

# W O R D A T W O R K

## VOLUME XL NUMBER XII Fortified with Courage

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Last month, we studied what it means to have a healthy fear of the Lord and how important it is for us to begin to build our wisdom concerning this truth. While the fear of the Lord is vital for us as believers, we also know from Scripture that God does not want us to live our lives in a state of fear. Fear, when not directed at the proper subject, can become paralyzing. And nowhere is this more apparent than the fear of man that is now rampant in the church and in the world. When was the last time we shared our faith with someone? How many of us feel the freedom to publically state our convictions concerning controversial issues? For some of us, it may be a daily occurrence. For others, it may be years between opportunities. While there are certainly distinct callings within the Church (e.g., the Five-Fold-Ministry of Ephesians 4:11), we are all called by Christ to fulfill the Great Commission. What is the biggest impediment for modern Christians in sharing their faith? It is the fear of man, and it only continues to grow as the age gets darker and darker. When the fear of God in our lives eclipses fear of man, we have achieved a milestone.

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Scripture: Proverbs 16:23

In listening to our favorite news broadcasts, many of us have come across a term in the last year or two that was unfamiliar to us. “Cancel culture” is a culture in which younger people online who hold anti-Biblical or anti-traditional beliefs come together on social media platforms and attack people who say things they disagree with. They do not respectfully *question* the disagreed-upon *idea*, as our founding fathers encouraged. Rather they *attack* the *people* themselves. It is an attempt to mute and silence voices that give a differing or opposing viewpoint. And in many cases, it is often a move of the enemy to squelch truth. Comments like “homosexuality is a sin” or “Jesus is the only path to salvation,” can lead to the formation of “outrage mobs” on these social media platforms. People who hold traditional views can be relentlessly attacked by these mobs. Some of these mobs have attempted to get people fired from jobs, evicted from rental properties or even physically attacked by Antifa types. These outrage mobs have a chilling effect on speech in society which is considered unpopular by these outspoken bullies. For most of us who grew up in an America which still feared God, to see this kind of speech-policing is scary. For those who grew up in a socialist or tyrannical country, it is painful and all too familiar.

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

Scripture: Acts 4:1-3, 2 Corinthians 11:22-30

One of the things we are promised as Christians is that we will experience trials in life. Despite what some ministers might tell us, we are not promised new cars, beautiful homes, perfect health and trouble-free relationships. If we do have those things, rejoice! Then let’s consider giving of our time and our resources to those who do not. When

we face hardships, including coming under attack for our faith, we must remember that we are not the first to face consequences from the world for our love of Jesus. The first ones of the early church to be publically attacked and punished for their faith were Peter and John. Acts 4 begins, *“Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.”* Peter and John were the first to be arrested for proclaiming Jesus as Lord, but they were certainly not the last.

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

Scripture: Proverbs 10:23

America has been steadily moving towards a secular belief system for almost sixty years. This secularism had its roots in the horrors of World Wars I and II, where generations of young men saw how cheaply humans could regard the lives of others. Slowly, the notion of charity or goodwill towards one’s fellowman, was mocked as a joke. Hardened men increasingly saw God as an absentee father or a fable by a priestly class wanting to maintain power. These men held positions from President to Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and were responsible for the weakening of religious education in America. First through decisions allowing the teaching of evolution in schools, then through decisions outlawing prayer in schools, and decisions establishing the so-called separation of church and state. Since the election of a former President of the United States in 2008, we have started to see anti-Christ secularization and persecution of believers in America. The employment rolls of certain agencies such as the IRS, FBI, Justice Department, CIA and state department and military were slowly purged of Christians, while globalists were promoted. Only the judgment of God can turn the ship!

#### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

Scripture: Proverbs 10:29

Persecution of believers in America is something that is hard to imagine, since our forefather passed a legacy of unprecedented freedom. The quality of freedom that America birthed had never been seen in the world from governments instituted among men. When Christians from the United States look abroad, it is easy to recognize persecution in other countries when we see it. Christians can be kidnapped, imprisoned and tortured for their faith in China and in other repressive nations. Believers are brutally murdered in Muslim countries. And even though we hear about these things, they often don’t affect as deeply as they should. When such challenges are not up close and personal, we look dispassionately. Have we grown so accustomed to religious freedom, that we take it for granted and have failed to prize it highly?

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

Scripture: Psalm 71:10-12, Jeremiah 48

Taking our freedoms for granted has led to a slow erosion of those freedoms. Believers who are beginning to wake up from their slumber are discovering that we are now boxed in by various institutions. In the political realm, we have laws being proposed that would strip away the right of pastors to preach against various forms of sin. This isn’t simply conjecture. Canada has already begun to fine and jail pastors for speaking out against the LGBT movement. In the United States, look no further than the so-called Equality Act, which Biden vowed to implement in his first 100 days. It would give bathroom and locker room access to individuals based on their ‘gender identity’ not birth sex. A pastor could not refuse to marry same-sex couples or fire a male employee who decides to identify and dress as a female. Health care providers could not refuse abortions and taxpayers have to fund them. The Equality Act is designed to prevent churches from claiming religious freedom as protection against it. In America, persecution will start by threatening our right to speak the Word of God. It will be billed as protecting people from hate speech. As any good Biblical warrior knows, the enemy won’t be satisfied with silencing our tongues. Pastors who choose to avoid preaching about sin and judgment are neglecting to train and prepare the saints in the whole counsel of the Word, producing a

generation which does not hate evil! Such leaders are complicit with the secularists for the condition of our nation! Jeremiah 48 says, *“Cursed be he who does the word of the Lord negligently.”* Do certain pastors fail to confront or even mention sin for fear of offending? Are some pastors failing to tackle hard issues like abortion? Are certain portions of Scripture overlooked in order not to offend?

#### MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

Scripture: Revelation 6:9-10,

We know from the books of Daniel and Revelation that things are going to get worse in the earth before they get better. We can see it happening all around us right now. Popular culture has slowly desensitized believers to the gravity of evil. The true church is the only cultural institution with the divine authority to resist the erosion and destruction of our culture, but in the name of tolerance, diversity, and love, the church leadership has largely abandoned that mission, favoring the making of converts rather than disciples. As monumental a task as it may seem, fighting these battles then falls to us, the individual believers, whether in our prayer closets, our churches, the ballot box, or even the streets.

#### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16

So how does God expect us to get through life, taking care of our families, protecting our children and our grandchildren in a world that is increasingly hostile towards people who seek to follow their faith? Make no mistake, running and hiding is not a long-term solution. Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16, *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* If we are living our lives appropriately for Christ, we won’t be able to hide who and what we are. There is an old saying which speaks to this truth: *“If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”* Based on Christ’s words to His disciples, the answer to that question had better be, *“YES!”*

#### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7, Isaiah 54:15

So where does that leave us? How are we to live boldly for Christ in an era where the Word of God and salvation through Christ alone are as popular ideas now as they were back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century in Rome under Nero? Most of the planet is now explored and settled. There aren’t too many options for Christians seeking to flee persecution as the Pilgrims did when they set sail on the Mayflower for the New World. Do we take up the fight and teach the next generation to live out their faith loudly, praying for a revival or move of the Spirit to sweep across the globe? Do we gather together into tight-knit communities as the Amish and Mennonites have done in the past? Whatever we choose, it is becoming clearer with each passing day that without a major shift, we cannot peacefully coexist with the evil that is gaining ground in our nation. Will we see an Isaiah 54:15 moment where God intervenes on our behalf?

#### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7, Isaiah 54:15

Isaiah 54:15 says, *“Indeed they shall assemble but not because of God, Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake!”* God, do it in this nation – fell the anti-Christ hordes for our sake! As we discussed last month, 2 Timothy 1:7 says: *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of **power** and of **love** and of a **sound mind**.”* We also discussed the meanings of power (**δύναμις – dunamis**), love (**αγάπης – agape**), and sound-mind (**σωφρονισμός – sofronismos**), that is: mighty power, divine love, and self-control / discipline. God has given us a **πνευμα – pneuma**, a spirit that is designed to be bold and powerful, while being directed and shepherded, and filled with God’s divine love. When the culture is relentlessly attacking believers, it can be difficult to walk with these characteristics. But we are

called to rise above our fear and walk boldly, in the dunamis, **δύναμις** of the Lord. It helps when we see victories, but even when victory is not apparent, we must boldly stand on God's promises!

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11

Scripture: John 16:32-33, Isaiah 54:15

What did Jesus say about the world after His departure? He certainly didn't claim it would be sunshine and happiness. In John 16:32-33, He says, *"Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take **courage** (G2293); I have overcome the world."* Christ's words are eternal, and indeed just as true today as they were for His disciples. We will face tribulations in life no matter the geographic area. The Pilgrims who came to the New World on the Mayflower escaped the persecution of King James I, but were met with new tribulations in the form of harsh conditions. Even if those of us today were to relocate into the wilderness areas of a different state, or found colonies under the ocean or on Mars, we would face different tribulations. What matters is how we deal with persecution or tribulation.

#### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

Scripture: John 16:32-33

We are given the answer in the text of John 16:33. We are to meet tribulation with courage. The Greek word for taking up courage here is **θαρσέω**, pronounced **thar-seh'-o** and comes from the root word for courage, **θάρσος**, pronounced **thar'-sos**. **Thar'-sos** has another meaning in the Greek as well. It also means boldness, or daring. Why, and how are we supposed to face a world that hates us and do it with strength and boldness? Christ answers that question for us at the end of verse 33. He has overcome the world! But what does it look like from a practical perspective in our daily lives, when our faith brings increasing persecution? If buying and selling or even banking were to become much more complicated, are we prepared for our **relationship with Christ** to be the wisdom, protection and shield of all things? Do we have the spiritual fortitude to go through great hardship if that is where we are headed? Let us take a look at some of the other saints in the Bible and see how courage operated in their lives to see if we can gain a greater understanding for a walk of wisdom and God's empowering grace to push through in our own daily struggles.

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

Scripture: Joshua 1:9

There are two words in the Hebrew language dealing with courage that are frequently found together in the Bible; so tied are they in the Old Testament that we almost will not find one without the other. **Courage** is found with its partner word **strength**. Joshua 1:9 says, *"Have I not commanded you? Be **strong** (H2388) and **courageous** (H553)! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."* "**Courageous**" is **יָהֵץ** pronounced **aw-mats'** for physical or mental courage, and "**strong**" is **קָיָה**, pronounced **khaw-zak'** for seizing, strengthening, or fortifying in courage, binding, restraining or conquering. Taken together, these words are suggesting the taking up of a double-portion of strength and courage. This command is given to Joshua directly by God Himself. When God is with us a divine plan of action unfolds. God's army marched around Jericho seven times each day for six days then on the seventh day seven times. **Dunamis** manifests when our obedience is complete.

#### MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:6-7; Joshua 1:6

Joshua could very well be considered one of Israel's most courageous leaders. Indeed, Joshua was thrice commissioned to be strong and courageous; Once by Moses in his commission of the whole of Israel in Deuteronomy 31:6. Then again by Moses in a commission of Joshua's family in Deuteronomy 31:7, and finally with a commission

given to Joshua personally by God in Joshua 1:6. A study of Joshua's life reveals him to be a man of limitless bravery. In the book of Numbers when Joshua, as part of the twelve spies was sent to spy out the land, only Joshua and Caleb returned with a good report. These two alone were full of faith and optimism. The other spies reported giants so terrible that the men of Israel had no hope of taking the land. Joshua saw something rather different, and it is what Joshua saw in the land that would lead God to eventually pass the mantle of leadership from Moses to him. Joshua looked with the eye of faith, for he had been with Moses. During that season he was cultivating a godly character and perspective. How much time do we spend with Jesus? There are endless benefits for all time spent with our Savior. Cultivating that time should be our highest priority!

#### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

Scripture: Numbers 13-14

Faith in God overcomes the giant-sized circumstances whether food, water, fullness of health or an alien army. Numbers 13:33 described the reaction of the more cowardly spies. *"There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."* Joshua and Caleb chose to honor, believe and value God over the impossibility, and God becomes their strength and their sustenance. For us, God Himself will be the Cloud that guides us by day and the Hedge of protection that shelters us by night. He is our El Shaddai and will be the All-Sufficient One who will cause us to ride above the giants of circumstance in our own personal lives. We have the same choice as Joshua and Caleb did. These two chose strength and courage above the giants of circumstance. Let's join them!

#### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

Scripture: Numbers 14:6-12

Joshua and Caleb demonstrated courage in the face of giants because they trusted in the Lord. That trust was born out of a God and son relationship, and that relationship when cultivated included valuable inner perks. They put **all** their trust in the Lord. Notice in reading the narrative they never denied the reports of the other spies. There was no minimizing of the threat. They merely said that so long as Israel was walking with God, He would deliver them to victory! The response of the Israelites to Joshua and Caleb's faith and courage was to attempt to stone them! God had to intervene, and the chapter ended with God suggesting the extermination of the cowardly men and women of Israel, and the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham through the bloodline of Moses alone! Moses had to intercede on behalf of the rebellious Israelites to save them from divine judgment. Let's not be fearful like the Israelites, but instead stand in courage on our faith like Joshua!

#### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

Scripture: Numbers 14:8

Joshua was willing to take on giants for the Lord. He was willing to take on the most heavily fortified city in the region at the time. He was willing to fight an enemy against whom victory required an 80-year-old man to keep his arms raised in the air until it was over. Joshua did not trust in people nor their abilities. He had seen the same things Moses had seen, a stubborn and weak-willed people who time and again wanted to run back to slavery in Egypt when adversity came. Joshua was commissioned to be courageous and courageous he was. What did Joshua say when he tore his robes and spoke against the cowards who counseled the Israelites to return to slavery in Egypt? Numbers 14:8 says, *"If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.'"*  Joshua's trust was fully in the Lord. Does our relationship with the Lord hold that degree of trust?

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:36-37, Judges 3, Judges 14-16

There are many Old Testament saints who acted courageously in service to the Lord. Many servants of God in

the book of Judges had to act similarly. From Ehud the slayer of King Eglon, to Samson taking on hundreds of men in battle by himself. What did all of the saints in Judges have in common with Joshua? They were all called by God. How did David react when faced with the prospect of fighting Goliath? 1 Samuel 17:36-37 says, *“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.”* Moreover David said, *‘The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’* No fear to be found in David’s words here, only righteous indignation! David was confident in his God and God’s ability to work through him, citing his slaying of wild animals as evidence of his prowess in battle. His eldest brother had even accused him of pride and insolence in coming to the battlefield, hoping to show off. While David may indeed have had pride as one of his character flaws, this was likely coming out of a place of his own righteous anger from Goliath’s defiance of God. As we hear God-mockers and God-haters attack God’s people and nation, are we as righteously angry as David was? Perhaps we should be. When we see God-haters and God mockers emboldened and unashamed how should we respond?

#### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:45-46; 2 Samuel 21:15-22

Braggarts may talk a big game when in front of others, but are rarely so cocky when the rubber meets the road. David seemed courageous and confident when he spoke to Saul about how he would deal with the threat, but what did he do when he was face to face with Goliath? We read in 1 Samuel 17:45-46 says, *“Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.’”* This is bold talk coming from David, a youth. And David’s courage was likely multi-dimensional. 1 Samuel 17 also mentions that David chose five smooth stones from the brook as ammunition for his sling. Was this because he needed more than one shot to kill Goliath? Perhaps not. 2 Samuel 21 tells of the four sons of the giant Goliath who were slain by David and his men. Could David have prophetically picked out five stones that day knowing that there were four more giants to be slain after Goliath? It is certainly possible. It is also worth noting that despite David’s courage, he needed help from his mighty men to defeat these other giants. God’s strategy is different for different battles. A hearing ear and Holy Spirit-obedience are the key! We take wise counsel as believers when we lean on God’s voice and on each other for prayer and support.

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Scripture: Matthew 9:2

We know that the Old Testament is filled with acts of courage by mighty men of valor. David was a leader of men who warred for God, and he walked in supernatural strength and courage leading his mighty men. When Jesus brought the New Covenant, He used the same word for courage, **thar-seh’-o**, that Paul did in telling Timothy to be bold in his faith. In Matthew 9:2 it says, *“And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, ‘Take **courage** (G2293), son; your sins are forgiven.’”* Facing difficult circumstances doesn’t necessarily mean being persecuted for your faith in the traditional sense. Difficult circumstances that a believer might face can come in many forms, and similarly the courage to face those circumstances may manifest in different ways. But for a believer, the power to endure comes from the same Source!

#### MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

Scripture: John 16:33

Jesus said in John 16:33, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have **tribulation** (G2347); but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* “Tribulation” is **θλιψις**, pronounced

**thlip'-sis** and means affliction, anguish, burdens, persecution, or trouble. Look at the lives of many believers throughout the centuries, including the original twelve disciples and the early church fathers. Did any of them NOT experience varying degrees of tribulation? Most walked through significant hardship. Yet with all the suffering they endured, there are no stories suggesting that they were anything other than faithful to the end. Have we had **thlip'-sis** in our life? Do we have a health affliction or series of illnesses that has crushed us? Are we battling for the lives of our children and grandchildren? Is isolation impacting our well-being? Do we have financial needs that cause struggles? Yes, we are promised affliction and burdens, but we are also promised the **thar-seh'-o**, the courage to endure.

#### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

Scripture: Psalms 59:16-17

How did King David endure when he was at his lowest points? There are two moments in David's life when it seemed as though he was going to lose everything; his calling, his kingdom and his life. The first was when he was pursued relentlessly by King Saul who intended to kill him. David prayed for deliverance, and judgment upon his enemies, but he also took care to praise God, even in the midst of his tribulations. Psalms 59 was written while the army of Saul pursued David. In verses 16 and 17, it says, *"But I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; For You have been my defense And refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; For God is my defense, My God of mercy."* David knew full well who his Redeemer was, and he was granted the courage to face down the giants in his life who were coming to kill him. Is it possible David's posture of praise amplified his courage? Psalm 149 promises a reward. *"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations,..."* Covenant vengeance is covenant justice.

#### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

Scripture: Psalms 63

The second great tribulation in David's life came with the rebellion of Absalom. David's son Absalom was convinced that he would make a better king than David, and he managed to win the hearts of many men in Israel. When Absalom marched with an army on Jerusalem, David and his closest counselors had to flee. As with most other periods of his life, when something weighed heavily on David's heart, he would write music. Psalms 63, per church tradition, was written while David was in exile from Absalom's rebellion. It says, in part: *"So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me."* David drew his strength and his courage directly from his relationship with God, and the same Source that supplied David is available to us! David's intimate, worshipful relationship with the Lord kept him steady, faithful and victorious.

#### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

Scripture: Romans 8:31

Romans 8:31 says, *"What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"* We know that context must determine meaning. The preceding scriptures are the passages which discuss God working all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. What do we see with those who are courageous in the faith, those brave, steadfast servants of God? No matter what their circumstances were, no matter the fierce resistance, they didn't give up, and they didn't blame God! Paul was the most prolific writer in the New Testament. We can benefit greatly from his personal path and how he handled what befell him. He was beaten, stoned, left for dead, shipwrecked and eventually killed. We can also assume that he suffered some degree of unkindness from his Jewish friends as well as the families of those in the faith whom he had persecuted before his conversion. Paul needed a high level of courage. It was the courage to continue in the faith and to boldly proclaim Christ despite the

risks, and despite the suffering. When we are facing high levels of trials in our own lives, we should pray for the courage to continue standing faithful and walking tall!

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Scripture: John 1:1-5

John 1:1-5 says, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”* We here at Word at Work Ministries want to take this day to show our thankfulness to God the Father for sending His Son Jesus into the world. We celebrate and honor the One Who’s greatest sacrifice bought our salvation and freedom. What a truly marvelous gift! Let’s take the time to meditate on the Living Word of God Who became flesh and dwelt among us. From the team here at Word at Work, have a Merry Christmas!

#### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

Scripture: Joshua 1:7

Joshua 1:7 says, *“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”* Being courageous was rarely a suggestion in the Bible. More frequently, it was given as a rallying cry, as inspiration and encouragement from the Lord. At what times are we to be courageous? Certainly the Israelites were moved to be courageous before physical battles, and it should go without saying that we are to be courageous in the spiritual and physical battles in which we find ourselves. Though most decisions in our lives have some component related to our spiritual walk, there are plenty of times that we are doing the mundane things, whether it is working in our jobs, involved with chores and necessities, or simply resting. So when does God want us to be courageous? Are we to don courage as we would a piece of the armor of God when we are getting ready to go into spiritual battle? Courage should be a tool in our spiritual arsenal, but we should moreover live it as a life pattern – no matter the season! God wants us to live as much as possible, in a state of strength and courage, whether there is a crisis or not. Our relationship with God must engender a faith stance with a composed outer posture and unshakable inner resolve! Let’s remind ourselves that feelings are often fickle and truth eclipses emotion every time!

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 15:7-8, 1 Kings 18

God wants us to be courageous even when faced with tasks that are long and arduous! Look at the story of Azariah and Asa from 2 Chronicles 15. Israel was in a phase of rebellion against God and had set up idols throughout the land. The hearts of the people had turned away from God. Oded the prophet sent the Word of the Lord to King Asa through Oded’s son Azariah. God made Asa a promise that if he undertook the great task of clearing the land of the idols to whom the people of Israel had turned, that He would be with him, and not forsake him. Through Azariah in 2 Chronicles 15:7-8, God tells Asa, *“But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work.”* Now when Asa heard these words and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded the prophet spoke, he took courage and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. He then restored the altar of the LORD which was in front of the porch of the LORD.” Clearing a land of idol worship is not something that often happens overnight. It normally takes a long and sustained, purposeful campaign. Only when Elijah managed to gather all the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel was the land rid of idol worship in such a short time. Turning the heart of a people back to the Lord is an arduous task, and Asa was told not to lose courage as he prepared for what would be a months-long campaign. Many of God’s assignments can occupy a lifetime! Whether short, medium or long and regardless of the duration, God has called us to be courageous for the long haul!

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 28

Scripture: Psalm 27:14

We are not called to be strong and courageous only in bursts of activity. Displaying courage and strength over the long haul is part of the mature Christian's walk. There are periods in our lives when it feels like we are waiting on something, waiting for some unknowable conditions to be filled in the heavenly places before we can move ahead in our lives. For those familiar with pilot-speak, we call those times holding patterns. This is initiated when the air-traffic-controller directs the pilot to start circling the area waiting for something to be dealt with before landing. Pilots can get frustrated being stuck in a holding pattern for hours and so can the passengers! We rarely find out what the cause of the hold-up was until after it's all over. Likewise, when we are waiting on the Lord we can get discouraged or even downright depressed. No matter the length of time, we should never lose sight of our hope that the landing is right around the corner. Psalms 27:14 says, *"Wait for the LORD; Be **strong** (H2388) and let your heart take **courage** (H553); Yes, wait for the LORD."* Here we have David in exile, praying Psalm 27, declaring his trust in God. Yet David had no idea whether Absalom would heed the counsel of Hushai over that of Ahithophel. David did however, have his covenant of Sure Mercy with the Lord, and he trusted in the Lord to be his deliverance. When we are in those times of waiting we should strive to trust the Lord as David did, to take courage even when we are faced with the prospect of an unending question mark!

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29

Scripture: Revelation 1

What is the one thing that the churches mentioned in Revelation 1 have in common? They are all instructed to overcome and promised a reward for overcoming. God wants us to overcome! He wants us to endure by walking it out with a Christ-filled aroma. 2 Corinthians 2:11:15-17 says, *"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing."* To be sure, this does not mean that we simply accept challenging circumstances as they are, and do nothing about trials that come our way. If we have it within ourselves to positively affect the outcome to bring about the end to a trial we are facing, by all means, let's move forward in power and in truth! But for those times when the answer to prayer is not immediately forthcoming, or is something other than what we might want to hear, let's keep our hope in the Lord. We should talk it through and pray about it with those in the Lord whom we love, knowing that Christ will work all things together for our good. Remember that our ultimate destination is eternal! Through adversity, regardless of whether we experience miracle victories or overcoming might we are to carry the aroma of Jesus. The reward is in the overcoming!

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30

Scripture: Psalms 31:24

Psalm 31:24 says, *"Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD."* Our hope should always be in the Lord. He is the Eternal Reservoir from which to draw courage, strength and hope. The Word of God is something that can never be taken from us, no matter how much evil authorities try to dominate, control and persecute the church, God's Word is eternal. If we aren't spending time regularly meditating on the Word, doing so needs to become a priority. Psalm 119:11 says, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You."* As we move further and further into an age where what we see on our TV's, computer monitors, newspapers, and books becomes less and less reliable, we must learn to trust more in the One Who does NOT change with the times and seasons. It will take courage to face the trials that come in the end-times. Courage is needed more than ever to stand up to an increasingly harsh and dark culture that relishes evil. If we are to be the salt and light, we need a foundation of the Word stored up in our hearts and ready to recall at a moment's notice!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31

Scripture: Isaiah 35:3-6

Let's rehearse the words of the Prophet Isaiah which are spoken in 35:3-6 says, "Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be **strong**, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you.'" Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.'" Lord Jesus, we pray for Your people that You would help us to be strong and courageous. We pray against the schemes and plots of the enemy, that they would be discerned by Your people for what they are. We pray for strength to endure those trials and adversity, and for the courage to boldly speak Your name even if we face ridicule or persecution. May the eternal hope that we have in You be real to us in our daily lives. Lord, help us to find the integrity of Job within ourselves, willing to praise you even though it seems like the world crumbles around us. We rejoice in Your name, O, Lord, and thank You for giving us eyes to see and ears to hear. May You bring supernatural strength, courage and provision to your people in 2021. Show Yourself to be Jehovah-Jireh, in Jesus' Mighty Name, Amen!

*Courage or cowardice  
You make the choice!  
Choosing to fear God  
Or bow to man's voice!*

*By Jayne Houghton*