

1 Peter 4:12–17; 5:6–11

May 28, 2017

“Have Courage”

Our Redeemer

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

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Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior  
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**[Introduction]**

And so the story goes like this:

A man goes charging into a burning house  
and he comes out with a helpless victim – in his arms.

This is the type of story line you would find on tv shows like Chicago Fire  
Or Emergency. Remember that one?

And ... this is always the type of story that ... makes the five o'clock news.

In one such case the rescuer was asked,

*“What crossed your mind when you heard the cry for help?”*

He answered,

*“I looked around to see if somebody else might answer it. Then  
I thought, Not my problem! But it dawned on me that if I didn’t  
go in there I would never have been able to live with myself!”*

**[Be Self-Controlled and Alert]**

Perhaps the quality most admired in a person is courage.

The Apostle Peter writes:

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial  
when it comes upon you to test you...” (1 Peter 4:12)

Peter encourages.

He encourages the abused and threatened Christians.

He encourages them to be self-controlled and alert.

He encourages have – in just one word – courage.

Now, such counsel is not new in the long and turbulent history of God’s people.

Three times the Lord urges Joshua:

“Be strong and courageous” as Moses’ successor begins to lead Israel.

But with many of the Old Testament patriarchs

the image of courage is marred by cowardice.

Even Moses himself can't find enough excuses  
to avoid a confrontation with Pharaoh.

*"O Lord, please send someone else to do it"* (Ex 4:13).

Now, Gideon obeys the command of the Lord to tear down the altar to Baal,  
but because he is afraid of his family and the men of the town  
he does it under the cover of darkness (Jud 6:27).

Jeremiah begs off as well, *"I do not know how to speak, I am only a child,"*  
he responds to God's order that he prophesy (Jer 1–6).

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Fear of being hurt – or even killed – is not limited to biblical figures.

The first three centuries after Christ, were rough.  
During one tough point, the bishop of Carthage, Cyprian, suddenly disappeared.

Some said, "Now, what kind of an example is that?"

Others thought it was great.

After all, if he was hidden away, he couldn't get hurt.

A general should keep himself away from the frontlines of battle.

Seven years later, when another persecution arose, *HE WAS THERE*.

Cyprian, was there!

Perhaps, just perhaps the lesson is simply this:

even those who usually display courage will on occasion lose heart.

Did you ever lose heart?

While no concrete definition for courage is given in the Bible,

it could be defined as the "confidence that God will see you through."

Do you remember the courage of *Esther*,?

She was a Jew who became Queen of Persia some 450 years before Christ.

Her marriage to King Xerxes – Well, it could well have prevented  
the annihilation of the Jewish nation.

One of the highest official in Persia, persuaded the king to destroy  
all of the Jews because, he claimed, they did not obey his laws.

While anyone who approached the king  
without being summoned would be put to death,  
Esther decides to come to him in order to save her people.

Courageously she says, “If I perish, I perish” (Esth 4:16).  
Throughout the Bible, in story and command, we are told to have courage!  
**Have courage!**

[*Resist Him*] In the late 1700s  
a 14-year-old girl by the name of Marie  
was told by the authorities to renounce her beliefs.

She belonged to a Christian group called the Huguenots,  
a French nickname for Protestants.

It was a very simple request was made.  
All she had to do was to say, “I renounce.” BUT Marie refused.

As a result she was imprisoned in a single room along with 30 other women  
who also refused. They remained there for 38 years.

Occasionally they were asked, “*Do you renounce?*”  
They not only said no!  
They even carved another word in the wall – the French word for resist.  
Tourists still stare at the word,  
shaking their heads as they hear this astonishing story.

Today, we live in a world where religious beliefs are so easily thrown aside!  
If it is inconvenient, forget.  
Commitment like Marie’s seems to be beyond comprehension anymore.

When we think about those women  
sitting in the same room day after day, week after week, year after year...  
They had such courage!  
They would not deny their Lord!  
They would resist!

***Peter encourages us to have courage and resist!***

Peter pictures the devil as a roaring lion, seeking to devour.  
Think about the hungry lions in the arena with the weakened Christians.  
Think about the martyr's blood poured in that arena.

Satan roars like a lion,

But Satan also masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14).

The temptation to deny our faith may be more subtle,  
if they call only for a “bending” of God's commandments.

Oh! Don't break, just bend...

Some would argue: Goodness knows, there can't be any harm in that!

But there is!!!

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,”

the apostle James admonishes us (James 4:7).

***And Peter encourages us to have courage and resist!***

[***Conclusion***] On Calvary, there was one man – Jesus Christ.  
He had courage. He did resist. He was brave enough to suffer and die.

You see, it was a “must” situation,

for all of humanity faced eternal damnation,

everlasting separation from the Creator because of sin.

Jesus had courage and he resisted the Devil.

***Peter encourages us to have courage and resist!***

So, a word to some of you who are here today:

Whatever your burden, your cross, your suffering

—if it takes great courage even to get up in the morning

and face another day:

***“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart,***

***all you who hope in the LORD”*** (Ps 31:24 NKJV). Amen

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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...  
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,  
for ever and ever! AMEN!

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