

A Call to Courage

Acts 4:13-22

Thomas Lim

Whenever we lack courage, we need someone to say to us “take courage!” or “take heart!”. At one time or another, we all need to hear God say, “take courage.” (John 16:33b).

What is Christian Courage?

‘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.’ – John Piper. Christian courage is not just that, but also the acknowledgement that it comes from our identity as sinners saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. When we forget that we need the message about Jesus as much if not more than others, our courage appears to others as arrogance.

As disciples of Jesus, we need to be willing to have courage every day wherever God places us at. Therefore, living courageously is not an option for Christians, but a daily necessity.

Three observations from Acts 4:13-22

1. They saw the courage of Peter and John

The religious elites had Peter and John arrested; they were greatly annoyed and disturbed by the miracles and preaching they had been doing (Acts 4:1-3). They were brought before a council to be questioned (Acts 4:5-7) and Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, responded in great courage because of the faith he had in Jesus (Acts 4:8-12) and his act of denying himself (Luke 9:23-25).

2. They took note that these men had been with Jesus

To the religious leaders, both Peter and John were unschooled, uneducated and ordinary men, but were astonished at their courage (v13). They knew that both

Peter and John had been with and were taught by Jesus. If you want to grow in courage, spend time with Jesus! Courage comes out of communion.

3. We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard

The religious leaders did not know what to do with Peter and John (vv15-16). They conferred with one another and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus (vv17-18), which Peter and John rejected and denied (vv19-20). The more time we spend immersed in something – becoming bolder and more knowledgeable – the more we would speak about it. The more time we spend with Jesus, the bolder we will be to make Him known. It is only when we spend time with Jesus in prayer and in His word that we would be able to speak of Him clearly and proclaim Him loudly.

Three implications for courageously living:

#1 Living courageously requires faith in God

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is the willingness to act in spite of fear. The biblical understanding of courage is that we can count on God because it is faith in God that overcomes fear (Josh. 1:9; Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5b-6).

#2 Living courageously requires faithfulness

Throughout church history, there have been men and women with the courage to stand and live strong for Jesus Christ like Peter and John did, despite having their lives on the line. Courage is in our every decision of life. As Christians, we don't just do whatever works, more importantly, we do whatever is true.

#3 Living courageously renews the courage of others

After hearing from Peter and John what had happened, the people prayed to God for them to become more courageous and bolder to speak His word (Acts 4:31). *'Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened.'* – Billy Graham. God is calling His people to live strongly and courageously!

The message of courage points to Jesus Christ who is faithful and trustworthy. Take heart and find courage in the Lord Jesus Christ, who conquered His fear and with full faith in God, faced the cross. He was courageous for our sake and gave His life for us – that our sins can be forgiven and that we can find courage to live strongly for Him!