

## Who Am I...Courageous Conqueror!

Romans 8:31-39

November 11, 2018

What happens when a kid puts on a superhero's outfit? They start acting like that superhero. They believe they can run faster. They have the lightning quick moves of their superhero. They find in them a courage to be that superhero!

What if I told you to put on a superhero costume called, "COURAGEOUS CONQUEROR!!!" How would you respond? Would it cause you to live differently?

I want to tell you today that is who you are! You are the superhero: "COURAGEOUS CONQUEROR!!!"

From as far back as the beginning of time a courageous conqueror has been thought of as some bad dude. They back down to no one. They have a set of qualities, physique and mental toughness that gives them an iron-will against any evil person or evil power they may face. They refuse to cower to danger or to run from it.

That understanding of courage is still around today. We have the new superheroes that kids imitate...Captain America, Superman, and the newest Ant Man?

But what about some of the old school heroes many of us grew up watching and imitating and quoting. I want to talk about some old school heroes...some old school courageous individuals.

John Wayne! His tough role as U.S. Marshall Rooster Cogburn in the movie, True Grit. John Wayne, the tough loner cowboy, always riding in to take down the bad guys.

Here is how John Wayne, in real life, described courage:

**"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyways."**

Another old school tough guy was Clint Eastwood. There is a quote of his that I have used and I'm sure many of you have shared with your kids or someone challenging you.

What is his famous one-liner from the movie, Sudden Impact?

**"Go ahead and make my day!"**

That tough guy phrase of courage, *"Go ahead and make my day!"* has an interesting origin. It was written by Charles B. Pierce. He was not some tough guy. He was an independent filmmaker. The actual origins came to him from his dad who use to tell him as a child, *"Just let me come home one more day, without you mowing that lawn, son just go ahead...make my day!"*

This one liner impressed him so much he wrote it into the movie, Sudden Impact. A couple of times we observe tough guy, Harry Callahan facing bad guys. At the beginning of the movie Harry Callahan goes into a diner for a morning cup of coffee where he discovers a robbery in progress. He takes out one of the robbers. However, one of the robbers grabs the fleeing waitress and holds her as a hostage. He threatens to shoot her if Callahan doesn't back off. Instead, tough guy, courageous Clint Eastwood, keeps his revolver pointed at the robber and with clinched teeth and in his courageous rough grumble says to the robber,  
*"Go ahead and make my day!"*

Anyone ever used that courageous statement?

33 years ago, at the 1985 American Business Conference, President Ronald Reagan stated,  
*"I have my veto pen drawn and ready for any tax increase that Congress might even think of sending up. And I have only one thing to say to the tax increasers.  
Go ahead---make my day!"*

Courage...scared to death but saddles up anyways.  
Courage...Go ahead and make my day.

As a courageous conqueror we are being challenged to saddle up and go ahead and challenge life to make our day.

As a courageous conqueror we are being challenged to have a willingness to defy the status quo or popular opinion. We are to put on the life of a courageous conqueror as we step into life each day. We are to take on the attributes of a courageous conqueror against the hate and evil of our day.

What will that look like?

Ernest Hemingway coined an expression that seems to capture what lies ahead for those who are willing to put on the courageous conqueror life. He called this courage:

**"Grace under pressure."**

The Apostle Paul is the one who called us to be **"more than conquerors...to be courageous conquerors."** (Romans 8:37)

There was a guy during Jesus' time on earth who displayed this "grace under pressure," this kind of a courageous conqueror's heart. His name was Joseph of Arimathea. He was a secret follower of Jesus. He was a wealthy and honored member of the Council of the Sanhedrin. Most Jewish leaders hated Jesus. Joseph was a Jewish religious leader who was looking expectantly for the coming messiah. He was there the day Jesus died on the cross. He put on his courageous conqueror spirit.

The word describes it this way, **"Working up his courage he went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body."** (Mark 15:43 MSG)

Joseph risked his reputation, lifestyle and friends when he worked up his courage and placed Jesus' body in a tomb he donated. He was a courageous conqueror. He saddled up the courage to risk for what was right. He spoke up and put into action what he felt in his heart and spirit was the right thing to do.

How courageous are you in working up the courage to speak up for Jesus? How good are you in "grace under pressure" situations?

Let me share with you some courage quotes, some courageous conqueror promises Jesus gives to you and me.

**"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)**

Jesus came and faced sin and evil. He called out to evil to go ahead and make his day. He died on the cross and sin and hate thought they had won. However, Jesus was raised from the dead and overcame all the pains, struggles and hatred we may face in life.

God, our Heavenly Father, promises to give us the courage we will need to face the challenges of each new day. What He doesn't promise is to remove the challenges we will face as we live out life in our culture today.

John, a close follower of Jesus, would later write these words of courage:

**"for the Spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world." (I John 4:4)**

The evil we face in our world, the hate that seeks to divide us, may be greater than we are on our own. However, the Holy Spirit in us is far stronger than any evil we may face. We are courageous conquerors through Jesus' Spirit living in our hearts. We have been given a spirit not of weakness but a spirit of power. (II Timothy 1:6-8)

We may be scared, but we saddle up with the Holy Spirit and we face the challenges of life.

The Apostle Paul recognized this strength in Jesus when he penned the courageous conqueror promise,

**"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)**

In the evils, hatred, divisive difficulties we face, we don't face them alone. We call on Jesus Christ to give us the courage needed to conquer the evil in our lives. We can face a new day through the strength of Jesus in us.

David, the giant slayer, the king, would write about his reliance of God's strength and presence:

**"The Lord is my Helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6-7)**

We should expect resistance. We should understand that we live in a fallen world of sin. We should realize that not everyone we meet in life will play well with others or understand our love for Jesus.

We also need to realize that we are not called to simply survive in this society.

We are called to be COURAGEOUS CONQUERORS in our culture. We are expected by Jesus to make a difference in our daily encounters.

We are to speak what we feel and live out the truths we claim as followers of Jesus.

Fear can paralyze us.

Faith can mobilize us. We saddle up anyways and follow the lead of Jesus' spirit.

We work up our courage in Christ to risk to claim Him as our Savior.

We take the risk to say to our world, "Go ahead and make my day" as we speak and live the truth of God's Word with love.

Our Christian faith, our personal relationship with Jesus, was never meant to be like a child's security blanket. We are to take risks!

**It takes courage to be a follower of Jesus.** We are to be more than conquerors...we are to be courageous conquerors for Christ.

The church today is not to be a silent church. We are to speak out boldly to this world we live in, "Go ahead and make my day. I am not afraid to take a risk for Jesus, the resurrected Savior, the One who courageously conquered sin and death."

**Father Alexander Men**, a Russian Orthodox priest, spoke boldly as a courageous conqueror against communism in the mid to late 20th century.

He challenged not the government but the church with these words:

*"Christianity is more like a mountain climbing expedition, a dangerous and difficult undertaking. Too many people who call themselves Christians prefer to stay at the bottom of the mountain and read guidebooks and fancy that doing so is good enough. Not by a long shot. It takes courage and resolve to reach the summit."*

Father Alexander Men lived the life of a courageous conqueror. He was killed on the ninth of September, 1990, as he made his way to the church where he would serve the Sunday liturgy. An assassin's axe to the back of his head took his life.

During the times he lived in Soviet Russia the church was suppressed by the regime. Priests didn't dare preach the Gospel of Jesus. At best the priests would meet old ladies at the church to say prayers. Thats all! That was the end of their priestly activity. John Paul II once called it "**The Church of Silence.**"

In contrast to his colleagues, Father Alexander Men did preach sermons and young people flocked to his church. He set up small groups in houses and apartments to share about the faith and truths of God's word. He formed prayer groups. He was not willing to be a part of the Church of Silence. He was a courageous conqueror who was willing to speak the love of Jesus to an evil society.

Where are you on the mountain climbing expedition of faith? Are you in a lobby reading some guidebook about courage, or listening to a talk about being a courageous conqueror, thinking that's enough?

Are you willing to step out and begin the climb up to the summit? No matter how difficult or dangerous it may be? Are you willing to answer the challenge and risk becoming a courageous conqueror of Christ's?

Are you satisfied being a member of the "Church of Silence?" We do not live under a communist regime, yet many followers of Jesus are living in silence. They are not saddling up and speaking the truth of God's word into their daily lives. They are not challenging the evil of the day to "go ahead and make their day."

We are to speak what we feel in our hearts and believe in our spirits! This is not your kids' pretend superhero world. This is not some virtual reality video game.

This is for real. There is sin, evil and hatred. We hear it on the news, we see it on line. Don't become silent about it.

Our hearts weep, our minds get confused but we must not cower in the corner of our world.

We are to saddle up and ride out each day with Jesus!

Shakespeare's King Lear made the statement:

*"The weight of this sad time we must obey,  
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say."*

If we are courageous conquerors we will stand courageously against any opposition to the love and grace of Jesus. Anything that contradicts the truths of God's kingdom we will say, "Go ahead and make my day!" We stand with bold courage in the face of evil. We take the risks to speak against hatred with love.

A coward will speak division and hatred. A coward will not take a stand for truth.

A courageous conqueror will speak what they feel in their hearts... hearts that are shaped by the love of Jesus.

As courageous conquerors, followers of Jesus, we are called to **speak the truth in love and to grow in the likeness of Christ.** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

Speak hope!

Pittsburgh Mayor, Bill Peduto, called the attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue, "the darkest day of Pittsburgh's history." But he went on to courageously say, "We know that we as a society are better than this. We know that hatred will never win out, that those who try to divide us because of the way we pray, or where our families are from around the world will lose."

That is a courageous conqueror saddling up and saying to the evil hatred of our world, "Go ahead and make my day!"

As courageous conquerors, we are to speak, shout, live out the hope that is in us in Christ Jesus.

Who am I? A courageous conqueror!

Who are you? A courageous conqueror of Christ Jesus!