

Spilling the Beans on Christian Courage

Hello and welcome to another TLC World Coffee Break!

The world today places a great deal of emphasis on courage. After love, it's the major preoccupation of the movies, for example. In fact, it's fair to say that courage is a universally admired quality.

When I was reading the Bible the other day, I came across 1 Corinthians 16:13 which tells us this, *Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong*, and I was reminded that a great deal of emphasis is also placed on courage in the Bible. An example is the case of Joshua, one of God's heroes, who, on assuming military leadership of the Israelites, is told directly by God Himself, to 'be strong and courageous' on three successive occasions. Actually, estimates have it that the word 'courage' is used 116 times in the Bible.

Now, this all led me to think about worldly courage in comparison to Christian courage. There are certainly similarities, for example, the courage so admired in the worldly context is frequently associated with a military setting. Movies such as 'Saving Private Ryan', 'Dunkirk', 'Hack-Saw Ridge' and the most recent '1917' are all about courage in times of war. Now similarly, in the Christian context, it's a common view that those who give their lives to Christ, actually enlist in God's army with Jesus Christ as their Commander-in-Chief and this is all about courage in times of war - that is, a spiritual war.

I'm sure that many believers and non-believers alike are aware of the old hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers' with the opening verse: 'Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war'. Now this hymn confirms the warlike nature of the Christian walk but for the Christian 'soldier' the enemy consists of both seen and unseen forces, which the Bible refers to as: 'the spiritual forces of evil'. These are actually the devil and his demons, and the courage needed for victory against them derives totally from the power and spirit of Jesus Christ which all men receive when they become believers. Worldly courage, however, is based solely on the personal or what we might call 'heroic' qualities of the individual when faced with a visible enemy. Of course, Christian courage does not rule out the Christian's personal heroic qualities but draws on the power and spirit of Christ that resides in the Christian to combat both the visible and the invisible.

My message to you in this short break is to actively engage in the greatest of battles, the most intense battle that exists in fact, and that's the battle between God and the devil for the souls of our fellow human beings. Now, I can

tell you from personal experience that joining God's army is not for the faint-hearted, but it will definitely provide you with many opportunities to exercise Christian courage during the battle. God designed you to be a hero for Him. Christian courage is a courage that God has designed for you to exercise and will offer you purpose and fulfilment beyond the ordinary; that's what 1 Corinthians 16:13 is all about!

So, join us again next week for another TLC World coffee break. Until then, have a blessed week.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think that courage is such a major theme in movies, literature and so on?
2. What are the implications for believers generally of God speaking directly to Joshua and encouraging him to be 'strong and courageous'?
3. What type of courage is needed to engage successfully in spiritual warfare?
4. Why does the exercise of Christian courage offer purpose and fulfilment beyond the ordinary?

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