

Boldness

vs. Fearfulness

Boldness is welcoming any suffering that comes from doing what is right, because it will produce a greater power of love.

Definition

There is rich insight in the Biblical definitions of boldness. Three Greek words translated *bold* each identify a distinct and important aspect of this quality.

1. *Tharrheo*—Boldness in the face of death
2. *Parrhesiazomai*—Boldness to speak the truth
3. *Tolmao*—Boldness to accomplish great things for God

Boldness is the fearless and daring courage to carry out the work God calls us to do. When God commanded Joshua to “be of good courage,” he was being told to have boldness—boldness to face death in battle, to speak truth to his own heart and to the nation, and to do great exploits for God.

1. Boldness in the Face of Death

No believer needs to fear death because of the confidence that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Conquering the fear of death is actually one of the purposes for which Christ died. “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14–15).

The Apostle Paul had this type of boldness. He fearlessly faced beatings, persecutions, and shipwrecks. His secret was the assurance that he was indestructible until his work was done; he knew that death would bring him immediately into the eternal presence of the Lord Whom he served.

Paul stated, “Therefore we are always confident [*tharrheo*], knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:6, 8).

Paul carefully considered both the benefits of continuing his ministry on earth and the rewards of enjoying his labors in Heaven. He favored the idea of going to Heaven but knew it would be more beneficial for believers if he continued his ministry on earth. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:21, 23).

God promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. Therefore, “we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:6).

The most powerful people on the face of the earth are those who have no fear of death.



The righteous are bold as a lion. (See Proverbs 28:1.)

When did one man’s boldness cause empires to fear the Lord?

Daniel came to Babylon as a captive and served four kings. Before he came, he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself or violate the Law of the Lord. He stood firm, even in a den of lions, causing King Darius to decree “that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God” (Daniel 6:26).

“There is nothing more dangerous on this planet than people that are not afraid of dying.” —Josef Tson

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” —Revelation 12:11

The wolverine illustrates boldness. It is a fearless and tenacious fighter and does not back away from any opponent, even one that is many times its size.



Honor is given to those who are bold.

Daniel was bold to speak the truth to King Belshazzar during the feast in which the king used the sacred vessels from God's Temple. After hearing God's judgment upon himself and his kingdom, the king honored Daniel. (See Daniel 5:29.)

**"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"**

—Philip P. Bliss

"Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth."

—Isaiah 51:12–13

Personal Evaluation

How bold are you in the face of death?

- Have you purposed to die to self and follow Christ? "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).
- Have you conquered the fear of man by exchanging your reputation for Christ's and choosing to be concerned only that people see Christ in you?
- Have you dedicated your life to fulfill God's calling, and are you determined to make whatever sacrifices God requires?
- What Biblical convictions do you have that you are willing to die for?
- In what specific ways are you dying to self so others can know Christ?

2. Boldness to Speak the Truth

Whereas boldness to conquer the fear of death comes through salvation, boldness to speak the truth (*parrhesiazomai* boldness) comes through the prayer of other believers. Even the Apostle Paul requested prayer for such boldness: Pray "for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:19–20).

When the apostles were threatened with harm if they spoke in the name of Jesus, they received boldness through prayer: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word . . . And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:29, 31).

Boldness to speak the truth must begin with a clear conscience toward the Lord and toward others. Nothing stops the freedom of the mouth like the unresolved failures of a life. Before Isaiah was commissioned to speak, he was cleansed of his iniquity. (See Isaiah 6:7–9.)

Personal Evaluation

How bold are you in speaking the truth?

- What Christian leaders are you praying for to have boldness to speak the truth?
- Have you asked others to pray that you will have boldness to witness?
- Do you wait for opportunities to witness, or do you make them?
- When people ridicule the Lord, do you defend the truth in a loving way?
- What good treasures are you putting in your heart that will then be spoken by your tongue?
- Have you written out your testimony so that you will always be prepared to give a ready answer?

3. Boldness to Accomplish Great Things

When a believer conquers the fear of death and boldly speaks the truth, he or she is equipped for *tolmao* boldness. God is able to accomplish mighty things through such a believer. “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (II Chronicles 16:9).

Doing great exploits for God and His kingdom is the result of knowing God and understanding His character and His purposes in the world. “The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Daniel 11:32).

God initiates the boldness to do exploits by giving His people special passages of Scripture that directly relate to what He wants them to accomplish. These passages are *rhemas* and are the basis of faith, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word [*rhema*] of God” (Romans 10:17).

As we engraft the *rhemas* of Scripture into our lives and meditate on them, we can claim their fulfillment in bold exploits. “If ye abide in me, and my words [*rhema*] abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:7-8).

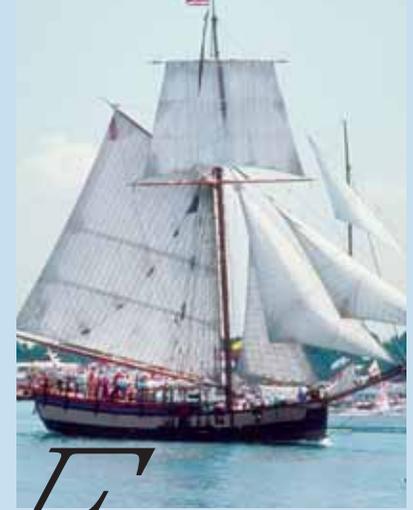
Gideon demonstrated boldness when he pulled down his father’s altar dedicated to a false god and then led three hundred soldiers against the enemy’s huge army. David also demonstrated boldness as he went out against Goliath.

The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 demonstrated *tolmao* boldness. “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11:32-34).

Personal Evaluation

How bold are you to do exploits for God?

- Is your heart right before the Lord so He can work mightily through you?
- Is it your goal in life to lead as many people as you can to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and then to disciple them in all the teachings of Christ?
- What special passages of Scripture (*rhemas*) has God given to you, and do you regularly meditate on them? (See Psalm 1.)
- Has God given you special concern for a certain category of people so that you can meet their needs?
- When you get to the end of your life, what do you want to look back on, of which you can say, “This is what God accomplished through me”?



Fear of God will destroy the fear of man.

John Knox was a sixteenth-century reformer. He boldly spoke the truth to his large congregation in Scotland but was arrested for it and chained to the oars of a ship.

During long months of pulling on oars, he built not only his physical strength but also strength of fervent prayer. His cry was, “O God! Give me Scotland or I die!”

His life and his work for God became so powerful that the Queen of Scotland is quoted as saying, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.”

“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” —I John 4:4

“We fear men so much, because we fear God so little. One fear cures another. When man’s terror scares you, turn your thoughts to the wrath of God.”

—William Gurnall