

No. 43 Courageous but Not Self-Reliant!

[PLEASE NOTE: This talk includes three videos]

WHAT COURAGE DOES NOT MEAN (5 min.)

Many Philistine soldiers may have thought of Goliath as courageous

He was a warrior from his youth, a veteran of many battles, who surely faced countless grave dangers (1Sa 17:4, 33)

He boldly defied the entire army of Israel, challenging any of the Israelite warriors to engage in a battle to the death (1Sa 17:8-10) Goliath thought that he could rely on his armor, his weaponry, and perhaps his size, strength, and skill as a warrior

Young David understood that Goliath's courage was misplaced (1Sa 17:45)

David knew that true courage should be based on faith in Jehovah's saving power (1Sa 17:37)

The outcome of the very brief fight between David and Goliath clearly shows who had the right kind of courage (1Sa 17:48-51)

For the past two days, we have learned a great deal about what courage is; now let us focus on what it is not

Some base their courage on belief in self, which may lead them into overconfidence, pride, or recklessness

Servants of Jehovah, however, remember the key words of Proverbs 3:5, 6 [Read]

We need courage, but we must never become self-reliant

First, we will examine a Scriptural passage that shows why it is unwise to rely on anyone other than Jehovah

Then we will consider some Bible examples to help us to see that proper courage includes modest reliance on Jehovah

A DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF THE TREACHEROUS HEART (8 min.)

Jeremiah 17:9 warns us about our treacherous heart, but let us consider the context, which teaches us much about the danger of self-reliance [Read and discuss Jeremiah 17:5-10]

Verses 5 and 6 tell us why it is a grave mistake to rely "on human power"

The consequences are so serious that they are like a solemn curse If we rely on human power, especially our own, we cannot have Jehovah's favor, for such a choice betrays a haughty spirit (Jas 4:6)

If we were to rely on ourselves, we would, in effect, be turning away from Jehovah

We would become "like a solitary tree in the desert"

The Hebrew word here rendered "tree" likely refers to a dwarf juniper tree, a shrublike tree that presents a gloomy appearance

We do not want to be alone, without Jehovah, in the parched wilderness of this spiritually starved world

If we were in such a vulnerable state, it would be only a matter of time before our faith would weaken, leading us to compromise

Verses 7 and 8 set up a striking contrast, focusing on one who is blessed, not cursed

The one who puts his trust and confidence in Jehovah is like a very different tree

This tree is, not a scrub bush in the desert, but a strong tree planted by water, with deep roots

Such a tree is equipped to weather storms and heat, still bearing fruit and foliage in harsh times

When we rely on Jehovah, he nourishes us spiritually, making us strong and fruitful, able to encourage others

Verses 9 and 10 remind us that Jehovah sees into our treacherous heart, so we need to resist any tendency toward self-reliance; rather, let us follow examples of courage and modesty

THEY MODESTLY RELIED ON JEHOVAH (15 min.)

Gideon was a "mighty warrior" who proved to be modest

When Jehovah's angel foretold that Gideon would save Israel, Gideon responded humbly [Read Judges 6:12, 15]

[Video crew plays artwork of fleece test (1 min.)]

He showed caution, not a lack of faith, when asking for clear evidence of Jehovah's backing (Jg 6:33-40)

Gideon's caution stands in contrast with reckless overconfidence, which is the mark of "a stupid one" (Pr 14:16)

Because he was humble, Gideon was useful to Jehovah

Gideon led his people to a resounding victory against the

Midianites, using an initial force of only 300 men (Jg 7:22-25)

If we rely on Jehovah, no matter what our personal strengths may be, we will remain useful to him

Nehemiah—a court official and governor—was not self-reliant

Nehemiah was a man of considerable authority; he was cupbearer to the Persian king, a high court position, and he later became governor over Judah (Ne 1:11; 8:9)

[Video crew plays artwork of Nehemiah praying silently when before Artaxerxes (1 min.)]

Faced with an opportunity to speak to the king about the needs of God's people, Nehemiah prayed first (Ne 2:4, 5)

Faced with opposers who threatened and showed contempt, Nehemiah responded by asserting his unshakable hope for success but attributing victory to Jehovah (Ne 2:19, 20)

Because he continued to rely on Jehovah, Nehemiah was able to impart strength and courage to others [Read Nehemiah 4:12-14]

If we remain humble regardless of our degree of authority, we will be a strengthening aid to others who love Jehovah

Jesus—the greatest man who ever lived—remained modest

No human has ever had more wisdom, power, or authority

Jesus set a perfect example of modesty [Read John 5:19]

[Video crew plays artwork of Jesus in prayer (1 min.)]

He acknowledged that his wisdom, his powerful works, and his authority all came from his Father (Mt 28:18; Joh 7:15, 16; 11:40-44)

When we show an awareness of our limitations and imperfections, we demonstrate godly wisdom (cf 53-54 ¶16-17)

What practical steps can we take to imitate such fine examples?

HOW CAN WE SHOW OUR RELIANCE ON JEHOVAH? (6 min.)

Diligently study God's Word

Ponder over Bible examples, both good and bad

Reflect, for example, on how self-reliance may have led such men as Absalom, Solomon, and Uzziah into trouble; meditate on the contrast between them and modest, humble ones such as those we have discussed

As you study, keep examining yourself, carefully considering whether you are truly relying on Jehovah or on your own strengths

For example, do you prepare before going out in the ministry, handling a Bible study, or attending Christian meetings?

A habit of going unprepared may indicate an undue reliance on self

Pray humbly

As you pray from the heart, keep in mind Jesus' illustration of the humble tax collector (Lu 18:9-14)

Note that the illustration was directed to those "who trusted in their own righteousness"

As we pray, we do well to acknowledge our sinfulness and to beg Jehovah to keep refining and training us (Ps 51:10)

Cooperate closely with Jehovah's organization

Self-reliance has led some to run ahead of Jehovah's organization; some have even left the truth when they got upset over matters that were later corrected

Remember Peter's heartfelt words to Jesus (Joh 6:68, 69)

Jehovah uses his organization to teach us the truth; we need to stick close to his people

Work closely with those taking the lead, supporting them (Heb 13:7)

Help fellow Christians to keep a positive outlook

Jehovah loves to reward those who show a patient spirit, "a waiting attitude" (Mic 7:7)

He will bolster your courage and help you to remain modest and humble, never self-reliant

If he is our source of hope and courage, we will never be disappointed [Read Isaiah 25:9]

TO BE COVERED IN 34 MINUTES