

Let's Visit

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Reflections On Courage

John Fox lived during the 1500's. He wrote the interesting book, "Fox's Book of Martyrs". It contains accounts of the suffering of early Christians. During the early days of the church, Christians often faced persecution. Some were killed with the sword, others were burned at the stake. Some were fed to wild beasts in the arena. In all of these cases, Christianity required great courage. Open, obvious courage. To be sure, these early Christians could have escaped their fate. They only had to renounce their faith in Christ. Yet, because of their great faith and courage they accepted death.

The Bible tells of the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts chapter 7. James was the first of the Apostles put to death in Acts 14. According to secular history, John is the only apostle who did not suffer a violent death. Paul even records a brief but comprehensive summary of the hardships he faced in II Corinthians 11:24-27. Later he would tell young Timothy that all who lived Godly in Christ Jesus would suffer persecution.

Does this mean if we are faithful today, we can expect to be martyred? I don't think so in this country – at least not yet. Does it mean if we are faithful today we will face persecution? Does it mean we will be called upon to show our courage? I think it does.

It is not likely we will be beheaded or burned at the stake. I don't foresee us being dropped into a cauldron of boiling oil. Neither do I envision us being fed to wild beasts. Yet, it is likely each of us will be subjected to strong and powerful temptations and pressures. These will constitute our persecutions. They will call for our courage. They often will call for quiet courage.

All of us are aware life has many hurtful influences and pressures. Social pressure is often overwhelming in our lives. Following the crowd is almost universal. Stepping out of the crowd and standing alone when the crowd is moving in the wrong direction requires courage, and this is not a courage that comes easily.

Often there are economic pressures around us. When one's job is at stake, it is easy to forget principles and convictions. Sometimes little compromises are made to continue to live as we have become accustomed to living.

There are also physical pressures within man himself. These appetites or drives are described in the Bible as the "lust of the flesh". It takes courage to curb these basic human drives. Especially when those around us are freely indulging in the sins of the flesh. It is not as spectacular as the persecutions of the early Christians, but the problems of our day are nonetheless powerful. They require courage, but a different kind of courage.

When the crowd around us is enjoying the pleasures of sin, there is a definite need for courage and remaining strong. It is unrealistic to deny there is pleasure in sin. Sin is often very enticing, offering momentary satisfaction and very real enjoyments. To be sure, Hebrews 11:25 speaks of the pleasures of sin. That passage points out that they are only

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In Search Of The Lord's Way



Tune in to this Television Ministry
KSLA 12 – Shreveport -7:30 a.m. Sunday
DISH channel 239-6:00 a.m. Sunday
DIRECT TV channel 307 -6:00 a.m. Sunday

Gathered Here and There



Today's Sermon

"Conquering Discouragement"

Our text comes from Nehemiah chapter 4. During the past year, it has become easy to become discouraged. This was something that faced one of God's choicest servants. We will take a look at how Nehemiah conquered discouragement in his time.

FOR THE PANTRY....

Chili (no Beans)

Reflections on Courage – continued from page 1

temporary and fleeting. In the long ago, Moses had the insight to see that earthly, sinful pleasure were only for a moment. He had the strength of character of decide for the long view. When we turn to the Old Testament, we read of the same kind of courage in the life of Joseph when he refused the advances of Potiphar's wife. Moses, Joseph, Daniel and others displayed the kind of courage that is needed in our day and time.

Courage remains true to one's convictions. Courage is what causes us to remain true when others are compromising. Courage quietly tells the truth when others play fast and loose with it. Courage quietly motivates a days work for a days pay.

It takes quiet courage to be faithful in many situations. To be faithful in church attendance, bible reading and offering prayer before meals takes quiet courage. It is quiet courage that enables us to be faithful in the basic elements of the Christian faith.

Often, in the disappointments of life is when we find it hardest to have courage. Disappointment comes to every life. When we face an incurable disease or even the decline of health through advancing years, courage is needed to maintain our

equilibrium and continue to do our best. In the face of the loss of a love one there is another great call for quiet courage. When a beloved companion, or parent, or child is taken in death, there is often the temptation to give up. Yet, God wants us to continue to live and work.

In those times, spiritual strength is the only answer. When we lose a job or possessions we find the need for inner strength, for courage. When we find that someone whom we have loved and trusted has been unfaithful to that we have committed to their care, there is a need for inner strength

Often, these are not matters we can discuss with others. They are fields of battle on which we must fight alone. Some of the greatest examples of courage are unknown except in the heart of the one who has waged the battle.

When you want to see quiet courage, you look to the courage of Jesus. Jesus had the strength and courage to live and die that we might have salvation. He prayed, "Father, not my will but thine be done." We need that same kind of courage to live for him.

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On The Lighter Side....



**HOW CAN YOU HAVE THE MONDAY BLUES
WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK AGAIN
UNTIL NEXT SUNDAY?**

**Courage is fear holding on
a minute longer.**

George S. Patton

Miscellaneous



Save The Date!
Sunday June 6th

Tentatively, this
will be our next
Covered Dish
Luncheon.

Remember-

We are collecting toilet paper for the Children's Home of Lubbock. There is a basket in the foyer for you to place the toilet paper in. They will be here the end of May to pick up what we have collected. Let's make sure they have a trailer load!

We found it necessary to cancel our annual "Singing and Gospel Meeting" with Phil Sanders that was scheduled for April 23rd through 25th. However, we have scheduled Brother Sanders to come to Center for our "Singing and Gospel Meeting" the weekend of April 21st through 23rd, 2023. Put that date on your Calendar!

Special Announcement

The statewide mask mandate has been lifted by our governor, more and more people are receiving the vaccination, and life is slowly transitioning back to "normal"

However, we would ask that all of us remember to be respectful of the personal space of others and the level of "personal contact" they are comfortable with. For the present time we will continue to leave every other pew empty as we sit socially distanced.



Those To Remember In Prayer

Paul Cocklin (co-worker of Norma Perkins) is hospitalized in Tyler with complications of diverticulitis.

We extend our sympathy to the family of **Connie Hargrove**. Her services are scheduled for Monday, March 15th at Watson and Sons Funeral Home.

THOSE WITH ONGOING NEEDS:

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Roxie Bostick (back issues) **Gene Bradshaw** (recovering from surgery), **Martha Jean Golden** (recovering from a fall) **Debra Pate** (waiting for more tests from a recent mild stroke) **Jerry Pate** (knee replacement surgery scheduled for April) **Wayne Sims** (cancer);

"EXTENDED FAMILY" AND FRIENDS

Cody Butler (Debra Pate's grandson) **Peytin Cook** (Betty Miller's great-grandaughter) **Gracie Elam** (6 month old baby recovering from heart surgery) **Dalton Hendrix** (Joyce Holt's great-great nephew) **Ernie Hill** (Jerry Pate's cousin) **Lamar McCormick** (friend of Sarah Fletcher, multiple health issues) **Jared and Natalie Tate** (Mike and Roxie's son and daughter-in-law) **Pat Tate** (Jana O'Brien's mother)

THOSE IN THE MILITARY AND FOREIGN SERVICE

Amanda Bradshaw, Leland Bradshaw, Lucas Tate

If you want someone added to the prayer list, please fill out a card and put it in the offering plate.





Across The Preacher's Desk

One of the things I miss from my childhood is the fireplace we had in our home. I can remember many cold, dreary winter mornings laying in bed, pulling the covers up tight and hearing the sound of my father chopping kindling to get a fire going. It was still dark outside, there were coals in the fireplace from the fire during the night, but dad wanted to make sure there was a big fire going before my mom and I would get up in the mornings. Those roaring fires he built would fill the room with cheer and brightness as their radiant warmth pushed away the frigid winter dreariness.

The love that Jesus taught and demonstrated has that same transforming quality. When Paul wrote the First Corinthian letter, he would tell us in that great chapter on love in verse 13, "but the greatest of these is love". Love is our greatest weapon against the cold selfishness and deep despair of the world around us. Just like the old family fireplace was central to the warmth of our home in the winter, so love is central to our Christian faith. Without love, there is no Christian. With love, the Christian has need of little else.

They tell the story that when John became too old to preach, and too weak to walk to worship services, his friends would carry him on a stretcher. They would place his stretcher on the floor and he would say over and over to those who passed by, "little children, love one another." Some finally grew weary of his ceaseless repetition and asked why he always said the same thing. "because" he replied, "it is the Lord's command, and if only this is done, it is enough".

it's something to think about. . . .tlp

**Great Churches are built with
Commitment!**