Exercising Your Courage
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: TMC72

Let me share with you, this morning, something that was on my heart a few weeks ago at our church and a number of students came to me and said, “You need to...you need to present that to us as a student body, and I want to do that. I think you’ll find some fresh things that you’ve never thought through before in our talk this morning.

The most basic, fundamental virtue of manliness, is what I want to talk about. I want to talk about what makes a real man. Now I talked to somebody...(laughter)...some of you girls are really alert right now. This is the guy you’re looking for, I will describe him this morning. I want to talk about the basic fundamental virtue of manliness. I want to talk about the one trait that distinguishes manliness most distinctively. I want to talk about the solitary equality that is foundational to manhood and I want to put it in one sort of stuffy word and then I want to describe it. If I were to find one word, borrow some old word, it would be the word “fortitude.” That’s really a dumb word but file that somewhere in your mind.

It’s the old word “fortitude.” Now if you look it up in the dictionary you’ll find basically that the word “fortitude” is made up of two other words...courage and strength. The most fundamental, distinguishing, basic, foundational quality to manliness is fortitude, or the combination of courage and strength. It is the willingness, listen carefully, even the desire to risk, to take a challenge, to attack difficulty, to have an adventure, to move into the unknown, to square up against difficult odds. Men seek that. And I really believe that that’s a genetic component. I believe God has designed it in men that they are the risk takers, they are the ones who face the challenge, they are the ones who conquer.

On the other hand, that which is most true about femininity is that it seeks the very opposite...security. It kind of works like this. The husband comes home and says, “Honey, it’s really exciting, God has called us to the jungles of Eriangyna. We’re going to a tribe that has never heard the Word of God. We’re going to be living in the jungle and we’re going to give our lives.” And she’s saying, “Heh-heh-heh-heh. What...where will we live, what kind of house will we have? Who will take care of the kids? What will happen to me when you’re off in the jungle?” Her thoughts instinctively nesting, no risk, security, protection, insulation, comforts. His thoughts, adventure, challenge, enemies, attack, conquer. That’s the spectrum.

That which is truest about manliness is that it is courageous, it is strong, it loves a risk and a challenge. That which is truest about femininity, it seeks security, protection, insulation, has a nesting

instinct. That's by God's design. That's built in to the very genetic makeup of men and women.

The great leaders have always been risk takers. The great leaders, the great champions, the great heroes of human history are those men who set their life on the line for a great cause. They're great generals, they win great battles. They're great soldiers. In the midst of war, they put their life on the line, they run across mine fields. They capture enemy installations by themselves. They're great missionaries like Stan Dale who finally fell over after the fiftieth arrow plunged into his chest, but not until. They're great scientists who venture into the high-risk areas, the great challenges to discover great things that can better the life of mankind. They're great business men, entrepreneurs who come up with incredible ways to find success. They're great athletes who achieve great things because they love the risk, they love the challenge. If there are wars, they will show up on the battlefield. If there are no wars, they have to show up somewhere else. Maybe they show up by climbing Mount Everest. No one needs to climb Mount Everest, there's not even a good restaurant at the top. There's nothing there. There is no reason to go there. You can't see anything from there except what you've already seen.

But some people do that. And if there is no adventure and risk built in to the nature of the culture, they will climb the face of a rock even if they're a paraplegic because that's something in a man that makes him want that risk. The real man, the man who is a real man is a man who loves a risk, who loves a challenge, who wants to cut on the edge.

Now with all that in mind, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 16...1 Corinthians chapter 16. Paul writes to the Corinthians and that church included men and women, obviously, but I want you to notice what he says and then I want you to stay with me for some of the most interesting input.

First Corinthians 16:13, I just want to take one phrase out of here, we don't have time for the rest of it. One phrase, 1 Corinthians 16:13 says this, middle of the verse, "Act like...what?...men. Act like men."

Now that poses a question in my mind as soon as I read it, what's the question? How do men act? Are we all to act like men? How do men act? The verb, let me tell you what the verb means in Greek, the verb means to conduct oneself in a courageous way, and it is what we call hapax logamina(??) which means this is the only place in the New Testament it ever appears. This verb is used only one time in the New Testament, it means to conduct yourself in a courageous way. Therefore, to conduct yourself in a courageous way is to act like a man. How do men act? They're courageous. They're risk takers. They're challenge lovers. They're conquerors. They're on the cutting edge. They love it, they seek it, they desire it, they long for it.

You notice which phrase follows that one? Be strong, act like men, be strong. So you have the

combination of those two things. Act like men, the verb means be courageous, be strong, it means to be strong. There you have courage and strength which equals fortitude. That which is truest about a man is that he has fortitude.

Would you please notice verse 14, however, because here's the balance. "And let all that you do be done in...what?...in love." You can't have courage and strength without a balancing element and that balancing element is love.

How do men act then? Men act courageously. Men act in strength. And he must be reminded to do it in love. Men are not weak. Men are not vacillating. Men are not compromisers. Men are not defeated. Men are not depressed. Men are not fearful. When you meet a man like that, you call him...a what?...a wimp...a wimp. You know where wimp came from? Interesting derivation. You know what the British call that kind of a man? A wet...w-e-t. I don't know where they got it but they call him a wet. And somebody took wet and limp and came up with wimp. And we call those kinds of people a wimp, they're vacillating, don't have any conviction, don't want a challenge. They're kind of depressed. They're fearful. But real men face life with fortitude, with courage. They love to take on a challenge.

Now to see the richness of this truth here in 1 Corinthians 16, you have to go to the Old Testament. Now follow this thought. This is the only place this kind of instruction appears in the New Testament, but these same words appear in the Old Testament in the Septuagint. Now the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. So if we want to know how those people at that time viewed that phrase, we see it in the Greek Old Testament. So if we had a Septuagint before us, we would find these same terms in a number of Old Testament texts. What that means is we can go to the Old Testament and get some more information about what this all means. When it says "act like men, be courageous and be strong," we go to the Old Testament, we'll find those same phrases used again in the Old Testament and it will enrich our understanding.

So, take your Bible, turn to Deuteronomy chapter 31...Deuteronomy chapter 31. And we're going to move a little rapidly here because of time, but I want you to follow. Deuteronomy 31, Moses is speaking to all of Israel here. And you'll notice verse 6, and here we find these same kinds of terms, and in the Greek Old Testament, the same words that are used in 1 Corinthians 16 are used. Verse 6, "Be strong and...what?...courageous." There are those two terms again, same two terms. "Do not be afraid or tremble at them."

Now here you have the very description of a man. He is strong and courageous, he does not fear and he does not shake. When he faces an enemy, when he faces difficulty, and he is telling the people you're going to go across into the land and you don't be worrying about the Amorites and all of that, you're going in there and you need to be strong and courageous. That's how men are. Act like men.

Why? Follow verse 6, "'For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you, or forsake you.' Then Moses called to Joshua, said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Joshua, you be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. And the Lord is the one who goes ahead of you, He will be with you. He will not fail you, or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.'"

Now why are you to be strong and courageous? Because...what?...Because the Lord is with you...because the Lord is with you. Go down to verse 23, same chapter, "Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, same thing, 'Be strong and courageous.'" Any time you are to be a leader, you must have strength and courage. You must have the strength to endure the difficulty and the courage to face it. That's fortitude. That's how real men act.

Second Samuel, chapter 10...2 Samuel chapter 10, most fascinating. David and Joab, "When Joab...verse 9...saw that the battle was set against him in front and in the rear, he selected from all the choice men of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans." Here is a man in battle. Joab is the commander of David's forces. And what does he say, verse 11, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me. But if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you." And he's working out the battle plan. But verse 12, what does he say to his troops? "Be strong and let us show ourselves courageous." There's those same two terms. We are facing difficulty. We're in a war here, we must be strong, that is able to deal with the enemy, courageous, bold enough to confront, strong and courageous.

First Kings chapter 2, 1 Kings chapter 2, David is charging his son, Solomon. What does a father tell his son? What does a father want from a son? Verse 1 of 1 Kings 2, "David's time to die grew near, he brought Solomon, his son, in." What does a dying father say to his son? First of all, every father would like his son to be a man, a man's man. "So he draws Solomon to his side," and what does he say? "'I am going the way of all the earth.'" In other words, I'm going to die like everybody else. "'Here's what I want you to do. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself...what?...a man.'" Be strong, be a man, keep the charge of the Lord your God. Walk in His ways. Keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, His testimonies. Do what you know is right. And now he's moving from the military dimension, as we saw with Joab, to the spiritual dimension. And he's saying be courageous and strong in terms of faithfulness to God.

First Chronicles chapter 22. In 1 Chronicles chapter 22 verse 11, David again talking to Solomon. Verse 11, "Now, my son, the Lord be with you that you may be successful and build the house of your Lord your God just as He has spoken to you, or concerning you. Only the Lord give you discretion and understanding and give you charge over Israel so that you may keep the law of the Lord your

God, and then you shall prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel, he sums it up, be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed." Be strong and courageous, that's how men act. That's the way every father would want his son to act, strong and courageous.

One more time. First Chronicles 28:20, David speaks to Solomon again. "Then David said to his son, Solomon...in chapter 28 verse 20...'Be strong and courageous...listen to this...and act.'" I love that. Be strong and courageous and act. Do not fear or be dismayed for the Lord God, my God is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished. Be strong and courageous.

Second Chronicles 32...2 Chronicles 32:1, "After these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came and invaded Judah and besieged the fortified cities and thought to break into them for himself. Now when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and he intended to make war on Jerusalem, he decided with his officers and his warriors to cut off the supply of water from the springs which were outside the city and they helped him. So many people assembled and stopped up all the springs and the stream which flowed through the region saying, 'Why should the kings of Assyria come and find abundant water?' And he took courage and rebuilt all the wall that had been broken down and erected towers on it and built another outside wall, strengthened the Millo and the city of David and made weapons and shields in great number and he appointed military officers over the people and gathered them to him in the square at the city gate and spoke encouragingly to them.' And what did Hezekiah say?...verse 7... 'Be...what?...strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the multitude which is with him, for the one with us...listen to this...is greater than the one with him.'"

Who was the one with him? Who was it? Satan. Who was the one with us? God. Be strong and courageous.

Psalm 27, I'll just mention to you, you don't need to look it up. Psalm 27:14, "Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage, yes wait for the Lord."

Now we have just gone through a number of scriptures that tell us how important a phrase that New Testament phrase is. Be strong, act like men. It means to be courageous. A man does not give way to fear. A man does not give in to intimidation. A man does not seek the secure place, a woman does. A man does not seek the easy path. A man lives on principle. A man lives on the courage of his conviction. He stands strong against opposition. He is brave and he faces challenges. That's manly fortitude. It means contending with difficulty. It means facing a challenge. It means meeting an enemy. It means bearing the pain of a difficult situation. It means upholding righteousness. It means pressing on to God's purposes. This is the virtue that makes a man a man. This is a man who is

decisive. This is a man who will risk anything for what he believes in for the cause that's in his heart. This is the man who risks for truth and risks for principle, who is bold and strong.

And, ladies, let me tell you something. This is the kind of man you're looking for. And, gentlemen, this is the kind of man you want to be...a man who is decisive, a man who acts like a man, who is bold and courageous. And from our viewpoint, not just in the social world, or the business world, or the economic world, but in the spiritual dimension as well. Find a man who is decisive. Find a man that lives on truth and principle to the point where he'll risk for that. Find a man who can be challenged at the point of his convictions and not cave in. That's a man.

One passage in the Old Testament to pull it all together, Joshua chapter 1 and I want you to turn to it. Joshua chapter 1, here is the Word of the Lord to Joshua. Moses is now dead. Joshua is the leader. And I want you to notice verses 5 to 9, Joshua 1, God speaks to Joshua. "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life." Boy, what a statement. What a promise. Nobody will be able to take you on and win. "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you, or forsake you." Verse 6, "Be strong and courageous for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant, commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous." That's the third time God said this to him. "Do not tremble or be dismayed...that's the opposite...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Now, three times He says "Be strong and courageous." But what are the components that motivate that? What's behind that?

Component number one, verse 5, "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you or forsake you." The first component in being strong and courageous is faith in the presence of God. Faith in the presence of God. When I know that God is present with me, I can face any spiritual challenge and know that greater is He that is with me than he that is with them, right? Greater, as the New Testament puts it, is He that is in you than he that is...what?...in the world.

So the first component of fortitude is faith in the presence of God. Confidence in God's presence. Second one is in verse 6. "Be strong and courageous," why? "For you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." The second thing that gives you courage and strength is not just faith in the presence of God, but...follow this...faith in the purpose of God. God had promised He would give Canaan to Israel. Joshua, God says, you know the cause is right. If you know God is present, and you know the cause is right, that's the substance of courage

and strength. “Joshua, you know that I promised to your fathers to give them this land so you can move out with courage, knowing you can’t be defeated.”

The third component, verses 7 and 8, “Only be strong and very courageous because if you’re careful to do all the law which Moses, My servant, commanded you and you don’t turn from the right to the left, you will have success.” Then in verse 8 He says the same thing another way, “This book of the Law, the Scripture, shall not depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night, careful to do everything that’s written in it and you will make your way prosperous, you will have success.” This is another very important component. Confidence in...follow this...the sovereign providence of God.

You have confidence in the presence of God, He’s there. You have confidence in the purpose of God, He’ll work out His plan. You have confidence in the providence of God, that He is orchestrating every single detail of life to make your way successful.

Let me tell you something, young people, I live on these principles. I live on the reality that I can face any spiritual challenge because God is with me, the cause is just, and God will orchestrate every event in His providence to bring about His purpose and success. And there’s one other component, verse 9. “Have I not commanded you? Have I not commanded you?”

What is this? This is to recognize your duty, to recognize you are called to obey. Obedience, let’s call it duty. I am under duty to be strong and courageous. I must do that. Where I trust the presence of God, where I hope in the purposes of God, where I have confidence in the providence of God to orchestrate every detail, and where I am submitted to my spiritual duty, I will be strong and courageous and I will act like a man. And that I am commanded to do. That is a man.

It’s amazing to me how many people in our culture think a man is some kind of macho guy with no principle. Not so. You know, God has designed this into us. God has designed the man to lead. And how can a man be a husband of a wife and lead her if he doesn’t have a component that relates to her? And how can a man be a father in proper perspective as he leads the family if he cannot have some comprehension of his daughters? And how can a man lead the church if he does not understand something of the compassion sensitivity of a woman? And how can a man be in any leadership in society if he cannot identify with that gentle nesting instinct with that femininity to some extent?

I believe the differences between men and women are not a result of some floating fog in the air. It isn’t that, “Well, girls, just turn out to be girls.” No. It’s genetic. It’s built in to the fabric of their genes. It’s our responsibility to lead. And that’s why it says, “Act like men, be strong but do everything you do in love.” God has built into the fabric of a man a genetic component to make him able to face challenges and take risks. Why? Because he’s the protector of his wife. He’s the provider. Hey, we

live in a risk-free world, right? What do we risk? What do you risk? You get in your little car, you put on your little safety-belts and hopefully if you have an accident, a big balloon blows up in your face so nothing hurts you. What risk? If you get sick, you've got an HMO. If you have a job, you can't get fired, or the ACLU will sue your employer. You don't have to go hunt for your food, you're not trekking through the jungle trying to find something to eat. You're not carving out a house in the midst of wilderness. This is a risk-free world. Your biggest risk is that you don't get asphyxiated with your hair spray, right? Where is the risk?

You know what happens...you know what happens in a risk-free society? You don't produce men, folks. You don't produce men. You produce wimps on one side or artificial men on the other running around beating their chest, they have no idea what manliness is, which is living on the basis of principle. Too bad I only have three minutes, I have a lot more to say. We don't know what risk is. The only people who I think really know what risk is are some of us who live as Christians in the spiritual warfare that Christians live in. God's design for men is that they challenge, they know how to lead, that's a man. That's built into them. And we have to protect women and we have to provide for them and we have to insulate them and allow them to have that opportunity to be in a place where they can be all that God wants them to be protected. That's why you see the marriage is likened to Christ and His church. Christ is the Savior, Protector, and the church is the one saved and protected. We're the bride, He is the husband.

Men who are men are people of spiritual conviction who can face a spiritual challenge, and not cave in. You say, "Why are you saying this? This should be just given to men." No. Remember now, 1 Corinthians was written to men and women, right? So let me close by saying this. Men and women today, all of you are to be strong and courageous in the spiritual dimension, right? All of you. He's not just talking to men. We are all to do that. We are all to face temptation, to compromise with conviction, courage and stand firm. You're going to go out of this school in a couple of weeks and you're going to hit the summer and you're going to be in a situation where you'll be tempted to compromise. You're going to act like a man, going to be strong and courageous. Are you going to remember that God is present? Are you going to remember that God has established His purposes and if you're obedient to Him, they'll succeed? Are you going to remember that God is providentially orchestrating even the difficult things of your life for His own glory? And are you going to remember that you're called to duty? Or are you going to compromise?

If you act like a man, you'll be strong and courageous. You're going to be tempted to tolerate teaching and behavior and viewpoints in others that you have affirmed as unacceptable. Are you going to cave in to that? Or are you going to stand your ground? Are you going to be tempted to break your vows? During your devotions this year, maybe in chapel, or in class, some time in church service, you've made some promises to God about how you want to live. Are you going to go home and break those promises and break those vows under the pressure or are you going to act like a

man? Strong and courageous?

I pray all the time that God would put men like this on our campus because ladies need to learn from those kinds of men how to act. Are you going to be tempted to sin? Are you going to be tempted to violate God's Word? Even the part of it that you know very well? How you going to act?

You're going to act like a man. You're going to be able to say when the summer is over and you come back what Paul said, listen to his words, 2 Corinthians 1:12, "For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and Godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God we have conducted ourselves in the world." What a statement.

Our proud confidence is this, that we have conducted ourselves in the world in holiness and godly sincerity. He came to the end of his life and said, "I have fought the good fight," right? "I finished the course, I've kept the faith." To put it in other words, "I've acted like a man."

My prayer for you as you go out this summer is that you would do just that, act with spiritual courage, courage of your convictions of what you know is right and that acting like a man you would find your way made prosperous and you would have good success and give all the glory to God.

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