

## **GOOD COURAGE REQUIRED FOR OVERCOMING**

**"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." – Psa. 31:24.**

THE Scriptures everywhere encourage the Lord's people to be full of faith, hope, confidence, trust. As we look out into the world we see particular reasons why this should be so. The majority of the world are full of fear, apprehension, distrust, worry. For this reason they fail to get the best out of the opportunities they have. They know of pitfalls of sin and trouble in different directions, and therefore they have reason to be distrustful, to be fearful.

But the Lord's people have come into special relationship with Him and He with them. He has assured them that He will have a supervision of their affairs, as would not have been their experience had they not come into relationship with Him. They are, therefore, to hope in the Lord, to trust in Him. They are to heed the things which He has said, and to take courage in the thought that their affairs are under His supervision.

God's people have stepped out from the world and joined the standard of the Lord Jesus Christ – the standard of righteousness, truth, holiness, opposition to sin and the Adversary. They will be beset by powerful enemies. Against them will be arrayed Satan himself, who will seek to oppose them, as he has opposed all of God's plans. He can make no direct attack upon the Lord, but he can attack His Plan and those who believe in God. He it is who instigated the riots, the tumults and the persecutions in the days of the Lord, and subsequently instigated the persecution of the Lord's people.

Satan has not done these things with His own personal touch, but through his deluded servants. He has ever opposed righteousness and all those who love righteousness. On this account the Lord's

people need to have *great* courage; for if they allow the Adversary to beat their courage down, he will soon put them out of the battle entirely. A *retreating* soldier is of no more good than one who has not gone out to battle. Instead of losing courage we are to resign our earthly interests to our Father and trust Him that in the present life He will guide us, will overrule everything for good to those who are "the called according to His purpose."

Besides the Adversary, we have the general spirit of the world to oppose us. The world considers us foolish in thinking that we have any special Divine supervision – that God loves us. They say to us, God has made all the worlds, the thousands of angels, etc. Do you imagine that He has any special interest in you? They tell us that if there is a God, He is so great and we so small that He cannot take any notice of us. Thus they would beat our faith down. And this is the sentiment of the world, even when it is not expressed. And whenever we come in contact with worldly people we find, as it were, a wet blanket thrown on our simple trust, even though they say not a word to us. We need to have good courage and to hope in the Lord, as our text enjoins.

Then, additionally, we have our own flesh. Each of us has in himself, in his own body, an opponent. The Scriptures represent that when we gave ourselves to the Lord and He gave us His Holy Spirit, we there passed through a transformation and became embryo spirit beings, the embryo having this mortal body in which to develop until the moment of resurrection, when we shall pass from the earthly to the Heavenly condition. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." – I Corinthians 15:42-44.

But while we are in the flesh, we have all the motions of the flesh. We as New Creatures have disowned these. We have turned our backs upon sin. We have exchanged the earthly interests and

hopes for the Heavenly interests and hopes. By our daily experiences the Lord is testing us. We must be on guard to overcome the flesh. It requires a great deal of courage to fight down the tendencies to sin. And it requires still more courage that, after battling [R5330 : page 309] with the weaknesses and frailties of the flesh, and conquering it, we should additionally force our human bodies to *sacrifice*, to abandon the earthly things, and to serve the Lord. It requires a *great deal* of courage; therefore we are of ourselves insufficient.

### DIFFERENT KINDS OF COURAGE

But we are exhorted to put our trust in the Lord, and assured that we "can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth us." (Phil. 4:13.) His is a power sufficient for us. It requires all our courage, all our hope – every helpful element that we can put into the fight – in order to bring about the most successful issue. But the Lord supplies sufficient grace so that we may be overcomers. This does not mean that any one will live a perfect life; and he may not fully exercise this good courage. He may make partial failures from time to time. But our Lord is leading us on, and we learn valuable lessons from our failures.

Some, having stronger faith and hope, having their minds fully centered on the Lord, have gone forward courageously. This is called *good courage* in the sense of being *strong* courage, proper courage. We might also associate with our text the thought that this *hope in the Lord* is to be backed up by a good courage, a right kind of courage, a godly courage.

There is a courage that is born of pride, which would say: Do not back down. Do not let anybody get ahead of you. In a battle the soldiers will vie with one another, each having a desire to do something especially conspicuous, which will bring him the applause of his fellows. They need something to inspire them – desire for fame, love of country, music, etc. – in order to give them

courage to run the risk of losing their own lives, or to take the lives of other human beings. And this is the kind of courage that will help them to gain the victory in their battle, even though it be an unworthy motive for inspiring courage.

But a courage from *right* principles, based on faith in the Lord, is not one of bragadocio, but a courage that is noble and pleasing to God. It has its source in a realization that *God has promised*, and that God is watching, and desires us to be joint-heirs with His Son in His [R5330 : page 310] Kingdom. He is merely testing us to see whether we will prove faithful. And this courage with us must also be to do things in the right way.

### **THE EXHORTATION APPLIES TO ALL STATIONS**

This exhortation affects us in everything in life, whether we are in one station or another. It would apply to a king on his throne – that he should be courageous enough to do the right thing – the thing understood to be the Lord's will. Such courage would say to us, Do your duty, whatever may be the Lord's will for you. Hope in the Lord, even though your motive will be misunderstood. We should have the good courage to stand for what is *right*, whether our reward be in this life or in that life which is to come.

This exhortation is for the business man who is a Christian. His worldly friends may say, You will fail in your business. You cannot advertise your business. If you tell the truth, the people will not patronize you; they will go to a place where a host of lies will be told them. If he takes their advice, he will do a larger business, but he will make a failure of the chief affair of his life, he will lose the great Prize.

It will apply to workingmen – that they may advocate right principles, and be not faint-hearted and fearful to express the truth. This does not mean that a man should be cantankerous and take a

different view of every question from that of others, but that, after conceding every point that may be yielded with wisdom, where there is a principle at stake he should take his stand and say, My thought is thus and so, and I shall be obliged to maintain my position. However, I recognize that each of you has a duty to perform according to his own conscience; and I will content myself with doing what I feel is my duty, not wishing to coerce the remainder of you. But at any cost I will be faithful to principle. I hope that you will not misunderstand me, and think that I am trying to oppose you and to turn the matter my way. I have my rights and my conscience, and you have yours. I am merely telling you what I must do according to my judgment and my conscience. You must do what *you* think right according to your judgment and conscience.

Thus even those who would think differently would know that the one speaking to them had a conviction, and that he was of good courage. This would apply to the humblest walk in life – to a day laborer, or to a washer-woman – any person.

## **COURAGE PROPORTIONATE TO FAITH**

There are trials and difficulties in the life of each one, great and small. The right kind of courage finds an opportunity to exercise itself in each of God's children. And this is what the Lord is looking for. He is looking for this kind of courage, a courage such as must be found in *overcomers*. It is only to *overcomers* that any place will be granted in the Kingdom. Whoever has not *good courage* will not be in the Kingdom at all. Hence the lesson of our text is, BE OF GOOD COURAGE; for this is the way in which we shall demonstrate our faith in the Lord. He who hopes in the Lord and is loyal to the Lord will be courageous in proportion to his loyalty and his faith.

This kind of courage will stand by us in all circumstances. For instance, our Lord in addressing His disciples on one occasion said, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake;...take

no thought [beforehand] how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." (Matt. 10:18,19.) The Lord's people, whatever circumstances may arise, will have such faith and trust in God that they will conduct themselves courageously, relying on God's power. The Greek here seems to give the thought: ***Do not be worried*** when you shall be brought before kings and judges.

The way in which God will give us a mouth and wisdom may vary according to circumstances – perhaps by suggestions from another; perhaps in the hearing of the testimony of some one else; or it may be that a text of Scripture that would be especially helpful would come to our mind. But the thought is that our trust is in the Lord, and that we are not to be in fear and trembling.

The Lord addressed these words to His disciples – the ignorant and unlearned. For them to be brought before kings and magistrates and judges would naturally cause them much apprehension. What should they say? How could they answer those men – those great, learned men! They were very humble, and they realized their ignorance; but the Lord guided them. Education was much less general then than now. Today, practically all are educated to some extent. The assurance of the Lord would, therefore, apply less forcefully to us today, than it would to the disciples then living.

But if we are in any straits, any difficulties, we are to remember that the Scriptures assure us that "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear [reverence] Him, and delivereth them." (Psa. 34:7.) This thought should tend to make us cool and collected in our minds, and should enable us to conduct ourselves courageously, feeling ourselves in this close relationship with Him, and having the confidence that this thought would give us. Furthermore, we realize that we are not wise enough to know just what God's purposes respecting us may be. We know not, therefore, just how the Lord may prefer to have this or that matter eventuate.

## "FAITH CAN FIRMLY TRUST HIM"

The early disciples, thinking of Jesus and what He had said to them, thought: Jesus is certainly a good man; God would not allow any disaster to befall Him. Thus they pondered, as they thought of the things that Jesus had predicted for Himself. St. Peter said to Him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" (Matt. 16:16.) And they thought, How could God allow any harm to come to Him? So the disciples concluded that these things He had said must be figures of speech, just as when He said, "You must eat My flesh" and "drink My blood." So now when He said that the Son of Man would be crucified, they thought it was one of His peculiar sayings that they could not understand.

Hence they were quite perturbed, wondering and astonished, when He was arrested and taken before the Jewish Sanhedrin, and when, instead of using His powers and His eloquence, He was *dumb*, and allowed Himself to be contradicted and maligned. Then He was taken before Pilate. Now, the disciples thought, Jesus surely will not hesitate before him! Hence the surprise and astonishment of the disciples again when things turned out so contrary to what they had expected. But such a course on our Lord's part was *necessary* in the Heavenly Father's Plan, not merely for the Lord Jesus, that He might suffer and then enter into His glory, but necessary also for the world, because the *redemption price must be laid down*, must be in the hands of Justice.

We see that the Lord has declared that His people shall not be especially protected along earthly lines; and if in His Wisdom it is best in any way to bruise us and put us to shame, as was done with our Master, we are to be of good courage, and He will strengthen our hearts, because we trust in Him, we have confidence in Him. We know that He is too wise to err, and that there must [R5331 : page 311] be a motive, a reason for the permission, whatever it may be. We know assuredly that the saintly ones are precious in the sight of

the Lord – are as the apple of His eye; and thus we know that all things are working together for good to us.

So we do not necessarily anticipate that a certain form of words will be given to us, before either judges or princes. We are not necessarily free from worldly condemnation. We are to remember that these words of the Master were applicable to our Lord Himself and to the Apostles; that Jesus was condemned and crucified; that the Apostles were condemned and were put into prison and received stripes on several occasions. And later most of them were killed.

Whatever may be the outcome of any matter to us, we are to accept it as from the Lord, whether we are able to discern the reason for it or not. We are to have faith and hope, even though the way is rough, and even though things might seem to be the very reverse of what we expected. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." – Psalm 27:14.

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