

FEARLESS SCREEN (Ephesians 6:18-20)

- Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, the one called to proclaim the Gospel message to the Gentile people asked the church of Ephesus for prayer that he might fearlessly proclaim the Gospel message.
- In the sermon I am going to break down this compound word into two components: fear and less. **Fear** is a negative word and it is based on the assumption that one will get negative consequences for one's behavior. Paul lived during the times of the Roman empire. This was an empire that was relatively peaceful as long as you were bowing down to the emperor and a multitude of Roman gods. Those who did not bow down were severely persecuted because it threatened Roman unity. Paul not only received persecution from Roman but also from the Jewish people. They believed Jesus was an impostor because He was cursed on a tree and because He did not conquer and kill Rome.
- Due to our fear of not conforming but to be loved by this world we as Christians allow the word of God to be more and more watered down in our lives and as a result we become **less and less** likely to be effective as lights unto the nations or to fulfill our roles as His ambassadors
- We as modern Christians do not face the same persecution as Paul but with what little persecution we do face – losing friends and family or maybe even a career opportunity – we tend to conform to this world more than to God's holy word
- While it might appear this passage has nothing to do with us as modern day Christians I believe it has everything do with how poorly we are living our lives. **Do we as Christians fearlessly program the Gospel message or has His message flowed right off our backsides into the oblivion called modern day living?**

THE AMBASSADOR'S CALL

Paul is Called

- Paul's reaction to hearing about Jesus Christ was one of indignation and violence. He got letters from the high priests to take anyone who belonged to the Way and have them imprisoned at Jerusalem. Paul spoke murderous threats to Christians and he was present for the stoning of Stephen with full approval even though sentencing someone to death was illegal for the Jewish people to carry out.
- Fearless was Ananias' response when Jesus told him to speak to Paul and give him the Gentile calling. Can you imagine what he must have thought? Ananias being a Christian, who was a devote follower of the law and a member of the Synagogue, rightly feared Paul in a human sense. He ended up trusting in Jesus and delivered a profound message to Paul: you have been chosen to proclaim the Lord's name to the Gentiles, kings and Israel and you will suffer greatly for saying YES.
- **The Pharisaic persecutor becomes an apologist and missionary.**
- Paul had every reason to fear his missionary especially when it came to travel and to preaching to both the Gentiles of Rome and the Jewish people.

Paul's Missionary Journey

- Based on the map outlining Paul's third missionary journey – he travelled both by land and sea from one place to another. Travel was dangerous even in Roman times.

Shipwrecked at Sea

- Twice Paul states he was shipwrecked at sea
- For example, on his way to Rome a great storm hits so strong that the people on the ship don't eat for fourteen days while the storm rages.
- They were in 90 feet of water so drowning was a grave possibility
- Since they did not have the sonar equipment we have today seeing reefs was impossible at night time. They threw overboard four anchors to keep the boat from hitting reefs and waited for morning
- It was so bad that the sailors tried to abandon ship on a life boat but Paul convinced them to stay
- At daylight they sail for a beach only to hit a sand bar and tear the stern to pieces
- Those who could swim jumped overboard and the rest grabbed planks and paddled there

Paul Bandits

- Rome built roads from one major settlement to another within the Roman empire.
- Historical Saying – "All Roads lead to Rome" was certainly true
- These roads were primarily safe because they were patrolled by Roman guards
- However, at night many bandits would hide in the cliffs or hills waiting to jump anyone who travelled – they would hit fast and run away before anyone could catch them
- Paul states he was in danger of bandits at all times during his journey

Persecution from Jews and Gentiles

- Persecuted by Rome for not bowing to the emperor and for not having belief in a single god
- Persecuted by the Jews for having believed He who hung on a tree was the Messiah who did not defeat Rome

Ambassadors of Christ

- John 15:18 if the world hates you remember the world hated Jesus first
- The more you tell people there is but one way to God the Father in heaven the more they will hate you. This is a world that believes in many gods and many paths to heaven – however they choose to define their own paths.
- As salt of the earth and lights to the nations we as ambassadors are called to preach the good news of Jesus Christ and His path of reconciliation
- Even though His is the only path that saves people will find His path too narrow some to follow

- **Instead of being fearless like Paul we tend to be full of fear and as a result we do far less in God's kingdom than we know we should**

Dam of Living Waters

- Do you remember when you got saved?
- While the whole world around you is like dry parched land, like the vision of Ezekiel and the dry bones you came to life by accepting Jesus as Savior
- You were dead in your sins (Ephesians 2:1) and the Gospel message was foolishness in your eyes (1 Corinthians 1:18). You often mocked those Bible thumpers – you know the ones who believed they have life all figured out!
- When you made Jesus Christ the Lord of your life (Romans 10:9) you were born of the water and Spirit (John 3:5). For a while living waters flowed inside of your soul. Remember thinking that all things were possible? Singing the hymns with enthusiasm and joy? Telling everyone that you loved Jesus? Reading and trying to follow His word? Remember?
- As ambassador's of Christ you are called as the light and salt of the earth to stand out and stand up and say – (2 Corinthians 5:20) – that your hearts of stone (Ezekiel 36:26) when introduced to the living waters will be like flesh that can be molded and reshaped into the image of God. You can know and spend eternity with him

Relationship Building

- We have been created in God's image commanded to love Him and one another (Matthew 22:38-39)
- A desire to have relationships with other people is within our very being
- One creates relationships by sharing one's time and energy with another person
- To create solid friendships sharing common interests is a must
- This world is on the broad path that leads to destruction – they do not approach the light because it exposes their sin (John 3:20) – they hate the light
- They love wandering without restrictions on that broad path indulging in their sinful nature (Romans 1:27-29)
- In John 15:19 it states that to make relationships with the world you must be like them

eve

Keeping God's Commands

- God has an expectation that we are going to take His word and obey it (James 1:22)
- When we go into the world we are to be pure and holy (1 Peter 1:16)
- Because we are light and salt (Matthew 5:13-16) that is not to compromise with this world – no longer conforming to the patterns of this world but daily be renewed by His Spirit (Romans 12:1-2) – the living waters that flow from within (Romans 12:1-2) compel us to do what is right in God's sight

Mother Against Daughter

- Keeping God's commands to be pure means that many people will not want to have a relationship with you! (Luke 12:53) states the Gospel message will create divisions in families even: mother against daughter, son against father ...
- There will be NO common ground – what does the darkness have to do with the light?
- Since we are told to go and make disciples and due to the fact that we can't avoid living in this world – then we must decide how to do so without being polluted

ARE WE FEARLESS?

- Due to our fear of not conforming and be loved by this world we as Christians each day allow the word of God to be more and more watered down in our lives and as a result we become less and less likely to be effective as lights unto the nations or to fulfill our roles as His ambassadors
- We as modern Christians do not face the same persecution as Paul but with what little persecution we do face – losing friends and family or maybe even a career opportunity – we tend to conform to this world more than to God's holy word
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Have your Cake and Eat It Too - Illustration

- Do an illustration dressed up as a chef
- To know what ingredients make a really good cake you need to have a recipe
- The recipe for holy living is found as commands in Gods hoy word
- These ingredients must be added - like flour, eggs, water, baking soda - in the same way we must follow Gods word not merely read it (James 1:22)
- When faced with the fear of not making friends we often compromise foolishly thinking we can have both a holy life and be part of this world at the same time
- We don't follow God's word so we don't offend this world– it is like leaving out the baking soda, or eggs, or more water – watering down Gods word
- We introduce worldly, sinful activities to win friends – this is like adding new ingredients such as sand to the cake
- Then we bake the cake and wonder why is turns out solid like a rock
- No longer easily shaped in His image and longing to conform to this world instead of to God, we like the church of Laodicea are rightly spit out of His mouth (Revelation 3:14-22)

Water Fall

- In the end we are no longer a dam of living waters but like a waterfall
- The rocks of compromise are rigid in our lives
- The dam has broken and the living waters are allowed to flow off of us
- We truly do look beautiful on the outside but are full of dead men's bones and all things unclean