

Christian Courage

By John Piper May 11, 1999

Christian courage is the willingness to say and do the right thing regardless of the earthly cost, because God promises to help you and save you on account of Christ. An act takes courage if it will likely be painful. The pain may be physical, as in war and rescue operations. Or the pain may be mental as in confrontation and controversy.

Courage is indispensable for both spreading and preserving the truth of Christ. Jesus promised that spreading the gospel would meet resistance: "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name" (Matthew 24:9). And Paul warned that, even in the church, faithfulness to the truth would be embattled: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30; see also 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Therefore, true evangelism and true teaching will take courage. Running from resistance in evangelism or teaching dishonors Christ. There is a kind of cowardice that tells only the truths that are safe to tell. Martin Luther put it like this:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point. (Quoted in Parker T. Williamson, *Standing Firm: Reclaiming Christian Faith in Times of Controversy* [Springfield, PA: PLC Publications, 1996], p. 5)

Where then shall we get this courage? Consider these pointers.

FROM BEING FORGIVEN AND BEING RIGHTEOUS - "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). "Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven'" (Matthew 9:2).

FROM TRUSTING GOD AND HOPING IN HIM - "Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the LORD" (Psalm 31:24; see also 2 Corinthians 3:12).

FROM BEING FILLED WITH SPIRIT - "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

FROM GOD'S PROMISE TO BE WITH YOU - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

FROM KNOWING THAT THE ONE WITH YOU IS GREATER THAN THE ADVERSARY: - "Be strong and courageous . . . for the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an

arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles" (2 Chronicles 32:7).

FROM BEING SURE THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER THE BATTLES - "Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight" (2 Samuel 10:12).

THROUGH PRAYER - "On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul" (Psalm 138:3; see also Ephesians 6:19-20).

FROM THE EXAMPLE OF OTHERS - "Most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Philippians 1:14).

Longing to stand firm with you,

Pastor John

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