

Drawing Strength from the Courage of Others

How thankful we should be for wonderful examples of courage that spur us on to greater strength in the Lord's service. Paul was just such an example: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil.1:14). These brethren, formerly timid and reticent, were drawing strength from the courage of Paul

Other examples abound. Stephen's plea, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", surely had for its source of strength the forgiving spirit of the Lord (Acts 7:60). The Thessalonian church found a source of strength in the example of the churches in Judea (1 Thess. 1:14). The Philippian church, a model of courage and conviction, could no doubt trace much of its strength back to the wonderful example of patience and equanimity demonstrated by Paul and Silas while in their midst. The Hebrew Christians were admonished to "remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

Christians of this generation are similarly drawing strength from the courage of others. Young men who refuse to miss services of the church to play on a ball team; young women who refuse to be seen in public in scanty attire; business men who would lose their jobs rather than compromise their convictions; women who continue to adorn themselves in "meek and quiet spirits" whatever the sophisticated world thinks or says of them; sick people who bear their afflictions with patience and faith; elderly people who continue to attend worship when they are hardly able to go anywhere else; dying people who demonstrate how Christians ought to die; all are sources of strength and courage for others as they face similar circumstances. These all have a common spirit with the great characters of the Bible; they see in their temptations, trials, afflictions, and persecutions a special opportunity to be like Christ, to demonstrate their fidelity to Him, and to provide a source of strength for those who might be weak and wavering around them. They seize the opportunity and stand, and all of us are stronger because of them. Of these courageous people this world truly is not worthy.

Are we, however, to be always on the receiving end of the strength of others? As we draw strength from the courage of others, we must in turn become sources of strength and courage ourselves. Others look to us. Each of us has a "charge to keep," and "God to glorify," and a "present age to serve."

- by Bill Hall

Adorning The Doctrine

In Titus 2:1 Paul instructs Titus to "...speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." Later, in this same chapter, he tells Titus to "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:9,10). These verses clearly indicate that there is speech and behavior that is not only becoming or befitting to sound doctrine, but will "adorn the doctrine of God". This being true, we should each strive for that kind of speech and conduct.

The word "adorn" means: "to add beauty to; to make greater the splendor or honor of." What a challenging thought that I may be able to "add beauty to or make greater the splendor" of the doctrine of God. How is this possible? Surely, I can do nothing to improve upon the doctrine of God. God's word is perfect (See James 1:25; 2 Tim. 3:16). Any change that anyone would make in the doctrine would detract from it and pervert it. However, Paul says it is possible to "adorn the doctrine of God."

I can adorn the doctrine of God by living in such a way that I make the doctrine more appealing to others. How many have been turned away from the truth because they have seen hypocrisy in the lives of those who claimed to follow the truth? On the other hand, there have been many who have eventually obeyed the truth because they observed the influence of that truth in the life of someone around them. This is the point Peter makes in 1 Peter 3:1,2 where he says, "*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your*

chaste conversation coupled with fear." I know of men who are faithfully serving the Lord today because their wives "adorned the doctrine of God."

I can also "adorn the doctrine of God" by refusing to compromise truth with error. It may take courage and it may demand sacrifice or suffering on my part, but if I refuse to compromise the truth others will be made to realize how valuable the truth really is. On the other hand, if I compromise the truth every time I encounter some temptation or difficulty, I am telling those who observe my life that here is something that has little or no value since I am willing to compromise it in the face of temptation.

I "adorn the doctrine of God" whenever I show that I believe "not in word only" but "in deed." James says, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"* (James 1:22-25).

The person who is "on again, off again" fails to "adorn the doctrine of God." The life of a faithful child of God is marked with stability and steadfastness. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (I Cor. 15:58).

What about your life? Does the doctrine of God appear more attractive to others as they observe your life?

- by James Hahn

Who Will Mourn At YOUR Funeral?

You have probably attended funerals when there was not a single additional seat available and people were standing in the doors and hallways in order to see and hear. But you also may have been at a funeral where only a handful of people were in attendance. Why the difference? The obvious answer is that some people have lived in such a way to gain respect, love, and admiration, while others have lived a life that produced very little of the same.

We all have an appointment with death (Hebrews 9:27). That being the case – and while not wanting to be too morbid – we simply ask: Who will mourn when YOU die?

FAMILY? Will your mate, your children, your siblings, and other relatives be grief stricken at your death? This is typically true, because of the "natural affection" of relatives. But some have lived in such a way as to alienate even their own relatives. What a sad situation! Are you working to maintain strong family ties?

FRIENDS? In order to have friends, one must "show himself friendly" (Proverbs 18:24). Unfortunately, some never do this. Therefore it is not surprising when there are no friends to mourn at their passing. On the other hand, it is obvious when one dies who has developed close friendships with many people. What about you?

BRETHREN? One of the closest relationships that anyone can know is the bond between brethren in Christ. When a faithful brother or sister dies, it is common to see large crowds assemble at their funeral. But too many people have never submitted to the Lord, never experienced the blessing of being in the family of God, and therefore have no brethren who might grieve at their funeral. How sad!

How we live now will determine how things will be when we die: not just at our funeral, but throughout eternity. Think!

- by Greg Gwin