

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN COURAGE: THE CHALLENGE OF PSALM ELEVEN FOR MEN TODAY

These are dark times in which we live, aren't they? Socially, legally, and culturally it would seem that everything is steering itself away from Truth and is heading fast in a direction that causes grief to the Christian heart. From the shallow, unsatisfying materialism, to the perverse, destructive sensuality, to the blatant hatred of Jesus Christ, this epoch in which we stand represents an all-time low for Western society, spiritually speaking.

Gone, for now, are the days of Whitefield, when that man of God could merely stand upon a hillock and open a Bible in order to find himself surrounded by a multitude of hungry, Christ-seeking listeners. No longer is the Christian meeting house the center of our society's Sunday life, but rather the coliseum and the arena have grown to be the places where men would conduct their Sabbath worship. When once the pulpit served as the helm of the world, it is now the television and media power which steer the mind and heart of the human race; dictating to our species not thoughts which summon us to glorify our God, but rather those which serve to multiply our lusts, have us to reap the painful consequences of sin, and encourage us to offer unwitting worship to our great enemy, the devil. Truly, truly, these are awful times.

Consider the counsel given to David in the opening verse of Psalm Eleven: "Flee as a bird to your mountain!" Was this counsel given hatefully or in sincerity? The Psalm doesn't tell us. But whether uttered spitefully or in kindness, its message was the same: "Run away! Hide!"

Times were very tough for David. Maybe in his heart of hearts this sounded like good advice. Perhaps these words might seem like good advice to us too, who live in the midst of a generation of such profound godlessness. Sometimes it may feel quite tempting for us just to give up the fight. For, as David's counselor points out, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (v.3). If the very pillars of what is true, right, and beautiful be cast aside by an arrogant and ignorant society, what can the people of God hope to accomplish? Have these thoughts ever taken possession of your heart, leading you down a path of sinking gloom?

WHERE IS GOD AT SUCH TIMES?

In meditating upon David's answer to the counsel he received, I was reminded of a telling scene from a recent film entitled *The Last Samurai*. The film concerns itself with the tragic, yet glorious experiences of those men in 19th century Japan who refused to yield up the samurai way of life, despite the encroaching cancer of modernization. One of these men, named Ujio, is a formidable warrior...perhaps the best of all those depicted in the film. During the final battle with the Emperor's modern army (the samurai were armed only with sword and bow), Ujio was shot through the back. Of course, the bullet knocked him down, and several other samurai made speed to help him up. Shrugging off their efforts to assist him, he stood up on his own, disdainfully spat out a gob of blood, shouted a battle cry, and cast himself once again into the fray. He later died nobly in a final, mounted charge against the Emperor's forces, gunned down with a Gatlin Gun by those who lacked the courage and skill to face him honorably.

David's response in Psalm Eleven is filled with that kind of manly stubbornness. His retort of verse four, "The LORD is in His holy Temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven," is no cold theological statement. His words are a shout of rebellion against the poor advice he has received, and a battle cry against those who think that by their cleverness, their wealth, or their earthly power they can "unhorse" God's anointed king. David views the counsel given him as absolutely absurd; unthinkable in light of what he knows about his Heavenly Lord.

In brief, what is David saying about Jehovah with these "words of rebellion?" First, he proclaims, "The LORD is in His holy Temple." The Temple was the seat of God's special presence. It made known to Israel and the entire world that Jehovah was a God who dwelt with and among His own. He was not far off in the distant desert dunes, but was "right here," living and working amidst His chosen, and by extension, amidst the whole world. And so where is the LORD in difficult times? He's right here where He's always been. Calamity, disappointment, sorrow, death...these are powerless to drive away the mighty presence of the LORD. Whether we have honors and comfort piled upon us, or our backs are bent under the weary weight of the world, the LORD stands in the same place as always: HERE.

There is a further message in the second half of the phrase: "The LORD's throne is in heaven." Though you have heard what I am about to say before, consider the wonderful message about Jehovah's nature being presented when you put these two phrases together. On the one hand, David speaks of a God who is near. That's good. That's comforting. And many in the ancient world were familiar with gods like that...gods who dwelt in temples, villages, and shrines. We know well enough that there were gods of rivers, lakes, mountains, and trees. These gods were "near" in their fashion. Yet, Jehovah is a God not only near (even his

"nearness" takes on a different, and ultimately more meaningful form than those lifeless pagan deities), he is a God who is above. He is a God enthroned as King in the heavens. This was something entirely new to the mind of ancient paganism. A God above everything, ruling everything, wielding all power, Jehovah was Divinity unlike anything the ancient world ever imagined. Amazing! A God both near and almighty! What greater benefit, what more sure fuel for comfort and courage could one find in life or eternity than that? David knew this. Running away, in light of what he knew about God, he deemed unthinkable. His courage was a natural outworking of his theology. An Almighty God was with Him and for Him, and thus was born in him a daring valor:

"For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." (Psalm 18:29)

WHERE ARE WE AT SUCH TIMES?

Let me make perfectly clear that the application I am about to make from David's experience is meant for all people, both male and female. Yet, let the boys and men of God's family pay careful and particular attention to God's Word on the issue of courage. Know that the absence of courage is nothing less than sin. Consider the words of the Apostle John in the closing chapters of Revelation: "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev.21:8). Note that the Lord includes "cowardice" as one of those sins that will mark those cast into eternal punishment. Bravery is a characteristic of holiness. Cowardice is a mark of the devil.

Does that mean that every man knowing Christ and his sovereign presence for His people ought to have the courage of David? Should every Christian man have the inner material necessary to cast himself into ferocious battle,

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN - PART 5



We have seen a couple areas of weakness that are inherent in the institutional method of educating our children. They were that God's mandate to bring up our children falls squarely upon our shoulders as parents and therefore it is we who have to give an account of what our children are taught and what they learn. Secondly, no matter how great intentions a teacher may have, and no matter how great his skill, and though they may possess greater academic equipment than the average parent, they cannot take the place of the parent in the education of their children. God has uniquely equipped parents to teach their children. He has given particular promises to them.

A third area where institutional schooling has a great weakness lies in the area of peer influence. All people are influenced by those who impact their lives. But it is particularly with those whom we let our guard down that will influence us the most. Those we let our guard down most with are those that we trust will give us what we believe is best for us, or at least most to our liking. For the child in the class who desperately wants to fit in, whether with the "in" group, or with those who share like passions, they will do what it takes to get "in". While the teacher may have the best interests for the student in school, it is very often the peer group that wields the most influence on a student's behavior or choices. We need to remember that the teacher belongs to a different generation than the student but in age segregated institutions the peer pressure is often overwhelming. Many children have made shipwreck of their lives because they listened to their friends, whose opinions counted most, more than to their parents which actually cared more for them.

Again, I want to stress that these weaknesses in the institutional schooling system, both Chris-

tian and secular, are there by the very nature of the institution. This does not mean that every student in school becomes a societal failure. I am only saying that these dangers present themselves when our children are sent off to a school for several hours each day, together with multitudes their own age who become their friends because of continuous contact. They enter a class where one teacher becomes responsible to teach certain subjects to a large class of which each student is but one member. The teacher cannot monitor, guide and interact with each student concerning their spiritual, mental, emotional and academic needs. And as we saw in previous articles, academic truths cannot be divorced from the fear and love of the Lord. By the grace of God, the careful involvement of parents, diligent school boards, many children have received a fine education and we might add that many godly men and women have been raised in such a way.

There is another way of educating our children that currently is increasing in popularity in North America. A great majority of those utilizing this method consist of some professionals and many in the Christian community. This method, of course, is that of home-schooling.

There are a number of reasons that parents have that choose to home-school, and some of the reasons carry more validity than others. It is my intention to help you to understand home-schooling better and doing so, I believe, will cause you to consider it more seriously. There are some parents who believe that home-schooling is the only method of educating our children that is faithful to the teaching of scripture. I understand to some degree what these people are saying but I am not willing to say that for parents to make use of Christian schooling opportunities or even of the public school in

some cases', is sin. I believe that the parents who before the Lord, choose to make use of the academic training of a Christian school, and who interact with their children to see what it is that their children are learning, who seek to understand their children's hearts and to guide them with the wisdom of scripture, may expect the Lord's blessing according to His promise. I am also not saying that home-schooling automatically means blessing for our children. I do believe that home-schooling fits the methodology of scripture and has much to commend it, including that it can facilitate the covenant nurture of our youth by their own parents, in accordance to Deuteronomy 6.

The first advantage that home-schooling offers parents, is the sheer amount of time and interactive involvement that it allows in the lives of their children. Now in our day, that will bring a number of negative reactions. "I couldn't stand to have my kids around me all day, every day." "I'm so glad to see them leave for school each day." "Our home would be a war zone if everyone was home all day." Sometimes the motive is simply the fear of not being able to give the children what they need at home. Sometimes, however, there is the desire for personal fulfillment apart from bringing up our children in the nurture of the Lord and so time spent in teaching our own children is seen as an impediment to our personal goals.

What we want is for our hearts and minds to be trained by the Word of God. Perhaps, in light of our cultures negative view of children, we have subtly begun to consider our children more as a burden, than a gift. Of course we would never

say this; we are orthodox enough to know that children are a gift of the Lord. But in our daily life's practice, we often evidence that we view our children much in the same way as does the world. Children impede our life style. But scripture says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward...Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them." Psalm 128:3, 5a Now it seems to me that when we have something that makes us happy or makes us to consider ourselves blessed, that we do not then begin to think about how to limit this pleasure. Rather we plan how to enjoy a particular delight all the more. Jesus could say of His Father, "As the Father loved me, I also have loved you; abide in my love." John 15:9 The divine pattern realized and applied in the home ought to be the goal of every Christian parent.

Let us as parents learn to love and value our children as the Father delights in the Son, and as God delights in His children. It is not separation with distant, warm feelings of love that we want, but the delight of communion and nurture that we desire.

One of the beautiful things that home-schooling is conducive to is the opportunity to love and interact with your own children and that in the all important phase of your child's life, the time of their education. What a privilege to be so closely involved in the things that your children learn, the things that shape their own vision of life. When we love our children and desire their well-being, then a home-based education will be seen as a privilege and opportunity because it gives us the opportunity for a more thorough involvement in the lives of our children. And that brings its own rewards and satisfaction.

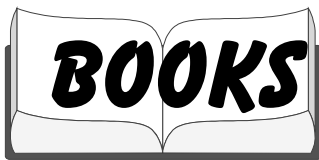
-by Bill Kroesbergen

Perhaps, in light of our culture's negative view of children, we have subtly begun to consider our children more as a burden, than a gift.

YOUTH'S CORNER BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Find the names of 16 books of the Bible hidden in the following paragraph. Each name may span more than one word, or be confined within a larger word, so look carefully!

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu, kept people looking so hard for facts, and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalized. But the truth finally struck home to numbers of our readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help find them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there really are sixteen names of books of the Bible in this paragraph.



BOOKS IN REVIEW

*Through Gates of Splendor
by Elisabeth Elliot*

This book is the account of some modern day missionaries who gave their lives for the sake of the gospel in January 1956 in the jungles of Africa. One cannot help but be moved when reading the story of 5 young men, Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Nate Saint and Roger Youderian who were filled with a zeal to serve the Lord and bring the gospel to those who had never heard it. Each one of them could easily have been successful in ministry in their homeland, the United States of America. But each were filled with the same conviction that Jim Elliot expressed, "I dare not stay home". In God's providence be brought these five men together in Ecuador and filled them with the desire to bring the gospel to a stone age killer tribe called the Aucas. It was to cost them their lives, leaving behind five widows and many fatherless children. As you read portions of their lives, and parts of their diaries, one is deeply convicted by their fervency and self denial, when we live so complacently and at ease in a world perishing and under God's condemnation. The book is easy and exciting reading. It can be bought through any Christian bookstore.

-by Cope Jonkman



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE SHARING YOUR FAITH

Sharing our faith isn't easy. I know--as a young man, I was convinced I didn't have the gift of evangelism. It was obvious. No matter how hard I tried, no one was coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing I did seemed to make a difference. I was inspired by the things I read and heard about Billy Graham's ministry, but I knew I didn't have his gifts.

I remember giving God a deadline: "If I don't see any converts by the end of the year, I'm quitting." Oh, I would still be an active Christian, but I planned to resign myself to simply teaching other believers.

The end of the year came and went. No converts. My mind was made up: Now I was sure I didn't have the gift of evangelism.

On Saturday about four days into the new year, the small church I attended in Argentina held a home Bible study. I didn't feel like going, but went anyway out of loyalty to the elders.

The fellow who was supposed to give the Bible study never showed up. So the man of the house said, "Luis, you are going to have to say something." I was completely unprepared. I had been reading a book by Billy Graham, however, based on the beatitudes. So I read Matthew 5:1-12 and simply repeated whatever I remembered from Dr. Graham's book.

As I was commenting on the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," a lady suddenly stood up. She began to cry: "My heart is not pure. How can I see God? Somebody tell me how I can get a pure heart."

I don't remember the woman's name, but I will never forget her words: "Somebody tell me how I can get a pure heart." Together we read in the Bible, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin" (1 John 1:7). Before the evening was over, that woman found peace with God and went home with a pure heart overflowing with joy. How delightful it was to lead her to Jesus Christ!

When you win someone to Christ, it's the greatest joy. Your graduation is exciting, your wedding day is

exciting, your first baby is exciting. But the most thrilling thing you can ever do is win someone to Christ.

Yet today, in an effort to be sophisticated and contemporary, many Christians have stopped trying to persuade others to follow Christ. There's an underlying feeling in our society that nice people just don't go around persuading other people to do things. We don't want to offend people, appear strange, or lose our newfound status. So we do nothing.

I, too, have been guilty of this. When I lived in Mexico City, my next-door neighbor was a young television personality. We would chat from time to time, and he even mentioned that he listened to our radio program occasionally. But I didn't share the Gospel with him. After all, I thought, he seems completely immune to the problems of life.

Eventually, though, my neighbor changed. The joy seemed to have left his face. He and his wife started driving separate cars to work. I could tell their marriage was souring, and I felt the need to talk with him, but I didn't want to meddle in his life. I went about my business and headed off for an evangelistic crusade in Peru. After all, that was the polite thing to do.

When I returned home, I learned my neighbor had killed himself. I was heartbroken. I knew I should have gone to him and persuaded him to repent and follow Christ. But because of false courtesy--because I followed a social norm--I didn't do it.

It's very convenient to make excuses for not persuading others to follow Christ. We may say we don't want to be overbearing or offensive. We may think we can't possibly witness to someone because he or she will become angry.

But over the years I have learned that some of the people I thought would be most closed to the Gospel often are the most receptive. Although they may outwardly fear it, in their hearts they welcome the message of the Gospel.

I saw this while in the Soviet Union recently. Chris-

tians there have been persecuted for decades. Now, with the advent of glasnost, evangelism is permitted. Right now, the situation is incredible. I've traveled all over the world, but I've never seen a place as hungry and desperate to hear the Gospel. But many Soviet Christians are just beginning to realize "the fields are white already to harvest."

Just before my evangelistic team's Soviet campaign was over, a Baptist pastor brought an acquaintance to one of our meetings in Moscow. The friend, head of an academic department at the university and a leading scientist, listened as I preached the Gospel. Then, to the pastor's surprise, this scientist prayed out loud to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior. And then, with tears, he came forward to confess Christ publicly.

The Russian pastor was astonished at his friend's response to the Gospel. He was equally surprised by the phone call he received at 7:15 the next morning. "I would like to express my gratitude to you," the scientist said. "You invited me to meet the Lord Jesus Christ. I didn't sleep the whole night. I just prayed. I asked God whether He would accept me, whether He would pardon me."

So the pastor asked, "Well, do you think God pardoned you?" And his friend replied, "Yes, I'm absolutely sure that God accepts me as His prodigal son." Later the pastor told me, "I never thought a scientist would accept the Lord Jesus as Savior. But now I've seen it with my own eyes. What a great experience!"

Having a part in leading a friend or acquaintance to faith in Jesus Christ is exciting. But actually praying with someone who wants to make that decision is even more thrilling.

Yet I've seen Christians lead someone to the point of decision and then panic. A Christian woman was witnessing to a Hungarian businesswoman sitting in front of me on a flight from Budapest to London. At the same time our team's European director and I were discussing the evangelistic rally we had in Budapest the day before.

While we were talking the Christian woman stood up, turned around and said, "Excuse me. Are you talking about the rally yesterday with Cliff Richard and Luis Palau?" I said yes. "Do you know where brother Palau is?" I said that was me. Then she said, "I've been

talking to this Hungarian lady, and I think she's ready to be converted. But I don't know how to do it."

Here was a sharp British Christian woman. I told her, "I've been listening to what you've been saying and you've done a terrific job." But she felt afraid of doing something wrong when it came time to pray with someone who was ready to receive Christ.

I agreed to talk with the Hungarian businesswoman for a minute. "Did you understand what this lady said to you?"

"Yes."

"Are you ready to open up the door of your life to Christ?"

"Yes."

At that, I asked the Christian woman to lead her in a prayer of decision. I wanted to do it myself. It would have been great. But I just sat back and watched as the Christian woman in front of me at first hesitated, then turned to this Hungarian woman, put her arm around her, and for the first time led someone to Christ.

I challenge you to pray: "Dear God, I want that experience. I want to know what it is to win someone to Jesus Christ."

Why be ashamed of the Gospel? "It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). It changes lives here and now, and for eternity!

The Dutch evangelist Corrie ten Boom had a God-given desire to win others to Christ. One of her poems says:

When I enter that beautiful city
And the saints all around me appear,
I hope that someone will tell me:
'It was you who invited me here.'

Whatever our place in the Body of Christ, let's actively and prayerfully invite others into God's kingdom. After all, God doesn't have a plan A, a plan B and a plan C for evangelizing the world. He has only one plan--and that's you and me.

-by Luis Palau

**THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN COURAGE:
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(continued from inside the front cover)

even if that means a painful and gruesome death? The answer is, frankly, yes. Cowardice is sin no matter where it expresses its dishonorable self. Whether found in the classroom, the pulpit, the field of battle, or at the dinner table, lack of courage is an outworking of depravity and requires repentance. That's because of what cowardice, at heart, really is. It's nothing less than unbelief. We run from battle, we hide because we believe God is not with us. We doubt His presence beside us and His power to shelter us from all danger. We come to believe that we are somehow in the unfeeling hands of fate, or at the mercy of our own skills, experience, and intuition. Such thinking is simple idolatry. And the catastrophic, emasculating reality of cowardice is the fruit of that idolatry.

The Man of Courage knows that he may well die in battle, he may well be embarrassed for standing up for the truth in the classroom, he

may well be fired because he won't be pressured into working on Sunday by his domineering boss. But those consequences don't matter to him in the end. They are unimportant. His mind isn't focused on what "might happen to him," but on Who it is that stands by his side, and how best to honor and serve that Divine King Who has summoned him into His knightly service. Such thinking is the foundation of true faith, true masculinity, and true courage.

It is such men that are needed in our dark times, Knights of God who do not fear combat, conflict, or cataclysm. Men who have a firm trust in the presence and power of God for their good, and the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of Heaven. Against such men our dark enemy can know no victory, and with such men our God will shatter the very gates of hell itself.

-by Pastor Ludt

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