

A Call For Boldness, Courage, And Fearlessness

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” –Joshua 1:9

What do Cleveland Brown’s running back Leroy Kelly, New York Yankee’s first baseman Babe Dahlgren, and Los Angeles Lakers center Vlade Divac have in common? If you guessed that each followed a legend in their particular sport you are correct. Kelly took Jim Brown’s spot in the Browns backfield, Dahlgren took over for Lou Gehrig, and Divac replaced the retired Kareem Abdul Jabbar.

So what? You might be asking who cares about sports figures. I think Joshua had an even greater assignment when he assumed the unenviable position of following Moses in leading the Israelites. I can’t even begin to imagine what that would be like. There was one thing that Joshua possessed that none of the people listed above possessed though. That one thing was God’s leading and direction to be strong and courageous for He was with him wherever he went. Talk about lifting your confidence.

One of the many things that churches and church leadership lacks today is an appreciation for the promises of God. Consider just these few.

- James 4:7 – Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- 1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- Deuteronomy 31:8 – The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or

forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

- Isaiah 54:17 – No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me, declares the LORD.

I could fill up many more pages with verses that tell us God is with us to strengthen us for the difficulties we face in fulfilling the assignments He gives us. That being the case, why are so many individual Christians and so many churches weak and afraid when it comes to putting their faith to action? Could it be that they've never been taught the Word of God or that they've never heard their pastor encourage them to trust God for the provision of everything they need to be obedient to His calling upon their life?

I remember reading a book over 25 years ago that made what I considered then and more so today a very profound statement. The author said that God is always working to accomplish His plans and that He is always working all around you. Therefore it is incumbent upon every believer to pray and ask God to show you where He is working and to seek to join Him in that work.

Now consider this friend: If God is always working around you and He reveals where He is working to you, isn't that an invitation to join Him? And if God invites you to join Him won't He provide everything you need to fulfill that assignment? Pastor Chuck Smith was fond of saying that where God guides God provides and it is just as true today as it was for Moses and Joshua.

Since the above is true then why are there still so few laborers in the fields? If God reveals His work, calls Christians to the work, provides them with the necessary resources, and gives them strength and courage, why are the laborers so few? Sheep will follow their shepherd. It is a law

of nature. Is it possible that faith among Christians today is lacking because the shepherds of America are more concerned with being liked and well thought of in their communities than they are concerned about being faithful to God's call to be strong and courageous and to go out and conquer the darkness in the power and authority of Jesus name?

Since God issues His call to us, provides the necessary resources for us to accomplish what He desires, and goes with us as we move forward into every new land, why is there such widespread apathy and outright refusal to go?

AW Tozer was a man for the ages. He was a pastor and prolific author who gave his thoughts on the church and Christianity without apology. Although he went to his glory in the early 1960's his words are just as timely today as they were then

In a book which is a compilation of his writings, Tozer said this:

If Christianity is to receive a rejuvenation, it must be by other means than any now being used. If the Church in the second half of this century is to recover from the injuries she suffered in the first half, there must appear a new type of preacher.

Another kind of religious leader must arise among us. He must be of the old prophet type, a man who has seen visions of God and has heard a voice from the Throne. When he comes (and I pray God there will be not one but many), he will stand in flat contradiction to everything our smirking, smooth civilization holds dear.

He will contradict, denounce and protest in the name of God and will earn the hatred and opposition of a large segment of Christendom. Such a man is likely to be lean, rugged, blunt-spoken and a little bit angry with the world.

He will love Christ and the souls of men to the point of

willingness to die for the glory of the One and the salvation of the other. But he will fear nothing that breathes with mortal breath.[\[1\]](#)

This captures the heart of the issue friends. There is a sore lack of fearlessness within the body of Christ today and most glaringly in the Christian pulpits of America. Oh but Mike don't you know the day of the fire-breathing preacher has passed like the dinosaur before it? Then I say it is time to revive the fire-breathing shepherd again! But Mike this kind of pastor will not be liked by his peers and most Christians won't care for someone like that?

Paul what do you think of those objections?

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. Galatians 1:9-10

Listen to me pastor, elder, deacon, or ministry leader. If your primary concern is to please your congregants, your friends, your neighbors, or anyone else as a first and primary focus you are in rebellion to the One who called you into the Gospel ministry. If you are thinking, "Well I don't preach I only lead a Bible study so I'm not any of those things," and that therefore this does not apply to you let me remind you of this:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Here is Tozer again:

A prophet is one who knows his times and what God is trying to say to the people of his times.

Today we need prophetic preachers – not preachers of prophecy merely, but preachers with a gift of prophecy. The word of wisdom is missing. We need the gift of discernment again in our pulpits. It is not ability to predict that we need, but the anointed eye, the power of spiritual penetration and interpretation, the ability to appraise the religious scene as viewed from God's position, and to tell us what is actually going on.

What is needed desperately today is prophetic insight. Scholars can interpret the past; it takes prophets to interpret the present. Learning will enable a man to pass judgment on our yesterdays, but it requires a gift of clear seeing to pass sentence on our own day.[\[2\]](#)

My point here is that serving God, which all Christians are commanded to do, means that you will be like a fish out of water. You will stick out like a sore thumb. You will march to a different drummer. Ok enough of the idioms – you will look, act, and speak differently than the culture at large. You will be a man or woman alive with a passion to speak to people about the grand delusion that has enveloped much of the Church and consequently much of what is thought to constitute outreach. You will be bold and courageous with joy and passion.

Pastors Have Accepted the Wrong Model

One of the many wrong paths the Church has taken in the last sixty years relates to outreach or evangelism. Many programs were developed to assist Christians in sharing their faith. Over time these programs gave way to new ones and the process evolved from going out into the community to inviting lost people to come to our services. Generally these programs focused on growing the Church through the creation of "events" which lost people might be interested in or in the reshaping of the services from focusing on the believer's edification, encouragement, and equipping to focusing on the lost person. Naturally this new focus meant reducing the amount of time spent teaching the Bible based on the belief that lost people don't know the Bible but they can relate to stories with a moral truth sprinkled in. So, many church services across America became story time with drama skits, musical performances, and other vignettes all designed to lead lost people to biblical truth in the hope they would "get it" and come to faith in Jesus Christ. Today all of these strategies fall under the general heading of Church Growth principles.

Church growth principles whether they claim to have purpose or to be sensitive to spiritual seekers are wrong headed for a number of glaring reasons. Primarily they are wrong because they are not biblical. Marketing and reprogramming the Church to reflect the greater culture in which it exists is simply compromise.

People who know they need God are not looking for what they can find outside the Church every day. They are looking for something that is life-changing. People that are not sure what they are seeking but know that they do not want to continue to live as they are don't need to hear sloppy sermons about acceptance and inclusiveness.

Modern evangelism has forsaken the Gospel mission to go into the world and preach repentance for the salvation of lost sinners. Churches have decided that since Christians won't go to the lost (because it is offensive to tell people they are

separated from God by their sin) they will construct events that might lure them into their meeting places. Churches like this will go to great lengths to not appear like a traditional church. I've even heard of churches canvassing their neighborhoods asking survey type questions such as "what would a church have to be like in order for you to attend," or "what do you think a church should focus on during a Sunday morning service"? This is beyond bizarre folks. Why in the world would Christians go ask lost people what the church should be like? Hello McFly! Get a clue here folks.

When the Church abandons its primary evangelistic mission of Gospel proclamation it has turned its back on the greatest and most powerful resource for changed lives ever given. The Apostle Paul states it clearly: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The household of God is exactly that – the people of God. Refashioning our meetings to lure the unsaved and make them feel accepted and welcomed is insanity. How will an unsaved person who sits under the God-anointed teaching of the Gospel feel accepted and welcomed? Have we forgotten that the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring conviction of sin? (John 16:8)

Why in the world would we want lost people who are going to hell to come and be comfortable in our Bible teaching times, our prayer times, our times of worship? Invite people most certainly, but do not try to soften or minimize the Holy Spirit's power to save a soul trapped in sin. You are not assisting the Lord's work in the lives of your friends if you apologize for Bible teaching that raises lots of questions, worship that focuses on God, and the genuine love of the brethren displayed toward one another.

What we need today is a powerful move of the Holy Spirit upon us so that we go forth fearlessly and in boldness proclaim to

this dying world that only Jesus saves. We have a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us that give testimony to the power of God to save. Therefore let us throw off the shackles of our age that do nothing but entangle us and prevent us from running this race of fearlessness that God has called us to. Let us endure to the end for the glory of God and the salvation of the lost.

Shepherds you have your marching orders.

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E-Mail Mike Spaulding: drmichaelspaulding@gmail.com

E-Mail Mike Spaulding: pastormike@cclohoio.corg

Dr. Mike Spaulding, Host, [Soaring Eagle Radio](#) and [Dr. Mike Live](#)

Footnotes:

[\[1\]](#) This quote appears in *Tozer on Christian Leadership*, compiled by Ron Eggert (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc), 2001, on the March 21 page. It originally was part of Tozer's book, *The Size of the Soul: Principles OF Revival and Spiritual Growth*, compiled by Harry Verploegh (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications Inc), 1992.

[\[2\]](#) Ibid, March 20 page.