

Courage

“Should a man like me flee? (Nehemiah 6: 11)

Courage is an essential component of every soldier’s character. Every soldier must have it. Without courage, that person is unworthy to bear the title “soldier. You may have every other qualification in abundance (physical fitness, education, commanding presence, experience, etc.), but without courage, you would be unfit for service in the military.

Courage is a distinguishing characteristic of great excellence in military character. Without it, a soldier is a burden to his unit. Without courage, a soldier will inevitably dishonor himself, his unit, the uniform he wears, the profession of arms, the nation he defends, and all that the military stands for.

Courage is true valor, not savage ferocity or brutal rage. It is a firm resolution to keep going even in the face of danger and difficulties. It does not mean the soldier is unaware of or indifferent to danger. It does not mean he foolishly stumbles along and is rescued by dumb luck. It means that he rises above the fear of the challenge to do what cowards will not do. Courage is not foolishness, but is tempered with wisdom, forethought, and acting within one’s abilities.

A courageous person is not confounded or defeated by the approach of danger. He does not forget who he is, who is with him, his mission, his abilities, or his training. But he firmly and clearly recalls all the things that shall enable his victory over the danger, and he retains the presence of mind to do what must be done for victory.

Courage enables a man to face the unknown. It empowers him to step forward against adversity. The courageous man looks back at his past victories, and draws strength from them to continue his forward momentum, for he knows that he shall continue to overcome if he continues in the path of courage.

A person must have courage to serve in the military. For those who are raised in military families, there is not as much unknown, and so their courage comes from the support provided by family. But for those who are not raised in military families, there may be a great deal of fear as they consider taking the military oath. Those who boldly go where they have not gone before certainly possess and exhibit courage in their going.

Not all men are equally endowed with courage. Some are more courageous than others. Some are so full of courage, they eagerly seek out challenges and dangers for the satisfaction of testing themselves and overcoming those challenges. (We sometimes perceive such men as fools, but perhaps that is because of the cowardice that lurks within ourselves as lesser men.) Others keep their courage to themselves, manifesting it only when necessary and in amounts sufficient to succeed at a given moment in an unavoidable task. And there are others who possess no great courage at all, and yet God has used such men to great effect. God has raised up cowards and turned them into leaders and heroes as suited for His divine intentions. Bible characters like Moses, Daniel, Gideon, Deborah, and Esther come to mind...you’ll notice that both men and women are included. These people were instruments of God’s will who faced the threat of death

for their righteous deeds. These were people who found courage by trusting in God. These were people who mustered up the courage to stand fast against adversity.

The soldier's calling is a naturally hazardous one, and they who enter into the military oath have agreed to surrender even their own lives for the defense of the nation. As soldiers of Christ, we must never forget that we have made that commitment. We must always be ready to seize any opportunity that comes our way to further God's purpose, even it means we must be inconvenienced, uncomfortable, insulted, harmed, or even killed for it. More specifically, when there is an opportunity to talk to someone about Jesus, we do not delay, but seize upon it as if our own soul's depended upon it. If there is an opportunity to help someone in need, we do not look the other way or carelessly cast the responsibility upon government agencies or other charities, but we lend aid from our own pockets and with our own hands, without any expectation of repayment. Is that not what Christ has done and would have us do?

The soldiering life is not fit for one who will not dare to die for his cause. A coward is in fact a murderer. He verifies Christ's statement, "He that saveth his own life shall lose it." The coward flees when danger appears, and sometimes even when there is no real danger (Proverbs 28:1). The coward quits when adversity rises. The coward puts his own life and comfort ahead of the cause he has pledged to support, and so the coward is an oath breaker and a liar for denying his commitment. Cowardly fear is a betrayal against God. The coward saves his own life, but leaves his comrades exposed and endangered. The coward is a betrayer.

Cowardice is unfortunately infectious. When one coward turns to flee, others who are weak lose heart and are further weakened, and then what was once an impenetrable wall of courage is broken so that all lives are endangered. The coward, by putting himself first, is thus responsible for the deaths of his comrades, and so he is a murderer. If you want to be a soldier for the United States, you must resolve that your death is potentially part of the deal. And if you would be a soldier of Christ, you must resolve that your death is part of the deal too, knowing that even if you die in horrendous fashion for doing what is right, God will save those who are faithful and courageous.

If the cause you serve is not worth the loss of your life, then do not sign up for it. If it is worth your life, you must choose to accept the sacrifice of yourself rather than betray that cause. We fight for eternal life, a prize that is certainly worth the loss of mortal life.

Consider now the brave man Nehemiah. He faced numerous threats as he led the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Even when his enemies threatened to blackmail him before the King of Persia, Nehemiah did not run away or hide in the Temple, but said, "Shall such a man as I flee?" Well said and bravo, Nehemiah!

There will come a day when you must choose between courage and cowardice for the Lord's army. Will you face it bravely, or seek to be excused from your responsibility? And there will be times when you must choose between right and wrong, good and evil, sin and righteousness, the easy path and the difficult path. Will you be brave enough to choose to serve God, even if it means you must suffer for it in the flesh? You will face peer pressure to do things

you know are not right. Will you find the courage to withdraw from evil and resist temptation, or will you be a coward and give in to fleshly weakness?

There was once a brave military commander who led his army onto the battlefield. Seeing that they were outnumbered, his army abandoned him and ran away. He cried out to them to stand and fight, yet they fled. And so he called out, “Go tell the living that I die fighting, and I shall tell the dead that you lived fleeing!” -My friend, which shall be said of you?

The Scriptures bid us over and over to be of good courage. Why? Because God is our Savior, our Defender, our Provider, and because God is greater than anything the enemy can bring to bear against us. Indeed, if God be for us, who can be against us? A single man on the side of the Lord will triumph over his enemies...just ask Samson and thousands of Philistines he killed. Since that is so, shall such a man as I flee when Satan tempts me, or when friends forsake me, or when the world persecutes me? No! I shall have no fear of this world, for Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33).

In Acts 23:11, Jesus told Paul, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.” Imagine for a moment that Jesus is speaking this directly to you, and the He is sending you forth to serve His purposes in your neighborhood, among your relatives and co-workers, even among those who are enemies of Christ. My Christian brother, Jesus *is* speaking this message to you. Will you find the courage, as Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43), and Paul (Acts 28:15), and other heroes of the Bible?

Or shall such a man (or woman) as you flee?