

## MANIFESTATIONS OF COURAGEOUS FAITH

Bro. Ted Smith

Hymn 197 expresses some powerful thoughts on Courageous Faith

1.

O for a faith that will not shrink  
Though pressed by every foe;  
That will not tremble on the brink  
Of any earthly woe.

2.

That will not murmur nor complain  
Beneath the chastening rod,  
But in the hour of grief or pain,  
Will lean upon its God;

3.

A faith that shines more bright and clear  
When tempests rage without,  
That when in danger knows no fear,  
In darkness feels no doubt.

4.

That bears unmoved the world's dread frown,  
Nor heeds its scornful smile;  
That seas of trouble cannot drown,  
Nor Satan's arts beguile.

5.

A faith that keeps the narrow way  
Till life's last hour is fled,  
And with a pure and steady ray  
Illumes a dying bed.

6.

Lord, lead me to a faith like this,  
Through trial though it be;  
For O! the rest of faith is bliss,  
The bliss rest in Thee.

Let us start with the first verse and call to mind certain examples.

O for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though pressed by every foe;  
That will not tremble on the brink  
Of any earthly woe.

When it comes to “earthly woes” we immediately think of some of the things endured by the Ancient Worthies. And this in turn makes us think of Jas. 5:10, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.” The words “for an example” suggest that the strong faith of these Ancient Worthies is to be considered so that we will become strong in faith in our lives.

Jeremiah was very courageous in faith when he spoke God’s Word to the unfaithful Israelites. The book of Jeremiah is filled with many examples of his faith, and in the words of the hymn, he did “not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe.” Let us read a few verses from Jer. 38, beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> V.: Then certain princes of the king “heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord. He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. Thus saith the Lord. This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army, which shall take it. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words, unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison; and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.”

Jeremiah knew that he would be in great danger if he spoke an unpopular message, yet he did “not shrink, though pressed by every foe.”

Let us read again the sentiments of V. 2 of the hymn:

That will not murmur nor complain  
Beneath the chastening rod,  
But in the hour of grief or pain,  
Will lean upon its God.

This reminds us of Heb. 12th chapter, V. 7: “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” And V. 11, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” And of our Lord, it was said that he “learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” (Heb. 5:8) Our Lord became a sympathetic High Priest by the things which he went through during the 3½ years of his ministry. He dealt patiently with the multitude as they forced him to give them his attention. He taught them, he fed them, he healed them all, and we find no word of complaint from our Lord.

Peter had to learn a necessary lesson when rebuked by Paul—apparently his faith in God’s wisdom enabled him to take this chastening without complaint.

No doubt this necessity of learning lessons of character without complaint was what inspired our Pastor to compose the Morning Resolve: “Trusting myself to Divine care and the providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement. I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providences may permit, because ‘Faith can firmly trust him come what may’.”

Life in general may cause us much “grief and pain,” and it is then that we are to grasp the meaning of Rom. 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” The Apostle says that we “know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” And who are those that love God? A clear and simple answer to this question is found in 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.” And his purpose is that we might become the bride of His Son, and as the second Adam and the second Eve we might regenerate Adam and his race back to human perfection.

Now the 3rd stanza:

A faith that shines more bright and clear  
When tempests rage without,  
That when in danger knows no fear,  
In darkness feels no doubt.

I think we could find a good example of such a strong faith as this in the life of our Pastor. When “tempests were raging” around our Pastor’s head, during the time when there was such violent opposition to the Truth, his “faith shone more bright and clear,” because he knew he had the truth and he knew his opposers were in darkness and error, and their spirit showed it. And when in possible physical danger he “knew no fear.”

That makes me think of a quotation from long ago that Bro. Russell used several times in his writings—he said that someone long ago wrote that “we are practically immortal, until our work is done.” And when “In darkness he felt no doubt”—when in time of uncertainty, he had the utmost faith in God’s wisdom and power, and he just followed the scriptural advice to “wait on the Lord.”

We quote now the 4th stanza:

That bears unmoved the world’s dread frown,  
Nor heeds its scornful smile;  
That seas of trouble cannot drown,  
Nor Satan’s arts beguile.

We think now of the experience of the Three Hebrew Children. They “bore unmoved the world’s dread frown,” neither did they “heed its scornful smile;” and this “sea of trouble did not drown them.” We remember the circumstances—the entire 3rd chapter of Daniel containing 30 Vss. is used to record this incident. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, set up an imposing golden image in the plain of Dura. All the chief men of the kingdom were commanded to assemble in one place and at the sound of combined musical instruments they were to all fall down and worship this imposing golden image. If we think of a nine story building, each story being nine feet high, we can gain somewhat of an idea how striking this golden image was.

The three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were present because at Daniel’s request they had been exalted over the affairs of the province of Babylon, so they were “chief men.” We can easily grasp the predicament of these three Hebrew children—here they were in the company of all the chief men of Babylon, and they were expected to willingly bow down before this mighty golden image that the king had made. And the threat was proclaimed that any who would not fall down and worship the image “shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” (V. 6)

The music sounded and all the chief men fell down and worshipped—all but the three Hebrew children. The chief men were doubtless astonished that any would dare to disobey the edict of the king and the matter was promptly reported to the king. This was a time of “frowning” indeed, and Nebuchadnezzar in his fury and rage commanded the three Hebrew children to be brought into his presence. He repeated the dreadful threat and said, “and who is that god that shall deliver thee out of my hands?”

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O

king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (V. 16-18) To the king this was bold defiance that must be punished with immediate death.

The furnace was heated seven times hotter than usual and mighty men were selected to cast these men into the furnace. The heat was so intense that these mighty men lost their lives when they cast the three Hebrew children into the fiery furnace. The end of the story is remarkable (the deliverance from the fiery furnace)—they were not burned and did not even smell of smoke. But no less remarkable was the strong faith shown by these three Hebrew children. You could not imagine a more terrifying setting for the exercise of faith in God’s power, care and wisdom. There was not the slightest trace of hesitancy or doubt on the part of these three men.

Whether God would deliver them or not, did not seem to matter—they would not bow down to the image nor worship the gods of the king.

The last line of the 4th stanza reads, “Nor Satan’s arts beguile.”—Jesus stood up under Satan’s temptations perfectly—to each of the three temptations Jesus’ rebuttal was—“It is written.” Jesus applied the Word of God correctly and nullified the Word of God which was wrongly applied by Satan.

Now the 5th stanza:

A faith that keeps the Narrow Way  
Till life’s last hour is fled,  
And with a pure and steady ray  
Illumes a dying bed.

Possibly the most outstanding example we know of is the life of Brother John Edgar of Scotland—his death announcement may be found on Reprint page 4638, June 15, 1910. He was a doctor and comparatively young in age. He was an enthusiastic believer in the truth, and witnessed to the truth, constantly with great rejoicing. He served the Lord’s people with uncommon zeal. Suddenly he became deathly ill with appendicitis which proved fatal. Before he died, it seemed he wanted to use his very last energy of life in behalf of his family. “Be faithful to your covenant of sacrifice,” he repeated over and over. “Be faithful to the ministry the Lord used to give us the Truth!” Over and over again he exhorted the brethren and his dying energies so used left a lasting impression upon his family. So it was indeed his “dying bed was illumined with a pure and steady ray.”

6th and last verse:

Lord, lead me to a faith like this,  
Through trial though it be;  
For O! the rest of faith is bliss,  
The bliss of rest in Thee.

Yes, we would want a strong faith like this—even if it could be developed only by trial. The poet ends with the thought that the rest of faith is bliss because this rest is the bliss of confident trust in the Lord. Could there be any more heart-satisfying bliss than absolute confidence that our Heavenly Father was watching out for our eternal interests?

Daniel “the Beloved of Jehovah” had a remarkably strong faith in God. He was in a very influential position in the kingdom of Babylon—but prominence and possession of authority did not go to his head. Every day, three times a day, he prayed to God with his window open toward Jerusalem. Because of his integrity in office, Daniel incurred the displeasure of his associates.

Darius, the Median subdued Babylon and he had set 12 princes over the kingdom of Babylon, and there were 3 presidents appointed over these princes, and Daniel was the first president. The princes and the other two presidents had it in for Daniel because he was absolutely righteous in everything he did. They tried to find fault with him, but were not successful—they finally hit upon a plan whereby they could trap Daniel and get rid of him forever. They prevailed upon Darius to sign a decree that no one should ask a petition of any god or man, except Darius, for a period of 30 days; and if anyone violated the decree he was to be cast into a den of lions.

Daniel made his prayer of thanks daily as usual. His enemies, of course, were spying on him, and he was reported to Darius. Darius was very upset when he realized how he had been trapped into enforcing a decree whereby his loyal and favorite president would lose his life. He tried to the going down of the sun to deliver Daniel, but his chief men reminded him that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be set aside once they were made. It is a remarkable fact of this historical incident that just before Daniel was cast into the den of lions, Darius said to him (6:16) “Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.”

The king was miserable and spent a sleepless night. In the morning, very early, Darius went to the den of lions and “he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said unto Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” To the great joy of Darius, Daniel replied to the king’s voice, and said he was safe because God had sent his angel to shut the mouths of the lions so they could do him no harm. Darius then decreed that the men who had conspired against Daniel should be cast into the den of lions, along with their wives and children. And Darius made a decree that all should reverence the God of

Daniel; and Daniel himself “prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” (Dan. 6:28)

The whole life of Jesus manifested perfect faith in God and this life of faith was sealed with his blood on the cruel cross, when he cried, “It is finished.” Luther had a very powerful faith when he defied the pope and nailed the 95 theses upon the church door. It was the time of Reformation and Luther was protected from the wrath of the pope and his successors. The faith of David was very powerful showing his absolute trust in God—he waited upon the Lord, rather than try to wrest the kingdom from Saul. David waited and waited for several years until he had a clear indication from the Lord that he should act as king of Israel.

As for the exercising of faith in God’s power and wisdom, I can remember a question that was asked of me by a young friend of mine when I was a boy. I am going to repeat the question to you, and at first, you may not see what this has to do with our subject—the Manifestation of Courageous Faith. The question was: “What would happen if an irresistible force ran into an immovable body?” The question itself is inconsistent, for if there were an “irresistible force” there could be no “immovable body,” and vice versa.

But to consider the two ideas of “irresistible force” and an “immovable body”—as far as we are concerned, the laws of nature are “immovable”—we cannot change them or even alter their operation. And as far as the power of God is concerned—it is “irresistible.” How then, are the “immovable” laws of nature to be reconciled with the “irresistible” power of God? In this way—the laws of nature did not originate with us, neither can we go contrary to them—if we do, we will suffer the consequences. For instance, if we endeavor to walk on the surface of a lake 20 feet deep, we had better know how to swim or wear a life belt of some kind, because, according to the laws of nature, the law of gravity will pull down our mass which is greater than the mass of water, and we will not walk upright on the surface of the lake, not even for one instant. But Jesus did walk on the surface of a lake and he did not sink—how could this have happened?

The laws of nature are original with God, and are indeed the laws of God. But the laws of nature are not the only laws of God—there are other laws of God that are above or different than the laws of nature. And in case of necessity these other laws of God are put into operation and the appearance of this operation is called a miracle. This appearance is a miracle only because it is different than what we are accustomed to: we don’t understand it, that is all.

Jesus calmed the raging storm on the lake; he raised the dead; he turned water into wine; he fed the 5,000, having only five loaves of bread and two fishes to begin with. (Mark 6:38-44) The unlimited power of God is the controlling and “irresistible” factor at all times—nothing exists or functions except as it originates with God. The laws of nature

are “immovable” as far as our wisdom and power are concerned; but not so with God. We now come to our point—all the laws that we see in operation are functioning because a living intelligent being has decreed them; and that living intelligent being is God Himself, our Creator. It is the intelligent living personality that is the important consideration.

So then, in our prayers to God, we want to raise our minds to the highest level of comprehension—comprehending God as the source of all power, wisdom and laws; and that nothing can happen without his sanction; and that all things can and do “work together for our good.” Thus we can have peace in the realization that we are in touch with the source of all power and wisdom. Thus our minds will be freed of fear—fear of the terror of outward appearances of the operation of the laws of nature; fear of men who are in positions of power in this life; fear of great institutions of power; fear of the evidences of the Lord’s army leading on to anarchy.

From this standpoint, I think we can enter intelligently and sympathetically into our Lord’s statement in John 19:10 and 11, “Then said Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” This was not an evidence of braggadocio on Jesus’ part; neither was it defiance of Pilate’s power. Rather, it was just what we have been saying—that Jesus knew that God was the source of all power and wisdom, and that it would have been impossible for Pilate to deliver Jesus to be crucified unless permitted from above.

Job’s expression, chapter 13, V. 15 is in the same vein of thought—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” Job was meaning that even though outward appearances were very tragic, yet he had absolute confidence in God’s wisdom, power and love. In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> chapters of Job we read of the disasters that came upon Job. First he received word that the Sabeans ran away with his oxen and asses and killed his servants. Next he received word that lightning struck and destroyed his sheep and the servants. The third bad news was that the Chaldeans carried off the camels and slew the servants with the edge of the sword. The fourth message of tragedy was that a great wind arose and destroyed the house where his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house and all of them were killed. (We wonder if this great wind could have been a tornado.)

“Then Job arose, and rent his robe and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came out of my mother’s womb and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” (Job. 1:20-22)

The fifth tragedy of Job affected his body—he was sore with boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Satan thought that by making Job sick in body, he would curse God to his face. And Job “took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” (Job 2:7-10) So I think we can say that Job had a courageous faith in a personal living God and did not allow outward appearances or personal tragedy blind him to this fact.

Elijah had a very courageous faith when he faced the 450 priests of Baal and challenged them to a crucial test. This is all recorded in the book of Kings. Ahab did wickedly in worshipping the false god Baalim (1 Kings 18:18) and he married a heathen wife, Jezebel. (1 Kings 16:21) As a punishment there was a long period of drought and this was prophesied by Elijah. Elijah was provided for by God during this long time. Near the end of the drought of 3 years, Elijah was instructed by God to present himself to Ahab for there was rain to come again. By this time there was a severe famine in Samaria. (1 Kings 18:2) Elijah contacted Obadiah who was governor of the house of Ahab and who feared the Lord greatly. (1 Kings 18:3) Obadiah was to relay the message to Ahab that Elijah had returned.

It is interesting to note how Ahab greeted Elijah (1 Kings 18:17, 18), “and it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” (It is always thus, isn’t it?—the doers of evil try to blame their troubles upon the righteous.) Elijah’s reply was right to the point and showed great courage in the presence of this powerful and wicked king who had previously sought the life of Elijah. “And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mt. Carmel, and the prophets of Baal, 450, and the prophets of the groves 400, which eat at Jezebel’s table.” (1 Kings 18:17-19)

When the people were assembled “Elijah came into all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him, And the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:21) That silence on the people’s part was very ominous and no doubt they were in an angry mood having suffered the effects of a long drought and a severe famine—they very likely had the same feelings toward Elijah as Ahab did—“Art thou the man who troubles Israel?”

So Elijah proposed a test—the priests of Baal were to prepare a bullock sacrifice, and Elijah would also prepare a similar sacrifice, and he said, “and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the god that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.” (1 Kings 18:24)

And I think we all remember the end of the story—the priests of Baal begged and leaped and cut themselves from morning to noon, and they resumed their pleadings until the time of the evening sacrifice which was probably around three o'clock—but Baal let them down miserably. (1 Kings 18:26-29)

Then Elijah prepared his sacrifice for the acid test. He made an altar of 12 stones to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. He cut his bullock in pieces and placed it upon the altar. He made a trench about the altar and had four barrels of water poured upon the sacrifice—3 times, which made 12 barrels in all, so the sacrifice was soaking wet. “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that these people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.” (1 Kings 18:36-39) “And Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.” (1 Kings 18:40)

Another noble manifestation of courageous faith is found recorded in the 12th chapter of 2 Samuel. This was on the part of Nathan the prophet, who was sent on a mission to rebuke king David for his affair with Bathsheba, and his causing the death of Uriah that he might have Bathsheba for his wife. This was a shameful act on the part of David to say the least, and Nathan was sent to rebuke King David.

Nathan used a little parable to introduce his rebuke to David—a poor man has only a little lamb which became the family pet. A rich man near by had a visitor and prepared for him a feast—instead of selecting a lamb from his own flocks, he seized the little lamb, the family pet of the poor man and prepares the feast for his visitor. David's anger was kindled and he declared that the rich man should be killed and the lamb should be restored fourfold to the poor man. The auspicious moment had arrived and Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man!” It took a lot of courage and faith in God's protection to thus rebuke the king. And then Nathan delivered a stinging rebuke from the Lord. Happily David repented of his misdeeds, but had to endure severe punishment for his perfidy and dishonoring of God.

Moses displayed courageous faith in appearing before Pharaoh to deliver the Israelites. Pharaoh was a mighty despot and it took a lot of faith in God and a lot of love for God's people for Moses to defy this man and demand the release of the Israelites. Nine severe plagues were used in an attempt to bring Pharaoh to his knees; but after each plague,

Pharaoh returned to his native stubborn state. The tenth and final plague convinced Pharaoh that he was dealing with a mightier monarch than himself. Each family of the Egyptians suffered a death—the death of the firstborn. Pharaoh relented and the Egyptians urged the Israelites to be on their way, or else “We be all dead men,” they said. (Exod. 12:33)

It is a keen delight to consider Jacob’s longing for God’s special blessings. Jacob could see that Esau, his twin brother was a coarse man, caring nothing for the inheritance that had come down to him from his grandfather Abraham. Jacob longed to be in touch with God and be the heir—“in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” This meant more to Jacob than mere earthly blessings of the present life. His godly faith enabled him to brave the wrath of his brother and risk the displeasure of his father. Jacob’s mother loved him for she could see the contrast between these two sons of hers; and she worked out a scheme whereby her godly son would obtain the blessing from his father, Isaac—the blessing he had purchased from his brother Esau for a mess of pottage. Apparently God was pleased with Jacob’s desire for wanting the inheritance of Abraham, for it is not possible to find a single word of rebuke for what Jacob’s mother had done in behalf of her son’s purchased inheritance.

Coming down into the New Testament we find an account of the courageous faith of Paul when he appeared before King Agrippa. (Acts 25 and 26) Paul used this as an opportunity to preach the hope of the resurrection of the dead and the gospel of Christ, rather than to try to defend himself for his own personal safety. The preaching of the Truth was the important thing in Paul’s estimation. We would like to quote verses 27 to 29 of Acts 26, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” What a lesson all this teaches us, that if and whenever we are in trouble because we are connected with the Truth, we should endeavor to speak in behalf of the Truth rather than be concerned with our own defense and personal safety.