

*Braveheart*, Part 2

[James Cordrey](#) , April 9, 2003

One reason Wallace's speech is so rousing is the men of Scotland had lost heart under the rule of self-serving, pragmatic nobles, who — lacking conviction or passion — sought to negotiate with the English and forfeit their very selves. The nobles were men who had, themselves, lost heart under tyranny and could no longer lead. They had given their strength away in a search for the comfort of lands and titles that Edward The Longshanks, King of England, used to buy their allegiance. How many of us have lost heart just like that? How many of us have lived like the nobles, giving in to one form of evil or compromise because we have lost the heart to fight? Wasn't the world into which Christ was born just this sort of world? A world where tyranny ruled and crushed the spirits of men and women? And some of us become, over time, willing participants in lives we know we should not own.

One reason the film is so powerful is that it exposes us, and yet it does so in a way that invites us to see how the story might end differently — even redemptively — and how we might be changed for the better.

Such change is exactly what we see in the Bruce. By the time the film ends on the field of Bannockburn, the Bruce is a very different man from the one at the beginning of the story. Upon first meeting Wallace, the Bruce is a seemingly noble man, cautious and careful, not wanting to seem too passionate about anything and attempting to strike the pose of a confident leader. But Wallace undoes the Bruce simply in the way he speaks to him, and certainly not with a hint of malice. Wallace gets to the heart of the matter and tells the Bruce that we all end up dead, the only questions are how and why. It is an interaction in which Wallace challenges the Bruce to think about what he is willing to die for. But more than that, it is a call for the Bruce to examine his own heart and consider what he is living for. Then Wallace says that if the Bruce “would only lead” his men they would follow and — here is the kicker — Wallace would follow too. Wallace is trying to affirm the Bruce and draw him out from his life of cautious comfort to a life more in line with his calling: A life of kingly leadership and purpose in standing for the truth and all that is right.

Jesus speaks to us all in very much the same way Wallace speaks to the Bruce. Jesus knows who we are and invites us to live as true sons or daughters of the living King. He invites us to live in the much larger story of being truly alive rather than settling for lives which seem comfortable, yet which are actually lives of captivity. Consider Jesus speaking to the woman at the well in John 4. He offers her water that will truly slake her thirst, and she insists on arguing with him. We are all in the same place, going to our “wells” to get a little something (pick your idol or addiction) that we think will satisfy, but which never really takes care of the deep thirst of our souls. And then, when Jesus comes along inviting us to life and freedom, we dig in our heels and become contentious. All the while, Jesus calls to us, and speaks words that stir us — sometimes in ways that make us very uneasy — similar to Wallace's words to the Bruce. In every interaction throughout scripture, Jesus is constantly driving to the hearts of the people to whom He is speaking. With the Pharisees, He goes for the jugular — so to speak — in challenging their self-righteousness and external religiosity that has resulted in those leaders being whitewashed tombs. With the woman caught in adultery, the rich young ruler, and his disciples, He cuts to the core of the matter always seeking to restore those people to a right relationship with God.

Similarly, in Wallace's interactions with people in *Braveheart*, he pursues the hearts of those around him. In the case of the Scottish nobles and the English soldiers, he picks a fight to challenge their selfishness. In relating to the Bruce, the Scots whom he is trying to rally, and the woman he ends up marrying, Wallace seeks to bring wholeness to relationships. Certainly, the film takes artistic license

with the romantic encounter between Wallace and the princess later in the film. But when Wallace initially meets the Princess of Wales, he challenges her, yet does so with a redemptive purpose.

In Wallace's fighting of literal battles, we see the Warrior displayed. In his interactions with the Bruce and others throughout the film, we see the Poet. In Christ's clearing of the temple, as well as Exodus 15:3 where God is called a Warrior, we see how Jesus is a Warrior. In Christ's care of Peter after the resurrection, when He calls Peter to feed the sheep, we see Jesus as the Poet — nurturing the soul of relationship.

Another interesting parallel between Braveheart and the Gospel is in the death of Wallace and its aftermath. The narration at the close of the film says that after Wallace was tortured and killed, he was dismembered and beheaded, as an example to any who would rebel. The narrator says, rather simply, "it did not have the effect Longshanks desired." In the closing scene, the Bruce draws his sword and rides into battle with the men of Scotland. Likewise, the death of Jesus did not have the effect the Enemy intended. Followers of Christ were emboldened to speak the truth of the Gospel. Peter, who once denied Christ with curses, became a bold preacher of the resurrection.

The power of Braveheart lies in the extent to which it reminds us of the larger story into which we all fit; the reality in which we live. Christians and non-Christians alike are drawn to the film because it speaks to us about battles to fight, adventures to live, and beauties that need to be rescued. And even if we have difficulty articulating it, those themes resonate within us. We were created by a God who intended those themes to resonate within us.