

## **Boldness**

By Bishop George Khodr

Human relationships are ones of boldness or fear. The one of boldness comes from the faith one has in his power or his prerogatives. Yet our faith in prerogatives and rights does not always lead us to confrontation even though it might lead us to martyrdom; and martyrdom is not always in need of human power but of a conviction in the believer that God who is in us will speak for us defending us even though the defense might lead to the shedding of our blood.

And you have courage because you are certain of your orthodoxy saying what you think in front of other humans being an individual or an audience that you address or write for. That is what the Arabs call moral courage. Yet at times you would be apprehensive of confronting though you are very certain that you are on the side of Truth.

St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans: “Be strong”, and before him the Lord has exhorted people for martyrdom in front of kings and rulers; and it is clear that His life was one of confrontation with others from the beginning of His mission until His death. And we also see the courage of the disciples before the Jews and the Gentiles and we know that most of them were martyred and during the three centuries of persecution, millions of believers accepted death enduring fire, and boiling oil and lions, because they were waiting for a better life. For them, life was being with Christ for whom at times we have to give up life in this world.

How come, at times, we fear someone we love? That implies that you would expect him to turn his back on you drawing his mantle of love away from you. Then you would lose the protection of his love. At that you would feel alone and when you get to chide him you would avoid that, fearing that you would lose his friendship. Then you would be cast only on God who takes care of you.

In that situation, your apprehensions would be misinterpreted by others as weakness and lack of faith; yet God reigns and you know it for sure while they do not, because God does not make claims and allegations; He inspires and reveals.

And though love casts out fear as John says in one of his epistles, the one who loves but is afraid feels that he cannot combat and at times loses his case in the argument. This happens much in groupings that in whose dealings there is much craftiness and deception.

The tragic in this is that the righteous are trampled over by the “deceivers” and sin hails as victorious; but it does so only seemingly until, by the grace of the Lord, the real truth is revealed.

You, be on the side of the weak especially the “underdogs” who often have purity of heart and weightiness of opinion while the oppressors “vanish” under the Lord who tramples them over with His wisdom because they try to appease Him to no avail; but the underdogs are the lords in His Kingdom and they are content with such a grace.

Translated by Riad Moufarrij

Original Text: "الشجاعة" –An Nahar- 19.11.2011

A question remains as to how to provide those poor of the earth with the power to combat the evil in this world so that the light of the Kingdom of God does not dwindle but is revealed. Here we call to mind Jesus' words: "Be as wise as serpents and meek as doves". The difficulty in this life is that some people are serpents and some are doves. How do we lead the wicked to meekness and how do we bring up the meek on dealing with the traps that some set up, to undo their (the traps) effects. When St. Paul says: "Love believes all", does he mean that all what you hear others say is true? I do not think so, because we know that Paul had wisdom in how to manage different people differently and how to use Roman law in defense of himself before the procurator of Palestine. "Love believes all" must mean that one could believe, at times, those who usually lie. And what is atrocious is that at times we can do wrong to those who tell the truth (by not believing them). That would hurt them; but the Lord would have accepted their repentance while we do not because we do not believe them. Would that cause them to regret their good action (being honest) because we have considered them among the liars anew?

Learn boldness by seeking it from the Lord; for the fear you have has entrenched itself in you because of the complexes that have intertwined in your being and you have not been able to undo them with your own strength; but you feel that if you progress in the spiritual life you will receive power from above. The only armor you can put on is kindness and the word of God.

Yet many consider kindness a weakness because they measure it with the cruelty they use to gain authority; and authority, they think, makes them great. Be careful not to fall in the desire to oppress others so you can feel yourself powerful. There is nothing in that. Love those who oppose you for that would help them to make themselves better.

Learn how to combine kindness and strictness if you have to pass judgment on matters others oppose you with. You are responsible to bring your "opposer" to the Lord. It is not important to win the argument - or to lose it; what is important is to take your "opposer" by the hand and help him get closer to the Lord.

Yet there are those who know how to defend themselves and those who do not though they know they are oppressed by the other. One has to be careful not to become despotic but to harbor strictness with the compassion that he has. And if he remains weak, and that is not a demerit, then God will be his "mouthpiece" in this world and the one to come. Such a person has God and God alone.

We have learned from the Saints that gradually are trained in righteousness unless the Lord transforms you miraculously to the spiritual summit all at once. But train yourself in this spiritual power through which boldness waxes in you so that you become like the serpent in its cunning and the dove in its meekness; then the Lord will cover you with His wings.