**THAT'S THE WAY THE CHARACTER CRUMBLES**

**THE ROCK OF COURAGE**

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I checked the endangered species list again. I do that regularly. There were a few changes, but the typical animals are on there. The white rhinoceros, the Amur leopard. In fact, I saw one of those on my way to church today. The red panda. But there were two animals added to the list that shocked me to this endangered species list. The courageous man and the courageous woman. Courage.

I'm in a series called That's The Way The Character Crumbles. Sam Kelly will be in this series, and Pastor Jimmy Evans. We're talking about character, and we've been saying around here that character is a choice. Character often is grown during crisis situations, and character is applauded in community. We're talking about courage, right? That's part of character. What is courage? **Courage is the God given ability to stand for your convictions.** It is the application of the information of truth. Courage.

When I say courage, a lot of times, and this is where I totally mess up when I think about courage, I think, "Oh, courage. Man, it's for those human mutations. Courage, it's for that guy I saw on YouTube that has 43 million views. He took a swan dive into an icy pool to rescue his drowning Doberman. That's courage. Or it's the Navy Seal who was shot 14 times and helped his buddy out of a situation, saved his life. That's courage. I mean, doesn't happen to me." I mean, courage, Patrick Mahomes, he's hurt and the guy's still a freak of nature winning Super Bowls, but that's just not me. I mean, that's for other people. What I do is I'll kind of brush off courage and think, "Well, that's for someone else." But we mess up. I mess up when I do that because I'm here to tell you, courage is for you and me in this average, ordinary, we would say, suburbanite life. Courage is for the gin pop, you and me. It takes courage just to live. Courage.

Because this is kind of a difficult thing to describe, how do we ramp up and amp up our courage? I've written a lot of books and I've read a lot of books and I've never seen a book on, "Okay, here is how you develop courage." If someone would write that, I think it'd be a best seller. I don't know. Maybe I should write it. Anyway, courage though happens in three dimensions I want you to think about as you think with me.

The first one is **spiritual courage**. When you say courage, you don't think about spiritual stuff. I don't. It's not my knee-jerk reaction. It takes though spiritual courage because everything is spiritual to become a Christian. We have to courage to admit to a holy God that we're sinners in need of a savior. We repent and receive Christ. That's a courageous decision. Sometimes people go, you've heard this, "Well, Christianity is reserved for those people who need a crutch. It's kind of a psychological thing, so people who are kind of soft, those who drink decaf." I would say just the opposite is true. I would say, "We have more courage than you. At least we'll tell the truth about our condition before God. It takes courage." It takes courage.

I thank you for your courage so many here, so many of you are believers. That's a courageous choice that you, my friend, have made. Also, it takes courage to follow Jesus, to walk with him. Many times his leadings are counter cultural. The Bible doesn't always explain in specific detail all of the implications. It's like waiting in a stream and you're walking against the current. Many times it's that way. It takes courage to do that. I read this week, and I don't know who came up with this, but I had it substantiated by a lot of smart people because I wanted to have numerous sources.

We make an average of 35,000 decisions a day. Now, who in the world came up with that number? I don't know. That's a lot. Think about how much God loves you and me. You're talking about choice. You're talking about a freedom of choice. 35,000. In fact, you've already made a couple of thousand decisions in this worship service and some of you're making decisions now to go, "I'm going to listen, or I might just scroll." We make those choices and the choices have to do with, am I going to be courageous or cowardly? Am I going to stand or am I going to slither in the shadows?

It takes spiritual courage. It also takes **moral courage**. Think about moral courage in the marketplace. You're doing a deal or whatever. You say something costs this much, but in reality it doesn't, and you exaggerate. Got to tell some white lies just to get the deal done. It takes moral courage. It takes moral courage, students, to be honest, when you take tests and exams. It takes moral courage. It takes moral courage to run with the right people, to expose yourself to the things that glorifies God. Moral courage.

It also takes **relational courage,** doesn't it? I've been married now for 40 years. Lisa and I have been married four decades, and it takes God given courage to be married, especially for 40 years. Think about that. 40 years. 40 years. Courage to fight for that date night. Courage to have your kids on some sort of schedule. Courage not to overstimulate or over commit your family to the superfluous. Courage to say, "We are going to build our foundation and our family on the church." It takes courage. Courage to discipline. Man, your kids. That's not easy. Follow through to make sure who they're hanging out with. Courage. Relational courage.

It takes courage to swim with the swimmers. It takes courage to expose yourself to the right people. Because to expose yourself to the right people, you've got to say no to the wrong people. But the right people are going to take you to the right places and they will underscore God's purposes for your life. Conversely, the wrong people will take you to the wrong places and you'll end up missing the kind of purpose and the stuff that God has for you. So it takes courage to talk to a brother and sister in Christ, to get past talking about sports and the economy and business, to really talk about the real stuff. And I'm just so glad we have so many courageous people here.

I think about our Bible study classes, I think about our small groups, I think about our extravagant hospitality. I think about so many programs and things we have for community because when I'm around you guys and we're all fighting the fight, I gain courage. You encourage me and prayerfully, I encourage you as well. That's what the Body of Christ is all about. Because the Devil wants us to think, oh man, you're the only one dealing with this. You're the only guy or girl dealing with relational courage or moral courage or spiritual courage. No, no, no. Courage though is something that God is, and it's something that he wants you and me to be as well. Courage.

So how do you amp up your courage? It's hard to get a handle on it. How do we do it? 35,000 decisions a day? How do we do it? Well, let me introduce you to someone they're not can identify with. I'm talking about, his name is Simon Peter. That's right, Simon Peter. He was a guy who crumbled at crunch time, let's get ready to crumble. He crumbled. I can identify with that. I've crumbled before and so have you. We've all crumbled. If you've not crumbled, you're lying. We've all crumbled. So I can connect with him because he said one thing and did another. I've done that.

One day Jesus looked at him and he was a fresh follower of Christ. He goes, **"Hey, I'm going to give you a nickname: The Rock."** (**Matthew 16:18**) And I know the disciples face planted, like what? This guy's an idiot Jesus. He's all over the map. He's ADD, he's impulsive. They were face palming. What? The Rock? And he probably had it embroidered on his robe and everything.

I'm sure after Jesus gave him that nickname, he probably said to his disciples, and Peter said to the others, "If you smell What The Rock is cooking." Oh, come on with the golf clap. I about ruined my vocal chords? That was the biggest white man clap I've ever seen in my life. My wife is a great kisser. One time we were in like an argument and I tried to kiss her, just kind of mess around. She didn't kiss back. I'm up here working hard, I want you to kiss back. I know the white man has a hard time showing energy and love. I know that, we struggle with that. Let's just chill. It's a two-way conversation. “If you smell what The Rock is cooking.” That's what I'm talking about. All right.

Simon Peter had this nickname. What is the nickname Jesus has for you? I'm serious. What is that? He has one for you because I love He saw the potential in him. He didn't nickname him what he was at that time. Some crumbling, stumbling, bumbling igmo, some professional fishermen. He said, "No, no, you are The Rock." So when He sees you and me, He sees the potential. And the Bible says, "When we go from this side of the dirt to the other side of the dirt, we will have new names." Jesus will give you and me a new name, and the name will be reflective of what we did with our life on planet Earth. Isn't that powerful? So Simon Peter, I mean I can identify with him. He's kind of crumbling, and stumbling, and fumbling, and bumbling.

Then we move to the Last Supper. The Last Supper. Jesus is with his disciples. He's facing the cross. So after supper, he sort of says to Simon Peter and the disciples, "Hey guys, you're going to bolt on me." Simon Peter says, "Not me. I'm The Rock. Not me. I've got your back. These others are going to flounder and crumble, not me." And Jesus looked at him and said, "You're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows." Whoa. Simon Peter's like, "No way. No way. No way."

So Jesus goes to the garden of Gethsemane. He tells the disciples to stay up and pray three times. Another three. They were sleeping. Three times Simon Peter was sawing logs. Three times. Then they come to arrest Jesus. What does Simon Peter do? Pulls out a sword, cuts the guy's ear off. Jesus puts it back on. I'm telling you, man, impulsive, a little bit crazy, rebellious, doing his own thing his own way, kind of like you and me.

They frog marched Jesus from the garden. He ends up at Caiaphas' house, Simon Peter follows, I love this. It's tragic though, at a distance, and it's really impossible to follow Jesus at a distance, but that's a whole nother message. So he finds himself warming his hands by the fire and a little servant girl asks The Rock, "Weren't you with Jesus?" "No." "I think you're one of his disciples." "No." "I'm almost sure you are." "No." And he then cusses a blue streak. You can't make this up.

Jesus is being frog marched again from Caiaphas' house to another house. And the Bible says he made eye contact with Simon Peter.

People ask me sometimes, "Ed, do you work on your sound effects?" No. They just come out. I don't, but I'm not going to lie to you. I was reading the scripture this week and I saw the rooster and I thought, I wonder what a rooster sounds like. So I tried to do it. It was pitiful. So I went to YouTube and there's this YouTube video. It has a minute of five roosters just cock-a-doodle-doing. So I heard it and I'm like, okay, I'm going to do that. I am going to do the rooster noise.

Lisa and I have a book coming out in October that I'm very excited about, but it's been very, very difficult to write. It's called **The Pathway Through Pain.** And to relive some of the things we've gone through, especially the loss of our daughter has been, it is been tough. It's taken some courage, so I'm excited about that book. I was meeting with our agent, and she knows I'll make sound effects, and Lisa was there. They were laughing. I said, "I want to do a sound effects Bible." She goes, "Let's do it." I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I'm going to do it. You got to really go for it. That's better.

How many times has the rooster crowed in your life? How many times have you denied Jesus? You're paid. Maybe you have a windfall. You know the first 10% goes to the church. You deny Jesus. You're in a situation and you know you've got to be forthright and you know you need to release this person and say something about the Lord. You've denied Jesus. So the rooster is crowing, isn't he? In your life and mine.

So Simon Peter, the guy crumbled during crunch time. Of course, Jesus died on the cross for our sins, rose again, Simon Peter bolts. He's like, he's out. Then this is so cool, the women rushed to the tomb to help embalm the body. The angel goes, "Hey, Jesus isn't here. He's risen." Then he says, "Tell the disciples," in two words, "and Peter," and Peter.

The disciples go back to fishing. That's the only thing that Simon Peter really knew what was up to do. He's fishing, fishing, fishing, and it's dark thirty, sun's coming up, and there's this young man on the beach and he sees the boat. He goes, "Hey, guys, you caught anything?" Now that's a ubiquitous question, that people always ask fisherman, "Hey, you caught anything?" They were like, "No, we're skunked. It's been horrible." "Why don't you throw your nets on the other side?"

I'm sure they're thinking, "What does this guy know on the bank about fishing?" They think, "Okay." They throw them on the other side, and they bring in 153 trophy fish. Simon Peter realizes this, Jesus, he swims to shore and Jesus has made a fire. You can't make that up, can you? He made a fire. You know he was thinking about the fire where he denied Jesus. Now Jesus has made a fire cooking them breakfast, and Jesus three times again, three, "Simon Peter, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" He reinstates him, reboots him and refurbishes his life. The resurrection power, it's on tap. When we share the gospel, too many times, we just concentrate on the death and the crucifixion of Jesus. Obviously that's a half of the gospel, but the other half, the power, the resurrection power, is not talked about enough.

What I'm talking about is tapping in to the courageous power of the lion of Judah. But as I said last week, we've declawed the lion of Judah. Jesus was and is all about courage. To come from heaven to earth, courage; to take on the limitations of the flesh, courage; to live a sinless life, courage; to die a sacrificial death, courage; to face all those temptations, courage; to get buried and to rise again, courage, courage, courage. Simon Peter, you won't believe this, he became known as a man of courage. In fact, one of the most courageous people to ever live was Simon Peter. You're like, "What?" Oh, yeah. He was one of the catalysts of starting the church. Yeah.

If you have your Bibles turn to the Book of Acts, Acts 3:13, because courage is tethered to the Trinity. Number one, you got to **WALK WITH GOD THE SON. Acts 4:13,** **“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”** That these men had been with Jesus. You walk with Him, with God, the Son, you're going to have courage. You obey Him, He's going to infuse you with courage as you face your fear.

Not only do we walk with the Son, we **WORSHIP WITH GOD THE FATHER.** **Acts 4:24,** **“When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. ‘Sovereign Lord,’ they said, ‘You made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.’”** God is the creator and controller and sustainer.

We walk with God the Son, worship with God the Father, and we **WITNESS WITH GOD THE SPIRIT.** **Acts 4:31 (NKJV),** again, they're talking about Simon and Peter and his posse. **“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”** With boldness. How do you hear the voice of God? How do you hear the Holy Spirit of God?

Did I tell you I've been married for 40 years? Lisa is a great kisser? We've been intimate for four decades. We've talked for four decades. We've had arguments for four decades. Many are reoccurring themes. You know that most issues in marriage are reoccurring. You just have to understand how to negotiate through those issues. But we've talked a lot. I've even used sound effects, all sorts of things. I could be, for example, at a grocery store, not that I go to the grocery store that much, but now and then I do. I could be on aisle one, and Lisa could be on aisle two, and there could be a lot of people in the store. But I can recognize her voice because I've spent so much time with her.

How do we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? We spend time in that relationship, that intimate relationship, God the Son, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit. We hear, and we follow, and we make these micro courageous decisions that end up accruing and becoming a macro life.

So what I want you to do is I just want you to sushi size, sushi size your courage. I love sushi. You just start popping those little rolls in your mouth and you leave the restaurant. You have a food baby, and you're $150 lighter. That's good. Courage, it's not something way out there.

As you think about Simon Peter, here's some practical things you can do. Yes, you understand the trinity. Okay, you got that. Yes, the power comes from the gospel, but **face your fear.** Face your fear. Jesus will give you the octane, the horsepower to face your fear.

Also, **Jesus forgives us.** Aren't you happy about that? He forgives us when we crumble. I'm telling you, I've crumbled relationally. I've crumbled before morally. I've crumbled financially when I should have stepped up and brought the first 10% to the church, I didn't. I've had those times in my life. I've crumbled where I should have said something, I don't mean in a mean way or an arrogant way, but a nice way and a loving way about the Lord and didn't do it. He forgives us.

Here's what I love too. **Jesus patiently teaches us.** Think about how patient he was with Simon Peter. You got to be kidding me. I mean, he would drive us crazy. Yet Jesus is patient, he saw the best in him. And also too, he sees something else. Our potential. He sees things in us that we don't see in ourselves.

Then as with Simon Peter, **God always uses unlikely people.** God hits those straight licks with crooked sticks, doesn't he? **Courage, the God-given ability to stand.** Courage.

We're going to Israel this November. Did you know that? If you haven't signed up for the trip, I'm telling you, you can name any vacation destination. Nothing compares to Israel, the holy land, it's phenomenal. I don't have any tattoos. Not that you care, but I don't. But I am going to get a tattoo. Lisa and I both are, because I found out, again through my Googling, the oldest tattoo parlor in the world is in the old city of Jerusalem. And they have this unique way to tattoo. I'm going to do it, both of us are. What do you think about that, Landra? Your 61 year old dad is finally getting inked and you're hot mom, you got to say that now. She's smoking hot, she's hot. We're going to do that. And if you have a problem with tattoos, you need to go to a church where no one has tattoos. Ed, why did you say that man? Have you had too much espresso? Well, yeah, I probably have.

But I have a gift for you. Yeah it's from me to you. It's a fake tattoo. And you won't believe what it says. Oh, where is it? Here we go. Those are directions. It says courage. Courage. And maybe you put this temporary tattoo on and maybe you go, you know what? I want to make it permanent. It's up to you. It's my prayer that you make character, Christlike character. It's my prayer that you make courage, permanent.

Would you bow your heads with me? Father, thank you so much for this great church. I thank you for the courage that you have given each of us. And if you're here and you have never ever, ever made the decision to give your life to Christ, you can make it right now by simply saying this, God, I admit to you the obvious that I'm a sinner in need of a savior. And right now, I admit to you the obvious, I turn from my sin. I repent and turn to you Jesus. I receive you. Just say that, as Savior and Lord of my life. I give you all that I am and all that I will ever be. Thank you for rescuing me. And Lord, I want to walk in your resurrection horsepower each and every day. Lord, continue to move in our lives. Continue to comfort us, to convict us, as we follow your character and as you live it out in our lives. In Christs’ name, amen.