of Rosalind Goforth where she had such a sense. Her husband was saying, we've got to move to a certain place in China. We've got to move the family.

They'd already had one child die. And she thought we're not going to go there because there's all this sickness. We're going to lose more children.

And she did not submit to her husband. She fought her husband and she stayed there. And God killed one of her children.

And then they went all the way up to that place. They were there for decades. And no kid ever got severely sick.

And the whole point is, you're most protected when you're in the will of God, right? Your greatest protection is being in the will of God. It's not being in a place where everything appears to be full of protection because the only reason any protection is anywhere is the Lord. You want to think about how unprotected you are? Apart from God, listen to Kurt Daniels' sermon called A Step Between Life and Death.

He goes through lists of ways people died. From mowing their lawn and a plane flew over and a bolt fell off and it flew all the way down and hit the guy in his head and he died. You're just hearing the sermon and all these ways people died.

And you just realize we are but grasshoppers. We are but small before God. Apart from His protection, we won't make it.

We could have a stroke at any moment. God could take our life. So the safest place to be is the place God has guided you, right? By not going into the land to face the giants, they're actually putting themselves in greater danger.

Who would have thought? You're putting yourself in greater danger by not facing great danger in the physical realm because you are now disobeying the Lord. So do you see here? Not going forward for the Lord because one is discouraged, is despising the Lord. It's an act of unbelief.

We instead should have courage to trust the Lord despite what our eyes have seen and to believe Him. Let's see, what time is it? We've got 20 more minutes. Okay, so where's your confidence in Christ today, right? Being courageous, being encouraged is having confidence in the Lord.

It's all about who God is. Who is the Lord to you? What is your view of the Lord? It's not even about being confident you're in the will of God. You could say, well, I need confidence I'm in the will of God, then I'll have courage to go forward.

You know what you need? You need confidence in God more than you need some confidence that you're in the will of God. What if you get confidence you're in the will of God and you're not and you've deceived yourself? I mean, how do you know whether you're in the will of God or not? Well, you're not looking so much for what's the will of God as you're looking to God, following Christ, and then He is faithfully guiding you. And you'll find yourself in His will and serving Him.

But discouragement, it says what the spies said. We are not able. I'm not saying there's not a time where you actually need to discourage someone who's saying we're able and they're saying we're able to do something that's just, it is crazy and it's not a faith.

I mean, there's times you want to discourage people and it's a right discouragement. But often, us being a discouragement and bringing in the language we are not able, often it's rooted in some unbelief there. And what we see, we're not going by faith.

Listen to J.O. Frazier. He was a isolated missionary among a mountain people in China. And for years, he saw very little fruit.

Eventually, revival came to the mountains. And after a trial, listen to what he said. If such a trial had happened a year ago, it would have driven me down to the depths of depression.

I have given way to discouragement, dark discouragement far too much in the past. Now I know rather better and thoroughly agree with the assertion all discouragement is of the devil. Discouragement is to be resisted just like sin.

And we've seen that here from numbers. Discouragement is to be resisted just like sin. To give way to one is just as bad and weakens us as much as to give way to the other.

God has wonderfully sustained me through this trial. And to Him be all the praise when I say, that not for one instant has it disturbed my peace or radiant faith in the risen and ascended Lord. God has enabled me to trust Him more than ever before, to rejoice in Him more than ever before, and to believe more than ever before for a work of grace among the lesu.

You see, Frazier, he got to a point he had to view being discouraged for what it is. Sinful unbelief. If you don't even view discouragement in that way, brethren, it's like having lust in your life and you don't view it as sin.

You're content with it. It can't be so. Discouragement is despising the Lord.

It's unbelief. It's lacking courage and confidence in God because of what we've seen. Therefore, we don't go forward.

As Frazier said, we shouldn't look at that and say it's irrelevant. We should look at that and he says he views others' sin. Frazier goes on, he says the aim of satanic power is to cut off communication with God.

To accomplish this aim, he deludes the soul with a sense of defeat. He covers him with a thick cloud of darkness. He depresses and oppresses the spirit, which in turn hinders prayer and leads to unbelief, thus destroying all power.

The enemy is delighted to have us so occupied incessantly with secondary and trivial concerns as to keep us from attacking and resisting in the true spirit of the conflict. You see, he's so right. He faced it as a missionary.

We've got an enemy who's opposing us. He's wanting us to be discouraged, to be depressed, to be full of darkness, not moving forward. We need to fight and go in the opposite direction.

Well, a few thoughts here in closing and some applications. What does lacking courage lead to? We already saw it. Not moving forward.

And not just not moving forward, what does 14 verse 2 say? Would that we had died in the land of Egypt. It's interesting. Verse 3, would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? Wow, I mean, lacking courage, being discouraged, it's not just that it led them to do nothing.

They actually wanted to go further in reverse. So, I'd ask you this, is there a direction? You are no longer moving forward right now in your life because you are discouraged. Is there some direction? You had confidence in God to go in this direction, and now you're not.

You're not doing whatever it is the Lord had burdened and called you to do because you've been discouraged. You've kind of thrown in the towel. That's the question.

Ask yourself that. Why do we get discouraged? We saw it there, right? Unexpected things. I didn't expect the antic to be there.

If they weren't there, we could have gone on. But brethren, our whole lives are full of things that are totally unexpected. When I followed Christ 15 years ago, I had no idea what trials I was going to face.

Neither did you. Hard trials are not the issue. The issue is how do you respond in the midst of a hard trial? Don't blame the trial.

If you lack courage and you get depressed and discouraged in it, that's your own response of unbelief. The fault's on you. It's not on the Lord.

It's not on the trial. We need to believe the Lord in the midst of the trial. You know what? There's going to be cruel comments made by onlookers telling us to look back.

Telling us God's abandoned you. Telling you that there's no hope. And does that affect you? Does that discouragement, does it affect you? Does it drive you to despair? Joshua and Caleb, apart from them, the ten other spies, they sinned against their brothers.

They sinned against them by discouraging them from going in God's way. And you and I too can discourage the hearts of the brethren. Listen to this.

Deuteronomy 20, v. 8. The officers shall speak further to the people and say, is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? What does he tell them to do? Let him go back to his house. Why? Yeah, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own. Isn't that interesting? Your heart starts melting.

You fall into discouragement. You know what might happen? You might have other people's hearts melt. You might cause that to happen.

And it was so serious here, he's telling those who are causing this discouragement in the midst of the war, go home. Don't stay there and negatively affect others. Brethren, I don't want to be a negative effect of discouragement upon any of you.

And I hope you don't want to be that either. We're all trying with joy to follow the Lord, to be encouraged in Christ in the midst of trials, in the midst of seeing things that we might not have expected when we embarked in this life of faith, not a life of sight. It's faith.

It's faith. So is there anyone that maybe they've made comments to you based on what they saw and it left you discouraged? Or maybe you've done the same thing. As I said, what if one of us elders leading a prayer meeting, a Sunday service, what if we've made a comment that discourages your faith? What if we want to be like Joshua and Caleb, but who says we have perfectly been that? I don't know.

When we're vulnerable, when we're discouraged, that's the time to strike, right? Anahithophel, a very, very wise counselor, he told Absalom that, listen to this, 2 Samuel 17, I will come upon David while he is weary and discouraged. You hear that? That's an opportune time for the enemy. You're discouraged? Man, let's attack and throw him into a panic.

And all the people who are with him will flee. Wow! I mean, in one moment, it's like the enemy sees they're discouraged, let's strike. Let's get them all to just flee and separate.

Let's divide them all from David and keep them advancing. That didn't happen, brethren. They arose, God protected them, and David eventually took the throne again.

And as I said, maybe there's someone you should discourage. Maybe there's a path someone's going on and you look at everything there and you feel like there's no way. I mean, they're trying to go marry an unbeliever or something like that.

You should discourage them. When they meet with you and they go away saying, I feel really discouraged about marrying this unbeliever after the meeting, yeah, they should feel really discouraged about marrying the unbeliever because marrying the unbeliever, it's not the will of God. Look at the despair the people had due to the spies' bad report.

We already kind of saw it. 14, verses 2 and 3, they grumbled. Just look at all the moaning.

Oh, that we had died. Oh, we fell by the sword. Oh, our wives, our little ones, they're going to become prey.

You can't imagine even being there in person. Just seeing all of that happening. The grumbling.

And often, grumbling goes hand in hand with discouragement. Someone who's discouraged, they tend to just grumble a lot. Right? They're already lacking confidence in the Lord.

Their discouragement causes them to be a grumbler. And ultimately, that was them not trusting the Lord. How can we encourage others? Well, by not being discouraged.

You know how encouraging it is when you talk to someone? And you might think, are they discouraged? Are they not? And you find out they're full of encouragement. What does that do to you? It tends to encourage you. Think about Paul.

Philippians 1.14 Most of the brothers having become confident in the Lord because of what? Because of my imprisonment. Paul's there rejoicing in prison. It causes the brethren to become more confident.

And then he says this, they are much more bold to speak the Word without fear. You see, Paul's response in the trials of trusting the Lord despite what he saw, him being encouraged in the trial did what? It encouraged others. Just you being encouraged and happy in Jesus has an incredible effect on the life of the church.

Don't look at that as something small. Just you being confident in the Lord while you're in prison can lead others to have a confidence in Christ. We see that with Paul.

So how can you encourage others? By being encouraged in whatever you're facing right now, brother and sister. How can we be encouraged? By being in the Word of God. We read this in Romans 14 that these things are written down, that the God of endurance and the God of encouragement may grant you to live in such harmony with one another.

And he says that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope. When you go to the Bible, you're going to be encouraged. You want to be encouraged, you be in the Bible.

You be in the Bible, you be memorizing the Scriptures, you start studying the Bible more and more, you believe the promises of God, you trust the promises of God, you write them on your heart, you put them on your wall, and you're going to find yourself being encouraged because what's going to happen when Satan tries to twist a verse like he did to Christ? You're going to have a counterattack from another verse and you're going to win the battle. You're not going to be consumed by the lie of the enemy. You might even feel what they felt in Luke 24 as Christ taught them from the Old Testament Scriptures of how it all pointed to Him.

It says their hearts burned within us. I mean, the more my heart burns from truth from who the Lord is and from His Word, I'm not going to be in discouragement. Then we'll have, as Hebrews 6.18 says, we'll have strong encouragement because of all these things that God has promised who does not lie, we'll have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that is set before us.

So yeah, what is your perspective in whatever you're facing? They said our enemies are like bread. Brethren, what you're facing right now, that trial, it's like bread. What do you do with bread? Eat it.

I mean, look at the antic over there, the giants. Look at a piece of bread. What's more intimidating? The antic over there.

When you view them as what they are in God's eyes, a piece of bread, sit down and get the knife out and start eating. View your trial through the perspective that the Lord says in His Word and you will find encouragement. So, what satanically inspired discouragement in your life right now is causing you to lack courage to do something right now as a Christian? Or is there anyone in the church that you're causing to be discouraged by statements of unbelief? Or even this, the discouragement you and I face, do we act in a similar way to our children? Listen to Colossians 3. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest what happens? They become discouraged.

You realize that, parents? It's not just, oh, I'm a discouragement to the brethren at times. You could be that to your children where you exasperate them with discouragement by your perfectionist mindset or your harsh, impatient parenting with no humility and not apologizing for the ways you sin against them. That's going to be a discouragement to them.

Here, another question is who is someone today that you can speak a word of encouragement to and build up who's going through a trial? You want to have an environment of encouragement in the church and people have encouragement? You be an encouragement. Who can I encourage today who's going through a trial? Maybe they're not going through a trial. Who can I give encouragement to? Another

question, is there a situation you're facing in which you are stuck dwelling on we are not able? Any of you thinking that this morning? Is there some situation where you're saying we're not able? Maybe you're like those in v. 14 too, right? Our wives and our little ones will become prey.

Maybe your overprotective nature of your family is preventing you from doing something in faith that is actually what God wants you to do. Well, we're about out of time. One reason this is a real warning to us here with the Israelites is they had 40 years or more to think about the very lack of faith their fathers had, and in the end, even with that example, they go and they do something similar in v. 32.

And so, my whole point here is I'm hoping we will be an encouragement to this current generation in this church. We don't want to be a discouragement. 2 Chronicles 32 Be strong and courageous.

Do not be afraid or dismayed before the King of Assyria and all the horde that is with Him. For there are more with us than with Him. With Him is an arm of flesh.

But with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles. Brethren, we've got to believe that. Be strong and courageous.

Do not be afraid at the horde because the Lord's with us. The Lord is with us. You want to be encouraged? What's your prayer life like? You commit things to the Lord in prayer when you have a sense of fear entering in or discouragement? You get discouraged.

Someone says something to you today. It discourages you. It makes you lose heart.

Do you go and pray? Listen to Lloyd-Jones from his biography. For MLJ, prayer was primarily fellowship with God. He abhorred any attitude which tended to represent it as a means of getting results.

His testimony was to God, not to prayer. But one cannot truly draw near to God without being affected. In the words of John Flable, prayer begets and maintains a holy courage in evil times when all things about you tend to discouragement.

This is why I read this. It is your being with Jesus that makes you bold. And he appeals to Acts 4.13. He that is used to being before a great God, he who is used to being before a great God will not be afraid to look such little things as men in the face.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, that is so true. The more that we are before You and Your greatness, Lord, the more we'll see all of humanity as but grasshoppers, Lord.

All of our enemies as but a loaf of bread on the table there to be eaten and conquered. Lord, forgive us of the ways that we have not trusted You. And, Father, Lord, I feel like I didn't get to say everything I necessarily wanted to say during this time, but Lord, I pray nonetheless, use this word to, yes, Lord, I pray that brethren, one outcome would be brethren being more of an encouragement to one another in their speech even today, Lord, even in the weeks ahead.

And Lord, part of that I think is, Father, do cause us to be gripped more and more with the wickedness of being a discouragement to others. Lord, that we would look at it like J.O. Frazier said. View discouragement as any other sin.

And so, Lord, give us courage. Give us confidence in You. Father, wherever a sheep here today is lacking confidence in You and in Your promises and what You have said, Lord, I pray that You would break

through into their life.

You'd give them faith to trust You, to believe You. Lord, to not doubt You. Lord, to not look at what they saw and say that God is not able.

Lord, to look and to say, yes, I've learned the secret. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Lord, whatever the circumstance, Lord, Your strength is there.

Lord, help us to believe You. Lord, be with us now even in this time of fellowship. In Christ's name, Amen.

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