

Discouragement Is A Lack Of Courage; Cowardice And A Very Serious Sin

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the danger of discouragement, highlighting how it reflects a lack of courage and can be seen as cowardice in the eyes of God. Using the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark chapter four, it illustrates how even when following Jesus, challenges may arise, testing our faith and courage. The message stresses the need to confront discouragement as a serious sin, akin to a cancer that requires aggressive treatment to root out, as it ultimately leads to cowardice and separation from God.

Scripture: Mark 4:35, Revelation 21:7, 2 Timothy 1:7, Daniel 11:32, Psalm 27:14, Joshua 1:9, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Deuteronomy 31:6, Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "Courage in Faith", "Overcoming Discouragement"

Description

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Transcript

When you think about discouragement, what are the words or the things that come to your mind when you think about it? Discouragement can usually, how do you know if you're discouraged? You can think you don't have motivation or you don't have the energy, you're feeling down, but discouragement is a lot more dangerous. The fundamental problem with discouragement is right in that word, discouragement. It's a lack of courage.

That is what God does not like about discouragement. Another word for discouragement is to be a coward. I have to recognize that when I'm being discouraged, I should say, Lord, what I'm saying is I'm a coward.

That is what God hates. That's what God hates about discouragement, is it is cowardice. It's being cowardly in light of who God is and who we are as the children of God.

It's a great insult to God to be discouraged because despite him dying for us, despite him doing everything for us, we call ourselves children of God and then we act as cowards. That is what is discouragement is.

Interesting way in which God demonstrates this, you would not think that this is, you'll be surprised to read this, is in Mark chapter four.

We know the story in Mark chapter four, verses 35 through 41, is the story where Jesus is in the boat with his disciples and he's asleep. And there are a few things to note about this passage. Mark chapter four, 35 through 41.

I'll just point out a couple of things in verse 35 and 36. Jesus tells the disciples to get into the boat. Who's the one who told him to get into the boat? Jesus did.

The disciples weren't thinking that they're going to do their own thing and just do whatever they plan to do, to go fishing or just go for a boat ride. No, they were following Jesus. Jesus said, let's go.

So they were following Jesus. What happens when they follow Jesus? Now remember, they didn't go off on their own. They followed Jesus away from the crowd because Jesus said, let's get away from the crowd.

What did they do? What happened because of that? They faced a storm. Not something you expect when you follow Jesus. You think Jesus will give you green pastures and still waters? Well, they followed Jesus and they went away from the peace.

The crowd was comfortable and peaceful. They followed Jesus and they hit a storm. And then verse 37, this is not some kind of ordinary storm where the boat is being tossed around.

The waves are breaking over the boat and the boat is filling up with water. What would you do in such a situation? What do we criticize a lot of people for doing in such a situation? Well, this is not what the disciples did. Look what the disciples did.

They go to Jesus. That's again the right thing for them to do. They go to Jesus and say, they wake him up and say, what should you do? Try to fix the boat yourself? No.

The disciples did exactly what they're supposed to do, which is they went to Jesus. Yet you see what Jesus says about this and it doesn't come through. I don't know in which translations it comes through properly, but in verse 40, he stills the storm, but then he says this in verse 40, why are you cowards? That's the word actually.

It's not why are you afraid as it comes through in some translations. It's actually why are you cowards? That's what it says in my margin. Why are you cowards? You don't have any faith.

And then verse 41, it says, then they became very much afraid. See that word for afraid is very different than the word that Jesus uses in verse 40. He's a very different word.

Phobia is to be afraid as in verse 41. In verse 40, he says, why are you cowards? And just to think about that passage and to say, wait, what was wrong with these disciples? They followed Jesus. They go into a storm because they're following Jesus.

Then the boat's not just being tossed around, the water's filling up to the boat. And then they do the one thing that you think they're supposed to do, which they wake up Jesus. And Jesus says, why are you cowards? Jesus calls them cowards and a little faith.

I think part of it is what they said to Jesus is part of the problem here. They tell Jesus in verse 39 or verse 38, sorry. Do you not care that we are perishing? Do you not care that we are perishing? Lord Jesus, do you not care? And that was the, it's a great insult to Jesus.

It's a great statement of cowardice. Look, let's be very clear. These disciples, if you read earlier on, they've been called apostles.

And we know that the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. And in earlier in Mark four or Mark three, it says that God, Jesus gave them the authority to cast out demons. These were people who had given up everything to follow Jesus that had been done already.

Isn't that a statement of great faith? Absolutely. It's an act of great faith. But when the disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus, there was no storm.

It was, yes, it was a great sacrifice, but they saw Jesus and his power and they got the ability to cast out demons and everything's great. And sure, yes, they made a great sacrifice, but there was no storm. And God was grateful for them.

God gave them great authority, called them his disciples. But it's in the storms, in the drastic storms that God says, I'm really worried about you, that you may be cowards. And we have to fight hard against cowardice.

Another word for it is discouragement, lack of courage. The opposite of courage is cowardice. So whenever I see that I'm discouraged, I must say, Lord, I'm a coward.

That word, the reason I say that is because sometimes words have meanings and there's a way in which we can give ourselves credit and we can allow ourselves to allow the sin of discouragement to persist in my life because discouragement has a not that bad a sound to it. But when I am told by the Holy Spirit, no, Sandeep, you're not discouraged, you're a coward. Now it may shake some of us up.

I say, no, no, no, Lord, I don't want to be a coward. And let me share with you a couple of other words, the same word that Jesus used here. Why are you a coward? Right in Luke, sorry, in Mark chapter four, verse 40.

Why are you afraid in the margins of why you're a coward? That same word is used by Jesus in Revelation chapter 21. And I want to read that verse, Revelation chapter 21, verse seven and eight. That same word, not afraid, but it's coward is used also in Revelation 21, near the end of the Bible.

It's an interesting use, interesting kind of judgment that God gives to such people who are cowards. That's what Jesus called the disciples when they're on the boat and the boat is filling up with water and they wake up Jesus and they say, Jesus, don't you care that I'm perishing? And Jesus rebuked the storm and said, you cowards. In Revelation 21, seven and eight, he says, he who overcomes will inherit these things and I will be their God and he will be my son.

But for the cowards, it's that very same word. It's the same Greek word. It's the same word.

But for the cowards, for those who are afraid when the storm comes to the way in which they start to question God, look what happens to them. Look in the company of such people who are cowards. They're the same place as the unbelieving and the abominable and the murderers and the immoral persons and

the witchcraft people and the idolaters and the liars.

They'll be in the lake of fire. The first group of people who are immediately sent to the lake of fire are not the adulterers and the idolaters and the witchcraft makers. It's the cowards.

We have to be, we have a guard against this. So I appreciate, discouragement is a sin. I call it a cancer.

It's a cancer that has plagued my life, had plagued my life for years. But here's the reason why I call it a cancer. If I had a sickness, I'll deal with it with some medicine, I'll eat better.

When I got a cancer, we need to do some pretty drastic methods. All the normal things are out the window. We have to go drastic and aggressive and that's what discouragement is.

Discouragement is a lack of courage and a lack of courage is to be a coward and cowards end up in hell. That's the first group of people that are going to end up in hell are the people who don't take discouragement seriously. So let's not give discouragement a cozy place.

Discouragement is a cancer. So I need to be brutal against it. Chemotherapy is not for ordinary sicknesses.

Chemotherapy goes through the body and it has such a, you know, huge effect on the body. It really affects our body in big, big ways. But that's what you got to do to cancer.

That's what cancer requires. You know, it's a radical effect that you got to do. It's a huge cocktail of drugs that says, I'm going to kill a lot of things because cancer is so dangerous.

This is the kind of attitude we need to have towards discouragement. It really is a no entry road that we need to see the huge penalty of when we allow discouragement to happen. And the Lord has shown me how much progress can be made.

Dear brothers and sisters, I still sin. I still fall into sin, not at the same rate like I used to, but I'll tell you how there was a great uptick in my spiritual walk was when I got rid of the cancer. There's some sins that are huge cancers and I have seen as clear as day that discouragement is a cancer and it is such a huge offense to God because it's cowardice.

And dear brothers and sisters, this is not a man versus woman thing. There are women who are much more courageous than men. There's no doubt in my mind about that on the battlefield or in any sphere of life.

So there's nothing to do with male versus female. We've got to have courage. Go read the missionaries of Mary Schleser and Amy Carmichael and how they stood up to huge powers of authority.

Men and women, we all need to be men and women of courage. We need to have courage to stand up to this world system to say, no, I don't buy your logic. Um, I'm going to walk with God.

I'm going to build the arc. I'm not going to, you know, be attracted by the world's pleasures. Let me end with second Timothy chapter one, verse seven, second Timothy chapter one, verse seven, for God has not given you the spirit of cowardice.

There's that word again, cowardice. God has not given you a spirit of timidity and cowardice, but of power and of love and a sound mind. That's why Paul says, I want you, Timothy, to kindle afresh this gift, the Holy spirit that was put upon you.

Dear brothers and sisters, if we were born again, uh, the Holy spirit came to be birthed in us and God wants us to, um, have fresh anointings and rekindlings of the Holy spirit to drive out all spirits of cowardice. Like we heard Jacob, I mean, Joshua and Caleb, uh, David, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, even if I am burnt, I'm not bowing my knee. David said that Philistines, who is this uncircumcised Philistine to stand against the, um, armies of the living God.

We need to increase our courage as the fire gets hotter. Many will be deceived. We know that verse in Daniel 11, is it 32, which we've heard many times over last year, those who know that God will display strength and take action.

That is the mark of people who have courage. Dear brothers and sisters, let's not take discouragement lightly. It is a cancer.

It is a cancer. Let us fight it tooth and nail. And if other sins would stumble and fall, we'll allow it, but let's not give, let ourselves go easy.

When we got discouragement, let us be brutal against it. Let be ruthless against it. Let's allow any chemotherapy or whatever it takes to root out the cancer of cowardice.

And let's call it by its true name of being cowardly. And let's look at it in the context of Mark chapter four, this parable where the disciples follow Jesus and they follow him into the storm and they wake up Jesus as a subtle spirit. And then God says, I hate that cowardice in you.

Lack of faith. And we go to Jesus and say, Lord, you are altogether good. Your cross on Calvary is screaming out.

I am good. I did the thing that I hated the most. And I endured eternity in hell on the cross to tell you, I love you.

What do you mean by asking me, do you not care that I'm perishing? That's an insult. Have courage, dear brothers and sisters, as the storms come in our lives, let us be people of courage and let us fight against all discouragement in 2021. Dear brothers and sisters, you'll have a tremendous 2021.

It's a guarantee. If you will treat discouragement as serious as cancer is if you will treat discouragement like cowardice and say, Lord, I do not want to be cowardly because cowardly are the first group of people that end up in the lake of fire.

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