Introduction: Are you feeling afraid or discouraged about anything this morning? If you are, then, these Bible texts have good news for you. God is big enough and strong enough to take care of any situation that is stressing you out or causing you anxiety. Throughout Scripture, God calls us to not be afraid and to not be discouraged. Let us ponder how to do so.

Going Against the Flow

We live in a world that encourages us to be afraid and to be fearful. One of the chief complaints I read from troops in Iraq is that the news crews focus on the violence or the bombings, rather than the ongoing reconstruction that is happening in Iraq, such as rebuilding of schools, power grids etc. Why is that news crews focus on violence at home too in their daily news reports? Every night we are reminded of the violence all around us, as people are killed or hurt each day in Sacramento. It almost seems as if the news hones in our fears, and makes them worse by magnifying them.

How can we as Christians respond? We can respond by being people of faith, trust and hope in the person and power of God. In Numbers 14:5-9, Joshua and Caleb are faced with such a choice. Will they respond to their surveillance of the Promised Land with fear of God or fear of its inhabitants? We see here two distinct and two different responses. First, the crowds freak out when they hear the report of the spies, saying in 14:2-3, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” They are advocating then a reverse Exodus. They are questioning the power, will and character of God. They are sinfully focusing on their power, not God’s.

Joshua, Caleb and Moses, on the other hand, argue that they must still trust in God, saying in 14:7-9, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, and the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.” In
doing so, Joshua and Caleb are going against the flow, choosing to trust in God, rather than to give in or to succumb to peer pressure. In doing so, they had to face and answer a basic question: Is God big enough and strong enough to accomplish what He has promised? Can the words and promises of God be believed and trusted? Their answer was yes, and as a result Caleb and Joshua alone were able to enter into the Promised Land. May we too say yes to these questions, so we too may enjoy and enter into the promises that God has for us today.

**Focus on God**

In the Bible, we see the importance of being focused on God, on what God can do and on what God can accomplish. In this text from Deuteronomy 31:1-8, it is the Lord: who will cross the Jordan before them; it is the Lord who will destroy the nations before them; it is the Lord who will take possession of the land; it is the Lord who will deliver them; it is the Lord who will go with them. The focus here then is entirely on God, on the power of God, on how God is trustworthy and on how God is with them. If we want to lay aside fear and discouragement, we can only do so by choosing to believe in and to focus on, the power of God. Let us then take our minds and sights off of ourselves and redirect them to God.

**God Will Never Forsake Us**

To me, one of the greatest truths of Scripture can be found in this text. Moses says in 31:6, 8, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you…The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” God knows that at times, we need to be reassured or to hear this truth more than once. Whenever we are facing daunting or frightening circumstances, we need to be reminded of the grace, power and presence of God. We can have courage and strength if we are focused and mindful of the power and presence of God with us and for us, that God will never leave us or forsake us, no matter how dark or grim life becomes. We cannot overcome the challenges or struggles of life on our own, but God can, for nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). We all deal with fear and discouragement, but this does not come from God. No matter what hurdles, obstacles, or circumstances we face, God holds and is the final answer. Praise God! May our lives be transformed by this good news, that all things are possible in and because of God.