

Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the Spread of God's Word

Unashamed and Unafraid, Part 2

Acts 20:17-38

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, March 22, 2020

I. You'll Need to Communicate More than Just Your Personal Testimony

Acts 20:21 "Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul didn't give them what they *wanted*; he gave them what they *needed*—the Gospel!

Paul had a powerful story, but he doesn't go around telling it over and over. He goes around telling a better story—the story of what God has done in His Son, Jesus Christ, by sending Him to the cross and raising Him from the dead in payment for our sins!

II. You'll Need to Embrace All of God's Word Even in the Face of Persecution and Pushback

Until you get your own thoughts off the table you can't even begin to submit to and embrace God's Word.

It's our job to lift up the Bible and tell people who God is and what He says about every area of life, even when we know it will offend them at some point.

If you really want to know God, you can't just believe anything you want about Him. You have to find out what's true—and He has revealed Himself to us in His Word!

A. The World Has Always Been Hostile and Offended by God's Truth

We *have to* hold on to God's truth! It's not optional.

Acts 20:20 "...I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house."

Acts 20:27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

If your goal is to not offend people, then you will be regularly revising God's Word. You'll end up spending your Christian life as an *editor* instead of a *publisher*!

God has called us to publish or proclaim His Word, not revise it!

When someone says they can't believe the Bible because they find parts of it very offensive to them, we can respond with: "I understand. Me too! And that's one of the biggest reasons why we know the Bible is inspired by God and not written by a committee of people in one particular culture."

Isaiah 5:20-21 "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes..."

As you look at the history of Christian persecution, it's often secondary issues and not the Gospel itself that sets off a new round of persecution.

When people persecute, what's usually going on is that one or more of our Christian ethics or morals is in direct opposition with how they want to live and what they want to do with their own bodies.

If we want to make an impact, we have to come to grips with the fact that we are up against the pressure to compromise God's Word.

"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not professing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

~ Martin Luther

B. The Church Has Often Had Insiders Who Work Hard to Lead Us Away from God's Truth

Acts 20:30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

NIV "...men will arise and distort the truth..."

ESV "...men speaking twisted things..."

The greatest challenge we face in the days ahead is not just persecution but seduction—the temptation to water down God's Word so that we can fit in and not be so odd.

Epidemic numbers of Christians are no longer reading their Bibles but are faithfully reading the blogs and listening to the podcasts of their favorite social media Christian celebrity.

When that celebrity steps away from Christianity, their followers do the same because their faith was never based on the truth of God's Word to begin with.

"... People will come to love and adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think."

~ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 1985

Postman predicted that with the rise of technology and communication, people would not be deprived of information, but would be given so much that they would become passive and egocentric. He feared that "truth would be lost in a sea of irrelevance."

We have a culture of Christians who no longer see truth as fixed in God's Word but prefer to see it as something more fluid and experiential that can be shaped by the latest trends of our day.

III. You'll Need to Add Tears to Your Truth Because That's What Our Savior Did

Without adding tears to your truth, it's not likely you'll see much impact on the people around you.

Acts 20:19 "...with many tears..."

Acts 20:31 "...remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

Acts 20:37 "Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him."

Paul says when you do ministry right, serving the Lord means getting so intensely involved in people's struggles that you cry with them and over them!

Luke 19:41 "...as Jesus drew near, He saw the city and wept over it."

Do you weep over sin and brokenness or are disdain and disgust your only emotions?

For God to use us in a mighty way, we need to have bold and broken hearts! Boldness alone for the cause of truth will not make the impact that bold *and* broken hearts will.

Philippians 3:18-19 "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame – who set their mind on earthly things."

Acts 20:28 "...which He purchased with His own blood."

Romans 8:31-32 "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Your confidence in God's care is rooted in the cross! If God did that back then, He'll take care of you now!