

Christian Courage

By Santiago Lange



A mother once sent her son to fetch the broom which had been left on the front porch. He went, but in a few moments returned without the broom. "Where's my broom?" the mother asked. As it was already night time, the boy said, "It's awful dark outside, I'm afraid; there might be ghosts or monsters out there." The mother tried to persuade him that there was nothing outside to fear. But he would not be convinced. Finally she said, "There are no ghosts or monsters out there. But Jesus our Lord is out there, because He's everywhere. So you have nothing to fear." Slowly the little boy walked to the door that led out onto the porch. He cracked the door, peeked out, then said, "Jesus, are you REALLY out there?" he waited. Finally He said, "Well, if you're out there, hand me the broom because I'm not coming out there."

Like that boy, we all occasionally need an extra dose of courage. What are the things that make us most afraid? What trials or circumstances in our life right now call for us to be bold, to stand up, and have courage? As a Christian, what are those times when our faith is weak and we're tempted to fall back from the courage of our convictions?

As Paul sat in a dark Roman dungeon, facing eminent death, he wrote 2. Timothy, his final epistle. This prison stay was unlike any before. Previously he'd been treated kindly. Then he had been under house arrest with many liberties to continue his ministry. At that time, he had hopes of being released, but not now. He knew that shortly he would be called to his eternal home.

But Paul wasn't the one in need of courage ... it was young Timothy, his son in the faith. While writing down some of his final thoughts Paul is trying to encourage Timothy as his letter to him progresses. Perhaps Timothy was wavering a bit and growing weak. So, Paul encouraged him in 2. Timothy chapter 1 to "stir up the faith". Paul reminded his son in the faith in verse 7 that "God has not given us a spirit of fear..." Then he began chapter 2 with these words, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong" He reminded Timothy to have courage like a good soldier, or like an athlete struggling in a competition. The epistle we know as 2. Timothy contains some meaty scripture with a lot of themes. But, there are four that particularly stand out. Paul mentioned four things in 2. Timothy 2:8-15 to encourage Timothy. Four pills (as it were a strong medicine) to take when our hearts and our faith grows weak.

They are:

- Remember - Jesus is alive and well.
- Remember - Nothing can chain the Gospel.
- Remember - the Lord Jesus is faithful.
- Remember - the Word will equip us for battle.

We have a tendency to forget important things. We're human. So, we need reminders. Some of us use post-it notes or alarm clocks. Some of us have calendars, thick appointment books or mobile apps for scheduling important events. Even in the Old Testament God told his people, as a reminder, to have scriptures written or posted on the walls. "Remember" Paul says. Remember that JESUS WAS RESURRECTED AND IS ALIVE. He said He will never leave or forsake us. In fact, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans and so too, we are not orphans, we are not alone in this world. The resurrected seed of David (emphasizing Jesus' humanity and ability to sympathize) is with us. He who was tempted just as we are tempted. He who endured suffering, who hungered and thirsted. He who got tired and wept. This same Jesus is alive and is with us always.

What obstacles are we against that require courage? Let's never forget that Jesus is with us and that he will not fail. He was with the Hebrew children in the furnace, with Daniel in the Lion's den, with the many saints who faced persecution, even unto death. And, Jesus is with us.

To Paul the gospel was not some man's philosophy. It was not just some church's creed. It was not just some religious doctrine. It was "his" gospel. And if the gospel is ours, that is, an important and vital part of us, we'll be willing even to suffer for it, if necessary (verse 9).

We can have a religion and not bother anybody. But, if we have a living faith, be assured somebody will be disturbed by it. In fact, Paul points out in 2. Timothy 3:12 that "all who desire to live godly" will at one time or another face opposition. If people dislike us they will also lie about us. It doesn't matter. We must strive to have the courage to be true and faithful in spite of what men do or say.

2. Timothy is one of those times in Scripture where we have recorded an early hymn of the faith. Perhaps such a hymn was on the lips of early Christian martyrs who sang of the faithfulness of their Savior as they faced their own death. It begins with the words, "This is a faithful saying..." Of course, all of scripture is faithful, but especially noteworthy is what Paul mentions here about the Lord's faithfulness.

If we be dead with him WE SHALL LIVE. Jesus is faithful. He knows all those who have "died with him" of which baptism is a clear picture. He said that "he who saves his life will lose it, but he who loses it for his sake, will gain it." "If we suffer...WE SHALL REIGN" (verse 12). Jesus will not allow our service and sacrifice to go unnoticed. Don't be discouraged. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

When we find ourselves struggling, when we are opposed, whenever we are down and doubting, whenever our courage and faith seem weak, we must remember. There are people who appear to live to argue. Those are people for whom words and ideas seem to have been made for wrangling and endless debates. But, Christians are not called to be contentious. Paul warns that it does no good to fight, argue and dispute. That isn't to say that we should not try to point out the truth and share God's word.

"Faith comes by hearing..." (verse 15). In God's word we find all that we need to give us hope when we're down. The Holy Scriptures also give us direction when our moral compass is broken and nourishment when we've been feeding on the "spoiled food" of the world.

Where do we need courage today? Remember Jesus is alive and He's with us. Are we timid about the Gospel? Let's be bold and share it, nothing can chain the gospel. God's word will never return void. Be encouraged, God is faithful. And let's look to God's word for comfort, for strength, for courage and faith. □