

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Courage to Say No

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 4:18-20 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Genesis 3:1-7; 39:6-10 | Judges 16:15-21
Isaiah 41:10-12 | Daniel 1:8-16; 6:4-24 | 2 Samuel 11:1-4 | James 1:13

SUMMARY

At some point in our lives, we all face fearful situations.

But if we yield to what we know is wrong, our lives will be filled with entanglements and trouble. Therefore, we must consider the source of our desires, learn to discern the difference between good and evil, and have the courage to say no whenever something is contrary to God's will and Word.

SERMON POINTS

When Peter and John healed a lame man, the Jewish rulers were infuriated and commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But they courageously refused, saying, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

This is the kind of courage God desires for all of us—obedience to Him without fear of what others may think or do. Instead of being frail Christians who base our decisions on the present situation, let's become followers of Christ who hold firmly to God's standards of right and wrong.

Biblical Examples of Courage

■ **Joseph** (Gen. 39:6-10). When Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, he was purchased by Potiphar, who eventually put him in charge of his entire household. Because Potiphar's wife was attracted to him, she repeatedly tried to seduce him. But Joseph refused, saying, "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" (v. 9). Although his refusal to yield to temptation landed him in jail

when Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of rape, God used the situation to elevate him to a place of authority second only to Pharaoh.

■ **Daniel** (Dan. 1:8-16). After Daniel was taken into captivity in Babylon, the king ordered that he and his three friends be given food from his table. But Daniel didn't want to defile himself with food that had been offered to idols so he asked the commander if they might have vegetables and water. When the commander objected, Daniel wisely suggested that he test them for ten days to see how the new diet affected their appearance. At the end of the allotted time, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than all the other youths. God honored Daniel's courageous choice and protected him from defiling himself with the king's food.

When Daniel was much older, he faced another challenge (Dan. 6:4-24). By this time he was one of the highest officials in the land, and the other commissioners were jealous of him. They convinced the king to pass an edict that anyone who makes a petition to any other god be thrown into a lion's den. Knowing the consequences, Daniel continued to pray to the Lord three times a day and shortly thereafter was thrown into a den of hungry lions. But once again the Lord protected him and closed the lions' mouths.

Biblical Examples of Yielding to Temptation

■ **Adam and Eve** (Gen. 3:1-7). Eve was the first person who said yes to temptation, and Adam soon followed, bringing a curse upon the earth and sin into the human race.

■ **David** (2 Sam. 11:1-4). Instead of saying no to his lust, David committed adultery with Bathsheba

and suffered the horrible consequences for the rest of his life—the death of his son, betrayal by another son, and the loss of his kingdom for a short while.

- **Samson** (Judg. 16:15-21). After Delilah repeatedly pleaded and cried, Samson gave up the secret of his strength and suffered the loss of his eyes and freedom, and eventually his life.

Questions to Ask When Facing Temptation

Before saying yes to temptation, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- **What is the source of this offer?** God never tempts us to do anything sinful or evil (James 1:13). Any desire that veers from truth and righteousness is from the devil. Instead of being carried away by the pleasure or benefits of the offer, we must focus on the Lord and remember what He thinks about it.
- **What are the requirements of this offer?** Yielding to temptation requires that we lay down our convictions. Sin is always expensive because it costs us our honesty, purity, and integrity.
- **What are the consequences of this act?** When temptation comes, we usually think only about the present, not the long-term consequences. But the satisfaction of the moment is never worth the pain and guilt that inevitably follows.

Why do people hesitate to say no to temptation?

- **Fear of rejection.** If we don't follow along with what others want us to do, we may not be accepted. However, being rejected by someone because of our convictions reveals something good about us—that we have a strong relationship with God and are committed to obeying Him.
- **Fear of losing a relationship.** We may think that saying no could result in losing a friend or never getting married, but any time we lay down a relationship in order to remain obedient to God, we are positioning ourselves to be blessed by Him.
- **Fear of the loss of finances.** The temptation to steal or cheat is often fueled by a fear of losing money or not having enough.

- **Fear of the loss of an opportunity.** Sometimes we feel pressured to make an unwise decision, fearing that the opportunity may never come again. However, if this opportunity is not from God, it could have devastating results. But if we live in obedience to the Lord, He will place us exactly where he wants us and open doors in accordance with His will.

- **Fear of the loss of our self-image.** In an effort to feel good about ourselves, we may be tempted to pursue what the world values—the finest clothes, cars, homes, and jobs—without considering that we might be living in disobedience to God. He knows what is best for us and will direct our future if we'll follow Him instead of the world.

The Source of Our Courage to Obey

- **The Promise of God's Word** (Isa. 41:10-12). Meditation upon Scripture is our greatest defense against disobedience. The Lord's promises help us trust and obey Him, knowing He will handle all the consequences.
- **Prayer and Meditation.** This is our daily defense as we humble ourselves before God, reading His Word, talking to Him about our situations, and asking for His help.
- **The Indwelling Holy Spirit.** He's the one who empowers us to resist temptation and obey God.

RESPONSE

- In the past, what has caused you to yield to temptation? What consequences followed?
- In contrast, how have you been strengthened to say no to temptation? What did God do in your life as a result?
- Looking ahead, how can you courageously resist temptation in the future?

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