

Boldness

One of the issues that we face on a regular basis is the issue of boldness. We all struggle with fear from time to time, but if we understand the term “bold” to deal only with fear, we misunderstand it. According to the dictionary bold means, “Fearless **and daring**; courageous.”

When we think of fear, we as evangelists tend to think of something that we have to overcome, that is coming against us. But the other half of the definition doesn’t have to do with merely overcoming; it has to do with doing extravagant exploits. It means to dare to do something. If someone is bold, not only do they overcome their fear, but they dare to do things that the average person doesn’t do. If a team leader is bold, they dare to do things that the average Christian, or maybe even the average team leader, doesn’t do.

In Acts 4, Peter and John (the leaders of the evangelism team in Jerusalem) are arrested for preaching and they are put in jail. They end up standing before the Sanhedrin and the high priests, the same group that had Jesus Christ placed before the Roman government and crucified. Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit and preaches an incredible sermon where he accuses them of crucifying the only One who can save anybody. Amazingly, instead of sending them to the Romans, they threatened them and let them go.

Predictably, they return back to the fellowship of the church for encouragement and to give testimony to what God had done. At this stage of the game, what would the average Christian do? Probably praise God for the incredible deliverance from the hands of the murderers of Jesus. Maybe they would count the number of listeners that heard the message that Peter preached and then rejoice over the Gospel being preached to those people. Or perhaps they would go over every word that Peter preached and relive the glory of the sermon and Peter’s wit.

But after all of that was done, what would the average Christian do? Most, if we’re honest, would consider it a close call and settle back to enjoy the comforts of fellowship and dare not venture out to open-air preach for a season. After all, Peter had done his part, had experienced a taste of persecution and had the hand of God’s blessing on him; he was delivered from the hand of the enemy! No one could blame Peter and John if they stayed back for awhile and focused on church ministry. No one would dare accuse them of cowardice; they had been jailed for their faith! In the average Christian church, there would be a praise service and maybe a fellowship dinner.

The early church in Jerusalem was not the average Christian church. They were not average Christians. How do we know? In Acts 4:29 these saints had the audacity to pray for...what? Protection from further persecution? No. A bigger church? No. Good publicity from the whole healing\preaching\persecution episode? No. What did they pray for? “Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, ***that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word.***” (Acts 4:29)

These radical, first century Christians had the audacity that Peter and John and the others would have boldness! These guys had already been thrown in jail and threatened! What did they have if they didn't already have boldness? Yet these believers pray that that is exactly what they will have.

The truth is, we can never have too much boldness. We can never have too much fearlessness and daring.

Our situation is nothing like that of the first century church. They faced real persecution. Peter would eventually die on a Roman cross, crucified upside-down. John would be banished to a remote island prison. What many Christians lack today is this kind of first century boldness, even though we don't face a tenth of the opposition that they did.

How do we get it? If they needed to pray for it, then we need to pray at least twice as hard for it. We already have the tools to do what they did; the Word of God, prayer, the Holy Spirit, etc.

But we also need the proper perspective. Consider this: in America, our Bill of Rights guarantees our freedoms. One of those freedoms is the freedom of speech. Now I used to collect antique printing presses and do a little letterpress printing. One of the sayings that is popular amongst the letterpress crowd is, "The only people who have the freedom of the press are those who use it." In other words, people who don't print don't really have the freedom of the press.

The same can be said for the freedom of speech. The only people who really have it are those who use it. If Christians do not share the Gospel and do not use this freedom, they may as well live in Communist China. They are no different than the Christian in China who does not share the Gospel out of fear that they will be arrested or worse. Most true believers in China don't let their government's policies stop them; they do it anyway!

In reality, American believers who do not share the Gospel do not have the freedom of speech. They are chained and muzzled. Imagine what believers in other nations must think of Americans (and others) who do not share the Gospel even though they have the freedom to do so! Jesus said that the ones who are required of the most are the ones who are given the most. Do we really think that the Lord will gloss over our apathy and disobedience when we stand before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ? American believers will be without excuse.

So, let's push the envelope! Let's dare to do great things for God in the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Let's pray for boldness and then dare to step out and attempt great things for His glory!