

Monday, March 16, 2026

Virtues 2 - The Courage to Stand: Biblical Fortitude in a Fearful World

Sermon Summary

This sermon explores courage as a meta-virtue, examining its biblical definition versus contemporary cultural understanding. The pastor defines biblical courage as "doing the thing that should be done despite significant opposition," emphasizing that true courage stems from faith in God's presence and power. Drawing from the cardinal virtues tradition (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance), the message distinguishes between godly courage and foolhardy audacity or cowardice. The sermon challenges believers to exhibit spiritual courage in everyday struggles, not just dramatic circumstances, reminding the congregation that Christ's victory over sin and death provides the foundation for fearless living. The pastor warns against cultural distortions of courage that celebrate rebellion against God or reality, instead calling for courage rooted in obedience to God's will, even unto death.

Scripture References

Explicitly Mentioned References:

2 Chronicles 32:7-8 - King Hezekiah encouraging Judah before battle with Assyria

Joshua 1:5-9 - God's command to Joshua to be strong and courageous

Daniel 3:17-18 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego facing the fiery furnace

1 Samuel 17:32 - David volunteering to fight Goliath

John 14:27 - Jesus saying "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you"

John 15 - "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me first"

John 16:33 - "Take courage. I have conquered the world"

John 16 (earlier verses) - Warning about being put out of synagogues and persecution

Romans 8:37-39 - Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus

Philippians 1:12-14 - Paul's imprisonment advancing the gospel and encouraging others

Ezekiel 33:11 - God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked

Referenced Concepts/Themes with Suggested Relevant Verses:

The Four Cardinal Virtues:

Proverbs 8:12-14 - Wisdom and prudence

Micah 6:8 - Justice and walking humbly

Proverbs 25:28 - Self-control/temperance

God Fighting for His People:

Exodus 14:14 - "The Lord will fight for you"

Deuteronomy 1:30 - God going before you to fight

Faith as Source of Courage:

Hebrews 11:1 - Definition of faith

2 Timothy 1:7 - Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline, not fear

Spiritual Warfare:

Ephesians 6:12 - "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood"

Fighting the Good Fight:

1 Timothy 6:12 - "Fight the good fight of faith"

2 Timothy 4:7 - "I have fought the good fight"

God's Hatred of Divorce:

Malachi 2:16 - "For I hate divorce, says the Lord"

Eternal Life Security:

John 10:28-29 - No one can snatch believers from God's hand

1 Peter 1:9 - "Attaining the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls"

Discussion Questions

1. How does the biblical definition of courage as 'doing the thing that should be done despite significant opposition' challenge or differ from how our culture typically defines bravery?
2. In what ways might we be confusing boldness or audacity with true biblical courage, and how can we discern the difference in our own lives?

3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said 'but if not' when facing the fiery furnace, acknowledging God might not rescue them. How does this kind of faith-filled courage speak to situations where we don't see the deliverance we hope for?
4. The sermon suggests that courage is contagious and that one person's bravery can embolden others. Can you think of a time when someone's courage inspired you to act, or when your courage might have encouraged someone else?
5. How do we balance fighting against evil with avoiding the trap of allowing righteous anger to become hatred in our hearts?
6. What does it mean that encouragement is always right and discouragement is always sinful when we use the biblical definition of courage? How should this shape the way we speak to others?
7. The four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) have been recognized across cultures for over two thousand years. Why do you think these particular virtues have remained so universal and timeless?
8. Alexander Solzhenitsyn criticized the West for a decline in courage in 1978, and the pastor noted his words still seem relevant today. What areas of modern life do you think most require courage that we may be lacking?
9. How can we develop fortitude, which is courage over the long haul, when facing ongoing struggles like chronic illness, financial hardship, or relational conflict rather than one-time dramatic challenges?
10. The sermon states that our faith must be bigger than our fear and that we fight spiritual battles with weapons of faith, love, and conviction. What practical steps can you take this week to strengthen these spiritual weapons in your own life?

Devotional: Living with Biblical Courage

Courage When You Feel Small

Scripture:

Joshua 1:9 – “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Reflection:

Joshua stood on the edge of the Promised Land staring at fortified cities, trained armies, and a people who had a history of fear and failure. God’s solution was not better weapons, a new strategy, or a motivational slogan. It was a reminder: “I am with you.”

Biblical courage is not the absence of fear; it’s obedience in the presence of fear because God is present. The command “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” is anchored in a promise: “the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

You may not be facing giants or armies, but you might be facing test results, a hard conversation, a confession you’ve been avoiding, a job loss, or a quiet pressure to compromise what you know is right. In those moments, everything in you may want to retreat, numb out, or pretend it’s not there.

Courage today might look like:

- making the phone call you dread,
- telling the truth when a lie would be easier,
- saying “no” to a temptation everyone else celebrates,
- or simply getting out of bed and praying again when you feel like nothing will change.

The same God who went with Joshua goes with you. He doesn’t promise a pain-free path, but He does promise His presence and the ultimate victory of His purposes. Let your faith in who is with you be bigger than your fear of what is against you.

Prayer:

Lord, you know where I am tempted to shrink back in fear. Remind me today that you are with me. Give me courage to do what is right, even when it is costly or lonely. Strengthen my heart with your presence and your promises. In Jesus' name, amen.

5 Day Devotional**Day 1: The Foundation of Courage**

Reading: Joshua 1:5-9

Devotional: Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conviction that God's presence is greater than any opposition we face. When God commissioned Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land, He didn't minimize the challenges ahead. Instead, He anchored Joshua's courage in divine presence: "I will not abandon you or leave you alone." Biblical courage flows from faith—the assurance that God fights alongside us. Today, identify one area where fear has paralyzed you. Recognize that courage doesn't require you to feel brave; it requires you to trust that God is with you. Memorize His promises, meditate on His faithfulness, and step forward knowing the Creator of the universe walks beside you in all you do.

Day 2: Courage in the Furnace

Reading: Daniel 3:13-30

Devotional: "But if not..." These three words from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego reveal the essence of unwavering faith. They believed God could rescue them from the fiery furnace, yet their obedience wasn't conditional on deliverance. They chose to honor God regardless of the outcome. This is fortitude—courage sustained over time, even when circumstances don't change as we hope. What furnace are you facing today? Perhaps it's chronic illness, financial struggle, or relational pain. Biblical courage means doing what's right despite the cost, trusting that even if God doesn't remove your trial, He remains sovereign and good. Your faithfulness in suffering becomes a testimony that encourages others to stand firm in their own battles.

Day 3: Peace Amidst Trouble

Reading: John 16:25-33

Devotional: Jesus never promised His followers an easy life. He explicitly warned: "In the world you have trouble and suffering." Yet in the same breath, He commanded, "Take courage, I have conquered the world." This paradox defines Christian living—we face real hardship, yet possess unshakeable peace. Our courage isn't rooted in favorable circumstances but in Christ's ultimate victory over sin, death, and darkness. No earthly opposition can separate us from eternal life. Today, when discouragement threatens to overwhelm you, remember that temporary suffering cannot diminish your eternal inheritance. The same Jesus who calmed storms and raised the dead offers you His peace. Let His conquest fuel your courage to face whatever troubles today brings.

Day 4: Inseparable Love

Reading: Romans 8:31-39

Devotional: Paul's rhetorical questions demand an answer: If God is for us, who can stand against us? The answer is no one and nothing. This passage catalogs potential threats—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, danger, sword—yet declares them all powerless to separate us from God's love. This truth should embolden radical courage in believers. We can face any opposition because our ultimate security doesn't depend on earthly outcomes. Are you allowing temporary setbacks to discourage you from obedience? Remember that you have "complete victory through Him who loved us." Your courage isn't based on your strength but on God's unbreakable commitment to you. Stand firm today, knowing divine love holds you secure regardless of circumstances.

Day 5: Contagious Courage

Reading: Philippians 1:12-14

Devotional: Paul discovered something remarkable in prison: his chains encouraged others. When believers witnessed his courage under persecution, they became emboldened to speak God's word fearlessly. Courage multiplies. Your faithfulness in trials doesn't just strengthen your own faith—it inspires courage in everyone watching. Someone in your life needs to see you stand firm right now. Your perseverance through unemployment, your integrity despite workplace pressure, your hope amid grief—these acts of courage give others permission to be brave. Today, recognize that your spiritual battle isn't fought in isolation. When you choose obedience over comfort, truth over approval, and faith over fear, you become an encouragement to the body of Christ. Be the first to stand and watch courage spread.

Final Thoughts

1. Biblical courage isn't just boldness; it's doing what should be done despite significant opposition and potential cost. It's rooted in faith that God is with us and for us, whether we're facing a fiery furnace, a giant, or simply the fear of being disliked, demonized, or misunderstood.
2. Because courage is a meta-virtue (or cardinal virtue), it "hinges" the rest of our character: when we act courageously, we strengthen others, too. True encouragement is helping people do what is right even when it's hard, and true discouragement is pulling them away from obedience to God—no matter how affirming or "positive" it feels in the moment.
3. Most of us aren't staring down martyrdom, gulags, or war, but we all face suffering, temptation, and discouragement. Fortitude means enduring those daily battles—physical, emotional, spiritual—with a settled resolve: not to surrender, not to give in to despair, but to trust that in Christ the war is already won, and to keep doing the next right thing with Him at our side.

Courage isn't just facing danger—it's doing what should be done despite opposition. Biblical courage flows from faith: knowing God fights for us, we face trials with fortitude. Whether battling persecution or daily struggles, take courage. Your eternal life is secure in Christ.