

2013: TIME TO CHOOSE

January 27: Courage: Bearing All Things (Hebrew 12:1-3; Acts 4:13: *When they saw the courage of Peter and John... or Jesus' courage on the cross*):

fortitude, forbearance, endurance, and ability to confront fear, uncertainty and intimidation. Courage is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object (Augustine). As Jesus demonstrated, courage means laying down your life for another.

Courage is not simply being willing to take a risk or face danger. Usually the wisest course is to avoid danger and not take the risk. Like prudence, courage is susceptible to disintegration into a vice. To determine whether an act is courageous or reckless or thoughtless, you have to examine the occasion, the circumstance, where this reaction occurs.

We are followers of Jesus, and we are processing these four cardinal virtues in the light of the person and work of Christ. So today I want us to read a reflection on the Christian life in light of the death of Christ upon the cross, Hebrews 12:1-4.

Plato associated the four virtues with the various classes in ancient Greek society. He believed that if these virtues were evident in a community, then it would be a just and strong society. He assigned courage or fortitude to the warrior class and to the spirited element in humans.

When C. S. Lewis argues that morality is universal in the human family, he uses courage as an illustration. No matter what your nationality, ethnicity, or family or origin, courage is praised and prized, and cowardice is looked down upon. Human societies give medals to people who show courage, not to people who are cowards and abandon their posts.

Sometimes you lose heart, you lose your fight, you feel like you have been beaten and you cannot get up. The ancient Christians felt this way sometimes with all the opposition that came against them. The writer of Hebrews saw them losing heart and offered this cure: fix your eyes on Jesus.

The word courage in French means "more at heart." Instead of losing heart, you can have more heart, and that is what you need. You need more heart at the very point where you just want to give up. Courage is the ability and determination to press on to the finish even the opposition is great.

Intro:

I. Courage Stays Focused: *Jesus: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)*

II. Courage Keeps the Prize in Mind: *who for the joy set before him (Hebrews 12:2)*

III. Courage Endures

A. Courage endures suffering: *for the joy set before him endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2)*

B. Courage endures opposition from sinful people; *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:4).*

IV. Courage Despises the Shame: *endured the cross, scorning its shame*

A. Courage is willing to be shamed. A large fear for most of us is the fear of failure, the fear of being overcome and put down.

B.

V. Courage Wins the Day: *and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).*

A. The warrior in you does not want to quit. You know that the prize awaits you.