
TIMOROUS & MISTRUST

TWELVE YEARS in the Bedford jail had taught John Bunyan that there were lions in the Way that needed to be contended with in order to attain the Celestial City. Unlike the Prince of Dreamers, many others who had made profession of faith in sectarian and Independent churches became fearful for their lives and turned back when religious opposition and state persecution reared their heads. As Thomas Scott said, "They feared the rage of men more than the wrath of God."

There are "lions" on the prowl in every century snapping at the heels of those who profess faith. (Only later does Christian find out that the lions are chained and "he heard them roar but they did him no harm.")

In his epistle, James begins by telling all true believers to "count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2–3, NKJV). In fact, trials in the life of the believer are such a given in the Scripture that the Apostle Paul preaches as part of his message of encouragement and affirmation in the truth, and perseverance in the gospel:

They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the

kingdom of God (Acts 14:21–22).

Of course, Hebrews 11 is the classic passage dealing with "lions." Here we are shown that in some situations the trials were unto death; however, behind the backdrop of the allegory is this larger perspective: afflictions come to different people in different packages. In our affluent and free Western society we know very little about "resisting unto death." Many of us will hear the roar but never feel the claws; however, there ought always to be a "but if not" in our lives, as demonstrated by Daniel's friends. They were confident in the power of God to deliver them from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, and they made this surety known: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king, *but if not ...*" (Daniel 3:17–18).

Timorousness has to do with cowardice and weak-heartedness. Mistrust is leeriness, skepticism and suspicion. Both partners are suitable to each other since timidity and faint-heartedness is connected with mistrust and doubting the promises of God. The Apostle John in Revelation 21:8 soberly reminds us that the first to go into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone are Timorous and Mistrust: "The fearful and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."
