

Ted The Egyptian

By Dana Buck

B *e on guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.*

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV)

At times, our walk with Jesus can call for the courage to stand firm. Not necessarily against physical attack, but often against the judgements, opinions or ridicule of others. Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 16:13 to "*stand firm*" can be a difficult challenge. Even more so when we are called to do this in situations and relationships that are important to us.

But, in the very next verse (14), he gives us the key to success: "*Do everything in love.*" In 1 Corinthians chapter 13: 4-8, Paul writes this classic description of love: "*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*"

Are you being called to stand firm in an important relationship or difficult situation? Ask God to infuse you with the attributes of love found in Paul's beautiful description. The odds of maintaining the relationship and having a good outcome increase greatly when we follow His commands in scripture. But, no matter the outcome, trust that God will be there and work his will in you and in your circumstances. God is love. And, in the words of Paul, "*Love never fails.*"

Many, many years ago in the land of pyramids
An epic tale unfolded, one who's telling here now bids

It's a story of salvation, of redemption from the dregs
Of kings and slaves and prophets, mighty miracles and plagues

But before we start the telling, lest we plunge too far ahead
Let's meet the man we'll follow, by his story we'll be led

First know that he's a soldier, he's a military man
Accustomed to the orders of those higher in command

He always does his duty and rehearses his salutes
His uniform is spotless, so much more than most recruits

His service here, however, may be worth a closer look
For he's the under study, sub-assistant to the cook

His weapon is a ladle. His battlefield, soups
His objective, putting vittles in the bellies of the troops

No spear is his to hurl, no saber his to slash
He's cutting only vegetables, he's slinging only hash

Yes, he's the commandant of casseroles, the brigadier of bread
The master of the mess hall, this Egyptian...name of Ted

Ted dreams of racing chariots and leading mighty forces
Hair blowing in the wind behind a pair of charging horses

He dreams of days of glory, his ambition richly buds
But, this spell is quickly broken by an endless pile of spuds

One day the chief cook shouted as he rang the kitchen bell
When all the staff were gathered he'd exciting news to tell

"We've just learned the king is coming" he intoned in awed inflection
"To muster all his men-at-arms and hold a grand inspection"

"And there will be a contest every soldier will compete"
"He who wins this competition will be crowned the King's Elite"

Now Ted was so excited t'was the chance he'd waited for
To be the King's Elite! The dream of all who trained for war!

“Excuse me honored sir” Ted shouted, feeling touched by fate
“Where do I sign my name to enter and participate?”

“You?” The Chief Cook cackled “Won’t be bearing sword or shield”
“You’ll be in my kitchen getting mounds of onions peeled”

“We’ve been ordered to provide the many meals that they will need”
“There’s no time to play at soldier with that many mouths to feed”

With this unkind retort Ted’s dream was pushed just out of reach
As he bore this rude rejection, the Chief Cook resumed his speech

“And when the games are over there is going to be a dinner”
When everyone has eaten they’ll announce and crown the winner”

“Ours will be the task” he said, excited to his marrow
“To prepare exquisite courses and directly serve the pharaoh”

His oozing pride was pungent as intoxicating ointment
All felt the same, except for Ted who bore his disappointment

And so that day excitement ran throughout the kitchen crew
While Ted morosely stirred a pot of tears and turnip stew

And in its time the day arrived, the army was assembled
So many feet and hooves and wheels the campground shook and trembled

Contests raged across the field with sword and spear and axe
While lines and lines of chariots were staging mock attacks

Judges kept a watchful eye to give each man a measure
Ten thousand troops were thus engaged all for the Pharaoh’s pleasure

And what of Ted, where is he found as horses race through curves?
He’s exiting the kitchen with a tray of hot hors d’oeuvres

“Present these to the Pharaoh” the Chief Cook brusquely instructed
“Be sure that proper etiquette and manners are conducted”

He turned back to the kitchen as he ordered Ted to scat
And take his tray of dainties up to where the Pharaoh sat

His head hung in depressed despair and shuffling his feet
Ted walked across the campground with his load of bread and meat

Meanwhile, on the concourse, all the soldiers sheathed their swords
To test their skills as archers fixing arrows to their cords

They bend their bows together now to let their missiles fly
The judge begins the countdown, but then something goes awry

One of the archers sneezes and he wildly fires his arrow
It arcs and makes its downward plunge directly at the Pharaoh!

At that very moment Ted arrives, deftly extends his tray
And the arrow strikes the platter, bounding harmlessly away!

There's a pause of frozen silence as what's happened settles in
Then the Pharaoh stands applauding and ten thousand join the din

Ted can scarce believe it, he's the focus of this riot
The king lifts-up his hands and all at once the army's quiet

"The gods have rendered to me an escape that was so narrow"
"This man was sent divinely to preserve the life of Pharaoh"

"There's no need for further contests and no reason to compete"
Then he fixed his eyes on Ted and cried "You are the King's Elite!"

And so, another cry was raised, was chanted by the soldiers
And Ted was swept away upon a sea of brawny shoulders

Soon all the land was singing, every troubadour and bard
Of the man who peeled potatoes who's now in the palace guard

Yes, Ted's job is in the palace. He directly serves the king
No more dirty pots and dishes and there is no hash to sling

Here no one works or toils or sweats from birth till in their graves
This is the land of Egypt, it's all done by Hebrew slaves

They do the heavy labor, all the tasks that carry risk
To build the mighty temples or raise up an obelisk

And bricks they make by thousands, out of mud and hay and ash
The work is pitiless beneath the overseer's lash

The soldiers can be brutal and at times they strike or beat them
They bully, frighten, mock, harass and otherwise mistreat them

Ted feels himself conflicted in the place he now enjoys
The other soldiers are his friends, he's now one of the boys

But he hates the shameful actions that can pass before his eyes
For he knows the pain and grief of being chided and despised

He keeps his feelings to himself; and this, because he fears
He'll lose the good opinion and the favor of his peers

Then one day he was patrolling, out accomplishing his rounds
When he saw a Hebrew slave who's busy landscaping the grounds

He approached the man, who startled, shied and quickly bowed his head
"Don't fear, for I won't harm you." "I want to talk; my name is Ted"

The slave was quite astounded by this guard whose name was Ted
All the soldiers he had known just spat or cuffed him in the head

This man seemed somehow different as he looked him in the eye
And summoning his courage said "Hello, my name's Eli"

"It's very good to meet you" Ted replied with a suggestion
"Let's move into the shade, "I'd like to put to you a question"

They quickly walked together to the shadow of a palm
Curiosity in Eli grew, his heart began to calm

Although this man's a guard he doesn't fit the status quo
So, Eli asked of Ted "What is it that you'd like to know?"

"I see your people's fate" said Ted, "Afflicted and abused"
"You're worked like common animals; your freedom is refused"

"And yet, somehow you carry on, with dignity, move through it"
"I cannot fathom your resolve." "I don't see how you do it"

"I want to know your secret" Saying this, Ted dropped his eyes
"Truth be told it's very clear you've much more strength than I"

Eli smiled and nodded “Yes, I know the key prescription”

“The secret is we cling to hope” he said to the Egyptian

“God has not abandoned us, you may call me a dreamer”

“But I know heaven hears our cries, He’ll send us our redeemer”

“How can you be so confident” Ted asked this Hebrew waif

“Ah” said Eli with a wink “That’s why they call it faith”

Then Eli bowed and took his leave without another word

Leaving Ted to ponder, try and grasp what he had heard

“Can it be that strength is more than muscle, more than might”

“And faith, the greatest weapon, can this Hebrew slave be right?”

As Ted stood chewing Eli’s words and thought about this notion

From the palace, there arose a turbulent commotion

And so, Ted sprinted up the hill on which the palace stood

Through the gate, then past the well as quickly as he could

He saw a group of soldiers and he hurriedly inquired

“What’s the cause for all this noise? What incident’s transpired?”

“A man approached the Pharaoh’s throne. This man and just one other”

“They say he is a Hebrew, his companion is his brother”

“He turned a stick into a snake, t’was quite a magic show”

“Then he shouted at the Pharaoh; “Let my people go!”

“The Pharaoh gave a laugh and said;” “I’ll keep my Hebrew slaves”

“Then motioned for a priest to toss a staff upon the pave”

“This staff then became a snake.” “The priest could thus create ‘em”

“But just like that the Hebrew’s snake crawled right on up and ate ‘em”

“And that was when all hell broke loose, the Hebrew pair retreated”

“Let my people go!” “They cried.” “Free them!” “They repeated”

“Because you have a hardened heart, your actions are impure”

“Ten plagues will now descend upon all Egypt to endure”

“And when these plagues have run their course you certainly will know”

“That God Himself cries out to you to let my people go!”

Ted could scarce believe his ears at what his comrades said
As Eli's words rang in his mind and echoed through his head

Is this the one predicted who would come and liberate
The Hebrews from their bondage and out of their sorry fate?

Ted turned and walked back down the hill, he had to think awhile
He walked until he came upon the waters of the Nile

He then kicked off his sandals and stepped in to cool his feet
But what he noticed next then caused his heart to miss a beat

The waters of the river, as they lapped upon the mud
Appeared as red as apples. It wasn't water, it was blood!

Ted quickly left the river carried by his crimsoned legs
At once he was reminded of the Hebrew's threat of plagues

He ran back to his barracks, this was just too much for Ted
He jumped into his bunk and pulled the sheet over his head

Next morning Ted awakened to the sound of angry voices
From the tone, he knew today he'd likely face some anguished choices

The soldiers talked of rousting slaves and getting some revenge
Ted just lay there wondering had the kingdom come unhinged?

"Ted, get up and join us" all the other soldiers cried
They each had grabbed their weapons and were hurrying outside

"Come on, get up, it's time to go and have a bit of fun"
"Were going to get those Hebrews, make them pay and watch them run"

"You all go on without me" Ted replied from in his bunk
"I'm feeling rather poorly and I haven't any spunk"

"Alright then" said the soldiers "Guess we'll have to do the job"
They rushed out of the doorway and they joined the larger mob

Ted was truly miserable his conscience tolled and rang
For he knew by doing nothing he's no better than that gang

And as he blinked back teardrops in a move to regain poise
From somewhere just above him came an unexpected noise

A frog was in the window. Now how did he get there?
Then he saw another sitting fat upon his chair

They were hopping through the doorway while Ted lay there just astounded
Frogs came in by hundreds till he found himself surrounded

Frogs were in his sandals, sitting on his shaving tray
In his helmet, in his bedding, wasn't this a crazy day!

For everywhere in Egypt all the land was quickly cloaked
By the hordes of webbed amphibians who hopped and flopped and croaked

And this was just the advent of the troubles to arise
Coming close upon the heels of frogs rose swarms of gnats and flies

And just when all of Egypt was berserk from pests 'a flying
Another plague descended and now all their cows were dying

The Hebrew came to Pharaoh (Ted had learned his name was Moses)
They argued and they shouted toe to toe, while touching noses

"I'll never let the Hebrews go, they'll always be my slaves"
"I'll tell you what I will arrange" the angry Pharaoh raves

"I'll have them make one million bricks, decree this is their quota"
"They must not fall one brick behind, no, no, not one iota"

"And if they do, they will be whipped. I've spoken, it's the law"
"Oh yes, and just one other thing; they won't get any straw"

A cruel smile was on his lips; the king's advisors smirked
The Pharaoh felt triumphant so convinced this tactic worked

Ted watched from the foyer. The poor Hebrews, they were doomed
He suddenly was startled as the voice of Moses boomed

"You dare to mock the will of God? For this you'll not be pardoned"
"God will show his glory through your heart so cold and hardened"

"You've called down further suffering and before this process stops"
"You will see hail fall from the sky and flatten all your crops"

“So, when the sky is darkened but the ground is white as snow”
“Then perhaps you’ll heed these words of mine and let my people go”

Moses spun and left the hall, the room grew deathly quiet
Pharaoh, in his anger cried “I dare you, you just try it!”

The Pharaoh sought to calm his nerves, he loudly called for ale
Then all stared at the ceiling when they heard the sound of hail...

As Moses passed the foyer door his eyes and Ted’s did meet
Ted then hesitated, seems he couldn’t move his feet

And in that frozen moment Ted’s raw conscience took a bruise
For as Moses left the building he first turned and whispered “choose”

And so, throughout the day and night the damage was inflicted
Till all the crops were crushed quite flat as Moses had predicted

Lest any disabuse themselves that famine had arrived
T’was then that hordes of locusts came and ate all that survived

And if that wasn’t bad enough, this havoc on the soils
All Egypt woke next morning covered head to toe in boils

The country cried for mercy; the afflictions came in waves
Yet Pharaoh’s heart remained as stone, he wouldn’t free the slaves

All Egypt was despondent and they cried for resolution
While soldiers in their anger sought out slaves for retribution

Cries of suffering filled the air and killed the evening stillness
Ted dodged this horrid duty by again feigning an illness

How long could he avoid it? Could he stand and just refuse?
He hadn’t had much sleep since Moses grimly uttered “choose”

And so, the plagues continued, it was dark during the day
And even when the sun should shine night wouldn’t go away

Then came the greatest plague as yet, caused all to shriek and mourn
What shook the land of Egypt was the death of all first born

Till finally Pharaoh felt regret for all defiance spoken
Mourning now his eldest son; hard heart completely broken

And so, he summoned Moses, Ted observed it from the wings
“Go and take your people, take your cattle, take your things”

“And as you travel may you see the havoc left behind”
“Go now, go forth in urgency before I change my mind”

Then Moses told the Hebrews all the things that Pharaoh said
They didn't even pause to add the yeast into their bread

They gathered up their families; each group, each herd, each flock
They all looked to the roadway east and all began to walk

Ted was just ecstatic! This was scarce to be believed
His nightmare now was over, he just felt so darn relieved

He couldn't help but wonder; what is Eli feeling now?
His faith has been rewarded, like the keeping of a vow

“I'm really very happy with the way this story ends”
“But there's still a little part of me that wants to be like him”

Then early the next morning he awoke to trumpet sounds
Much milling and much talking and a call to gather 'round

The Captain ordered quiet, they were told to form a line
As they did the Captain yelled “The Pharaoh's changed his mind”

“He's commanded that the army find the slaves and run them down”
“Alive or dead, no matter, it's the honor of the crown!”

The soldiers gave a rousing cheer, their mood was to attack
Except for Ted who trembled as the sweat ran down his back

Things only went from bad to worse that day for poor old Ted
He very nearly fainted at what next the captain said

“We have one here among us who has never known defeat”
“Of all the Pharaoh's soldiers, he was crowned the King's Elite”

“I think it's only fitting that this mission should be led”
“By this army's greatest hero, the Egyptian known as Ted!”

At this news, the soldiers cheered him; their reaction, simply grand
The Captain walked to Ted, he had a flag within his hands

“This is the Pharaoh’s banner, into battle you will carry it”
He turned and loudly shouted “Every soldier to his chariot!”

The men then took off running, climbed aboard and grabbed the reins
Ted cantered out in front, it felt like acid in his veins

He urged his horses forward, leading all the chariot crews
In his mind one word repeated and that word was simply “choose”

They rode full out for hours, just as fast as they could go
Then they paused atop a hill to scout the valley down below

And from this elevation, they could see there in the distance
The entire Hebrew nation moving east with great insistence

The Captain was elated as the circumstance got hotter
“They’re right there where we want them ‘tween our spear points and the water”

“It’s time to pull your swords and gallop after them like cattle”
“I call the King’s Elite to lead us now into the battle!”

The horses, tense and ready, pawed the ground and shook their manes
But instead of charging forward, Ted said this and dropped his reins

“The Hebrews have done nothing to deserve our hate and ire”
“Let’s turn our horses ‘round and let them peacefully retire”

The Captain strode to Ted and getting right up in his face
“You know that this is treason; your behavior, a disgrace”

“If you do this you’re finished, and you’ve got so much to lose”
“I’ve exhausted all my patience, now It’s up to you to choose”

That word hit Ted like lightening and he felt his strength increase
His fear was now replaced by an unnatural sense of peace

He looked right at the Captain and his smile was bright and broad
“I’d rather fail in your eyes than fail in the eyes of God”

The Captain flared with enmity “You fill me with disgust”
“Step down and drop your weapons, you’re no longer one of us”

“Sit down here while we battle and as soon as I return”
He smiled a wicked grin “If I were I you, I’d be concerned”

Now all the other soldiers looked at Ted with utter scorn
Then snapped their reins and bolted when they heard the battle horn

Ted sat there on the hilltop where it was so dry and bare
And as he watched the chariots he softly said a prayer

“I know that you don’t know me, but I think that I know you”
“You’re the God who Eli said that he has put his trust into”

“So, if it be your will Lord won’t you please just make a way”
“And deliver all your people, let them live another day”

“As for me, I am contented, why, I feel like I’m unfrozen”
Ted looked up to the sky and said, “I guess I’ve finally chosen”

Then down within the valley came a massive, awesome sound
Of wind and waves and water, t’was so loud it shook the ground

Ted worked to keep his balance and this effort had just started
When in one astounding moment the entire Red Sea parted

As it did, all of the Hebrews very quickly started down
And right before Ted’s awestruck eyes they crossed on solid ground

And what of the Egyptians? What decision did they make?
Well it wasn’t “stop and turn around” and that was their mistake

For the waters closed upon them and embraced them not so warmly
And that, my friends, was that for the entire Egyptian army

Ted sat upon the hill awhile to process what he’s seen
He felt himself remade, his very soul felt fresh and clean

He thought of Eli and his God, that thought was sweet and fine
“If Eli says that God is his perhaps he can be mine”

And as he watched the Hebrews fading east to parts unknown
Ted got up, brushed off the sand to make the long walk home