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## For the Living of These Days

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Harry Emerson Fosdick had a unique gift for turning the exact right phrase that could both deliver the precise meaning he intended while crafting his message in a nearly magical flow of the words, sounds, and pacing that go beyond communicating meaning to also convey feeling. There is no better example of his talents than his great hymn, *God of Grace and God of Glory*. He wrote this hymn exactly 80 years ago when the American people were battered by the Great Depression. At the same time, there was widespread disillusionment with the inept political leadership that had produced the War to End All Wars. Economic uncertainty and widespread disillusionment in our public institutions and leaders doesn't seem so far removed from today, does it?

It was in this environment that Fosdick wrote, "Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour." It was the perfect prayer for 1930 and it is no less perfect for us today. There is such a strong temptation when the going gets rough to *not* face the hour but to bury our heads in the sand, to throw up our hands in resignation, or to look for scapegoats to demonize and blame for all of our troubles. We see these three tactics from one end to the other of our national political landscape. Words — too often angry, self-important, strident, and hurtful — are shouted from every radio and television. But the shouting and polarizing do not solve problems. In fact, they only make the climate even more inhospitable to developing the concepts of shared responsibility, cooperation, and mutual respect that are essential to actually addressing and solving problems.

Where do we turn, then, to break out of this cycle of negativity? How do we overcome the shouting? How do we choose *positive action* over negative criticism?

"Grant us wisdom. Grant us courage." We need wisdom because our problems are too complex for simple solutions. Slogans, sound bites, and attack ads may vent anger and frustration but they do not solve problems. We need wisdom in order to find real solutions. And we need courage to face the painful reality that not everybody is willing to put the common good above their own self-interest. With both wisdom and with courage we can face the living of these days or any days! They go hand in hand. But we also need to realize where these priceless resources come from. Who grants us wisdom? What is the source of our courage? Fosdick helped his generation — and now our generation — to realize that before there can be any progress we must first turn towards God.

God comes first. And when we place God first, then — and only then — everything else flows from there. We need to acknowledge that we can find the wisdom and courage, the perseverance and the creativity, the cooperation and the inspiration; but that we have to first look to God as the source of all of these priceless resources. When we put God first, when we acknowledge we need to listen first to God's word, then we have finally set ourselves on the upward path. And indeed, once we put God first, our success is absolutely assured.

*Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,*

*For the facing of this hour.  
From the fears that long have bound us,  
Free our hearts to faith and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
For the living of these days*