



Courageous Holiness: The Temple of the Living God!

June 5, 2022

Holy Text: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

“Courageous” Review

What is Courage?

- Courage can be defined as alertness/awareness of problems/dangers and a hardening or resolve to face them. It is not the absence of fear; courage manifests in spite of fears!
- *Biblical Courage is the ability to hold fast to God’s Word, repent in the event of failure, and continue on in obedience, regardless of the circumstances.*

Why is this important?

1. Because obeying God takes courage and faith! There is a reason why one of the most repeated commands in the Bible is some version of “fear not,” “be not afraid,” fear ye not,” “fear thou not,” “be strong,” “be of a good courage.” Continually overcoming fear and instead walking by faith is a necessary part of our sanctification and our rendering glory to God!
2. Because one of the greatest tools of the enemy is fear! Our sin nature not only produces evil desire in us, but sinful fears as well. One of these sinful fears is unbelief. “Hath God said?” is just as diabolical a question now as it was in the Garden, designed to make us lose our confidence in God’s good purposes.
3. Because courage is contagious (as is fear)! God’s people need to see other believers be fearless!
4. Because following Jesus comes with a cost! It will take faith, boldness, courage, and conviction to follow our Master wherever He leads! Because Jesus knows our propensity to fear, He says to us like He said to the disciples, rowing on a boat in country winds: “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid! (Matt 14:27)
5. Because honest self-examination is hard! It takes courage to look into the mirror of the Word and allow God to change you.

Background/Context of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians is an intensely personal letter to the church at Corinth from the apostle Paul. Paul had spent much time ministering there (Acts 18), and was obviously hurt that false teachers had infiltrated the church and turned so many against him that he had to spend so much time defending his apostleship to them (sprinkled throughout this letter, especially in the early chapters).

In the midst of these things, Paul communicates wonderful Gospel truths:

There is Comfort in Christ!

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (KJV) *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

The Gospel is Light of Christ!

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (KJV) *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5 For we preach not*

ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is Victory in Christ!

2 Corinthians 4:8-10 (KJV) *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; **9** Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; **10** Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

2 Corinthians 4:14-18 (KJV) *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. **15** For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. **16** For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. **17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; **18** While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

We will spend Eternity with Christ!

2 Corinthians 5:1-2 (KJV) *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **2** For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:*

There is Reconciliation in Christ!

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (KJV) *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: **15** And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (KJV) *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. **20** Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Such a powerful Gospel orientation, even while dealing with the specific challenges of the churches, fits the apostolic pattern. Before or coinciding with the call to holiness in the epistles, there are typically strong explanations and exhortations of Christology and the Gospel of Christ. (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Peter, etc.)

Having focused Corinth again on Jesus, Paul attempts again to reorient them towards holiness.

Our Text: Ye are the Temple of the Living God!

1. Proposition: the Gospel itself is much about holiness!
2. Yes friends, God loved us so much that He sent Christ to die “for our sins.” His “holy” work and blood sacrifice is applied to us that we might be “made righteous.” (Rom 5:19) Indeed...

2 Corinthians 5:21 (KJV) *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Titus 2:11-14 (KJV) For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **12** Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; **13** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; **14** Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

3. Friends, may we never forget that our God is holy!

Leviticus 19:2 (KJV) Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

1 Peter 1:13-16 (KJV) Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; **14** As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: **15** But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; **16** Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Revelation 4:8-11 (KJV) And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. **9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, **10** The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, **11** Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

- In Hebrew, a common Bible word for *holy* is qâdôsh. It means “sacred” or “set apart.”
 - In Greek, common word is *hagios*. It means “sacred—physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated.”
 - The Webster 1828 Dictionary - “Properly, whole, entire or perfect, in a moral sense. Hence, pure in heart, temper or dispositions; free from sin and sinful affections. Applied to the Supreme Being, holy signifies perfectly pure, immaculate and complete in moral character.”
 - *Holiness is that part of God’s character that distinguishes Him from any created thing in purity and absolute righteousness. As the “first cause” and creator of all things, He is totally “other.” John MacArthur said, “...nothing in the creation, no one in the creation, even man created in the image of God, compares to God in essential nature. He is incomparable. He is infinite perfection. That is why His name is separate, distinct, or holy.”*
 - **There is no “right” apart from God; there is no “pure” unless it reflects Him. He is the standard of “good” and “perfect.”**
4. He therefore commands those of us who have been redeemed by His Son to be holy!
5. Paul frames his exhortation in terms of separation in verse 14.
- Paul may have had Deut 22:10 in mind (“Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ‘donkey’ together”). These animals are very different. MacDonald writes, “The ox was a clean animal and the donkey unclean, and their step and pull are unequal.” Yoking them together would make little sense!

- Likewise, what fellowship (or close relationship) should the holy have with the unholy, or the light with the darkness? They are opposites! They work at cross purposes. One cannot blend them and please God! Jesus said to the church at Laodicea:

Revelation 3:15-16 (KJV) *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

6. And in case the believer is tempted to think of themselves more highly than they ought (Rom 12:3), Paul gets to the root of it: **Christ with Belial?** LORD forbid! (v.15)
 - In other words, this exhortation is about Christ! The believer is of Christ! The unbeliever is of their father, the devil. How can the two comfortably and intimately join together in the sphere of life? They cannot!
 - Is there anything more egregious than attempting to unite Jesus our LORD with something impure? Our God with idol gods? Oh let us all flee unbiblical syncretism (the blending of different schools of thoughts/faiths into one), which was the bane of OT Israel!
 - This exhortation wasn't new. Paul had previously written something similar to Corinth. Were they struggling to get it?

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 (KJV) *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

7. Still teaching that believers are to be holy and separate, in verse 16 alludes to the Temple. If you have read the Old Testament, you might remember some of God's instructions for the Tent of Meeting and Temple. They were extensive. God determined the materials, colors, methods of construction, and instituted an entire priesthood with detailed laws concerning their lineage, dress and function. The high priest even wore a turban with "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" written upon it! (Ex 28:36)
8. The temple space itself was divided up into the "Holy Place" and "Most Holy Place" or "Holy of Holies."

Exodus 26:33 (KJV) *And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.*

9. God's reason was this:

Leviticus 11:44-45 (KJV) *For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 45 For I am the LORD that*

bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

Therefore He commanded things like:

Leviticus 18:22-25 (KJV) *Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. 23 Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. 24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: 25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.*

Leviticus 20:22-23 (KJV) *Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out. 23 And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.*

10. The truth that we are His temple, the place where He dwells now, is both exhilarating and sobering! But this truth should cause the next set of commands to make sense to our souls...

11. "Come out from among them!" "Be ye separate!" (v.17) Holiness is required in the temple of the living God! Friends, there are still distinctions and defilements...the holy and the carnal!

12. Our walk with our Father, although by grace, does not mean we are free to live sinfully. If we are true sons and daughters, we will remember that He is the LORD Almighty! (v.18)

13. And because of our Father's great love—saving us through His beloved Son—we are commanded to (v.7:1)

- Cleanse ourselves. Effort is required!
- Admit and repent of areas of outer defilement (flesh)!
- Admit and repent of areas of inner defilement (spirit)!
- "Work toward complete holiness..." (NLT)

14. And we are to do all these things in the fear of God! (v.7:1)

- "The fear of the Lord is the love, reverence, awe and passion that prompt the believer to obey God. It is that state of mental and emotional sanctification where the believer sees God as holy and a reverent trembling results. It is the necessary characteristic of Christian discipleship where total obedience to the commands of Christ is seen as a loving response to a loving God." - CRC Definition

(Note: We will never arrive at perfect holiness until we are in heaven. We must guard against legalism and moralism. Nevertheless, we are to strive, by God's grace in Christ, to be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt 5:48)

Holy in 2022? Really?

Really! As **temples of the living God**, how are we to live in 2022? Peter said:

1 Peter 2:9 (KJV) *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

2 Peter 3:10-12 (KJV) *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

We must look to the Scriptures! We must obey the God we love! In all areas and repent when we fall short! So much could change!

Despite the cultural mocking and hatred and for the Scriptures, what if **holiness and the fear of God...**

- Informed our discipleship and evangelism?
- Motivated our singleness and marriages?
- Impacted how we educate our children?
- Directed how we serve the church?
- Guided our sense of propriety and modesty?
- Regulated our worship?
- Was foundational for how we handle money?
- Was present in us during times of personal temptation?
- Gave us the courage to forgive or repent to others?

Final prayer:

Does your life “look like” a temple of the living God? Is it characterized by a loving but bold and courageous holiness? If you feel like the preacher did as this message was being prepared, you too will identify with David as he prayed this prayer:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.” (Psalms 51:1-11, KJV)

Amen.