

BOLDNESS vs. FEARFULNESS

BOLDNESS MEANS WELCOMING ANY SUFFERING THAT COMES FROM DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, BECAUSE IT WILL PRODUCE A GREATER POWER OF LOVE

“The righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1).

DEFINITION OF BOLDNESS

The Biblical definitions of boldness offer rich insight. Three Greek words translated bold each identify a distinct and important aspect of this quality.

1. Tharrheo—Boldness in the face of death
2. Parrhesiazomai—Boldness to speak the truth
3. Tolmao—Boldness to accomplish great things for God

Boldness means the fearless and daring courage to carry out the work God calls us to do. When God commanded Joshua to “be of good courage”, He was telling him to show boldness—boldness to face death in battle, to speak truth to his own heart and to the nation, and to do great exploits for God.

BOLDNESS IN THE FACE OF DEATH

No believer needs to fear death, because of the confidence that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross, in part, to conquer fear. “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death,” (Hebrews 2:14-15, New International Version).

The Apostle Paul had this type of boldness. He faced beatings, persecutions, and shipwrecks without fear. He enjoyed the assurance that he was indestructible until he completed the work God gave him to do. He enjoyed the assurance that death could only bring him immediately into the eternal presence of the Lord Whom he served. Paul stated, “Therefore we are always confident (tharrheo), knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord... We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:6-8).

Paul considered the benefits of continuing his ministry on earth or enjoying the rewards of his labors in Heaven. He favored the idea of going to Heaven but knew it would be more beneficial for believers if he continued his ministry on earth. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain... Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:21, 23).

Those free from the fear of death can boldly face even the onslaught of Satan himself. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death,” (Revelation 12:11). The Apostle John defines overcomers as those who place their faith in Christ, as those in whom the Word of God abides, and as those who understand that “greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world,” (see 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5). God promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. Therefore, “We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6). The most powerful people on the face of the earth are those who have no fear of death. As Josef Tson said, “There is nothing more dangerous on this planet than people that are not afraid of dying.”

HOW BOLD ARE YOU IN THE FACE OF DEATH?

- Have you purposed to die to self and follow Christ: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).
- Have you conquered the fear of man by exchanging your reputation for Christ’s and choosing to concern yourself only with letting people see Christ in you?
- Have you dedicated your life to fulfill God’s calling, and are you determined to make whatever sacrifices God requires?
- What Biblical convictions do you have that you are willing to die for?
- In what specific ways do you die to self so others can know Christ?

BOLDNESS TO SPEAK THE TRUTH

Whereas boldness to conquer the fear of death comes through salvation, boldness to speak the truth (parrhesiazonmai boldness) comes through the prayer of other believers. Even the Apostle Paul requested prayer for such boldness: Pray “for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19-20). When the apostles were threatened with harm if they spoke in the name of Jesus, they received boldness through prayer: “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly,” (Acts 4:29-31, New International Version).

Boldness to speak the truth must begin with a clear conscience toward the Lord and toward others. Nothing stops the freedom of the mouth like the failures of a life. Before God commissioned to speak, He cleansed him of his iniquity. (See Isaiah 6:7-9.)

God honors those whose consistent life gives them an audience to speak the truth to those in authority. Daniel was bold to speak the truth to King Belshazzar during the drunken feast in which the king used the sacred vessels from God’s Temple. After hearing God’s judgment upon himself and his kingdom, the king honored Daniel. (See Dan. 5:29). Philip P. Bliss wrote,

“Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!”

John Knox was a sixteenth century reformer. He spoke the truth to his large congregation in Scotland but was arrested for it and chained to the oars of a galley ship. During long months of pulling on oars, he built not only his physical strength but also strength of fervent prayer. He would cry, “O God, give me Scotland or I die!” His life and work for God became so powerful that the Queen of Scotland is quoted as saying, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.”

HOW BOLD ARE YOU IN SPEAKING THE TRUTH?

- What Christian leaders do you praying for to have boldness to speak the truth?
- Have you asked others to pray that you will have boldness to witness?
- Do you wait for opportunities to witness, or do you make them?
- When people ridicule the Lord, do you defend the truth in a loving way?
- What good treasures do you put in your heart that will then be spoken by your tongue?
- Have you written out your testimony so that you are prepared to give a ready answer?

BOLDNESS TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS

When a believer has conquered the fear of death and has become bold in speaking the truth, he or she is equipped for *tolmao* boldness. God accomplishes mighty things through such a believer. “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him,” (II Chronicles 16:9, New International Version).

Doing great exploits for God and His kingdom results from knowing God and understanding something of His character and His purposes in the world. “The people who do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Daniel 11:32). God initiates the boldness to do exploits by giving His people special passages of Scripture that relate directly to what He wants them to accomplish. These passages are rhemas and are the basis of faith, for “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God” (Romans 10:17). As we engraft the rhemas of Scripture into our lives and meditate on them, we can claim their fulfillment in bold exploits. “If ye abide in me, and my words (rhemas) abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:7-8).

Gideon demonstrated boldness when he pulled down his father’s false altar and then led three hundred soldiers against the vast hosts of the enemy’s army. David also demonstrated boldness as he went out against Goliath. The heroes of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 demonstrated *tolmao* boldness. “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11:32-34).

HOW BOLD ARE YOU TO DO EXPLOITS FOR GOD?

- Is your heart right before the Lord so He can work mightily through you?
- Do you make it your goal in life to lead as many others as you can to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and then to disciple them in all the teachings of Christ?
- What special passages of Scripture (*rhemas*) has God given to you, and do you regularly meditate on them? (See Psalm 1).
- Has God given you a special concern for a certain category of people so that you can meet their needs?
- When you get to the end of your life, what do you want to look back on, of which you can say “This is what God accomplished through me”?