

## “NO COWARDS HERE!”

Most of us have had the unpleasant experience of looking back into the rear-view mirror to see those dreaded red and blue flashing lights. No, I am not talking about the twinkling of Christmas lights. It was about 10:00 pm on a weekend and I was in a rush to fill a prescription for my wife because she was in pain. Then I saw the glimmer of those unwanted lights filling the darkness. Busted. The patrol officer came to my window and said, “What’s the hurry sir?” I gave my sob story about the emergency medication run, but to no avail. On the way home I was jumpy, as I kept looking back in the rear-view mirror. That is how I feel when I look ahead to 2018. I just want all of the unpleasant things in 2017 to be a fading light in the rear-view mirror, never to be seen again.



Just a few days ago, I was talking to a pastor friend on the phone. At the end of our conversation he made a reference to how we are handling the diagnosis of cancer in our home. He boldly said, “I admire your courage!” I thanked him and then hung up with a pondering question, “What did he mean?”

COURAGE. It has several names like bravery, valor, fearlessness, chivalry, heroism, confidence and nerve. Maybe a few others come to mind like guts, grit, backbone or spunk. What did he mean? COURAGE. It is another name for inner strength, presence of mind against odds, determination to hang in there, persevere or withstand hardship. For me, it meant the ability to see God and trust Him in the midst of a life altering adversity. COURAGE. David had it when he grabbed his sling in the Valley of Elah (I Samuel 17:48-50). Daniel and his friends demonstrated it when they refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s statue in Babylon (Daniel 3:16-18). Elijah evidenced it when he faced the prophets of Baal on Carmel (I Kings 18:18-19). Job showed it when he was covered with boils and lost his family (Job 2:7-8). Moses used it when he stood against Pharaoh (Exodus 3:1-5). Our precious Lord displayed it when He faced the clutches of death like a criminal and bore the weight of sin (Matthew 27:45-46).

The courage I speak of is not limited to the battlefields of Iraq, someone running into a burning house, the injustices of equal rights, confronting a bully at school, helping someone who is being robbed or even facing the uncertainties of cancer. The real test of courage is much broader, much deeper and much quieter. For me, it is that inner strength and test to face a trial. Our suffering is simply a platform for the display of God’s power. Sometimes that power is revealed through His miraculous deliverance or the exercise of grace to simply endure. Courage is the ability to show real faith in God when our trial puts us on public display and when Satan wants to deface God’s glory. It is the ability to demonstrate clearly God’s worthiness in worship from our hearts. Courage is the ability to give Him our willing allegiance and the reality of His presence and peace in the midst of pain. Do you see what I mean? Being courageous as a child of the living God is more than those acts of bravery we see on Good Morning America. It is our ability by faith to cling to His promises, understand His perfect ways and enjoy the beauty of His character when trouble comes. Why? It is because we are on the witness stand to actually demonstrate whether or not we will believe and apply what we know to be true

about God. The world is watching us. Will we be able to endure or hold up under the stress of our trial until God's work is done? That is courage.

For those of you who know God well, you understand that pain is a process with a certain purpose. Our goal can't just be to get through the tough times. Think on this. Through tough times we are made into the beautiful image of Jesus Christ. That is the courage that others will see in us.



We do not know what 2018 is going to bring, but this I know, our courage will be tested. It may not be very exciting or dramatic, but it is real none the less. His medal of honor recipients for courage will not be made in public for all to see, but in the quietness of our relationship with God. Satan will want us to run like a coward. In Christ, we will stand strong with courage for what is ahead this coming year.

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