

AFRAID TO WITNESS?

Hank Lindstrom

Each of us who have trusted Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour have been appointed as His ambassador. God has given every believer this wonderful privilege and opportunity to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. We are told in II Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Fear is the real obstacle to be overcome. Even the Apostle Paul experienced fear in witnessing. Paul says, "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling (I Corinthians 2:3)." Every Christian who witnesses has a problem with fear.

Has fear overcome you or have you overcome fear? I recently saw a list of possible fears that may hinder you in witnessing:

- 1) The fear of rejection.
- 2) The fear of ridicule.
- 3) The fear of failure.
- 4) The fear of bodily injury.
- 5) The fear of loss of friendship.
- 6) The fear of not knowing what to say.
- 7) The fear of not knowing how a person will respond.
- 8) The fear of trying something new and unknown.
- 9) The fear of not being able to answer a person's questions.
- 10) The fear of intruding into the private areas of people's lives.
- 11) The fear that your fears will show.
- 12) The fear that you will say something wrong.

You are not alone! The greatest heroes of the Bible have experienced fear. Yet they overcame their fears and proclaimed Christ. Fear is not an acceptable excuse. God has said, "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any (Isaiah 44:8)."

Never would the Lord ask us to do anything that we could not accomplish with His help. When Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission to His Church (US), He reminded us that we go forth in His Power and Strength. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:18,19)." Jesus reminds us that he has ALL POWER. He also says in Matthew 28:20 that "I am with you always." Jesus goes with us. Praise the Lord!

Unfortunately fear has many mouths closed for the Lord. Notice how the Lord encouraged the Apostle Paul at Corinth when fear may have kept his mouth closed. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city (Acts 18:9,10)." "Be not afraid, but speak" Paul was told. Fear of physical harm was the fear being dealt with here at Corinth.

Ezekiel the Prophet was afraid of the words and looks of the people. "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house (Ezekiel 2:6)." Obviously, from reading Ezekiel Chapter Two, we learn that not everyone Ezekiel would talk to would be receptive. Hostile is a better word to describe the people he would speak to.

Commanded! We are commanded to present Christ whether people will listen or not listen. Listen to God's Words to Ezekiel. "And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious (Ezekiel 2:7)."

The worst that could happen is that we would be killed for our witness. Jesus told his disciples when He sent

them forth, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul (Matthew 10:28)." All that the enemies of Christ can do to the Christian is to kill the body but they cannot kill the soul. They cannot affect the eternal salvation that God gives the believer in Christ.

Fear of physical harm is dealt with in a number of passages. I Peter 3:13-15 says, "and who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good? But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." "Don't be afraid" is the message again and again. We don't have to be afraid because of the greatness of our God.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27)."

What do we need to do? What is the solution?

The answer! "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise His Word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me (Psalms 56:3,4)."

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:9)."

We are commanded to, "Go into all the world, and preach (announce) the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)." We are also commanded to not be afraid, but to be strong and to be of good courage.