

## **The Courage to Set Yourself Free From Evil**

Courage is the strength to overcome a problem. Strength lies within a person, whereas the problem lies in front of a person. First of all, courage is faith in believing that what God has endowed you with is sufficient to overcome each problem. It is living hope through which we wait for what is necessary to overcome our problem, as well as a last ditch effort in charity to remain faithful to Christ and to our brothers at the hour of hardest trial.

Courage lies within our will. However, the strength required to overcome a problem is taken from the whole of a person, that is from the spirit as well as the body. People have to use their arms to lift up heavy weights, but if any of their vital limbs is sick, also the strength of their arms will be insufficient. Similarly it occurs in spiritual matters. The capability of courage always lies in our will, but if a person is weak in spirit or in flesh he will never be courageous. The weakness of flesh can sometimes affect the spirit, but very often our flesh is weak and the spirit is ready. Usually when the spirit is strong it is able to tow behind the flesh. However, if it is weak, the spirit and the shaky flesh will abandon the battlefield. What is it that weakens the spirit to the extent that a person loses his courage?

Christ is our strength. If we lack strength it is a sign that either Christ is not present or He is present in an uncomfortable way: without Him we cannot do anything. The presence of God in us comes true through the observance of His Will. In fact, he who observes the precepts of the Lord, truly loves Him, and becomes a stable home of God, so that whatever he will ask for he will obtain. And our Father cannot allow His son to face a trial greater than his strengths. Jesus repeats, 'Courage, for I am with you, do not be afraid!'. Who is with God will not lack any good thing. The spirit is with God if he fulfills His Will, and as a consequence it is serene, strong and courageous in trials. It is possible that despite being with God our faith is not mature.

But it is precisely in the experience of weakness that a humble and prompt soul will perceive the outstanding might of God. We have to experience this in order to be able to believe. It is after having overcome with faith and loyalty the most dramatic adversities of his life, that the Apostle Paul said, 'I can do everything in Him who gives me relief'. His will reached such a high level of maturity that he could dare to boldly claim, 'Who can separate me from the Love of Christ?'. Our human self, our intelligence, will and body, have to rely in Christ in order to overcome any trial which the Heavenly Father gives us. 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.' Christ is the winner, and he who is in Him will always be given victory. It is this two-fold certainty, the trial which comes from a wise and prudent Father and the victory which springs from the Crucified and Risen Christ, which provides boundless courage.

And him, who is not so intimately united to Christ, what shall he do to have courage? He has to remove weaknesses from his will. Any malice weakens and wears out your will, that is the faculty which leads you to do good deeds. It is necessary to thoroughly pull out any sort of malice from your will, especially the vice which has corroded your will more than any other vice, ultimately damaging

your capability of exercising your will. Such a spirit is in fact able to strive for many good things, but it will not be able to have a pure heart, a humble spirit and to escape temptation. As a result of recurring shipwrecks and utopias we firmly believed in, hardships frighten, courage is missing, and we stop asking God and our brothers for renewed courage. Our ego succumbs to that specific hardship, despite his desire not to, as he realizes that the adversity is stronger than he is, and that unfortunately not even God can set him free. Our soul easily mixes up an exemption from temptation with the grace to win a temptation. For Paul our Lord's grace was sufficient to overcome the scourging pain in his flesh, and still he has not been exempted from it.

The hardship or temptation which we face and which wears out our courage, needs to be initially identified, besieged and then fought relentlessly. In order to identify it we, need the light of the Word of the Lord, of prayer, especially of meditation, and of the consultation with our Spiritual Director. Once the predominant weakness has been identified through truth, we have to always keep it under control, through the light which comes from a sincere conscience and openness to our Spiritual Director.

Furthermore, it is necessary that we besiege the hardship by closing the channels which can lead to it: our eyes, our throat, our phantasy, special relationships, fondness of items and people, and the pleasure of flesh which we seek after, and which once found prompts us to do evil, weakening and emptying our will. We have to escape dangerous occasions, and ask for help to God through prayer, and to our brothers and sisters through a greater engagement in fraternal communion. It is necessary to avoid isolation, melancholy, and to be watchful on our presumption in order not to fall into the trap again. It is obvious that it is difficult for the beast to die. We have to fight it every day, without paying attention to how many hits we have given or taken in. It is necessary to be tough, pitiless and constant.

Christ did win, and you will also win, this is certain! As soon as you take notice of the possibility of overcoming the invincible hardship, do not cease to put effort into fighting to the very end. Be watchful because when the beast is still it is not dead. Pray and be vigilant, be humble, without making false mistakes coming from presumption. Fight and win, day by day. The power of our will, which is enriched by the strength of Christ, will resurrect and sing new songs of joy without end. Your faith will gain its prize, your hope its certainty and your charity its beatitude. God will deliver unique gifts of glory to the courageous, violent and fierce fighter. 'Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more'. Courage will be the distinctive feature of such a soul. 'Fiat secundum verbum tuum' (do to me according to your Will) will be his way, and his heroism will be his crown of glory for eternity.