

Good Courage

“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Courage and cowardice is a constant battle when living in a foreign land. The littlest things take courage, like going grocery shopping or going for a walk or going to the bank. Sometimes this courage is easy to come by and sometimes it isn't. Cowardice, of course, cries out against all of this. Even a walk outside is cut short by cowardice. So it's no wonder that Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, writes of courage at the same time he writes of living away from one's true home. Courage – even when not facing persecution – can be hard to come by while living away from home.

Yet it's not just any courage we're asked to have, but *good* courage. Because there can be bad courage. Bad courage is often proud confidence, or haughtiness. This is the kind of courage which pushes aside the weak and looks on others in contempt. Bad courage is zealous and aggressive pride masquerading as confidence and courage. When living in foreign lands, this kind of courage spends its time showing off and taking advantage of the kindness of locals.

Christians, however, are told to have good courage. Paul writes that he is always of good courage. While living away from his true home, Paul rooted himself in the knowledge of Christ, the expectation of judgment, and saw in this a source of good courage to do the right thing. This kind of courage stems from the aim to please God, whether we are at home with God or in the body and away from God. Good courage stems from the knowledge that we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our lives. Bad courage, on the other hand, stems from a belief in *I'll get away with this*. Because bad courage can't stand before the judgment seat of Christ, bad courage is actually another form of cowardice.

Let us, then, remember the end of our lives as we live in the middle of them. And let us not look to standing before the judgment seat of Christ as a source of fear, but rather, for Christians, as a source of good courage. The kind of courage that will live a life with nothing to fear.

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