

Pray for Boldness and Courage

Ephesians 6:18-20

I ask you to do a mental exercise with me this morning. Think of the top three reasons that you do not witness as much as you want to. Mentally write those reasons down. I believe that if we could read each others' minds we would discover that the list we made is very similar to the list the person in front of us made.

I think many of us would have the same three. Here are my three:
 Number 3: I do not think about witnessing. I get too busy with other things.
 Number 2: I do not know how to start the conversation.
 Number 1: I am afraid that I will offend the person or that I will say the wrong thing.

How does your list compare? Through our series entitled, "Pray the Miracle" we hope you are strengthened in your soul so that you will overcome any obstacle that stands in your way of being Jesus' ambassador in a world that needs to hear His message! Begin praying right now that God will stir your heart so that you will no longer neglect this priority that God has established for you. Pray that God will open doors for you to begin conversations that point others to Jesus. Pray that God will give you words to make His message clear. And pray that God will give you courage to face your fears of rejection or reprisal.

This morning we open our Bibles to Ephesians 6 . . . that great chapter on spiritual warfare and we learn that witnessing is part of the spiritual battle that believers can expect to face. Paul has been so bold with the Gospel of Jesus that he is now in a Roman prison because of his commitment to proclaim the Gospel. And yet, in this two year imprisonment, he does not feel strong within himself. He feels weakness. The sharpened claws of fear scratch at his soul. And so before he closes this letter, he asks for the brothers and sisters in Ephesus to pray for him.

*"Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words **so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan** that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. **So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.**" (Ephesians 6:18-20 [NLT-SE](#))*

It turns out that Paul does not like being hated, imprisoned, reviled, and threatened any more than you or I do! His humanity feels the pressure to find relief from the suffering the Gospel brings by simply being more quiet about it! So he says, “Pray for me. Won’t you? Please pray!”

Main Idea: The mission God gives to every disciple requires courage. If we are bold to speak the Gospel, we can expect Satan to threaten us. Let us pray for one another to speak the Good News with boldness!

The Beauty of Boldness

Boldness is not ALWAYS beautiful. Lots of people in the world are bold. We think of Hitler’s boldness to challenge the nations to the East and to the West of his country to a fight to the death. We think of Hamas boldness to cross a border and take glee in the destruction of women and children. We think of a high school board’s boldness to demand that biological females welcome biological males into their locker room. We think of an angry fans boldness to curse at a referee. We think of Satan’s boldness to tell God that Job is faithful only because God is blessing Job. That’s bold!

Much boldness in our present world is not beautiful, it is grotesquely dark and ugly. **So if we are bold, we are right to ask, “Is my boldness beautiful?”**

How can I tell the difference between beautiful boldness and ugly boldness?

Truth: Ugly boldness is fueled by selfish desires, by fleshly anger, and by fear. Beautiful boldness is motivated by love . . . love for God and love for others.

The flesh produces ugly boldness. The Spirit produces a boldness that is exquisitely attractive.

Boldness is defined by Oxford as “a willingness to take risks and act innovatively; confidence or courage.”

Christian boldness is a willingness to take risks for the love of God and out of a love for others. It is a willingness to act innovatively so that others will be spiritually enriched. It means we have courage and confidence to stand up against everything in this world that would endanger others or hinder others from knowing Jesus as Savior. We need more of that kind of boldness in Jesus’ church!

Examples of this beautiful boldness in the Bible abound: we think of **Moses' boldness** in confronting Pharaoh, we think of **Daniel's boldness** in refusing to stop praying, we think of **Esther's boldness** to go to the king, we think of **Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego's boldness** to refuse to bow down to the idol, we think of **David's boldness** to confront Goliath, we think of **Stephen's boldness** to preach the Gospel to a hostile crowd . . . so many, many examples of boldness in God's Word. Such boldness is surely a fruit of the Holy Spirit and not of the flesh.

I love the boldness of Peter and John in Acts 4: Remember this is only 50 days after the public crucifixion of Jesus!

"And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody" (Acts 4:1-3 [ESV](#))

*"And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" **Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,**" (Acts 4:7-8 [ESV](#))*

"let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."" (Acts 4:10-12 [ESV](#))

*"Now when **they saw the boldness of Peter and John**, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. **And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.**" (Acts 4:13 [ESV](#))*

This story tells us explicitly that such beautiful boldness is produced by the Holy Spirit and is a quality possessed by everyone who spends time with Jesus. We cannot fellowship with Jesus and NOT be moved to have a beautiful kind of boldness.

A disciple of Jesus wrote a letter in the second to third century to a Roman skeptic to convince him of the goodness of the Christian faith. Here is how he describes the beauty of the Christian's boldness for Jesus. From the Letter to Diognetus . . .

Christians ... love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life. They are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. ([ch. 5](#))

Boldness fills our Christian faith with beauty . . . boldness produces the fruit of realized hopes . . . of sacrificial love . . . of spiritual encouragement . . . of eternal meaning . . . of enduring perseverance.

Paul talked of the fruitfulness of his boldness when he was in Thessalonica:

*"For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, **we had boldness in our God** to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict." (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 [ESV](#))*

Paul's boldness to share the Gospel fueled an eternal impact upon the lives of the people in Philippi. If Paul lacked boldness, his life would have lacked eternal impact.

Sometimes I ask, "Are the people whom God places in my life better off because I am present with them?" Many factors that brings God's blessing to others lives, but BOLDNESS is one of them. Without boldness we do not take the risk of speaking God's truth . . . of talking about Jesus . . . of communicating the Spirit's love.

Is the janitor at your place of business better off because you work at the place where he/she cleans?

Is your neighbor spiritually enriched because you live next to them?

Are your cousins blessed by the LORD because you bring God's love in Christ to them?

Are your teammates receiving more of the light of God's love because you are in the locker room?

Paul's boldness paved a path to bring the joy of salvation to the Thessalonians. "Our coming to you was not in vain . . . not empty of meaning."

There is soooo much beauty in the boldness that the Holy Spirit produces! Yet BOLDNESS is not easy!

Application: Pray for the kind of boldness that brings the beauty of Christ to the people around you.

The Battle for Boldness

In Ephesians 6, Paul's request for the church to pray for boldness is set in this doctrinal teaching about spiritual warfare. That is NOT by accident!

Paul is sitting in prison. He KNOWS the cost of being bold. He knows that Satan stands in the way of his continued boldness for Jesus. He knows the beauty of Spirit-led boldness and he wants to continue to live with beautiful boldness. He knows that a battle must be fought. So he asks for prayer.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." (Ephesians 6:10-11 [ESV](#))

A "scheme" is a thoughtful strategy that is employed to defeat an enemy. Jesus is Satan's enemy. If you are in Jesus, YOU are Satan's enemy. He thinks over a specific battle plan to hinder you from experiencing the joy of the LORD and from being useful in advancing God's kingdom in this world. Paul talks about Satan's schemes again in 2 Corinthians 2:

"so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." (2 Corinthians 2:11 [ESV](#))

We can expect Satan to work overtime to keep us from boldness with the Gospel. Satan knows that boldness in the heart of a Christian devastates his purposes to destroy souls. So Satan works to strip us of boldness. How does he do that?

Satan's Schemes to Rob us of Boldness

Scheme #1: Threats to our well-being

Scheme #2: Condemnation of our person

Scheme #3: Distractions to our mission

Let us think about these three schemes together. You can expect Satan to plot against you in these three areas when you decide to follow Jesus and be His witness to your world.

1. Scheme #1: Threats to our well-being

--Our social status.

No one enjoys broken relationships . . . in fact we fear this kind of brokenness. And so Satan threatens us that if we are bold, we will pay with our relationships. Satan loves to disrupt our family, our friendships, our fellowship at church. These threats are not imaginary. They are real.

"2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, . . . 15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains," (2 Timothy 1:8-16 [ESV](#))

Satan loves to divide the saints. Paul knows that if he had not been so bold, his relationships inside the church would not have suffered so tragically.

"The best people possess a feeling for beauty, the courage to take risks, the discipline to tell the truth, the capacity for sacrifice. Ironically, their virtues make them vulnerable; they are often wounded, sometimes destroyed." Ernest Hemmingway

--Our physical safety

*"Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." **So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.**" (Job 2:4-7 [ESV](#))*

"So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited." (2 Corinthians 12:7 [ESV](#))

--Our financial stability

Paul had a great job, financial independence, and growing wealth before he decided to follow Jesus. All that changed when he believed in Christ. He lost all financial security, all his income, all his savings when he decided to speak up for Jesus. This loss is not guaranteed. But the disciple of Jesus weighs these two costs: on one side is my financial security and on the other is honoring Jesus. When a person chooses to follow Jesus, they are already making the decision to lose everything if that is necessary to have Christ.

"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8 [ESV](#))

2. Scheme #2: Condemnation of our person

"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." (Revelation 12:9-10 [ESV](#))

The Holy Spirit is seen in a community when that community is filled with encouragement, affirmation, biblical correction, covenant commitments. The devil is seen in a community when that community is filled with anger, condemnation, accusations, slander and gossip.

Condemnation can be avoided if we keep our heads low and do nothing bold. But the bold will be assaulted with accusation both inside the person and outside the person.

--Condemnation of our motives.

"but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." (1 Thessalonians 2:4 [ESV](#))

--Condemnation of our character.

"though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our

appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,” (1 Thessalonians 2:2-3 [ESV](#))

--Condemnation of our community

*“And he entered the synagogue and for three months **spoke boldly**, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. **But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation**, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:8-10 [ESV](#))*

Satan loves to bring wholesale condemnation upon us as a group so that we would shrink from being part of that group and being that kind of group that stands up for Jesus. I think it is this kind of intimidation that has strengthened the **“I am not part of any organized religion” mantra** so popular among those who are not bold with the Gospel.

In the New Testament, we see that Satan uses both believers and unbelievers to bring fear and discouragement to disciples who proclaim the Gospel.

--Condemnation of our methods

Illustration: A woman once approached the great evangelist D. L. Moody to air a grievance. (Moody was an international evangelist of great renown in the 19th Century.)

The woman said to him, “Mr. Moody, I don’t like the way you do evangelism!”
 “Well, ma’am, let me ask you, how do you do it?” Moody asked.
 She replied, “I don’t!”

Moody responded, “Well, I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it!”

3. **Scheme #3: Distractions to our mission. For the sake of time. Just list three distractions that Satan brings to Jesus’ church to push us away from boldness in witness.**

--Internal strife

--Extraneous priorities

--Sinful pursuits

"But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3 [ESV](#))

How do we overcome the devil's schemes? What do we do with these real world threats? How can we stand up when everyone is sitting down? How can we be bold for Jesus when we will suffer for it?

The Beauty of Boldness

The Battle for Boldness

The Building of Boldness.

Only the LORD can produce the boldness we need to speak His Gospel to our friends, family, and fellow-workers. Read Ephesians 6 because God's Word so powerful in its prescription for us.

"10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; Ephesians 6:17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

*18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to **me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.**" (Ephesians 6:10-20 [ESV](#))*

Build boldness in your life by taking three action steps: prepare, fight, pray.

Action #1: Prepare. Be confident in the LORD and His power. Place your hope in Him and not in your own strength to endure hardship.

“10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Know that God’s Gospel is able to keep us standing firm in every circumstance. If we are living our lives with our eyes fixed on Jesus, we will never run out of resources to match our need. We are not victims to be pitied, we are victors to be envied. When we are strong in the LORD, we do not look at the struggles that Satan throws at get angry, frustrated or given in to self-pity. When we are strong in the LORD, we stand up with boldness and do not shrink back in fear.

How can I practically prepare? By simply sitting at Jesus’ feet each day. Be fed by Him. Open your Bibles and listen to what He has to say to you. Learn from Him. Gather with other believers weekly to talk about what you have learned from Him.

Only the grace of God will plant the kind of boldness in our hearts that magnifies Jesus in the face of Satan’s assaults. Lean in to the means of grace!

*“For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. **Since we have such a hope, we are very bold**, . . . Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:11-12, 17 [ESV](#))*

Only the authority of Jesus can give us confidence to continue to witness when other authorities assert that we have no right to declare the gospel of Jesus to every person in every place.

Action #2: Fight. We must fight if we would win the battle.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore,

What does it mean to “fight”?

To fight means to press forward in spite of strong opposition knowing that the opposition will be agitated. To fight means to tell the truth in all circumstances, to strive for beauty, to hold on to virtue, to take risks, to persevere, to not give up, to believe that God has a better future than the one you experience right

now. To fight means to take action and not be passive with your faith in Jesus. To fight means to never, never, never give up and surrender yourself to the enemy.

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13 [ESV](#))

Illustration: A person tries to enter your home to harm your family. What do you do? There is beauty to boldness!! There is ugliness to fear.

Friends, of course we would have boldness to defend the physical lives of our family. But more is at stake than their physical life. The devil wants to rob every person you know of the knowledge of Jesus. AND one of his schemes to accomplish that end is to silence you!

Action #3: Pray. We must pray if we would win.

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:18-20 [ESV](#))

How often do we need to pray for boldness? At all times. No occasion is prayer for boldness not needed.

What frame of heart must we have when we pray for boldness? In the Spirit.

When do we know when we have prayed enough? Keep alert with all perseverance.

For WHOM should we pray? making supplication for all the saints, and also for me

For WHAT should we pray? that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:18-20 [ESV](#))

Notice the double emphasis on boldness!!

Truth: Prayer changes our hearts and our responses to our world. Pray brings boldness where there is no boldness. It really, really does!

Example from Acts 4: Peter and John imprisoned and then released with demand not to speak any more in the name of Jesus . . . or else!!! When Peter and John told the church about this . . . the church “lifted up their voices together to God”

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, (Acts 4:29 [ESV](#))

“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31 [ESV](#))

Here is a prayer that I plan to pray this week. Would you pray it with me?

Father in Heaven, We praise You for the redemption that you purchased for us through Your Beloved Son and by Your Eternal Spirit. We ask that you open doors for us to share the hope of Jesus. We are feeble and need your Spirit to grant us the proper words to say so that the Gospel would be presented clearly and beautifully to those who are still walking in darkness. We confess that we are often timid. Grant us boldness so that we would faithfully embrace whatever sufferings You would have us to endure for Him who suffered in our place. He is worthy! May the knowledge of His love compel us forward as His witnesses. Amen.