

Are You A Coward?



DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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Nobody likes to be called a coward. Being a coward means that you will run away from your fears rather than face and overcome them. Being a coward means that you are defeated by whatever you are afraid of. So, people emphasize the need for courage. However, there are many people who may be courageous on a physical level and are cowards on a spiritual level. For instance, God clearly identifies that there are people who can be classified as “cowards” in Revelation 21:8 when He says, “But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars – their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

1) The cowardice God condemns is on a spiritual level. When Revelation 21:8 condemns being a coward, God wasn't talking about physical cowardice that most people think about initially. For instance, some people are called “cowards” because they are afraid of heights, afraid of certain animals, afraid of confined spaces, etc. But, God doesn't care if you don't want to go into a cave, touch a snake, or repel off a mountain. Instead, God only cares about whether you allow your fears to prevent you from following Him.

2) What real cowards look like. Jesus knew that the kind of commitment He wanted people to make in following Him would carry consequences. He told His apostles, “If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you...If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:18, 20). So, Jesus told people that they could not be His disciples unless they were willing to bear the crosses associated with following Him, put Him before all their earthly relationships, put Him before their own earthly lives and possessions, and follow Him wherever He leads (see Luke 9:23-26 and Luke 14:26-27, 33).

Yet, many are not willing to make this kind of commitment because they are afraid to trust the Lord that much. They are afraid to stand against a loved one or a friend in order to follow Christ. They are afraid to teach someone the gospel of Christ. They are afraid to take a stand that is unpopular. They are afraid to live different and stand out for Christ. These people are the real cowards by being afraid to do what God wants them to do.

3) Choose who/what you will fear. Ultimately, each person has to decide what his/her greatest fear is. You have to decide whether you will fear earthly things and mankind or whether you will fear God more. Jesus put this decision into perspective when He said, “Don’t fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). So, when you are afraid to speak the gospel to someone, you are actually choosing to fear how that person might respond more than you fear disobeying God! And, Jesus assures you that fearing what can happen to you physically is never better than fearing what God can do to those who disobey Him.

4) The eternal home of cowards. Whenever people think of who will spend eternity in Hell, they usually think about the people who have committed atrocious sins (from a human perspective) – like murder and rape. However, let’s go back to Revelation 21:8 and notice that the people who are cowards regarding the things God wants from their lives will have their share in the same place! “But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars – their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Those who are so cowardly that they will not make the kind of commitment to Christ He requires them to make will not go to Heaven. Instead, they will go to Hell. So, before you allow yourself to be a coward in this kind of way, recognize that there is nothing worse than spending eternity in Hell!

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