

A Biography

Courage

Anne Hutchinson
1591-1643

Deuteronomy 31:6

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

...OR...

Galatians 5:25

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Anne Marbury (Hutchinson) was born in Alford, Lincolnshire, England on July 20, 1591. During her teen years her family moved to London where her father served as an Anglican minister and schoolmaster. Anne, like all women of this era, had no access to formal education. Highly intelligent with a hunger for knowledge and passion to understand scripture her father taught her to read. Through his strong belief in and dedication to learning she received a better education than most contemporary girls. Over time, she grew intimately familiar with scripture and Christian theology.

On August 9, 1612 Anne Marbury married William Hutchinson, an acquaintance from Alford, who worked as a London fabric merchant. They soon moved back to Alford where Anne cared for their growing family and worked as a midwife serving the women in the community. Not long after their arrival in Alford, the Hutchinson's learned of the charismatic teachings of John Cotton who preached at Saints Botolph's Church in the large port of Boston, twenty-one miles from their home. His spiritual message was different from that of his fellow Puritans, as he placed less emphasis on one's behavior to attain God's salvation and more emphasis on God's grace as the gift of salvation.

Anne was greatly attracted to and influenced by John Cotton's theology of "absolute grace" which caused her to question the value of "works" and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. This theology was empowering, especially to women during this time whose status was determined by their husbands or fathers. Another strong influence in Anne's life was young minister, John Wheelwright, her husband's brother-in-law, who preached a message similar to that of John Cotton's.

As reformers both John Cotton and John Wheelwright encouraged a sense of rebirth among their followers, however, this theology led to dissention and discord within the Anglican Church. John Cotton was eventually removed from his ministry and, threatened with imprisonment, he and his family made the voyage to the colonies where he continued preaching a grace-based theology. A year later, impressed to follow John Cotton to America by the evidence of divine providence, William and Anne Hutchinson, along with their ten children, left England and set sail for Boston.

Soon after arriving in Boston, Anne began serving the women in her new community as a midwife. Regular visits to women in childbirth led to theological discussions. She began hosting weekly meetings in her home for women who desired to discuss John Cotton's sermons and explore scripture more deeply through her explanations and elaborations. Her meetings grew in popularity and she was soon hosting and teaching sixty or more people a week. Empowered by her wisdom of scripture and ability to discuss with great clarity the minister's sermons, the women began to invite their husbands to attend these meetings. Soon, Anne was hosting several meetings each week teaching her followers that individuals could have their own spiritual relationship with God and interpret the Bible for themselves. Church leaders soon realized her theology went against those of other Puritan leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. They felt her differing beliefs might confuse the faithful.

In May of 1636 Reverend John Wheelwright arrived in Boston from England and immediately aligned himself with the "free-grace advocates." Anne Hutchinson, John Cotton, and now John Wheelwright continued to teach a grace-based rather than works-based theology. The three were eventually brought before the General Court and tried for various charges because of their unorthodox teachings. Both John Cotton and John Wheelwright were sentenced to banishment. Anne was the last to be tried before the General Court. She was charged with slandering the ministers and troubling the peace of the commonwealth and churches by hosting meetings in her home to teach a theology that differed from that of the Puritan Church.

During the many weeks of trial, she faced her accusers with courage, believing in the power of God to sustain her through these trying days. While in private meetings with her adversaries, she cited Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man brings a snare: but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe." Anne refused to denounce her belief that a relationship with God is attained through his grace and not by works alone.

Finally, in 1638, Anne was imprisoned for the winter, banished from the colony and excommunicated from the church. Following the stress of her imprisonment, she moved with her husband and now twelve children to Aquidneck Island, known today as Rhode Island. At the age of forty-seven Anne became pregnant and suffered through the heartbreak of a late-term miscarriage. Even though Puritan leaders deemed this loss a judgement of God, Anne courageously continued to put her faith in God and host meetings in her home to teach others the essence and power of his word.

For the next six years Anne lived peaceably in Rhode Island with her family. In 1642, shortly after her husband's death at the age of fifty-one, she took her children, six of which were still young, to settle in a remote farming area on Long Island Sound between the modern day Bronx and New Rochelle. The choice to settle in an isolated area proved to be a fatal mistake. Although she believed the Dutch had paid the natives for the land they sold her, a year later, angry Algonquian Indians attacked her home and killed all but her youngest child. Today, a tranquil river runs through this area and bears the Hutchinson name.

Anne Hutchinson lived a short nine years of her life in America before she died. Yet, her legacy continues to live on today. In being courageous enough to think differently from the colonial autocrats who would tolerate no views or beliefs aside from their own, she took an early place of prominence in the development of American intellectual and theological life and their basic tenet of free speech. With great courage she stood firm on the truth of scripture and the

opportunity for individuals to have their own spiritual relationship through God's grace and to interpret God's Word on a personal level. In 1922, a statue was erected in front of the State House of Boston honoring Anne Hutchison. The inscription on the marble pediment of the statue reads:

IN MEMORY OF

ANNE MARBURY HUTCHINSON

BAPTIZED AT ALFORD

LINCOLNSHIRE ENGLAND

20 JULY 1591

KILLED BY THE INDIANS

AT EAST CHESTER NEW YORK 1643

COURAGEOUS EXPONENT

Word Count: 1,129