

1 COURAGE

- What happens when we have courage in the face of fear?

2 Introduction

- The 20th century has been variously called the Age of Anxiety, the Age of Unbelief, and the Age of Depravity. Because of this, some have ultimately named the century the Age of Fear.
- Even now in the 21st century, fear continues to define our world almost on all fronts.
 - the economy,
 - wars and rumor of wars (Syria & threats from North Korea),
 - militant Islam and world terrorism, and
 - new outbreaks of potent and lethal diseases.

3 Headlines in the News

4 Be Strong & Courageous

- Philippians 1:12–30
- Why were most of the brothers encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly?
- According to the Apostle Paul in verse 14, it was because of his chains. (Philippians 1:14 NIV)
- So why would Paul's chains be an encouragement to others?
- Because Paul's imprisonment put him in a very unique position . . . for the defense of the gospel. (Philippians 1:16 NIV)
- Paul is able to defend the faith, so that others could preach the faith.
- In other words, courage encourages courage.

5 Religio Licita & Pax Romana

- The Roman Empire was generally quite tolerant in its treatment of other religions.
- The imperial policy was generally one of incorporation – the local gods of a newly conquered area were simply added to the Roman pantheon and often given Roman names.
- Even the Jews, with their one God, were generally tolerated.
- So why the persecution of Christians?

6 Judaism & Christianity

- During the first century, Judaism was a religio licita (legal religion) and Christianity known as “The Way” or “Nazarenes” was a sect of Judaism and therefore, legal under Roman law.
- However, to stir up problems for Paul and the early Gentile believers, Jews took Christians to court to get them removed as a legal religion.

- In Corinth, While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.” (Acts 18:12–13 NIV)
- In Jerusalem, The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.” (Acts 23:11)
- In Caesarea, “We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.” (Acts 24:5 NIV)

7 Judaism & Christianity

- I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. (Acts 25:25 NIV)
- And what is Paul’s appeal? That Christianity is not only a legal part of Judaism, but also the hope of the nations.
- However, getting to Rome was not easy.
 - A raging storm forced the ship to run aground on Malta.
 - When on shore, a viper, driven out by the heat of a campfire bites Paul and miraculously nothing happens to him.
 - When Paul finally reaches Rome, the Jewish brothers want to hear him for themselves as they have heard people everywhere are talking against this sect. (Acts 28:22)
 - So, from morning till evening, he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus.
 - Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. (Acts 28:24 NIV)

8 Providence

- Paul’s imprisonment was not the result of some secret sin or bad luck.
- It was God’s divine providence that put him there to speak on every Christian’s behalf, by defending the faith and its legitimacy and legal rights.
- However, he was not just a defender of the faith, but through his show of courage, he encouraged others to stand up for their faith and publicly proclaim it and put it into action.
- As I have already said, courage encourages courage.

9 Courage Encourages Courage

- This is why cowardice is so universally scorned. Soldiers are court-martialed for it.
- Even according to Bible, cowardice is listed along with liars, murderers, adulterers, and idolaters as sins that demand hell.

- “. . . the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8 NIV)

10 Oceanos

- Infamously, Yiannis Avranas, captain of the cruise ship Oceanos, abandoned ship when it sank off the coast of Africa in August of 1991, while 170 passengers and crew, including many elderly, were still on board.
- When challenged, he's reported to have said, "When I give the order to abandon ship, it doesn't matter what time I leave. If some people want to stay, they can stay."
- Yiannis was one the first ones off the ship.

11 Costa Concordia

12 Gideon

- In the story of Gideon in Judges 6–8, Gideon defeats an oppressive enemy of 135,000 seasoned warriors.
- Gideon first recruits 35,000. But God tells him that's too many.
- So God begins to pare them down. His first criteria: no cowards allowed: So Gideon says to his officers.
 - “. . . announce now to the people, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained. (Judges 7:3 NIV)
- And then God sifts out those who are unprepared, which then only leaves 300 men up against 135,000.
- However, the moral of the story is this, God can do more through individuals who have the guts to trust and obey Him than He can with those who don't.
- In other words, it takes guts to do the right thing.

13 Hero

- I'm not sure if you saw this on Facebook this week, but a certain woman in our church was calling her husband a real hero.
- Do you know what he did to get this honor?
- While she was at Cell Group, he did the laundry.
- In fact, being a hero is not all that hard.
- We are a hero, whenever we do what is right and become a help to someone else.
- In other words, whenever we stop making excuses and take on real responsibility and be a help at home and at church we are stepping up to be a hero.

14 Run to the Perimeter

- Jack Groppe, who has written the book, *The Corporate Athlete*, which is a how-to book on achieving maximal performance in business, shares an interesting experiment.
- The name of the experiment is “Run to the Perimeter.”
- The object of the game is to run to a fence—out on the perimeter and bring back the ribbon.
- However, he tells the participants that there is a wild boar in the woods, so be careful.

15 Run to the Perimeter

- The point was that there was no wild boar out in the woods—only a camera man hiding in the bushes.
- When a participant would approach near the camera man, he would rustle the bushes, grunt, and snort—just like a wild boar.
- This was enough for many to quickly run away.
- Even some NFL linebackers would turn tail and run, squealing like a schoolgirl.
- The only one who didn’t run was a CIA operative, who was so trained to keep his eye on the goal that fear had little effect on him.

16 King Saul

- Unfortunately, one of the biggest cowards in the Bible is King Saul.
- Even though he was a great warrior, he didn’t have the guts to do the right thing.
- When push came to shove, he would compromise God’s word and then replace obedience with religious sacrifices.
- According to the Bible, this kind of duplicity is rebellion and liken unto the sin of divination, witchcraft. (1 Sam 15:23)
- So Saul, lost the kingdom because he was too much of a coward to do what God had commanded him because he feared men more than God.
- Nevertheless, God found another to be king over Israel—a shepherd boy, who truly loved God and had a heart that was totally devoted to serving Him. This is why it is say, David was a man after God’s own heart.

17 Worthy of the Gospel

- Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (Philippians 1:27 NIV)
- As Paul has already mentioned, at least one measure of that worthy conduct is courage.
- Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved — and that by God. (Philippians 1:27–28 NIV)

- What Paul is saying is that when people see our conviction and refusal to be frightened by threats, fear, or feelings inadequacy, it has a powerful influence over others.
- In fact our courage is a testimony of an ultimate reality.

18 Worthy of the Gospel

- Courage says to a world that is easily frightened and quickly scattered, a world that puts its faith in things that cannot save and therefore always disappoint: it may not look like it now, but we serve the king who is really King. And we know he holds the future.
- Courage is not the absence of fear, but the judgment that something else is more important.
- If God is the most important thing to you. It will show!