

## THE CURSE OF COWARDICE

Compromise and cowardice hurts everyone concerned. Cowardice is destructive and short-sighted. In Revelation 21:8, Cowards are at the top of the list of those who will be condemned by God for all eternity – thrown into the Lake of Fire.

The Word of God commands us not to be afraid of any man (Deuteronomy 1:17). We are warned that the fear of man will prove to be a snare (Proverbs 29:25). The Scriptures tell us of those who would not say anything about Jesus publically for fear of the people (John 7:13).

*“Even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”* John 12:42 – 43

Even the Apostle Peter, who was normally so bold and brave, gave in to compromise and cowardice when *“he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel...”* then the Apostle Paul rebuked them openly (Galatians 2:12 – 14).

Fear of disapproval, fear of being embarrassed, fear of being ridiculed, fear of unpopularity, fear of being misunderstood and being lied about, fear of failure, of suffering, pain and death, fear of loss and sacrifice can all too easily lead us to stay seated when we should stand up, to stand still when we should step out, to remain silent when we should speak up, to remain passive and inactive when we should fight for what is right.

Selfish desires for fame and fortune, health and wealth, comfort and ease, safety and security all too often seduce us into choosing the way of least resistance, going with the flow, following the crowd, compromising our principles, stifling the still small voice of our conscience, resisting the Holy Spirit, quenching the Spirit, grieving the Holy Spirit, disobeying the Bible and dishonoring God.

*“Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of a son of man who will be made like grass? You forget the Lord your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth; you have feared continually everyday because of the fury of the oppressor... and where is the fury of the oppressor? But I am the Lord your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared – the Lord of hosts is His Name. And I have put My Words in your mouth...”* Isaiah 51:12 – 15

People pleasers make traitors (John 12:43). ***“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do O seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”*** Galatians 1:10

***“Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”*** Proverbs 27:5 – 6

There are legitimate fears, which caution us, sharpen our senses and warn us of the dangers of pain, crippling injury and death. Such reasonable fears, either for ourselves or for others, are put there by God to preserve life and limb, to keep us from extreme recklessness, walking too close to the edge of a cliff, driving too fast in dangerous conditions, warning our children of dangerous behaviour. Wearing helmets on bicycles and motorbikes, wearing seat belts in cars, keeping to speed limits and carefully observing traffic signs, reducing speed when visibility is impaired, or the road is wet, are wise responses to legitimate fear. Love of life and family is God given – but never at any price.

*“If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too.  
 If you can wait but not be tired by waiting, or being lied about not deal in lies,  
 or being hated don't give way to hating, and yet don't look too good nor talk too wise.  
 If you can dream and yet not make dreams your master,  
 If you can think and not make thoughts your aim,  
 If you can meet with triumph, or disaster and treat those two imposters just the same,  
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools;  
 or watch the thing you gave your life to broken and stoop to build them up with worn out tools;  
 If you can make one heap of all your winnings and risk it on one turn of pitch and toss,  
 and lose and start again at your beginnings and never breath a word about your loss;  
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew to serve your turn long after they've gone;  
 and so hold on when there's nothing in you except the will that says to them: 'Hold on!';  
 If you can talk to crowds and keep your virtue, and walk with kings nor lose the common touch;  
 if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you.  
 If all men count with you, but none too much,  
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run,  
 yours is the earth and everything in it, and which is more you'll be a man my son.”* Rudyard Kipling

**Courage is not the absence of fear, but the determination to do our duty in spite of our fear.** Some rational, God given sense of caution can protect us and our loved ones and prolong life. But if fear paralyses us into inactivity, neutrality, compromise, cowardice, defeat and disobedience, then it is evil.

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*  
 2 Timothy 1:7

The prevailing Arminian, Antinomian, Egalitarian, sinner-friendly, Prayer-of-Jabez, self centred, superficial, sensational, materialistic, cheap grace and easy believism that produces wets, wimps and weeds is gutless, spineless and yellowbellied. We are not called to be popular, but faithful. The Great Commission is not about how to win friends and influence people, but how to make disciples of all nations, teaching obedience to all that the Lord has commanded. Like Shedrak, Meshak and Abednigo we need to stand firm in the Faith, no matter what the cost. We are called to submit to God, to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7).

### **CHRISTIAN COURAGE**

We are called to overcome the world: *“Because He Who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”* 1 John 4:4

The Will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.  
 Where God guides He provides. God gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him.

*“I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.”* Philippians 4:13

*“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33

*“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.”* Romans 8:37

**The safest place in the world is in the centre of God's Will.** Duty is ours, the results are God's. God's servant is God's responsibility.

Like German Reformer, Martin Luther, who dared to defy the collective might of the Pope of Rome and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire when he refused their threats and demands to recant, we need to be able to say: *“My conscience is captive to the Word of God...Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God. Amen.”*

As Swiss Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli declared: *“They can kill the body – but they cannot kill the soul.”*

*“Some like to live within sound of chapel bell – I want to run and rescue shop within a yard of hell.”*  
C.T. Studd

*“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.”* Deuteronomy 31:6

As God commanded Joshua: *“Be strong and of good courage... only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, that you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”* Joshua 1:6 – 9

*“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed... for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.”*  
2 Chronicles 32:7 – 8

*“Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that... you remain steadfast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake...”* Philippians 1:27 – 29

Then with David we can say: *“I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.”* Psalm 3:6; *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid... though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may arise against me, in this I will be confident.”* Psalm 27:1 – 3

*“You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noon day... for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.”* Psalm 91:5 – 11

*“I called on the Lord in my distress; the Lord answered me... I will not fear. What can man do to me? It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.”* Psalm 118:5 – 9

*“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.”* Isaiah 12:2

Our Lord Jesus taught us that we should not fear man who can only kill the body, but rather we should learn to fear God alone who can destroy both body and soul in hell forever. The fear of God will free us from the fear of man. The reverential awe, respect and fear of God is liberating.

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* Proverbs 1:7

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