

Loyal Courage Hebrews 11:23-31

Introduction

Fear is common to the human race. Ever thought about why?

It is part of our built-in survival reaction to danger. When our minds pick up on a threat, our bodies respond. The nervous system releases stress hormones such as adrenaline. We breathe faster. Blood pressure and heart rate rise, increasing blood supply to our arms and legs, so that we are ready to fight for our lives or to run away from the danger. Those training to endure the stress of battle learn how to slow their breathing and their heart rate, so that their minds remain sharp in the middle of danger, enabling them to make a calculated response rather than just to fight or run.

Even in peacetime and prosperity life is not free from danger or from fear. In fact, it seems sometimes that the less trouble we encounter, the more anxiety we experience from comparatively small risk. Just consider how fragile our own culture seems to anything that challenges one's personal ideas, self-conceptions, or pleasures. Despite all the comforts we enjoy, fear and anxiety seem nearly epidemic, even among God's people.

When you review the history of those who lived by faith in God, you find them pushing through extraordinary dangers. Their confidence in God feeds a loyalty to Him that takes on incredible odds. Such loyal courage is one of the hallmarks of those living by faith. When God is big, everything else seems small. That's why you hear it commonly said, "Fear God, and you need fear nothing else."

It is said the that most often repeated command in the Bible is, "Fear not." 365 times—one for every day of the year. Tells us how natural it is for us to fear. Tells us over and over the cure for it: God Himself.

Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Most of us have rarely if ever faced the overwhelming threats Hebrews 11 records. But we find plenty to cause us fear in the common battles of life. If our God is big enough for the big battles, is He not sufficient for the small?

So come with me to learn from those who faced fearful circumstances with great courage rooted in their overriding loyalty to

the God on whom they were relying. Faith in God produces Loyal Courage.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **25** choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. **26** He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. **27** By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. **28** By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

1. Courage to Protect the Vulnerable (23)
2. Courage to Suffer with God's People (24-26)
3. Courage to Pursue Deliverance (27-29)

4. Courage to Fight God's Way (30)
5. Courage to Switch Your Allegiance (31)

All of these believers who showed loyal courage did so without knowing how it all would turn out. Remember, Abel died for his faith. Enoch never died because of his. As the next section will chronicle, people of faith experienced amazing victories and also endured great suffering even to death. The hero of these stories is not the people of faith. The Hero is the God in whom they had placed their faith.

1. Courage to Protect the Vulnerable (23)

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

You recall that Pharaoh considered the expanding population of the Israelites a threat to Egypt. His solution was to decree the destruction of every Hebrew boy at the moment of his birth—something like what is called “partial-birth abortion” today.

The parents of Moses were not afraid to disobey the king's edict because to obey him would be to defy a much higher King. God created human beings in His image, so to murder a person young or old was an attack

on one made in God's image (Genesis 9:6). A parent has no such right against his or her child or against anyone else.

They valued the child. The text says "they saw that he was beautiful." Ancient Jewish legend has it that God had revealed to them what Moses would one day be, but we don't know that for certain. The fact is, *unless God reveals it, we never know what future lies ahead for a child. But we know every child has been given life by God, and as a human being made in God's image, has a God-given purpose with gifts and capacities along with a string of as-yet-unknown providential opportunities* that lie ahead. What if Moses' parents had not spared their son? They would have killed not just his future but the future of their nation and the world. His impact on Israel and the entire human race can hardly be measured.

Moses' parents could have argued that they had no means to take care of Moses if they let him live. But killing him was not an option that faith in God would allow. They hid him as long as they could, then set him adrift in a basket among the river reeds with his sister Miriam to watch what would happen. It was an act of faith in God to do what they could no longer do. God did the unexpected. He used the daughter of the evil king to take Moses in and rear him as a prince.

God gives strength so that we can care for the weak and vulnerable. Rulers and nations that call for their destruction instead abuse their power and will be judged by God Almighty. So do not cave to their abuse. Remember when evil is in power that God's power is always greater.

What an irony that we live in a day so vocally opposed to abuse, yet at the same time so devoted to destroying the most vulnerable and innocent among us—and in the most gruesome of ways, all sanctioned by medical professionals, educators, and government officials, whose very purpose should be to promote and protect life. *One of the most dangerous places a child can be in our world is in a mother's womb.*

Are there significant difficulties for those who face unwanted pregnancies? Absolutely. But there are many humane ways to address that need without destroying children made in God's image and wiping out their future and all the contributions they would have made to their nation and their world.

Thanks in part to the faith of his parents, Moses survived this evil king's edict. It was the evil king that did not survive.

What are ways you seek to be aware of and to help the vulnerable?

If you value human beings as you should, how are you making life better for the human beings you encounter?

How can you convey to those who are broken or at risk that you are a safe place for them?

2. Courage to Suffer with God's People (24-26)

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Moses enjoyed the best education and most luxurious lifestyle the world could boast at the time. According to some accounts it's very possible he was next in line to be Pharaoh of Egypt. But for him to keep his position would mean turning a blind eye and deaf ear to the plight of his own people, the chosen people of God. He could not do that. Better a slave with God's people than a prince with their taskmasters.

Note that the comparison is not one of different advantages. On the one side is suffering mistreatment. On the other enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.

26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Reproach—to be reviled, to have insults heaped on you

Reproach of Christ—the Messiah; whatever abuse, verbal and otherwise, that Moses endured, he saw as connected to the Messiah, the Savior-King God had promised would come through the nation of Israel. He was taking the long view because of his reliance on what God had declared was to come. In particular, the Messiah and His kingdom in which His people, the saints, would reign forever. Egypt in all its splendor could not compare.

Egypt's wealth at the time was stunning—the treasures that fill museums today
Reproach of Christ = greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt

How can reproach be greater wealth?
Key: he was looking to the reward

Matthew 5:11-12

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in

heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Nobody likes to be insulted and mistreated. But allegiance to Christ and His people is worth it. That's true about anyone you truly love. You are glad to take abuse from other people rather than betray the people you love. It's a way of proving your devotion to them. How much more is it worth it to stay true to Jesus. Don't trample on His reputation to save yours. He died for you and broke the power of death for you.

3. Courage to Pursue Deliverance (27-29)

People today highly value their personal freedom, but it's striking how often what they pursue is slavery to sin in order to be free from God.

- **From Slavery to the World System**

²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Moses could have stayed in Egypt, enjoying the pleasures of the palace and ignoring the plight of God's people, Israel.

Moses could have stayed in the desert after fleeing Egypt when his first attempts to rescue Israel failed.

You remember he killed an Egyptian that was brutalizing a Hebrew. He hoped that would make clear to his people that he was on their side and that he would help them gain their freedom. But it backfired. They resented his interference and let him know his deed was widely known. He fled the country. It could have seemed that his life's purpose was done. A complete failure.

From a human perspective, to go back at God's command and demand Pharaoh let Israel go had to seem reckless and futile. But go back he did, over and over again, plague after plague. The hero was not Moses. The hero was God. It was God who rescued Moses in the first place and saw to it he was reared and trained in the palace. It was God who met Moses in the wilderness. It was God who commanded Moses to go back. It was God who brought the plagues against Egypt, her king, and her idols to break Pharaoh's stubborn tyranny.

What could give Moses the courage to confront likely the most powerful tyrant in the world at the time? The for-real God he could not see, but whose voice he heard from the burning bush. The "I Am that I Am." "Seeing Him who was invisible."

We live in a time when the world system with all its seduction and intimidation floods the

inlets into our lives with a kaleidoscope of images and a drumbeat of lies.

In what ways are you exercising loyal courage to God to break free from the tyrannical mind control of the age?

How much time and effort are you making to hear the voice of Him who is invisible?

- **From Sin and Death**

28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

Moses had to believe the Lord when he said He would pass over every household where the blood of the unblemished lamb was smeared on the doorposts and not destroy the firstborn there.

It was the plague that finally forced Pharaoh to let Israel go. The difference between those whose firstborn was destroyed and those whose firstborn survived was the blood of the lamb. God made the Passover meal a perpetual statute in Israel. It would one day be fulfilled by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus would one day be crucified the very week of Passover.

Death was the penalty for a sinful people. And the blood of the lamb slain delivered those who believed God and thus followed His Passover commands.

Apart from faith, who would have bothered to engage in such a bloody ceremony. What power could it have? None by itself. But the all-powerful God who commanded it has the power of life and death.

Breaking free from sin and death is humanly impossible. There's no ceremony you can do, no amount of money you can pay. There's only one way—God's way. Faith in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

- **Despite Impossible Situations**

²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

In front of Israel the Red Sea blocked their escape route. Behind them Pharaoh's army is rushing toward them. They were doomed. But for God.

Exodus 14:10-14

¹⁰ When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is not this what

we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.

¹³ And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

In the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, God moved between Israel and the Egyptians. Then when Moses stretched out his rod over the sea as God commanded, a strong east wind blew all night, made a path of dry land, and divided the waters walled up on either side, making a way for all Israel to pass through. When the Egyptians tried to pursue them, the Lord clogged their chariot wheels and threw the soldiers into a panic, caught in the middle where the waters crashed back over them and drown every last one of them in the sea.

What impossible situations are you facing?
What has you in knots?
What is robbing you of sleep?
What would happen if you turned your focus from all that seems so threatening to you and instead just sought the Lord for Him to command and guide you, and wherever necessary to intervene for you?

Do you really believe His goodness and wisdom and power are insufficient for you?

4. Courage to Fight God's Way (30)

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

Forty years before the nation was so terrified to attempt conquest of Canaan that they turned back in rebellion against the Lord. Now they have crossed over the Jordan much like they had crossed the Red Sea decades before. But their first great battle seemed impossible—the great fortified city of Jericho. Their divinely appointed strategy: march round the city each day for a week, and march round it seven times the last day, then blow trumpets. A tactic never used before or again. Why would they bother? Only that God commanded doing it that way. Using such a strategy made clear it was God who brought the victory over this mighty city, not man.

We are so often distracted and bogged down with human strategies for gaining divine victories.

How are we to make conquest of the world for Christ? With words. Good news displayed and proclaimed—the power of God to save everyone who believes it. Prayer. Not political power and influence. Not hating our enemies. Loving them. Not impressive entertainment.

Pointing them to Jesus. Not worldly-wise rhetoric. A simple gospel clear enough for a child to understand, yet so profound it transforms individuals and whole nations. Not great stores of money. But generous giving of our resources out of love for God and for our neighbor. Not fitting in with the worldview of the times, but confronting it with truth and love.

5. Courage to Switch Your Allegiance (31)

³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Rahab was a Canaanite, the people God was bringing to an end because of their centuries of deep-dyed sin. She was a prostitute, making her living in defiance of God's authority and care for family.

When the Israeli spies showed up at her door, the logical place to go because of the common traffic of strangers there, it became clear that she had not only heard of Israel and all God had done for the nation, but had become a believer in Israel's God herself. Enough to put her own life at risk by hiding the spies and sending the king's messengers off on a wild-geese chase.

God honored her and her family not only by sparing them when Jericho fell, but by making her the mother of Boaz, the great-grandfather of David, from whom would one day come Jesus the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

The crisis point came for Rahab to decide where her loyalty actually lay. It was loyalty to God and His people that gave her the courage to take the action she did. The battle of Jericho was a huge victory, but nothing like the victory Christ would one day bring. And Rahab got to be part of all that.

At the time she had no idea how God would honor her. We don't know what the future holds or how God will use our loyal courage that expresses our faith in Him.

You have to decide as well. In what or whom is your faith? Where is your true loyalty? That is the secret to courage, no matter what may come your way, from a difficult day at the office or on the stock market, to days of persecution that seem to be on their way. You don't know what exactly will happen, but you know the God who is sovereign over it all.

What seems like losing today in the face of a culture that seems increasingly oblivious if not hostile to Christian truth and virtue, will be certain victory in time. It may mean losing everything including your life in the coming

days. Or it may be prelude to a God-sent revival on the order of the Great Awakening or the Reformation. You never know. God controls all that. But you do know that the Promised Land of the heavenly city, the new heaven, and new earth will all be yours. Immortality. Sinlessness. Pleasures forevermore. But not if you cave to world to save your life now.

Matthew 16:24-26

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Where is your allegiance this morning?
King Jesus and His kingdom, His saints,
citizens of eternity, children of God?
Or are you scrambling to save yourself, to try
to ingratiate yourself with a world that hates
Jesus and His people?
Wise up. The walls are going to come down.
Jesus wins. Better come over to the winning
side before it's too late.

Conclusion

Faith in God produces loyal courage:

1. Courage to Protect the Vulnerable
2. Courage to Suffer with God's People

3. Courage to Pursue Deliverance
4. Courage to Fight God's Way
5. Courage to Switch Your Allegiance

Discussion Questions

1. What are some fears you have encountered in your life?
2. Why does protecting or helping the vulnerable sometimes call for courage?
3. When is disobeying the government (such as what Moses' parents did) the right thing to do? When is it wrong?
4. What are some examples of when suffering is a better choice than indulging in sinful pleasure?
5. What are ways you, like Moses, are choosing future reward in Christ's kingdom instead of present influence and material wealth?
6. Why does breaking free from this world's system and from sin call for courageous loyalty?
7. What are some ways God's way of waging war is different from the world's?
8. What did Rahab risk losing by switching her allegiance to Israel and Israel's God, and what did she gain?