

HAVE COURAGE, BE BRAVE

INTRODUCTION

We are facing a trial and a circumstance that most of us, have never experienced in our lifetime.

This virus threat has shaken the human race in an unprecedented manner. Not only does it threaten our health, but it has impacted financial markets and even healthy people's ability to work and earn an income, so it has attacked our wealth. It has impacted us socially, with social distancing and quarantine becoming factors that touch us all. It has also impacted us emotionally as fear and anxiety sweep through society, evidenced by panic shopping and hoarding. That is a pretty comprehensive onslaught. It means there is a battle line that has been drawn between the human race and this virus.

Whether it be a battle on a battlefield, a spiritual battle, an emotional or mental battle, a financial battle or a battle against the coronavirus, whatever battle we face, it will going to call on us to take courage and be brave.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NKJV) Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

Today I want to encourage you to have courage and be brave.

MESSAGE

A story is told of a well-known missionary in India who was bowing one night in prayer at the side of his bed when a huge python lowered itself from the rafters of his bungalow and encircled his body with its cold and powerful coils. It made no attempt to constrict, and yet the missionary knew that if he struggled the snake would tighten the coils and crush him. With marvelous self-control, and courage born of faith, he went on quietly praying, until at length the animal unwound itself and went back into the roof.

That python could easily represent this virus that faces us right now. We are called to faith in God and courage to keep us from sinking into defeat through a response of fear. We can't run, we can't get away from it. What is required from us in these extraordinary circumstances is courage.

Picture an army standing on the battle line in Bible times. They would have worn armour - helmets, shields, protective breastplates, swords, bows and arrows, slings, spears, catapults and so on. When the trumpet sounded, they would have to advance into battle. Consider the courage they needed to go into the battle when they fully knew they may not survive, they could be severely wounded or die on the battle field, but they didn't run, they courageously and bravely stepped forward into the battle. That's the type of courage and bravery we need to display today.

JOSHUA

When Joshua was appointed to lead Israel, he needed courage. He would lead them into the Promised Land and there were many battles to be fought. God encouraged him with these famous words:

Joshua 1:9 (NKJV) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

In Deuteronomy 31 Moses encouraged the entire nation and Joshua with the same words, and today, I believe the Lord is once more saying to His people, "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the I your God am with you wherever you go."

With our God, nothing is impossible, we can rely on the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever, to be with us in every battle we face.

DAVID

In David we see what it looks like to be a person of bravery and courage: Israel's army and king Saul stood on the battle line afraid to enter the battle with the Philistines because of their champion, the giant, Goliath.

1 Samuel 17: 10 And the Philistine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together." 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Has this virus possibly become a giant to you too? Are you feeling dismayed and greatly afraid? Is it defying your faith?

David, a youngster responded differently, he was not afraid, he knew his God had protected him before, and he was willing to trust God once again against this giant: He said **1 Samuel 17:36** (NKJV) Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God."

As David approached Goliath and the giant taunted him, he didn't run away, he courageously and bravely faced him: **1 Samuel 17:45-50** (NKJV) David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! 47 And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and he will give you to us!" ... 50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with only a sling and a stone, for he had no sword.

We do have a weapon which to attack this virus and any of the other challenges we face today, we have God's word and have faith. We also have a God who loves us, we have testimonies of how God has come through for us in the past and saved, healed and delivered us. With Him nothing is impossible. Let us face our giants with the same courage and bravery that David had. Let us trust God to give us the victory we need.

JESUS, THE HERO OF OUR FAITH

Jesus, the hero of our faith, displayed tremendous courage and bravery. He faced a battle with the devil when He was tempted, He faced the religious leaders of the day wanting to kill Him, but the greatest challenge He faced was the cross and the knowledge of what He was about to go through. We see this in His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane:

Matthew 26:37-39 (NKJV) And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Jesus was extremely sorrowful, what He faced would be unbearable result in His death and the Father would turn His face from Him when He took the sin of the world upon Himself. There was nothing worse than that for Jesus! But He said, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

He faced His enemies in the Garden with courage and bravery, He faced his torture and crucifixion with courage and bravery and today He is seated at the right hand of our Father in heaven, having won the final victory for us.

Jesus said we will know suffering in this world. but he also said, in **John 16:33b**, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

- Our courage comes from knowing Jesus has overcome the world!
- Our bravery is motivated by knowing that His victory is our victory!

Let us face this hour of trial with the same bravery and courage that Jesus displayed as He prayed to His Father in the garden of Gethsemane. Our hearts will not fail us, Jesus overcame, so will we!

SOME BATTLES ARE WON IN OUR TENT

Judges 4:3,17-21 (NKJV) 3 Sisera, who had 900 iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the people of Israel cried out to the Lord for help... 17 Meanwhile, Sisera ran to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because Heber's family was on friendly terms with King

Jabin of Hazor. Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come into my tent, sir. Come in. Don't be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. "Please give me some water," he said. "I'm thirsty." So she gave him some milk from a leather bag and covered him again. "Stand at the door of the tent," he told her. "If anybody comes and asks you if there is anyone here, say no." But when Sisera fell asleep from exhaustion, Jael quietly crept up to him with a hammer and tent peg in her hand. Then she drove the tent peg through his temple and into the ground, and so he died.

Jael displayed extraordinary courage and bravery. A woman alone, she defeated this powerful army commander. She did it in her tent!

We have been requested to separate ourselves from public places and spend our time where we won't be exposed to this virus. The countries hit hardest all say they didn't initially take this virus seriously and stay at home. This battle is won in our tents, at home. If the virus can't find someone to infect, it dies.

In our homes we have time we didn't necessarily have before, we can spend it in the Lord's presence, drawing near to Him and praying for His help. Surely God will hear and help us in this battle. I encourage you to stay at home if you can, don't spread this virus, rather spend time with the Lord praying for courage and strength and victory.

CONCLUSION

I began with **1 Corinthians 16:13** (NKJV) Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

Just like He was in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, He is with us today.

We all face battles, whether it be the virus or something else, but God is calling us to be courageous and brave. Know that He is with you. Wear your full spiritual armour, trust God and stand firm.