Discouragement, One of Satan’s Tools

Today we’re going to continue our study on the subject of discouragement. Previously we have taught two weeks on this subject. We talked about the dangers of discouragement. How discouragement has the power to neutralize God’s servants. How that is dangerous for an individual. That usually leads to isolation, sometimes depression, sometimes even worse. We want to be on guard. As you have heard me say over and over and over that the same Bible that says Jesus loves you also very plainly says that Satan is trying to kill you. You have to take God at his word. At a minimum God never means less than what he says. He might mean more but he never means less than what he plainly says. So you have to take the Lord at his word that you’re in a spiritual war. Nobody said that it would come and go but it says that you are in a spiritual war. So you have to define when am I in a war? You are in a war. You’ll be in a war until you get to heaven. Let us acknowledge the truth. It’s the discernment of the truth that is the beginning step of fighting discouragement.

I have some Scriptures here that are in the New Testament and the Old Testament and I want to read some of them in light of God’s resources to fight discouragement. Now, this is so critical that you understand that you are not apart of the world. That you are a part of a holy kingdom of people that have been chosen by God and have been selected by his choice to represent the Almighty Creator, his precious Son the Lord Jesus, with the help of the precious Holy Spirit. I said just a moment ago that you have a Bible that says Jesus loves you and everybody goes ‘ooo’, ‘aah’, then when you read the same Bible that says Satan is trying to kill you then you don’t go ‘ooo’ and ‘aah’, but you go ‘oh’! Right? Okay, you must understand that both are true and both required that we recognize the truth and to respond Biblically.

What I’m encouraging here is that you do not respond to life by feelings exclusively. I’m not here to ask you to throw feelings out of the window because they’re very natural. Feelings are very natural, right? God allows us to feel hot things in our fingers, right? In India a lot of the lepers they lose the feelings in their skin and so one of the first things a doctor does is if they get access to a leper is they look at their feet? Why? Because a leper’s feet would be full of sticks and punctures and all kinds of things. Why? Because the leper can’t feel what’s hurting them. I’m not at all discounting that feelings are real. They have their place but they’re not to be used as a compass. Okay? Because lies can create feelings the same way truth can create feelings. Discerning what you’re hearing is a discipline that might save your life.

Now if you’re in a house and somebody trips the fire alarm every day at the same time you might start to ignore the fire alarm. But that same fire alarm needs to be heeded because that fire alarm may save your life, would you agree? So what is the critical thing here? You must take all things into consideration in regards to all the sensory realms that God’s given you to use. Feelings sometimes overtake us and they start helping us by making decisions that never lead us to truth. What happens is that feelings become the exclusive ruler in your life. Not God and his Christ. His precious counsel or his wise people or the Holy Spirit, or we just respond to feelings. How many of us have done that? That you responded to feelings. How many people have regretted that? Alright, so what I’m painting is a picture that is very much part of your life, would you agree? What I’m saying to you is that alone, guiding your life by feelings, making critical decisions by feelings and making impromptu fast responsive feelings in light of ever changing circumstances can destroy your life. Good decisions are required for faithful living. Good decisions, rock solid decisions, good counselled decisions are required for faithful living in the kingdom. God does not want you to be a shoot from the hip person. He does not want you to go ‘fire’, ‘aim’, ‘ready’! I didn’t say ready aim fire. I said fire, aim, ready! No, that’s not the kingdom principle. Brother Joe lives by PFE, prioritize, focus, execute. Prioritize, focus, execute! This is where God’s principles come in to play.

Now we’re talking about discouragement. I’m trying to give you some rock solid unmovable principles that are in the Word so that when you’re making decisions, I’m talking about making decisions in light of when you come to the point where you’re able to discern that you’re being discouraged. In other words one of the first disciplines is in this battle….remember a moment ago I said Jesus loves you and Satan is trying to kill you, you need to recognize his strategic plans against you. Being able to discern and recognize that discouragement is not from God. There are times in your life when you will have seasons of discouragement and discouragement and discouragement, to where you become numb to discouragement and welcome it or allow it to stay. That’s the first order of business here church. You got to discern that God is not the source of your discouragement. You got to decide like a soldier that you’re no longer willing to tolerate the enemy’s tactics against your life. You discern truth and take note of it. You come to the point that you’re able to say ‘Lord, strengthen my mind that I may be able to discern Satan’s tactics against me’. What am I doing? I am reaching up, I am looking up, and I’m asking for God’s discernment for Satan’s strategy against my life. There’s a principle here.

The first one is look up. Now I want us to talk about how Satan’s discouragement works and what the Word says how you can come out. Last week we gave a twenty-six minute exposition, not exhaustive but pretty comprehensive run down of II Corinthians 10:5. That talks about taking your thoughts captive making them obedient to Christ and using God’s weapons of choice against this spiritual force of whom you cannot see. First of all when you’re talking about this battle, I’m targeting discouragement. Because I felt very strongly in prayer three weeks ago that the Lord wanted us as a group to make sure that discouragement is seen as an enemy. To make sure that we are equipped to use God’s resources to not only engage but to battle and come through. Discouragement cannot stay in your life. It’s not God’s will. Don’t accept it.

First thing first. You need to faithfully pray for God’s discernment. Asking Him like a child ‘Lord how is Satan working?’ Not if, how?! You can be sure that Satan has a strategic plan. You say Pastor why are you so sure? Because the Word of God says in I Peter 5:5-8 that Satan is seeking whom he may devour. He’s like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. That’s a fact that you have to accept. What’ I’m asking you to do first things first. If you’re to recognize discouragement as an enemy you have to understand the strategic plan of your enemy. Discouragement is an effect of the enemy. It’s a tool that the enemy uses to neutralize God’s people and he wants to keep them from working in the kingdom. You have to understand what the reason is for the discouragement. Is he afraid that you’re going to take his Tonka toy? No! Is he just playing with you because he’s bored? No! He understands that you’re an integral part on the earth in bringing glory to God the Father. That’s why you’re here on earth. You’re here for no other reason than to bring glory to God the Father. So anything he can do to make you neutral about the king and the kingdom he will do that. He will use discouragement to try to neutralize you. I’m going to show you an example in the book of Nehemiah. So the first discipline here is look up.

The next thing I want you to understand is that you must be willing to receive God’s resources of encouragement. I want to show you in II Corinthians 7:6. I want to show you that it’s very important that you’re willing to receive God’s encouragement at all times, not selectively. As I said, one of the tactics and sometimes the consequences of discouragement is that it leads you to isolate yourself. Let me tell you something, if isolation is crouching at your door, Satan is at work in your life. You cannot retreat from God’s people. You cannot retreat from God’s worship services. You cannot retreat from fellowship. You cannot retreat yourself from the Word of God. You cannot retreat yourself from the things that you know are good and pure and holy. Let that be a sign to you, if you’re running, you’re under attack. Okay? If you’re running you’re under attack already. It says here in II Corinthians 7:6, I’m going to call this God’s help in times of discouragement. In II Corinthians 7:6 it says “But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of…” Now pay attention, the coming of what? The coming of encouragement? No, the “…coming of Titus…” In other words God was sending comfort in the form of a human, whom he would use to encourage his people. You say what is your point? Well, I want to talk to you about the word ‘depressed’. Did you know suppression of truth leads some people perishing in the second death? When people send themselves to hell because they’re suppressing the truth of God. Suppression of truth usually leads to depression. It’s the rejection of truth. The major cause of this kind of discouragement and depression is unbelieve. Unbelieve. The primary cause is unbelieve.

I want to encourage you to recognize the ‘believe of truth’ is so critical for your faith. You have to understand in the Book of Ephesians 6:10-16. In that passage it talks about the armor of God. What is the key component in the armor of God that is not used as a defense but as a weapon of choice to shield the fiery tarts, or to overcome the fiery darts of the evil one? Faith! The shield of faith. You cannot have faith unless you’re standing in the well of believe. Because believe creates faith and faith is the weapon of choice to overcome discouragement. You say faith in what? Faith in the son of God. Faith in Christ. You have to understand that you belong to Him. Your body belongs to him. He said His spirit is in you. You were bought and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The first thing you want to do when you recognize that Satan is in your camp and he’s working to discourage you, you must believe in the power of Christ Jesus. You must be willing to call on the name of the Lord. When you call on the name of the Lord you will not be put to shame. Because the Bible promises whomsoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. You say that’s for salvation. Oh that definitely is truth but so is it in the battle between here and the arrival in heaven. Being willing to call on the name of the Lord is the first expression that launches the shield of faith. We talked about Israel and the iron dome. Let me tell you what my iron dome is. My iron dome is faith. Holding my shield from the fiery darts of the devil. You say what launches the iron dome? What launches the shield of faith? Let me tell you, you got to do just a little bit of study. If you look under the shield of faith you will find somebody who believes God. If you look under believe you will find somebody who trusts God. If you find somebody who trusts God you’ll find somebody who goes like this, who’s awestruck with the Almighty, who’s awestruck with the greatness of God. So you must not fear Satan. You hear me? You must not fear Satan. You must not folly with the armor of faith. The shield of faith. You must not folly with the weapons that are not carnal but spiritual. In other words stop ignoring God’s resources. See, you wallow you’ll lay like a pig in a framer’s barn yard in the mud if you want to. Don’t get comfortable in the mud pen. Don’t get comfortable in the mud pen. You’re a holy vessel. You got to come up and get out of the mud pen. What brings that out? Truth! Truth! Faith overcomes the world. With me so far?

So when you hear II Corinthians 6:7 says “But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus…” Saints, I want to encourage you one of the first disciplines of a disciple is that a disciple must be willing to disciple another. But before he is qualified to disciple another he must be willing to be discipled. You say how does that work? Let me tell you something, you need to be intentional like a small child. ‘Lord, make me a disciple’. He might use the Bible, He might use the Holy Spirit, He might use a Bible teacher and He might use all of the above. But petitioning the Lord, you crying out like a small child is critical for Him to make you a disciple. Because I can tell you Jesus is the soul winner. Jesus is the disciple maker. Jesus loves you more than anyone who ever could. He does not want you defeated in thought or in deed by Satan and his government. You can be sure of it. II Corinthians 7:6 is a resource. You say then what is the understanding? The understanding is don’t stiff arm God’s people who are trying to help you. I’m telling you the Lord might just show up at your house with a smiling face in a love filled believer. So don’t stiff arm God’s resources. Don’t go like that. Don’t hide from him. God might be trying to send you help. Don’t stiff arm him.

Next is that there needs to be a prayer for perseverance because some tribulations are lengthy, until they’re caught and you’re engaged with the weapons that are not in the flesh. Saints, you cannot use a baseball bat against Satan. It doesn’t work. I want to show you an example in Matthew Chapter 4. Do you remember the story how Jesus was confronted with Satan and Satan was questioning Him? He was constantly trying to get Jesus to release His power. Isn’t that how he works today brother Joe? He works on our mind. He works on our mind. He wants us to release our God given authority. Jesus responded in Matthew Chapter 4 very very directly. I want you to know that this is a principle and I talked about it last week about the importance of using God’s resources. The weapons of our warfare….say it with me, “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God to pulling down strongholds.” Okay, you have to understand that may be lofty, it can be unless you think through it.

First weapon is prayer, calling on the name of the Lord. Let me just make it plain, you want to know how to overcome discouragement? First thing first, you got to raise your shield. How do you raise your shield? You better be sure you believe in your God. You better be sure that He is the victor, that He has the power over your enemy. You can’t pray unless you believe. You can’t pray. You cannot pray unless you believe. To pray but you do not expect is terrible. It’s not an expression of faith it’s a babble. When you pray you better expect that God who made ears heard you. Okay? When you pray you better act like He’s helping you. Because if you pray anything according to His will it is already in motion. His help is on the way. When you recognize discouragement step one is to call on the name of the Lord. But you better be full of believe that comes from your heart being awestruck by the greatness of our great God. Okay? The moment you pray you have expressed faith. The moment you pray and ask God for help, the shield of faith is up and ready. Okay? You got to understand faith overcomes Satan. The shield of faith shuts down his fiery darts in your life. You say I don’t see no fiery darts. Let me tell you he’s got one in you and you’re on fire if you are tolerating discouragement. Guess what? Resistance against Satan is on.

Now the second one is the sword of the Spirit. Using the sword of the Spirit. Here is what Jesus did. See Jesus is being tempted here. He’s at the base of the mountain of temptation, it’s in Jericho. When you stand down near Elisha Spring and look up you can see the exact place where Satan appeared to him. Right now there’s a monastery up there where the Greek Orthodox go where they isolate themselves up there in prayer. I’ve been there I can tell you I have seen the place. It’s a desert. It’s near the lowest place on the earth, imagine that. Here it is in Matthew 4:1, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Let me show you one of the signs that Satan is trying to get you out of God’s perfect plan, is that your spirit is driven. Your spirit, you feel driven. You feel driven by your circumstances. You feel driven by the work load. You feel driven by your lack. You feel driven and confused, not knowing where to turn or what to do. Satan is at work. God is not the author of confusion. God’s people are led never driven. Write that down somewhere, “God’s people are led, never driven.” They are led. He points, we follow. Don’t let anything or anyone drive you except the Lord. He’ll do that by saying this is the way, please follow. “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God….”” Now here’s a point, do you know that the enemy wants to discourage you by doubting your God given identify? Yes, you are a human but you’re not a normal human. You are a human that is filled with the precious Holy Spirit. Last time I checked the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Holy Trinity. What that says is that God is in you. There’s nothing common about God being in anything. God in you is a treasure on earth. The most valuable thing in the entire universe is in you. So you are not ever common and you should never be discouraged because God is in you! Take heed to that. That’s point number one. Don’t let anybody tell you that God is not in you because Ephesians 1:13-14 says that God gave the Holy Spirit to the man who believed after he heard the gospel and by one spirit he was placed into Christ and the Holy Spirit was given to him as a deposit guaranteeing his inheritance. That’s the truth. So we are special. We are because He’s in us. Can I get an Amen? So first things first, don’t let anything challenge your worth. You are special. You’re chosen by God. You’re chosen and He’s put his Holy Spirit inside of you and guarantees that it will remain until you arrive. Here I’m pointing out that Satan’s first strategy to discourage, to try to get you in trouble was, Jesus of all people, to doubt his identity. What did he say to him? It says, “…Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, “if you are….”” If you are a Christian why do you act like that? If you are a Christian why do you speak like that? If you are a Christian why aren’t you? You heard those things before? Sure you have. Where does that come from? I can tell you. It’s the one who is trying to get you frustrated and doubt God. He’s the faith killer. When you understand the voices of those who doubt God, there’s a pattern. They become discouraged. Let me show you the tactic here. You have to recognize the strategy. Satan will speak many ways to you. He will try to drive you through circumstance. He will try to drive you into becoming less than content. The moment you’re willing to give in and become restless, the moment restlessness comes doubt enters the house, when doubt enters the house the next thing that happens is it takes a hold of your tongue and you began to grumble before God. The strategy of the enemy - doubt your identity, force you into confusion through restlessness and being less than content. When that happens look out. The restlessness and not being content causes us to be discouraged and discouraged people grumble. Discouraged people grumble. They grumble upwards and they growl on the horizontal level. Have you ever been around somebody who was confused or driven? They’re grumblers, they growl, they complaint. Even under their breath. These are signs that the spiritual war is at work against you.

First things first, recognize that this is not God. This is not his will for your heart. It is not his will for your mind. It is not his will for you to be restless. It is not his will for you to be driven. It is not his will for you to be discouraged. You must take heed. This is a warning. If you see these things in your heart, in your house, in your car, in your mind. Satan is at work against you. He’s resisting you. You must heed. You must take notice and you must use the weapons of the Word, the sword of the Spirit. Look at Jesus’s response, He said, “…And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”” Look at His response in verse 4, I want you to take note here. He said, “…It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’” What is He doing? He is using the sword of the Spirit to address the one who is tempting him. Now discouragement is otherwise known as temptation for you to adopt fear as a way of life. Fear comes from unbelieve. Fear leads to discouragement. Fear leads to being neutral with the kingdom. Causes you to retreat. Causes you to forget why you’re on earth. You’re here with a purpose. You were sent. You were sent, you were chosen. God’s plans are fixed and sure. We must shed off the times of discouragement. Take hope in the Lord. Take heed with your name on his plans. Engage the Lord. The first things first. Let me review then I’m going to close.

If you’re seeing discouragement in your life. Understand faith launches the shield. Faith expressed in the form of prayer for help releases God’s power to you on earth. Prayer, asking him to fight Satan is step one. Step two is the remembrance of truth and the declaration of truth. See in II Corinthians 10:5 we studied it exhaustively last week. One of the first things first in catching that you’re been attacked is taking the thought that is against God, that is against the truth and taking it captive. Neutralize Satan at that moment. The moment you take the thought that is not true, that is causing discouragement. When you take that thought captive and cast that care upon the Lord, the Bible says in I Peter 5, cast your care upon the Lord for he does care for you, you have neutralized. Now you need encouragement which is the opposite of discouragement. Encouragement. First things first, prayer, asking God to fight Satan should be coupled with prayer asking God to strengthen you. Strengthen your hands, strengthen your mind and bring encouragement in times of refreshment into your life. Let me tell you something, seasons of discouragement take their toll. It becomes learned behavior. First it becomes accepted behavior, then it becomes learned behavior. You’ve just taken it, I’m just going to live like this and I’m just going to be sad all the time. Non-sense! That’s not God’s will. Spiritual things are realized and consummated though either agreement or disagreement. So if you agree with it it’s going to remain in your house. If you choose by decision to disagree, to take the thought captive and cast it upon the Lord through prayer, tell the Lord, “Lord I’m taking my experience of discouragement and I want to bring it to your attention because I know it’s not your will. Would you please lift this burden off of me?” I Peter 5:5-7. With me so far?

The other things is look up, look out. Reach out to the body. Calling the prayer warriors, calling the intercessors, call in the people who can speak faith into your life and who can encourage you with love and hugs and encouragement. Okay? Look up, look out.

Last but not least in no set order of prioritizing here. You have to constantly refresh and recuperate from times of discouragement. That’s how you do it. Jesus said himself man shall not live by bread alone but the word of God. It encourages us, it cleanses us. It puts us back on the proper path by correction. The Bible says the word of God is like a double edged sword. You need that going ….Hebrews 4, go ahead and read it….Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Here it is. I don’t know who the Lord is working on right now but I can tell you I was deeply convicted three weeks ago to talk about this. If you’re suffering from discouragement you do not have to allow it to govern your life. You have to see it as an enemy and call for help. Okay?

Thanks for letting me share.