

BE MEN OF COURAGE

“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.” (1 Cor 16:13-14)

Symbols have a unique way of communicating ideas. The Scriptures make an immediate connection, for example, by describing a kingdom as a lion, a leopard, or a bear. Something about confronting a lion, a leopard, or a bear transcends the need for explanation. Consequently, using this symbolism to describe a kingdom immediately communicates what kind of a kingdom it is. In the same way, an earth quake, a tempest, and a swelling sea also convey thoughts and emotions that are immediately understood. Such eloquent symbols do not need lengthy explanations for they make an immediate connection with our mind and emotions. So also does the admonition to “be men”. This too is an eloquent appeal that is easily understood.

The Scripture before us is translated in a variety of ways, but each translation has the same emphasis on manhood. (KJV - “quit you like men”, NAS - “act like men”, NIV - “be men”, NKJ “be brave”, RSV “be courageous”, etc.) Being a man is something that Paul understood and which he felt his readers would understand.

The symbolism of a woman conveys a totally different idea. We expect a man to be calloused and rough, and a woman to be delicate and soft. There is something about being “masculine” or “feminine” that transcends ethnicity and culture. Yes, there are “tame lions” that perform in the circus, but this is not the way that lions are in general. Yes, there are delicate men and rugged women, but this is not an accurate picture of the sexes as a whole.

So the Word of God admonishes men to “be men”!

While these inspired words were written almost 2,000 years ago they are certainly relevant in our own day and age. Today the distinction between the sexes is being blurred. Masculinity is under attack. Now is the time, as never before in my life, when men need to be “be men”. We need to be “on guard”, to “stand firm in the faith” to be “men of courage” and to “be strong”. Yes, all of these manly qualities must be done in love, but still they must be done.

The late Archie Word came out of W.W I the light heavy weight boxing champion of the Navy. In those days he described himself as an “unconverted hellian”. He was in jail 21 days out of the first 23 days he was out of the service. He, and three other friends from Visalia, California, bragged that they could whip anybody, no matter how many there were. Praise God, Archie became a Christian and led thousands to Christ. As a follower of Christ, however, he did not lose his manhood. He continued to display a bold and fearless approach to life. Vic Knowles has written a 600 page biography of his remarkable life. The following story will help you to understand what kind of a man Archie was. During one of his many revivals, some of which lasted several months, someone invited him to a Saturday night dance. After revival services that night he showed up with his written invitation. Since the person who invited him knew he was a preacher, Archie said that he figured that they wanted to hear him preach. So he asked the band for a drum roll, climbed to the platform, and began to tell them about Jesus. Who can deny that he was a “man of courage”?

At the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians he was in Ephesus. It was here that he fought with wild beasts (1 Cor. 15:32). It was here that many opposed him (1 Cor. 16:8). It was here that the people rioted and wanted to kill him (Acts 19:23 - 41). But it was also here that God did extraordinary miracles through Paul and that everyone in Asia came to hear the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10 - 11).

So, “be men of courage”. Don’t let the devil turn you into a limp wisted sissy. Develop some back bone and be a man. When Gideon went to battle God told him to send home all who were fearful and afraid. Perhaps we need to do the same thing in our own day and age. Let the fainthearted flee from the conflict for the Lord can deliver with many or with few. One man with God is actually a majority, for if God be for us, who can be against us?

So, **“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”**