

## Thanking God for Ordinary Heroes

Last week we saw how giving thanks to God for the sure provision of redemption is part of the basis of our salvation. If you only hope that you *might* get saved then you have no reason to be grateful. Expressing our gratitude provides clarity for the understanding that we have actually *received* salvation. After we understand the Gospel and ask God to save us from our sin, salvation is secured in the moment we say, "Thank you God, for saving me." There are so many more ways to continue in thanksgiving to God. There have undoubtedly been not just millions but truly countless messages that have been preached on thanksgiving in the course of time. I suppose that is why celebrating Thanksgiving is such a dear holiday to us.

Today, I would like to focus on being thankful for the ordinary heroism in the fellowship of the faithful. Even the unbelieving world is able to recognize the need such heroism.

George Bernard Shaw was renowned as a free thinker and liberal philosopher in the last century. In his last writings he said, "The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt. Its counsels, which should have established the millennium, led, instead, directly to the suicide of Europe [World War I]. I believed them once. In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshipers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith." Shaw had lived his life without faith in God and the tragedy for him was that both his faith in science and his Atheism failed him.

Will and Ariel Durant, who were great secular historians of the twentieth century, reached a similar conclusion after surveying the rise and fall of civilizations. They said, "There is no significant example in history of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion." Their observation was not theological but based on observation. Whenever men

attempt to live as though God were unnecessary, moral order disintegrates. From Greece to Rome to modern Europe, the pattern is the same. Without reverence, courage decays into cynicism, freedom collapses into license, and the will to virtue vanishes.

It's into this moral exhaustion that the call to heroism is so important. The movie industry has exaggerated heroism to superhumans with a godlike status, but we need the steady courage of those who live faithfully in a faithless age. The world has grown skilled at amusement and skeptical of meaning. But, God still calls men and women to rise above the spiritual narcotic of ease. He calls us to live as witnesses that truth, duty, and righteousness are not relics of the past, but the essence of hope for the Kingdom of God.

In every age, the world celebrates the visible heroism of the soldier who charges into battle, the firefighter who runs into the burning building, or the rescuer who risks everything for a stranger. Yet there is a heroism that often wears no medals and draws no crowds. It lives in the ordinary Christian who, against a flood of moral decay and spiritual apathy, keeps walking faithfully with God. Heroism is not always a sudden act of valor; it is more often the sustained courage to live by conviction when the world calls you foolish for doing so.

## 1. The Modern Crisis of Comfort -

Every age drifts into a moral crisis. Justice Robert Bork, a nominee for the Supreme Court in the 80s, warned that we are a culture slouching towards Gomorrah. He identified that we are not racing headlong into ruin, but drifting there comfortably, numbed by indulgence and moral relativism. The danger is not sudden collapse, but slow corrosion, as a society that once revered virtue now sneers at it, trading moral strength for the narcotic of ease.

This crisis rises up in every age. The prophet Amos rebuked Israel for their moral indifference which was born of

prosperity.

Amos 6:1,4,6 Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, *which are* named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!  
4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;  
6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

Their sin was the sin of comfort: they ceased to care.

There are two classic books that described how entire nations could be enslaved. George Orwell, in the book *1984*, feared a world where government tyranny would crush human freedom through surveillance, censorship, and fear. But Aldous Huxley, in *Brave New World*, saw a subtler and far more seductive bondage. His perception was that enslavement would not come from the tyranny of *pain*, but would come from the tyranny of *pleasure*. He predicted that mankind would not need to be *forced* into submission. He said that "People will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think."

Neil Postman, a critic of media, wrote *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. He observed that Huxley's vision had come true. He said, "Orwell feared those who would ban books. Huxley feared there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one." Our greatest danger is not a state that forbids truth, but a culture that forgets it. He warned that the danger would not be *Big Brother*, but the *big screen*. The problem that destroys culture is not persecution, but distraction. One of the problems we face in our culture is that there are so many things that *distract* people from being spiritually challenged.

## 2. The Cowardice of the Unmoved -

In the cultural fog of amusement and self-indulgence, heroism fades. Courage fades when conviction disappears. Scripture describes this moral paralysis:

Matt 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

The person who can live without God and remain unmoved by eternity demonstrates not courage, but cowardice. They have a spiritual apathy so deep that it no longer trembles at sin or yearns for truth.

Psa 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.

It's easier to drown the conscience with entertainment than to confront the hollowness of a life without God. The Bible describes this as a sloth of the soul.

Eph 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

## 3. The Heroism of Faithful Endurance -

In contrast to the sloth of indulgence, true heroism is most often hidden in *ordinary faithfulness*. The Apostle Paul wrote near the end of his life:

2Tim 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

Paul experienced persecution, but the fight *he* fought was enduring the quiet

trials of obedience day after day. Real heroism is not in a single act of defiance, but in a lifetime of steadfastness.

Jesus praised the servant who, when the master was away, continued faithfully:

Luke 12:43 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Christian heroism is demonstrated in those who resist bitterness, choose integrity, pray faithfully, forgive when wronged, or raise a godly family amid cultural decay. Such lives hold society together when entertainment and self-worship work to dissolve it.

Heroism is not spontaneous; it is trained in daily obedience. Proverbs 24:10 warns,

Prov 24:10 *If* thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength *is* small.

Strength must be built before the crisis comes. It comes through spiritual discipline, worship, Scripture, and prayer. Without that training, a person may appear harmless but is simply weak.

God develops heroes in the hidden places: in the shepherd's field before David meets Goliath or in the open prayer closet of Daniel before his triumph over the lion's den. These small daily choices forge the courage to stand when everyone else bows.

1Cor 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

In a generation lulled by comfort and addicted to amusement, the call of heroism sounds strangely simple: *be faithful*.

1Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

To remain uncorrupted, to live above complaint and compromise, or to serve God in obscurity requires a courage that preserves civilization when empires collapse.

The heroes of Hebrews 11 were not *superhuman*. They "wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb 11:38). They simply refused to bow to the idols of their time. Today's idols are not golden images but glowing screens and indulgent hearts, yet the same faith overcomes the same temptation.

The world exalts the dazzling, but God honors the faithful. True heroism is revealed not in noise, but in endurance; not in one grand gesture, but in thousands of small obediences.

You might not be a fireman rescuing someone out of a burning building, or a medic racing out to a fallen soldier, but you *can* be a *daily* hero who is like the Israeli girl, a slave to the Syrian General, Naaman, who didn't think twice to speak up encourage him to go to Elisha. You might be like the boy with five loaves and two fishes who spoke out of the generosity of his heart and offered them to Christ to multiply. These two were unnamed but their testimony was made famous because their immediate reaction was born of their faithful spirit.

Among the finest examples of quiet heroism in Scripture are David's thirty mighty men (2Sam 23). They were not kings or prophets, but soldiers whose loyalty was proven in hardship. They stood with David when others fled, fought when the odds were hopeless, and even risked their lives to bring their weary captain a drink of water from Bethlehem's well behind enemy lines. Their courage was not born of applause but of allegiance. They were men who counted obedience to their leader greater than their own safety. Especially when we celebrate Veterans Day, we see the example of millions of men and women and who have submitted their lives to obedience that stands out from the culture of decay of our day. Our faithful

soldiers through the generations have stood in that same spirit: not for glory or reward, but for duty, honor, and love of country. They mirror the enduring truth that true greatness lies in service, that courage often looks like steadfastness, and that those who quietly defend what is right become living parables of sacrifice. Such valor reminds us that spiritual and civic freedom alike are preserved by those willing to give themselves for the good of others.

When many drift with the current of pleasure, it takes courage to resist. When the culture laughs at holiness, it takes heroism to be pure. When others live as victims or spectators, it takes fortitude to live with purpose.

In a world that has amused itself into apathy, the Christian is a hero of the highest order who simply cares and loves God, loves truth, and loves souls. Every quiet life lived in steadfast faith declares that Christ, not comfort, is Lord.

1Cor 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

#### 4. The Fellowship of Heroes -

A prominent columnist, wrote about a teacher who greatly influenced his life:

Miss Thompson reached into her desk drawer and pulled out a piece of paper containing a quote attributed to Chicago architect Daniel Burnham. I listened intently as she read: 'Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us.'

More than 30 years later, I gave a speech in which I said that Frances Thompson had given me a desperately needed belief in myself. A newspaper printed the story, and someone mailed the clipping to my beloved teacher

who had no family of her own.

She wrote me: "You have no idea what that newspaper story meant to me. For years, I endured my brother's arguments that I had wasted my life...When I read that you gave me credit for helping to launch a marvelous career, I put the clipping in front of my brother. After he'd read it, I said, 'You see, I didn't really waste my life, did I?'"

— Published by Little, Brown, January 1992, Reader's Digest

We are a fellowship of heroes. We share in the work with those who have gone on before us.

John 4:35-38 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

We share in the work with fellow-laborers.

Rom 1:9-12 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Phil 1:3-6 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,  
4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,  
5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;  
6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

We share in the success of the Gospel.

Rom 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

2Tim 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:  
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Woody Allen darkly joked, "I don't want to achieve immortality through my work... I want to achieve it through not dying."

Paul pointed out that dying is *exactly* what we need. We need to die to self and let Christ live through us.

1Cor 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave

himself for me.

Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

As we close, consider what kind of life you are living. Distraction leads to destruction. The world promises meaning through pleasure, but a life filled with endless distractions ends in emptiness. The soul that lives without God may feel entertained for a season, yet it drifts toward destruction. There is no lasting joy apart from the One who created us. Jesus said,

Mark 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

If your heart is restless, if you're chasing the world's noise and finding only weariness, Christ calls you today to lay down your striving and find peace in Him. He alone can give your life purpose, forgiveness, and eternal hope.

To those who know the Lord, let us not grow weary in well doing. The true heroism of faith is not in fame or applause but in steady perseverance. It holds fast when others drift. When you serve faithfully without a trumpet fanfare, when you live for the eternal rather than the momentary, that is the ordinary heroism that changes cultures. Let us thank God for ordinary heroism: the daily courage to obey, to pray, to love, to stand, and to endure. In a world asleep in comfort, the believer who stays awake in faith is a true hero.

1. The Modern Crisis of Comfort - Amos 6:1,4,6
2. The Cowardice of the Unmoved - Matt 13:15, Psa 14:1, Eph 5:14
3. The Heroism of Faithful Endurance - 2Tim 4:7, Luke 12:43, Prov 24:10 , 1Cor 4:2, 1Cor 15:58, 16:13
4. The Fellowship of Heroes - John 4:35-38, Rom 1:9-12, Phil 1:3-6, Rom 1:8, 2Tim 4:7-8, 1Cor 15:31, Gal 2:20,6:9