

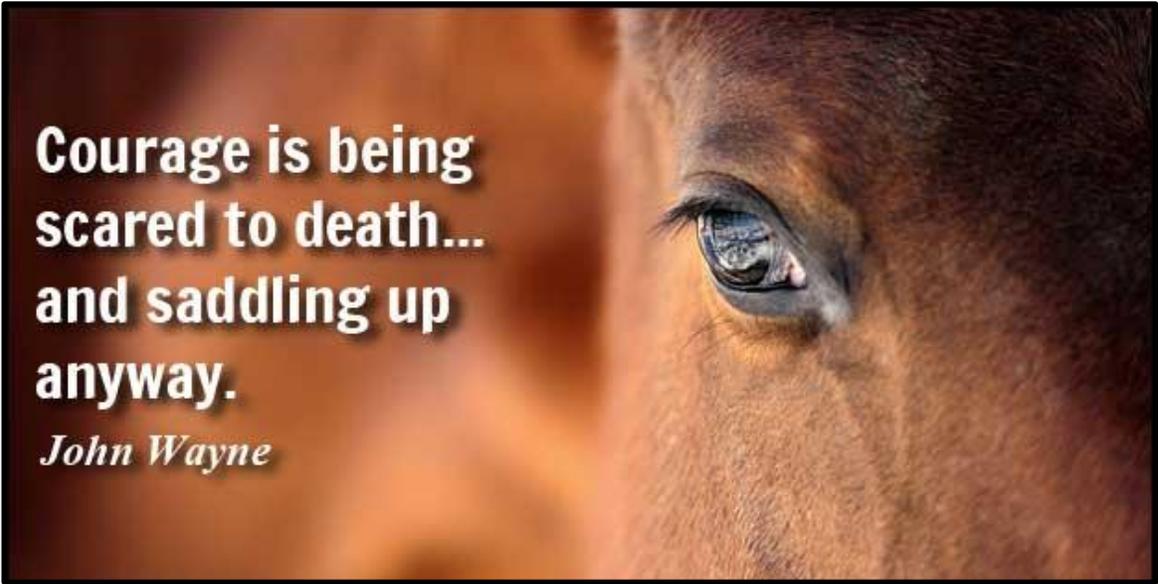
Courage in Crisis

Men's Conference

Cross and Spurs Cowboy Church

Buchanan Dam, Texas

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**Courage is being
scared to death...
and saddling up
anyway.**

John Wayne

“When I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

Psa 56:3

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Courage in Crisis

“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Psa 56:3

I. The Rationale of Faith (Psalm 56)

Introduction

- A. David lived a life of extreme danger from his youth.
- B. As a shepherd, David faced and defeated lions and bears to defend the flock (1Sa 17:36–37).
- C. Still as a youth, David alone was willing to face the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, in personal combat (1 Samuel 17).
- D. After killing the giant, Saul became envious of David, pursuing and persecuting him for 10–15 years in the wilderness (1Sa 24:14, 26:20; read 1Sa 18–31).
- E. During his reign as king, David was the focus of constant death threats and assassination attempts (Psa 22:16).
- F. In all his life of danger, he learned that the secret of victory over fear is that faith drives out fear (Psa 42:1, 5, 11, 43:5).

Analysis

- A. Psalm 56 is “*a Michtam of David*,” this means “a golden Psalm.” It contains precious instruction for the troubled soul.
- B. It is written according to a tune, to be sung, called “*the silent dove afar off*,” possibly referring to David in a time of refuge, when he wished for the “*wings [of] a dove*” to escape his troubles (Psa 55:6).
- C. It was written after the incident recorded in 1Sa 21:10–15, where in his desperation, David fled to Gath, the city of Goliath. He was carrying the sword of Goliath (1Sa 21:8–9), and thus was recognized and surrounded. He feigned madness to escape.

Historical Interlude, 1Sa 21:8–15

In this incident, we see why Psalm 56 is said to contain a “lesson of gold.” David foolishly enters the Philistine stronghold (home of Goliath), carrying the giant’s sword, and thinks he can escape detection. This shows the ability of fear to dull the mind. In reality, when we act on fear, it always leads us to make foolish choices and go in the wrong direction. The reason is that fear is **subjective**, while faith is **objective**. Subjectivity is defined as being self-centered, whereas objectivity is fact/reality-centered. In this case, the greatest fact is the character of God! He remains the same, no matter how foolish or flawed we may be.

- A. His plea for mercy (Psa 56:1–2) is in the midst of grave peril. “Mercy” is *chanan*, “unmerited favor based on God’s love for His children.”

- B. In great fear of soul, David makes a resolute decision to overcome his fear by trusting in the Lord. The word “*trust*” is *batach*, which implies “bold initiative in facing an enemy,” “to hope for deliverance.” Some sources use this word for “throwing an enemy to the ground.”
- C. David states his spiritual rationale for overcoming overwhelming fear, “... *I will praise His word ... In God I have put my trust; I will not fear.*” It is the knowledge of, and assurance in God’s Word, that is the object of his faith. By this, he will drive fear from his soul.
1. This would involve the conviction of God’s sovereignty.
 2. On this basis, we can build trust in the providence of God.
 3. This providential care will follow the promises of God to His child. We cannot claim promises we do not know! There are an estimated 7,000 promises in the Bible to the believer.
- D. In Psa 56:5–7, he describes his enemies as “*twist[ing his] words*” and watching his steps in order to take his life.
- E. Then in Psa 56:8–11, he contrasts his danger with the watch-care of God:
1. God is conscious of every step and situation of our life.
 2. He counts and records every tear as a precious treasure, and records our afflictions in His book of life.
 3. He hears the prayers of His people and never disregards them.
 4. David is convinced of God’s future deliverance. His faith will not be in vain.
- F. Finally, David promises to keep his vows to God, knowing he will yet praise Him. He bases this on his past experiences with God’s faithfulness.

Summary

- A. This Psalm is “*more to be desired ... than gold*” (Psa 19:10) for its instruction in facing fear, which is always the ploy of Satan (Heb 2:14–15).
- B. The only spiritual weapon effective against fear is faith. The causes of the fear are as different as the conditions of life. But the solution is always the same—active trust in the Living God.
- C. Fear focuses on what might happen to **me**—this is subjective thinking. Faith focuses on the ultimate reality: **God**, who never changes. This is objective thinking—a faith rationale!
- D. Reviewing past times, when things looked bleak in our lives and we experienced God’s deliverance, are powerful reminders of the faithfulness of God.

II. The Refuge of Faith (Psalm 57)

“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.” Psa 57:1

Review/Introduction

- A. There can be no real courage unless fear is being faced. Spiritual courage conquers fear through faith.
- B. Effective faith must have a working object worthy of being trusted. In other words, does the object of my faith have the power to fulfill my hopes? For the believer, knowing God and His Word gives us that object.
- C. David’s faith was directed to God’s Word (Psa 56:4), which instructs us regarding:
 - 1. The sovereignty of God (Rom 8:31–39)
 - 2. The providence/plan of God (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28)
 - 3. The promises of God (Heb 13:5–6)
 - 4. The guidance of God (Gen 24:27, 50:20; Joh 16:13–14)
 - 5. In the stories of the Bible, we see that God’s guidance to His children is often unconscious, as we look to Him in confident faith. Consider Gen 24:27; Jos 2:1–11 (Rahab); Luk 2:1–7 (Joseph/Mary); Act 16:6–10 (Paul/Silas).

Analysis

- A. Psalm 57 is a companion to Psalm 56. Again, it is a *“Michtam”*—a lesson of gold—and is set to the tune *“Do not Destroy,”* apparently a known song of praise at that time.
- B. This Psalm commemorates God’s deliverance to David recorded in 1Sa 24:1–15, when he could have avenged himself on Saul.

Historical Interlude, 1Sa 24:1–15

Here, Saul takes 3,000 choice men to go against David’s 400. The *“Rocks of the Wild Goats”* are still there, and so are the goats. Had Saul discovered David and his men in the cave, they could have covered the entrance or burned them out. At the same time, David could have easily taken Saul captive. Yet the incident of cutting off a piece of the king’s robe, and David’s smitten conscience (1Sa 24:6; compare Exo 22:28), shows the nobility and integrity of David. As Saul confesses in 1Sa 25:17–18, David is the greater man. God allows trials to both refine and to prove our faith (Jam 1:1–8, 12; 1Pe 1:6–7).

- A. Even though David and his men sought refuge in the cave, Psa 57:1 tells us that David’s trust was *“In the shadow of Your wings,”* a familiar figure to David (Psa 91:1). This figure is based on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, and pictured dwelling in the presence, and under the protection, of the Almighty.

- B. In Psa 57:1–2, David expresses his conviction in the power of prayer. He is confident that God will not ignore his prayers. We must always keep in mind that it is our duty and privilege to pray—it is up to God how He will answer the prayer. His way is always best!
- C. Then, in Psa 57:4–6, David compares his enemies to “*lions*” whose souls are “*set on fire*.” This reminds us of Jam 3:5–6 where the tongue is compared to a fire ignited by hell. A lying and slanderous tongue can kill as quickly as “*spears and arrows*” or a “*sharp sword*.” Saul sought to trap David as in “*a net*” or “*a pit*,” but in the end, he would fall into it himself. This is God’s justice.
- D. In Psa 57:7–11, David breaks into song, praising God because, “*my heart is steadfast*” due to trust in His Word. The repetition of the phrase emphasizes his exultation in a sense of joy and security. Only by faith are we enabled to have calm and joy in the midst of painful and trying circumstances.
- E. Note in Psa 57:10 that the source of David’s steadfastness is “*Your mercy ... Your truth*”—what we see in Joh 1:14 as “*grace and truth*”—which were exhibited fully in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace reaches the lowliest sinner, and truth produces the greatest saints!

Summary

- A. In ancient Israel, there were six cities of refuge (Num 35:6–34), where one guilty of accidental manslaughter could go to escape the avenger of blood—usually a near relative of the victim.
- B. These cities were a “type” or shadow of Christ—our refuge. They are named in Jos 20:7–9; each name speaks of Christ in some way:
1. “*Kedesh*.” The root word means “to sanctify.” In Jesus Christ, our refuge, we are sanctified forever from all guilt (1Co 6:11; 1Th 5:23; Heb 10:10, 14).
 2. “*Shechem*.” This comes from a root that means “to bear on the shoulders.” Jesus Christ is our burden-bearer, and we “ *dwell between His shoulders*” (Deu 33:12; remember, “*Benjamin*” means “Son of My right hand,” Gen 35:18). Jesus is pictured as the Good Shepherd seeking, finding the lost lamb, and carrying it on His shoulders (Luk 15:5).
 3. “*Hebron*.” This name means “united,” and we are united by faith to Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:4–6).
 4. “*Bezer*.” This speaks of “*gold*”; we are being refined in our faith as gold (1Co 3:12; 2Ti 2:20–21; 1Pe 1:6–9).
 5. “*Ramoth*.” This city’s name means “height, high place.” In Christ, we are raised and seated at God’s right hand (Col 3:1–4; Phi 3:14).
 6. “*Golan*.” This means “captive, captivated.” We have been taken as captives to Christ, to follow in His train of victory (Psa 68:18; Eph 4:8).

- C. In Christ Jesus, we have a strong refuge from all dangers. We are secure forever in the shelter of His love (Rom 8:28–39).
- D. Once again, objective thinking (faith) looks to the Source, Jesus Christ, where subjective thinking sees only the situation (see Mat 14:22–33).

III. The Readiness of Faith (Psalm 11)

“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Psa 11:3

Introduction

- A. There are many today who ask this same question: When the foundations of a nation or a society are destroyed, what can one person do?
- B. Our president has called this destruction in America, “The fundamental transformation of America.”
- C. With the assault of evil and tyranny at every hand, what can you, as a single believer, do?

Analysis

- A. Psalm 11 is too often misunderstood as to its content and its intent.
- B. In the Psalm, there are two speakers: the first is David and the second is a mocker who disputes with him about his faith.
- C. While David expresses—as he did in Psalm 56 and 57—that his faith is grounded in the faithfulness of God, the opponent contradicts him.
- D. Note the opening line, *“In the LORD I put my trust”* (Psa 11:1a). This is not only the theme of all of David’s psalms, but of his entire life. It is this, above all else, that made David *“a man after [God’s] heart”* (Act 13:22).
- E. In Psa 11:1b–3, the mocker seeks to undermine David’s faith and sow doubts as to the reasonableness of trusting God.
- F. First, David repeats the mocker’s attempt to create fear, *“flee as a bird to your mountain.”* This is no doubt a reference to times when David fled *“to the cave of Adullam,”* and other *“strongholds in ... the mountains”* (1Sa 22:1–2, 23:14; 2Sa 23:13).
- G. The principle here is that Satan always uses fear to seek to undermine faith and cause subjective reactions to life instead of objective responses. Subjective thinking reacts with emotion, while objective thinking responds to facts and truth.
- H. Next, the mocker speaks of those who would seek David’s life, as already drawing their bow to destroy him. This was a time of great peril, and the speaker—looking only at outward circumstances—suggests that all hope is lost.
- I. The assault on David’s faith ends with what appears to be a reasonable question, *“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* (Psa 11:3). It is very easy in life to make superficial things look like foundational things. To those who *“walk by faith, not by sight”* (2Co 5:7), visible things are never taken as foundational. Consider the counsel of the Apostle Paul in 2Co 4:1, 18:

“Therefore ... we do not lose heart ... for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

- J. In Psa 11:4–7, David reveals the true foundations of life. Of three things he is absolutely certain:
- a. God is on His throne, and He will never be removed, Psa 11:4a.
 - b. God is the judge of men. God will test the righteous, so as to bless and reward them, but He will judge the wicked, both in time and eternity, Psa 11:4b–6.
 - c. Finally, God has special care for the righteous and watches over them with infinite care and loving-kindness (Mat 6:25–34).
- K. What we see in David’s certainties is the essence of faith, which again objectively fixes the eye of the soul, not on the situation—which is changing—but on God, who is unchanging.

The Essence of God Rationale

A “rationale” is defined by Webster as: *“the logical justifying grounds for something ... a statement or exposition of principles or reasons.”*

- A. God is sovereign. He reigns supreme over all events and circumstances. Therefore, nothing can overrule His will.
- B. God is righteous. It is impossible for Him to do evil in any form.
- C. God is just. He is fair in all His dealings. Though we suffer injustice in a fallen world, His reward for faithfulness turns the cursing of evil into blessings forever.
- D. God is love. It is impossible for Him to deal with us in any way that is not the expression of His infinite love in Christ Jesus.
- E. God is eternal life. All the perfections of His plans and purposes will be seen throughout all eternity. He works through afflictions to bring the lost to faith in Jesus Christ and to purify the believer.
- F. God is omniscient. He knows the end from the beginning. Therefore, nothing can happen that He has not anticipated or prepared for.
- G. God is omnipotent. There is nothing impossible for Him that is in the realm of what is infinitely good. He overrules even evil to serve His good purpose.
- H. God is omnipresent. There is no place or circumstance in which we are separated from His presence.
- I. God is immutable. He cannot change. He will never change His mind or purpose for us in Christ, nor will His love for us ever alter in any way—either by what happens to us, or by our failure.
- J. God is veracity. He is the very essence of truth. His Word and promises will stand for all eternity.

Summary

- A. There is a rough-and-ready quality of faith that prepares us to be both optimistic about life and eager to face whatever challenges God permits.

“I am ready to preach the gospel...” Rom 1:15

“Always be ready to give a defense...for the hope that is in you ...” 1Pe 3:15

Note: *“The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; the optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty,”* Sir Winston Churchill.

- B. There will always be those—often even among friends and loved ones—who present “reasonable” arguments for losing heart and giving in to fear.
- C. The only spiritual way to face these times in which we live is to keep our eyes on our resurrected and seated Lord (Heb 12:2).
- D. This study shows that the **rationale** of faith leads us to take **refuge** in our Lord’s faithfulness, which gives us a **readiness** to face the challenges and uncertainties of life.

During WWII, at the siege of Dunkirk, Winston Churchill called on the people of Great Britain to pray. That night, a dense fog moved into the English Channel, making the evacuation of soldiers trapped at Dunkirk possible. Later, this graffiti was found written on a door of a pub in London: *“Fear knocked, faith answered, and no one was there!”*

Quotes on Courage

“Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Jos 1:9

“The man so bravely played the man, he made the fiend to fly.” Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan

“Blessed are the valiant that have lived in the Lord.” Cromwell, Thomas Carlyle

“Valor grows by daring, fear by holding back” Publius Syrus

“It is better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep.” Italian Proverb

“No sane man is unafraid in battle, but discipline produces in him a form of vicarious courage.” Gen. George S. Patton

“Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities, because it is the quality that guarantees all others.” Sir Winston Churchill

“You will find that most men with moral courage learnt it by precept and example in their youth.” Field Marshal Viscount Slim of Burma

Random Thoughts

1. Courage is enhanced by diligent preparation. When facing any danger, the knowledge that you have planned for it is grounds for confidence.
2. Training takes away one of the greatest threats to courage, which is uncertainty about what to do.
3. Planning, followed by preparation, ending in executing the plan, occupies the mind, leaving less room for fear to take control.

Courage According to the Savior
Eight Tactics to Spiritual Victory
Luk 21:7–36

The Setting

1. Jesus has just told the disciples of the coming destruction of the temple, and they are terrified.
2. They ask two questions in essence: When will this happen? And how can we be prepared?
3. While this passage has end-times, tribulation conditions in view, the instruction will surely equip us for any time of peril and upheaval.

The Eight Tactics

1. Overcome deception by knowing the truth, Luk 21:8.
Jesus could only command us not to be deceived if it were possible not to be. All who are deceived participate in their own deception, often simply by failure to lay hold of the truth.
2. Overcome fear by faith in God’s plan, Luk 21:9.
This step builds on the first. If we take pains to learn the plan of God—both for us personally, and for the world historically—we will see in these events not the end of the world as we know it, but the preparation for the coming of God’s kingdom.
3. Use every crisis for crisis-evangelism, Luk 21:13.
If we overcome deception and fear, we will then be equipped to use crisis events to point the troubled souls around us to faith in Jesus Christ. People are much more open to truth when their world is shaking. The key in these times is to let the Spirit speak the message for that soul in that hour.
4. Garrison your soul by steadfast faith, Luk 21:19.
The idea here is to guard or hold on to what is rightfully yours. Jesus speaks of a man exchanging his eternal soul for temporary riches (Mat 16:26). In his pursuit of riches, he neglects the securing of his soul for eternity, through faith. In times of trial, we maintain control of our soul perseverance—patient endurance—which comes from the conviction of future deliverance and eternal reward. In Rev 13:9, Jesus speaks of the saints’ patience as being based on the assurance of ultimate justice from God coming on their persecutors. Endurance of affliction has in view God’s final reward (Jam 1:12).
5. Don’t look around, look up, Luk 21:28!
In the story of Peter walking on the water to Jesus (Matthew 14), we see that, as long as Peter’s eyes were fixed on the Lord, he was very secure in an unstable environment. Once he took his eyes off the Lord and looked around him at the wind and waves, he began to sink. The literal rendering of Heb 12:2 is “looking away unto Jesus.” We need to get our eyes off circumstances and on to Him.

6. Know your location on the spiritual roadmap, Luk 21:31.
Only the informed Christian knows history in advance, due to understanding prophecy. Jesus only used the phrase “*this generation*” twice. Once, for the first-century generation (Mat 23:36), and once, for the final generation (Mat 24:34; Luk 21:32). In the last two references, He always related it to the “*fig tree*”—a symbol of Israel’s re-emergence (Mat 24:32; Luk 21:29).
7. Beware of the twin snares of duplicity and anxiety, Luk 21:34–35.
There are two great dangers to the soul in times of national or historical crisis. The first is carelessness, where we live as if there were no tomorrow. Before both WWI and WWII, history records that people became crazed with entertainment and self-indulgence. The second is care, or anxiety. Whether carelessness or care, each becomes a burden to the soul. Both are widely evident in our time.
8. Be ever vigilant in prayer: to escape and to stand, Luk 21:36.
Our ability to hold up in times of spiritual, national, and historical upheaval, depends on our moment-by-moment fellowship with God. To a very great extent, this is dependent upon our prayer life. It is in the secret communications of our prayers that we express to God our total helplessness and dependence upon His grace to deliver us from fear, from faithlessness, from failure. We are “*counted worthy*” of escape, not by our merits, but by our trust in Him, who alone can deliver us. To “*stand before the Son of Man*” is not speaking of our salvation, but of our standing unashamed at His judgment (1Co 3:10–15; 2Co 5:9–11).

Summary: What Does Victory Look Like?

Look at 2Co 4:1, 7–18. Here, Paul gives us, in his own experience, an example of a victorious Christian warrior:

“Therefore ... as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart ... we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith ... we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

May God grant that we may follow his example and face our times with the courage that comes from the conviction of His eternal truth!