

Courage Instead of Fear

Compiled from the writings of E. G. White

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“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

2 Timothy 1:7

Let us learn a lesson of courage and fortitude from the last interview of Christ with his apostles. They were about to be separated. Our Saviour was entering the blood-stained path which would lead him to Calvary. Never was scene more trying than that through which he was soon to pass. The apostles had heard the words of Christ foretelling his sufferings and death, and their hearts were heavy with sorrow, their minds distracted with doubt and fear. Yet there were no loud outcries; there was no abandonment of grief. Those last solemn, momentous hours were spent by our Saviour in speaking words of comfort and assurance to his disciples, and then all united in a hymn of praise.

Instead of expressing the sadness of their hearts by the mournful measure of some solemn lament, they sung, as was customary on that occasion, the joyful Hallel, which abounded in expressions of faith, of gratitude, and of lofty praise: “The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” What a prelude to the agony in Gethsemane, the abuse and mockery of the judgment hall, and the awful scenes of Calvary, were those last hours spent in chanting the praises of the Most High!

When Martin Luther received discouraging news, he would often say, “Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm.” This psalm commences with the words, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” Instead of mourning, weeping, and despairing, when troubles gather about us like a flood and threaten to overwhelm us, if we would not only pray for help from God, but would praise him for so many blessings left,—praise him that he is able to help us,—our course would be more pleasing to him, and we would see more of his salvation.

When difficulties and trials surround us, we should flee to God, and confidently expect help from Him who is mighty to save and strong to deliver. We must ask for God’s blessing if we would receive it. Prayer is a duty and a necessity; but do we not neglect praise? Should we not oftener render thanksgiving to the Giver of all our blessings? We need to cultivate gratitude. We should frequently contemplate and recount the mercies of God, and laud and glorify his holy name, even when we are passing through sorrow and affliction.¹

“God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.
Come, behold the works of the LORD,
what desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
he burneth the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Psalm 46

Standing for Truth

It will require moral courage to do God’s work unflinchingly. Those who do this can give no place to self love, to selfish considerations, ambition, love of ease, or desire to shun the cross. We are commanded to “cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet. “Shall we labor to make the name of God a praise in the earth? Shall we obey his voice, or shall we listen to the soothing voice of the evil one, and be rocked to a fatal slumber just on the eve of eternal realities? The truth is everything to us, or it is nothing. Let those who want to make a name in the world, go with the world; but let those who would serve God, obey God, and not man. In the great conflict between faith and unbelief, the whole Christian world will be involved. All will take sides. Some may not apparently engage in the conflict on either side. They may not appear to take sides against the truth, but they will not come out boldly for Christ, through fear of losing property or suffering reproach. All such are numbered with the enemies of Christ; for Christ says, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

Conservative traditions received from educated men, and from the writings of great men of the past, are not safe guides for us in these last days; for the great struggle before us is such as the world has never seen before. Those who have not acted a part in this work in the past, need to move with great caution in regard to accepting or refusing what may be presented to them as truth. They need to penetrate much deeper than their limited spiritual knowledge, or their present habits or opinions would lead them to do. We are not one of us safe unless we live as seeing Him who is invisible, even with past experience in the work; and we certainly are not safe, if we have not had that experience. Daily, hourly, we must be actuated by the principles of Bible truth,—righteousness, mercy, and the love of God. He who would have moral and intellectual power must draw from the divine source. At every point of decision inquire, “Is this the way of the Lord?” With your Bibles open before you, consult sanctified reason and a good conscience. Your heart must be moved, your soul touched, your reason and intellect awakened, by the Spirit of God; and then holy principles revealed in the word of God will give light to the soul. The true source of wisdom and virtue and power is the cross of Calvary. Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. He says, “Without me ye can do nothing.”²

Over the Prince of life and the holy angels the satanic agencies can not prevail. Altho suffering and death came to the disciples for Christ's sake, yet not in one instance did Satan triumph. He bruised Christ's heel, but Christ bruised his head. Standing before governors and kings for the Master's sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, the disciples were the means God used for showing the contrast between the spirit which controls those connected with Satan and the spirit which controls those connected with the Prince of life.

The Promise of Help

The promise of help in time of need is given to us as surely as it was to the disciples. When we deliberately adopt a right course of action, when we determine to be true to the claims of the truth, to obey God, not swerving from principle to save property, reputation, or life, wisdom from above will be given us, even as it was given to them.

Paul declares: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore," He enjoins us, "take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Whatever trial may come upon you, however oppressed by persecution you may be, remember that beside you stands One mighty in power, even the Captain of the Lord's host. Resolve that not one jot or tittle of the sacred law of Jehovah shall be marred or dishonored by your course, that its authority shall not weaken in your hands.

Satan is defeated every time God's servants maintain their integrity in spite of his lying accusations and fierce persecution. An entire surrender of self to Him who has purchased all human beings will enable the suffering one to say: "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord; ... but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God."

The faith and confidence in God which is essential in time of trial is gained by a diligent cultivation of the qualifications given by God. A daily striving to know God and Jesus Christ will give to the mind a power and efficiency more precious than gold or silver. As we faithfully endeavor to improve our God-given faculties, we are made partakers of the divine nature.

The Lord desires His representatives to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. It is His design that the men in positions of responsibility in the world shall have an opportunity of hearing the truth. The truth has been misrepresented. False charges have been made against it. The kings and rulers of this world are to be given an opportunity of knowing and understanding the truth for themselves. They are to see the truth in contrast with error. While they are being critically examined by men who do not love or fear God, the Lord's servants will have opportunity to speak words of wisdom. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Thus human beings may bear a powerful testimony for their Lord. The Christian can not remain silent and non-committal until he sees that it is safe for him to speak. He is bound by the most sacred responsibilities to take his position on the side of truth and righteousness and witness for Christ. He is pledged to battle bravely against the disregard of God's law, even tho he be in danger of being swept away by the fury of the passions aroused by the stand he takes.

Jesus seemed to lose sight of the nearer view as He saw what was to come upon the world. He looked into the future, and saw that the world would despise His warnings and reproofs. "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death," He said, "and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." Satan was the instigator of all this cruelty. He worked to put to death those who were determined to serve God, according to the light they had received, and according to the dictates of their own conscience. Satan tries to force men even in their worship of God to carry out his ideas. Christ has given no example for this kind of work. He draws men, but He never drives them. "My sheep hear My voice," He says, "and they follow Me."³

The Promise of Power

The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are "the times of refreshing" to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus." Acts 3:19, 20.

Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side.⁴

¹ *The Review and Herald*, November 1, 1881

² *The Review and Herald*, February 7, 1893

³ *The Signs of the Times*, July 25, 1900

⁴ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612