

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MARCH 2003

THE GRACE OF COURAGE

BY TIM KELLER

Courage is living and behaving right no matter what the danger. It is doing the right thing especially when it entails danger to do so.

Modern Americans have as safe and secure a life as any group of people in history have ever had, so perhaps it is not surprising that many of us had begun to think that “courage” was a quality only some people needed in exceptional circumstances. This illusion was shattered not only by 9/11, but also by the “DC Sniper” last fall. Ann Patchett wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*: “Staving off our own death is one of our national pastimes. Whether it is exercise, checking cholesterol, or a mammogram — we are always trying to find out what the profile [of death] is and then make sure we do not fit it... ‘I don’t fit that description’... ‘I would never go to a place like that’... But... a sniper tak-

ing a single clean shot reminds us horribly [that] death, despite our best intentions, is still, for the most part, random. And it is absolutely coming.” (October 20, 2002)

Courage is living and behaving right no matter what the danger. It is doing the right thing especially when it entails danger to do so. We all need it—but how do you get it?

Inside Grace Church, New York City, there is a plaque dedicated to Edith Corse Evans. She was a passenger on the Titanic who gave up her seat in a lifeboat to a poor immigrant woman who (unlike Evans herself) was a mother with children waiting for her at home. How did she accomplish that act of courage?

The classic approach to courage can be called “hero emulation.” Alasdair MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue* describes how ancient civilizations forged character in children not by teaching abstract moral principles in a classroom but by telling stories—“heroic narratives”—in communities. We are encouraged to immerse ourselves in the lives of great and heroic men and women for inspiration. This approach can bear much fruit in our lives.

But there are limits to this approach. One weakness is that heroic examples can discourage as much as encourage. Many children growing up with a parent who is a genuine hero find they

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THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP

BY TONY HINCHLIFF

Healing Prayer and Anointing With Oil at Redeemer’s Worship Services

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.
— James 5:14, 15

For several years now, Redeemer’s elders have made themselves available to the congregation for healing prayer and anointing with oil at a monthly prayer service called CPR (Corporate Prayer and Renewal). Meanwhile, Redeemer’s Fellowship Group system has grown significantly, and as the groups have flourished they have increasingly taken center stage as the primary

focus of our church’s prayer life. This shift is a good thing—a healthy reflection of Redeemer’s commitment to our Fellowship Groups as the center of our Christian life together.

As a result, somewhere between 1200 and 1800 Redeemerites are meeting weekly for prayer and worship in the 150 or so groups that we currently have. This abundance of intimate, weekly prayer opportunities has allowed us to consider bringing CPR to an end

this year. It has also allowed us to consider new ways in which a greater proportion of the congregation might be given access to Redeemer’s elders for healing prayer and anointing with oil.

To this end we are happy to be able to announce that beginning on Sunday, March 16th, the elders will be available for healing prayer once a month, immediately after each communion service at the front of each auditorium. Following church tradition we

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are crushed by the expectations and comparisons. It is just as easy to listen to a heroic story and think, "I could never do that!" as "I want to be like that." Courageous examples aren't able to really impart the courage they depict.

Another problem is that courage seems to need more than just a model. It also requires a world-view. If the reigning modern world-view is true—that life is just the product of blind chance and natural selection—then we 'got here' not through noble sacrifice for others but through the strong dominating the weak. Why *should* we give up our seat in the lifeboat if this life is all there is? Such an act takes a particular world-view, not just hero-emulation. If life is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" then all we have is to hold on to life and health and comfort as long as possible.

There is a more profound and enduring way to develop courage. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, the writer is going through a list of great heroic figures, from Abraham to Moses to David. Why? Most scholars recognize that the author is preparing his readers for danger and persecution. In short, he is trying to help them develop courage.

Perhaps the most famous example of courage that he mentions is the "champion" David (11:32). In ancient times the champion was the one soldier selected to fight on behalf of the whole army. He endured life-threatening dangers on behalf of his people, and if he won, his victory was imputed to them. That's what heroes do. They face death so that others may live.

The author of Hebrews moves through the catalogue of these figures, and he obviously hopes that we will emulate them, but he does not stop there. Suddenly he says: "*let us fix our eyes on Jesus—the archegos... of our faith*" (Heb 12:2) This word (often translated "author") is the word that meant "champion" or "hero" in ancient literature. Jesus is the *ultimate* champion, the hero of heroes. Why? Jesus came, not just at the risk of his life (as David did) but at the cost of his life, to save us, not just from physical death (as David did) but from sin and eternal death itself! He "took the bullet" for us. He paid the debt we all deserve, so we could live. Why does the Hebrews writer insist that we "*fix our eyes*" only on Jesus to get courage? He is saying that before you can *be* a champion, you *need* a champion. We will never live like David until we first believe and rest deeply in the one to whom David (and all

heroes) point.

So if I look not to David but to Jesus, I begin to get the power that enables me to live like David.

Jesus solves the problem of hero emulation. But Jesus also gives us a 'world-view' in which even life-sacrifice makes sense. He is coming back to put everything right eventually. He will slay every dragon, cast down every villain, heal every evil. When we believe in him we become part of his epic quest to heal the world. We live like him because all "deaths" done in his service—even physical ones—lead to resurrection. If the resurrection of Jesus really happened, it makes sense to give up your seat in the lifeboat.

In the end, the Christian grace of courage is not so much the absence of fear but the presence of joy. Jesus faced the cross "*for the joy that was set before him*" (Heb 12:2.) There is the joy of what Jesus has already done for you. He's slain the only giants who could have really destroyed you. There is also the joy of what Jesus is going to do in the future. All evil in the end is a temporary, passing thing. There is light and high beauty forever beyond its reach. Jesus proves it. If you rejoice in that—you will be brave and bold in the face of anything.

THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP

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are linking the healing prayer to our celebration of the Lord's Supper (Typically the first Sunday of the month in the morning, and the third Sunday of the month in the evening

services). This means that the elders will be available at both morning services on the first Sunday of the month and at both evening services on the third Sunday of the month. It is

our hope that having the elders at these services will greatly increase their accessibility and availability and will allow all of you to spontaneously seek them out as the need occurs.

REDEEMER REPORT

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
EAST 69TH (BETWEEN PARK & LEXINGTON)
services at 9:30AM • 11:15AM • 6:00PM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 7:00PM

PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW

DAVID BISGROVE

In Psalm 65 David wrote the following concerning God's generosity, "You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance". As I reflected on this Psalm in light of Redeemer's year end giving I was reminded again of God's love and provision for his people.

As most of you know, Redeemer was facing a potentially difficult start to 2003 due to the lower than expected

income through the first 10 months of 2002. However, because of the financial generosity of our congregation and friends, the 2002 total giving more than surpassed our \$5.15M target.

This allows us to proceed with the majority of our plans in 2003 on firm financial footing. We are grateful to all the Fellowship Groups and individuals who made use of the Devotional Guide and FG Study from our Web Site

(www.redeemer.com). It is part of God's grace that he allows us to participate in his kingdom through the giving of our time and money. In the months ahead, we will keep you informed through the newsletter and mailings as to the financial issues related to Redeemer. In the mean time, thank you again for your gifts, and let us all remember how God has 'crowned the year' with his bounty.

TAKE THE MUSIC WITH YOU

Until recently, Redeemer attendees have been able to purchase tapes of Tim Keller's sermons, but not the music from Sunday services. This was due to a number of concerns, among them poor recording quality and copyright issues. However, much of Redeemer's music is now available through the online store at www.redeemer.com.

In the "Recorded Music" section, you will find CDs by Redeemer soloists such as Stickman Jones and Annie Quick, jazz recordings by Redeemer band members Steve Sacks and Bill Holcomb, and CDs of instrumental offertories by the Redeemer worship band. Also available are the Christmas of Hope CD, recordings of contemporary praise songs, and a collection of vocal offertories with soloists Holly Krueger, Mark Oswald, Michelle Jennings, Kimberly JaJuan and others. In the "Printed Music" section, you can purchase sheet music for several hundred compositions and arrangements created at Redeemer. Included are pieces for orchestra, string quartet, brass quintet, worship band, choir, praise songs and more.

Sales from the Redeemer online music store support a wide variety of Redeemer ministries.

For example, sales of the Christmas of Hope CD benefit the children's ministries of Hope for New York. Sales of Steve Sacks "Look to the Sky" CD benefit the Diaconate.

Other product sales support the Arts Ministries at Redeemer.

PUTTING AMAZING BACK INTO GRACE

Doctrine should stir our hearts. Too often however it serves as tonic for insomnia, or fuel for intramural rages. Refreshingly, Horton's "Putting Amazing Back into Grace," draws out the power and majesty as well as the humility and gentleness of reformed theology. Don't be skeptical of a title that seems a little too cute, chapter headings peppered with double meanings, or cartoons used to convey rich complex ideas. This contemporary, almost pop feel simply makes the message readable, and his rational, matter-of-factness is helpful in

approaching controversial issues.

Of course, it is also possible to have the wrong passion for reformed theology — a type of intellectualism that in doctrinal debates evokes reform school behavior. Getting doctrine to fall from our heads to our hearts is hard work. "Putting Amazing Back into Grace" is a great supplement to gravity in the process. Horton has stripped the jargon from the discussion of reformed distinctives like predestination and election, and focused instead on its implications, breaking through what Tim Keller has

BOOK REVIEW BY: DAVID COOK

described as the "hard candy exterior" to the "sweet nectar" inside.

This book is miles away from the dry doctrinal tomes that can leave a reader shaking, but not stirred. It presents a position of peaceful security that allows for humbly partnering with all flavors of Christians in advancing the Kingdom.

It is on Tim Keller's recommended reading list (found at www.redeemer.com) and is available at the Redeemer book table for \$16.00.

A Book Review of: Micheal Horton's, "Putting Amazing Back into Grace"



THE NEW YORK CITY RESCUE MISSION

BY NANCY BARTER, HFNY VOLUNTEER

In the past few issues of this newsletter, I have written about the rewards of ministering to the needy, broken and disenfranchised of our city. Now I want to narrow my focus to one organization directly impacted by the work of HFNY and its volunteers: the New York City Rescue Mission.

The Mission, founded in 1872, has a long history of sheltering homeless men, providing addiction recovery services, and feeding the poor of New York. There are a number of things that distinguish them from the numerous city-run shelters, but the most important is that its services are grounded in Biblical principles, and therefore its motivation is to change lives rather than simply provide a short-term solution to the problem by removing the homeless from view.

The Mission's successful model addresses some of the problems that lead to poverty and homelessness by ministering to the body, mind and soul. Through generous gifts of

money and time from donors and supporters, the Mission provided in excess of 40,000 nights of shelter and provided over 27,000 hours of spiritual counsel last year.

As a resource for volunteers, funding and Christian encouragement, HFNY is an important friend to the Mission. In the aftermath of September 11th, the Mission experienced a dramatic rise in the demand for its services, and providing for that increase resulted in a 21% escalation in their operations costs. During the same period, the usual sources of donations decreased significantly due to the flagging economy. Thanks to a grant from HFNY and other unsolicited gifts, they nearly closed the gap for that year. However, in the past year, homelessness skyrocketed and the Mission saw a tremendous increase of 55% in the number of meals it served. Through another generous HFNY grant, they were able to add a new food pantry

program through which they provided 54,379 meals to poor individuals and families.

With a limited number of staff, meeting all of the needs of their clients is a challenge for the Mission. This is where Hope for New York makes its most valuable contribution. They provide a steady flow of volunteers with a variety of talents, including doctors, lawyers, and musicians. These volunteers reach out to the men in the program—men who desperately need a helping hand—and in so doing, display God's love in action. According to Jim VarnHagen, the Mission's executive director, "It is a wonderful blessing to work with volunteers who share our desire to penetrate broken lives with God's love and healing. Every little bit really does help. We thank God for Hope for New York and the volunteers they send our way—keep them coming!"