

Why We Must Preach the Gospel Boldly

INTRODUCTION

There are plenty of reasons a Christian may be tempted to stay quiet about the gospel. We may wonder what somebody will think. We may be afraid of saying something wrong. We may not want an argument. Sometimes we simply feel like we are not very good at explaining things.

But when we come to the end of the Gospel of Mark, we find Jesus sending His disciples out with a message that was meant to be preached. The gospel was never meant to stop with the people who had already heard it. It was supposed to go out into the world.

And notice who Jesus was speaking to. These were not men who had never struggled. Verse 14 tells us that Jesus had just rebuked the eleven for their unbelief and hardness of heart. Yet immediately afterward, He gave them a mission.

That should encourage us. God does not need perfect people with perfect personalities. The power is not in us. The power is in the message that we have been given.

The question is simple: Will we open our mouths and preach it?

I. PREACH THE GOSPEL BECAUSE PEOPLE MUST HEAR IT — MARK 16:14-16

Mark 16:14-16 “Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. **15** And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. **16** He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Look at where this begins. Jesus is speaking directly to the eleven. We should not ignore that. This commission was given directly to His disciples in that setting.

But the New Testament also shows that spreading God's Word did not remain exclusively with the apostles. When persecution scattered believers in Acts, those believers carried the Word with them. Philippians tells us about brethren becoming more confident to speak the Word without fear. Gospel witness clearly spread beyond the apostolic office.

And what does Jesus tell these men to do? “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

The gospel has to be communicated.

Sometimes people say, “I just try to live the gospel.” We ought to live godly lives. Our conduct matters. A terrible testimony can hurt our ability to reach people. But nobody can learn the gospel merely by watching you live a good life.

At some point somebody has to speak.

Romans 10:14 “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

How are they going to believe something they have never heard?

Your neighbor cannot look through the window of your house and somehow discover the gospel. Your coworker cannot watch you work hard and automatically know how to receive everlasting life. Your family cannot learn the saving message simply because you are kind to them.

Somebody has to tell them.

And that gives this work urgency because verse 16 deals with salvation and damnation. The stakes are eternal. Jesus says, “he that believeth not shall be damned.” Scripture consistently makes belief the determining distinction between the person who has everlasting life and the unbeliever who remains condemned.

John 3:18 “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

That is why we cannot treat gospel preaching as something insignificant. We are not merely inviting somebody to a church activity. We are bringing them the message they need to hear so that they can believe.

Do you really believe the person standing in front of you needs the gospel? If we believe that, shouldn't that affect whether we speak?

II. PREACH THE GOSPEL DEPENDING UPON GOD — MARK 16:17-18

Mark 16:17-18 “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; **18** They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

These verses describe remarkable signs connected with the advance of the message. Whatever else we address concerning these individual signs, one thing becomes very clear as the passage continues: this mission was never presented as something accomplished through mere human ability.

That matters when we talk about boldness.

Biblical boldness does not mean that you naturally have a fearless personality. It does not mean you are loud. It does not mean you like confrontation. It does not mean you walk into every conversation looking for an argument.

Biblical boldness is the willingness to speak the truth faithfully when pressure would otherwise make you silent.

Look at what happened after Peter and John were commanded to stop preaching.

Acts 4:18-20 “And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. **20** For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

That is boldness.

They were being pressured to stop speaking, and they kept speaking. But do you know what they did afterward? They prayed.

Acts 4:29-31 “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, **30** By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. **31** And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

They asked God for boldness.

That means feeling pressure does not make you spiritually useless. These believers had just been threatened. Paul himself later asked other Christians to pray that he would speak boldly.

Ephesians 6:19-20 “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

If Paul asked people to pray for him to speak boldly, maybe we should quit thinking, “I would witness more if I were naturally better at it.”

Ask God for boldness.

You do not need to become somebody else. You do not need a different personality. You do not have to be the greatest speaker in the room.

Your confidence is not supposed to be in yourself anyway.

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Why was Paul unashamed? Because he knew what the gospel was.

The power is not your personality. The power is not your clever argument. The power is not your ability to pressure somebody into making a decision.

We speak the truth. God gives the increase.

So when you feel nervous, speak anyway. When you feel inadequate, depend upon God. When you do not know how the person will respond, give them the gospel clearly and faithfully.

That is boldness.

III. PREACH THE GOSPEL KNOWING THE LORD IS AT WORK — MARK 16:19-20

Mark 16:19-20 “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. **20** And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

I love the simplicity of verse 20.

Jesus told them to go, and “they went forth.”

He told them to preach, and they “preached every where.”

Then notice what the Bible says: “the Lord working with them.”

There is our part, and there is God's part.

Our responsibility is faithfulness. We cannot make somebody believe. We cannot force a conversion. We cannot manufacture the increase. We give people the truth.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. **7** So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

That should take a tremendous burden off us.

Sometimes we become afraid to witness because we are worried about how the conversation will end. What if they reject it? What if they argue? What if they ask something we cannot answer? What if we explain the gospel and they still refuse to believe?

Give them the truth.

You are responsible to be faithful with the message. You are not responsible to force the result.

And boldness does not mean becoming rude when somebody disagrees with you. Scripture never gives us permission to become needlessly argumentative just because we are preaching something important.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, **25** In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;”

You can be bold without being obnoxious. You can be clear without being cruel. You can refuse to compromise without deliberately trying to provoke somebody.

Our goal is not to prove how tough we are.

Our goal is to get the gospel to people.

And when we remember that the Lord is at work, we can stop measuring faithfulness only by immediate results. Sometimes you plant. Sometimes somebody else waters. God gives the increase.

So speak.

There are people around us who need to hear what we already know. There are people who know us personally but have never heard us clearly explain the gospel. There are conversations we may have avoided because we were nervous about how they would go.

We cannot allow fear to control whether the gospel gets spoken.

CONCLUSION

Mark 16 ends with Jesus sending His disciples out, and then it tells us exactly what they did: “they went forth, and preached every where.”

That is the direction of the gospel. It goes outward.

Why must we preach the gospel boldly? Because people must hear it. Because fear, shame, opposition, and our own weakness can pressure us toward silence. And because our confidence does not rest in ourselves. The Lord is at work, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

Maybe you say, "But I get nervous."

Then pray for boldness.

Maybe you say, "I am not a great speaker."

Then remember where the power is.

Maybe you say, "What if they reject me?"

Your responsibility is faithfulness, not manufacturing the result.

Do we care whether people hear the gospel? Do we believe the consequences of unbelief are real? Do we believe the gospel really is the power of God unto salvation?

Then we cannot be content to keep it to ourselves.

Open your mouth. Give them the truth. Preach the gospel clearly. Preach it faithfully. And when fear tells you to remain silent, ask God for the boldness to speak.

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