

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

What Does Real Courage Look Like?

Acts 22:1-21

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, July 12, 2020

I. What Are We as Christians Even Called to Be Most Courageous About?

Acts 22:1 “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.”

Regardless of how Paul was being pressed or attacked, he continually brought it back to the Gospel because he knew that's what mattered most. He knew that's what would make the biggest difference.

Sharing the Gospel is what we should be the most focused on and most courageous about, regardless of what's going on in our culture.

Titus 3:3-6 “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

“Christians seek to reconcile people to God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:11ff). When people are reconciled to God, they have a new identity in Christ, thus resulting in a new perspective of others because #WeAreFamily. Of course, Christians involve themselves in other worthy endeavors in life apart from evangelism. That's fine, but I don't think anything will bring about true, lasting reconciliation between people groups apart from the Gospel. Most 'solutions' you see being suggested today will not only fail to work, but will almost certainly make matters worse.”

~ Pastor Peter LaRuffa, on the role of believers in racial reconciliation

What is Grace Fellowship doing about racial reconciliation?

- 1) We're going to stay focused on proclaiming the life-changing message of the Gospel that changes hearts by reconciling people to God in a way that changes how they see others.
- 2) We're going to keep doing biblical counseling with real people one-on-one, helping them to change and grow so that they can live out the power of the Gospel.
- 3) We're going to keep equipping every believer to head out into the culture to make a difference in whatever area God's Spirit places on their hearts.

The Bible never condones anarchy or calls the people of God to use violence and break laws to promote a good cause.

Luke 9:55 “...You do not know what kind of spirit you are of.”

In other words, God is saying “That's not My Spirit you have right now because that's not the way I get things done!”

II. How Should that Courage Affect the Way We Speak to People Around Us – Even If We Feel Threatened or Attacked?

[See Acts 21:34-40]

Paul's calm, gracious, civil, and humble demeanor stands out in stark contrast to the way everyone else is acting. Paul is not angry or rude...and he states his case without attacking his opponents.

Acts 21:37 "...May I speak to you?"

Acts 21:39 "...I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

It is great to be passionate and it's great to want to make a difference in our culture, but we're supposed to be a peculiar people who do not talk and act just like everyone else.

Staying so calm and self-controlled demonstrated the amount of love and compassion Paul still had for the crowd that was coming against him.

1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear..."

James 1:20 "...the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

No matter how just or worthy the cause, you will never accomplish the purposes of God through fear and anger. He's called us to live and act radically different than the rest of the world, regardless of what's going on in the world.

III. Where Should We Put Our Hope for Real Change?

The greatest hope for our country and the world is still the Gospel and our Lord, Jesus Christ!

We need to remember that there's still a brilliant, clear, and glorious shaft of light that penetrates this darkness and will ultimately shatter it. His name is Jesus, who died and rose again to give us the greatest message of reconciliation—the Gospel.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

John 20:21 "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."

In other words, what God the Father sent Jesus to do is what we should be doing!

Don't set the Gospel aside or act like something else is more important than reconciling people to God through His Son. The Gospel is the most powerful change-agent in the world!

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..."