

## Courage Proverbs 1:7

Isn't it striking that John's list of vices in Rev. 21:8 begins with the cowardly? Along with the murderers, sorcerers, and liars, the coward's final portion will be the lake of fire.

If cowardice belongs to unbelievers, the implication is that *one mark of a true Christian is courage*. If we are honest with ourselves, many of us would admit that courage is not the virtue we think of or aspire to most often. Where is the courage in the everyday, ordinary, mundane stuff of life?

All of us need courage. We would do well to understand and cultivate this virtue, for courage is at the heart of all other virtues.

What is courage? *Courage is a Godward strength of soul manifested in doing what is right and necessary despite difficulty or danger.*

"Godward" - *courage as a Christian virtue is distinct in that it is rooted in the fear of the Lord.* What is the fear of the Lord? *It is a life lived in wholehearted trust and obedience to God's revelation in His Word.*

Ex – the Hebrew midwives (Ex.1:17) and Obadiah (1 Kings 18:3-4)

*A God-fearing life remembers God.* (Nehemiah 4:14) God is not an afterthought; He is already in the equation. For the courageous believer, a strong and steady root was growing in the soul; an inward courage was being cultivated as it recalled God's presence, power, and promises. God is always preparing fearful men with the promise, "I will be with you." Ex. – Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah. For these men, their courage was nurtured in the knowledge that they did not go forward alone. They didn't have to go alone.

*Courage is also cultivated as the God-fearer recalls God's power.*

David had the courage to stand before Goliath because he knew God's power would guide his small stone to kill the giant. (1 Samuel 17:47)

Elisha knew that God's power would defeat the huge Syrian army surrounding him (2 Kings 6:16)

King Hezekiah could courageously respond to Sennacherib's invasion because he trusted in God's power. (2 Chronicles 32:1-8)

God's power to save was not an urgent matter of question, but a certainty to calmly acknowledge.

*Finally, courage comes to life when one is increasingly familiar with God's promises and is convinced that He keeps them.*

-The prophet Azariah reminded King Asa of God's promise to bless obedience. Asa took courage and destroyed idolatry among the people. (2 Chronicles 15:8)

-When Jehoshaphat pleaded with the Lord to rescue Judah according to His promises, he believed God would hear and save His people when they humbly cried out from His temple. (2 Chronicles 20:1-12)

*Courageous Christians live a daily life of fearing and remembering God—His presence, power, and promises. It made no difference the circumstances; the disposition of your mind and heart toward God determined whether you act with courage or cowardice.*

*The crux, the puzzling problem, is this: thinking rightly about God will not inspire courage unless God is on your side. (Psalm 118:7)*

Unless God is on my side as my helper, unless He is for me and not against me, the uncertainty of occasions that call for courage will be terrifying. Why will this uncertainty be terrifying? Because *acting with courage does not guarantee earthly comfort or success*. Unless I know that He is on my side, the possible terrifying consequences of my courage would not be bearable.

How do we reckon with that reality?

How can we muster the strength to say along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, “But if not,” (Dan. 3:18) or to say with Paul “whether by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20)?

*Our courage must be founded in the fear of God Almighty; that is, we are to live in wholehearted trust and obedience to God’s revelation in His Word, for us that is Jesus Christ. Our Father is wisely working all things—all outcomes—for the eternal good of His children. We can endure suffering for He will never leave us nor forsake us; He is always on our side.*