

The Courage of Daniel

Daniel is one of my favorite Old Testament prophets. Few faced the foes that Daniel and his friends faced on several occasions. They took a death-defying chance to stay true to God when the king commanded him (and his friends) to eat things unlawful under God's laws. Daniel faced lions barehanded but did not capitulate to the king's demands. His friends were thrown in to the fiery furnace, not knowing if they would survive.

Time after time Daniel and his friends chose to stay true to God rather than compromise their faith and commitment to Him. Where did they get such extraordinary courage? What did they have to so many others lack?

Actually, I am of the opinion that true and even deep courage are not as rare as we might imagine. I believe that courage lurks in most of us, just waiting for the right opportunity to leap out and do deeds of great proportions. That inner courage is simply waiting for the right moment, *one in which our love and our commitment is shown in circumstances that involve those we love more than self!*

Courage is not rare, commitment is. Mothers and fathers often rise to the occasion when their child is threatened. Most of the time courage acts when enough love is present to act, to protect, to defend, and to risk life and limb.

Jesus calls us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. When that much love is blended with the deep appreciation of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, courage lingers just below the surface, ready to pop out at a moment's notice. Daniel and his friends loved God, loved his law and saw their courageous commitment as a natural outgrowth of their faith and dedication to Him and His laws.

The same is true for us. As Katharine Lee Bates wrote *America the Beautiful*, she recognized this precious interplay of love and commitment in the third stanza, "Who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life." We might paraphrase her words, "Who more than self their God they loved, His law more than life."

Courage is not complicated, nor is it rare. Commitment born of love for God is rare, but when we cultivate love for Him until it grows into commitment to Him, courage is at the starting blocks trained and prepared for every event life may throw at us.

When Paul packed his bags for Rome, Jesus told him to take very something special with him, **"Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." (Acts 23:11)**

Paul took courage with him. What's in your pack?

-Ray Wallace