

Our Courageous Lord

It was Christ's courage, as well as His love, that led Him to the cross. It was His courage that enables Him to love in those last dark hours. The victory that was won on Golgotha's Hill was compounded by three precious elements:

- (1) Humility – Jesus was willing to become a man and suffer.
- (2) Love – Jesus expressed the very nature of God's love, and
- (3) Courage – Jesus walked willingly into death

Jesus faced death in its most excruciating form. He was not caught unaware by these tragic forces of evil. Jesus knew full well the path He took, and the animosity of the Temple authorities, and what His chances were, yet, He walked deliberately, of His own free will, to the crucifixion. He accepted, without flinching, the condemnation of the religious leaders. He entered into the abyss of the darkness of bearing humanities sin and cried out "*My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" Christ's courage was in knowing what was right and wrong; it led Him to stand for the right – no matter what forces opposed Him.

In spite of the ridicule of the crowd; in spite of the opposition of the authorities; in spite of the cross that stood before Him; in spite of the castigation of the religious leaders; in spite of the agony of His own soul – He chose His Father's will! This is true courage!

Jesus gives to us the real meaning of courage! Courage is more than power of the will. Courage is more than simply enduring physical pain, Courage is more than stepping into danger. Real courage is a quiet and determined thing, not loud, boasting, or foolhardy. Courage is firm unyielding resolution to live out the values of eternity, no matter what forces of destruction throw themselves against us. **This is real courage!**

Courage is not the absence of fear, but a willingness to go on in spite of fear.

Real light is only found on the other side of darkness. There are some here who are facing the darkness of despair – the darkness of bereavement – the darkness of pain – the darkness of turmoil – the darkness of anxiety – or, the darkness of guilt. To pass through darkness, we need courage! It takes courage for us to break out of our cocoon and be what we truly are meant to be – to soar high into "*life that can be.*" We can love and be humble all our lives, but until we add courage to these qualities, our lives are bound to fail.

In Jesus we see the most magnificent example of courage that has ever been shown to the human race. Jesus would never have hung on the cross had He not "*willed*" to do so! He could have easily avoided the cross. "*He could have called ten-thousand angels!*"

What makes the cross of Christ so magnificent is that it was a "*free willed*" offering on His part. Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life for all mankind. At any time, He could have left the cross but, Jesus, of His own will, went to the cross.

TAKE NOTE OF THE STEPS OF COURAGE JESUS TOOK

1. As Jesus came to Bethany, He raised Lazarus to life, right under the nose of the High Priests. Jesus knew that it would be the final act that would excite the Jewish leaders to seek to put Him to death. (See John 11:46-48). Jesus loved Mary and Martha and knew they were grieving (John 11:5), but knowing there was something more important to show what His Father could do, courage caused Him to tarry two days before responding. It takes more courage to show what God can do, than to worry about what man can do to you. Jesus went to Bethany, knowing His fate would be sealed.
2. As Jesus turned toward Jerusalem, He could have simply stayed away for a little while at this time, but courage, knowing what was in store, said, *"Don't hide Your light, go to Jerusalem."* Jesus went!
3. If Jesus had not entered as He did on that Palm Sunday, but quietly crept in by some side gate, unnoticed, He might have been spared. But He came in triumphantly, the crowds shouting *"hallelujah, hosanna, Blessed be the king of Israel, who comes in the name of the Lord"* No one could ignore Him that day!
4. If only He had ignored the corruption of the money changes in the Temple, He might have been spared for a little while, but courage said, *"You cannot compromise. This is the House of God, and you have made it a den of thieves."* He drove them out of the Temple – the gauntlet was thrown down!
5. Even in Gethsemane, Jesus could have fled in the dark of that Judean night, but courage heard God say, *"This is My will!"* Courage said, *"Not My will, but Thine be done!"*
6. If Jesus had defended Himself before Pilate and the Sanhedrin, again, He might have been spared, but His courage would not stoop to their methods. And, in the silence of nobility, His courage showed forth more than any words. Peter tells us that *"He simply committed His cause to Him Whom He knew would just righteously"* (See 1 Peter 2:23).
7. The final test of Christ's courage was to stay on the cross.

It took courage to affirm a way of love and truth, without compromise. It took courage to walk into darkness, until all light faded, and it turned pitch dark. But, Jesus walked on resolutely! He went all the way to pay for your sins, and mine. He was willing to humbly Himself unto death on the cross, because He loved – and had courage to struggle through the darkness.

Peter, speaking of Christ's willingness to suffer for others, said, *"Let this attitude be in you which was also in Christ."*