

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#538 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less
#480 Blessed Assurance

Scripture Reading by: Parker Balch
Oft We Come Together

Communion Devotional by: David Smith
Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#611 Heavenly Sunlight
Sermon: “Faith Is Truthful”
James 5:12

Is Thy Heart Right with God?
#396 There’s Not a Friend
Closing Prayer by: Zach Arthur

We will be watching the second season of “The Chosen” at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday nights in the fellowship room.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

June 11, 2023

“*Stand Firm in...Liberty*”

Galatians 5:1

Be Strong and Courageous

Last week, people all over the Western world commemorated the 79th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. Just after dawn on June 6th, 1944, nearly 160,000 Allied troops, including about 73,000 Americans, began landing on five code-named beaches on the coast of Normandy. The operation also included parachute landings at strategic sites. A total of 4,414 Allied troops, 2,501 of them from the United States were killed that day; in the ensuing Battle of Normandy, 73,000 total Allied troops were killed, as well as about 20,000 French civilians. Despite nearly 8 decades that have elapsed, there are still a few thousand D-Day veterans still alive; consider that the youngest of them are in their late 90s! Several dozen were actually in Normandy for the anniversary, on trips organized by charities and local residents who provided travel and housing for them.

I cannot imagine the courage it took to participate in those events. If you look at the numbers up there, the likelihood of survival is actually pretty good in raw numbers. But imagining myself in one of those Higgins boats, staring straight into the face of the stretch of sand and the cliffs and the gun emplacements with no real cover, those statistics are cold comfort.

In thinking about that, it reminds me that it took a great deal of courage to be a Christian in the early centuries of the church, too. Have you ever read *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*? It contains accounts of the suffering of early Christians: some were killed with the sword; others were burned at the stake; still more were fed to wild beasts in the arena. All these cases involved open, obvious, observable courage. These early Christians could have escaped their fate; they only had to renounce Christ. But because of their great faith and , they accepted death.

We don’t have to read books like that, though. We could just look at Scripture. The Bible tells of the martyrdom of Stephen in **Acts 7**. James was the first of the Apostles put to death in **Acts 14**. According to extrabiblical history, John is the only apostle who did not suffer a violent death. Paul records a brief but thorough summary of the hardships he faced in **2 Corinthians 11:24-27**. Later he would tell Timothy *all who live godly in Christ Jesus would suffer persecution*.

Does that mean if we are faithful today we can expect to be martyred? Well, there are some parts of the world where that’s the case. Sometimes we forget that. But it’s not likely to happen here. But does it mean if we are faithful today we will face persecution? That’s increasingly probable in a post-Christian society. Does it mean we will be called upon to show our courage? I think it does. We are not going to be beheaded or burned at the stake or dropped in a cauldron of boiling oil. But social pressure is often overwhelming in our lives; stepping out from the crowd and standing alone requires courage. There is also internal pressure, the drives and appetites described in Scripture as *the lust of the flesh*. It takes courage to curb these basic human desires, especially when those around us are freely indulging them.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Kelly McCain had eye and tumor surgery on Friday.

Brooke Ann Smith, Gloria McKelroy's granddaughter, is having pregnancy complications.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ka'Leisha Jones, Linda Frank, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stiflemire, Donna Wilson, Bryan Senegal, Cynthia Deblanc, Patricia Prater, Richard Prater, Edna Semien, Wilson Semien, Gloria Moore, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meet Monday, June 12th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, June 15th at 8:00 a.m.

VBS is Saturday, June 24th from 9-2 p.m.

Summer Book Club

Last Thursday we started a Summer Book Club. The book we will be reading and studying is "Gentle and Lowly". A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board. We will meet each Thursday at 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in this see Bryant.

VBS Yard Signs

Our VBS yard signs are here. Be sure and pick one up today.

The problems of our day are not as spectacular as the persecutions of the earliest Christians, but they are nonetheless powerful. They call for courage of a different sort: quiet and consistent.

There is a definite need for courage in remaining strong and pure when those around us are enjoying the pleasures of sin. It is unrealistic to deny there is pleasure in sin; of course, that pleasure is ephemeral, but it is often very enticing, offering momentary satisfaction and enjoyment in exchange for terrible consequences. **Hebrews 11:25**, for instance, speaks of the pleasures of sin, but points out they are only temporary and fleeting. *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Heb 11:24-26).* Moses had the insight to see that earthly, sinful pleasures were only for a moment. He had the strength of character to decide for the long view. We can think of other examples like that in the Bible: Joseph resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife, Daniel refusing to eat unclean foods.

That is the kind of courage needed in our time. Courage remains true to your convictions, even when others are compromising. Courage quietly tells the truth when others play fast and loose with it. Even to be faithful in things like assembling with the church, studying Scripture, and persistent prayer requires courage of a sort.

And we need courage in facing disappointments in life. When we face an incurable disease, or even the decline of health through advancing years, courage is needed to maintain our equilibrium and continue to do our best. In the face of the loss of a loved one, there is another call for quiet courage; when a beloved friend, or parent, or child is taken in death, there is often the temptation to give up. But God wants us to continue to live and work. When we lose a job or possessions, we find the need for inner strength, for courage. When we find that someone whom we have loved and trusted has been unfaithful to what we have committed to their care, there is a need for courage.

Often these are not matters we discuss with others; they are fields of battle on which we fight alone (though we shouldn't—but that's a different article). Some of the greatest examples of courage are unknown except in the heart of the one who has waged the battle. We can be encouraged then by the example of Jesus: he had the strength and courage to live and die that we might have salvation. Though he wanted, desperately, to escape the cross, he prayed, *Father not my will but thine be done*. We need that same kind of courage to live for him.

The context is God commissioning Joshua to succeed Moses as the leader of Israel, but the promise still rings true for all of God's people: *Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Josh 1:9).* May God help us to remember that and to live accordingly.

Bryant Perkins

"Stand Firm in...Liberty"

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Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;

Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903) 407-5737

Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ