

The Courage of Evil Men

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They came to arrest Jesus by night because they were afraid of the public outcry, and “not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.” Matthew 26:5.

When Jesus asked them, “The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?” They were afraid to say what they really thought because, “But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.”

On another occasion Jesus asked them “Why go ye about to kill me?” But they answered, “Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?” No one would speak openly of Jesus for fear of the Jews, but when confronted openly about their intentions, they lacked the courage to tell the truth that they were indeed trying to plot Jesus' murder. They were clearly afraid of something everytime they stood before Him.

Jesus told them the parable of the wicked husbandmen which the chief priests and Pharisees perceived that he spake of them. “But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”

The wise men observe, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.” Proverbs 28:1. Jesus shamed these cowardly men on the night of His arrest, “Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Luke 22:52.

Now go back a few moments and witness the fear of these men. In John's account, Jesus first asked, “Whom seek ye?” When He answered them, “I am he,” they drew back. They flinched, you might say. And they fell to the ground. Can you imagine that? And yet they found the courage to get back up again and arrest Jesus.

Where did they get that courage? Certainly not from the righteousness of their cause! It must have been from the fears and ambitions of the flesh. The forces that kept men from confessing Jesus, John 12:42, also drove others to seek His destruction. Are they not afraid? Of course they are! But men are valiant in the battles to justify their sins and silence the voices of truth and reason, the voices of their consciences.

Contrast them with the true courage of Jesus born of His love for us. tp