

Eight Keys to Boldness in Evangelism

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I can tell you I have not ceased to pray for your church and for your elders in particular, and I'm so grateful to see what God is continuing to do. I have to say that your church has been, for the years since I've known you, a model of healthy church life in many areas. One area where I think you've been a good example to me and to others is the area of evangelism. And your numerical growth through these years is one of the evidences of that. And I want to buttress your commitment to evangelism this morning by speaking about one aspect of that subject.

Let me begin by asking a rhetorical question. That's a question you're not supposed to answer out loud. And that question is, what would you ask of God to give you concerning evangelism? I think some of would say, God, give me more love for the lost, more compassion for the lost. Who of us has enough love and compassion for the lost? Some of you might ask for more opportunities to witness. Some of you might say, Lord, I need more wisdom in answering the questions that unbelievers ask me, so I could give a better reason for the hope that is in me. But I dare say that many of us would also ask God for greater holy boldness in evangelism.

And so I want to speak to you this morning about holy boldness. It occurred to me, wait, this is two days before the literal 500th year anniversary of the Reformation. And rather than your pastor, I am in the pulpit. Should I have not chosen to speak about the five solas of the Reformation? Well, two things come from my conscience. Number one, I can invite you to a seminar at the Laredo church in about a week and a half where Phil Johnson will be coming from California and be speaking on the five solas. So, I urge you to go there. Phil Johnson is just an excellent expositor of the Word. My other comfort is this: What better way to commemorate the recovery of the biblical Gospel than to urge us to be bold in the proclamation of that Gospel? So, my conscience is eased.

When we think of boldness in evangelism, as in so many areas of the Christian life, there's a need for balance. If holy boldness is in the middle of a continuum, what is on either side? On the one side, we might think of carnal brashness. Bluntness. Unloving, uncaring, uncompassionate, unkind directness. Using evangelism to put more notches on our evangelistic gun. On the other end of the spectrum would be the fear of man. Cowardice, selfishness, that keeps us from sharing the Gospel with those who desperately need it. So let me begin with some disclaimers as to what I, and I think God, does not mean by holy boldness. Boldness in evangelism is not brashness, rudeness, harshness, abrasiveness. It's not being argumentative, insensitive. It's not running over people's sensibilities. It's not being the proverbial bull in the china shop. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:24, "The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, with gentleness, correcting those who are in opposition." Our Lord Jesus said, "Come to Me and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." And it says prophetically about our Lord Jesus, "He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out." To put it bluntly, Jesus did not come as an abrasive, obnoxious, loud-mouth. He did not come as a boisterous rabble rouser.

So by boldness, we don't mean those things. Neither do we mean that boldness is the possession of certain people who have a certain personality or temperament. Those who are perhaps type A or are more aggressive personalities, or those who have the gift of gab. No. Boldness can characterize every Christian by the grace of God. And in calling us to have holy boldness, I am also recognizing that God gives various gifts to His people. Peter sums them up as serving gifts and speaking gifts. Not everybody has a speaking gift. By that I mean that not every Christian is called to verbalize the Gospel to the same degree. If you have a speaking gift, you're going to be doing more speaking than those who have a serving gift, but remember what Jesus says in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine in front of men that they'll see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Even if you don't have a particular speaking gift, if God is going to be glorified by your good works, you somehow need to verbally identify with Jesus. How are they going to know who to give the credit to? You don't want people coming away saying, oh, people aren't so bad after all. Yes, they are. And the only reason I'm good and different is because of what Christ has done. So everybody is called to verbalize the Gospel to some degree. Are you with me on that?

So what is boldness? I'm going to give you a definition in a minute, but my study is based largely on the Greek word for "boldness" in the New Testament. It's the word *parresia*. And it literally comes from a combination of two words: "all" and "speech" Speaking all. And the lexicon would say that boldness is outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech, concealing nothing, passing over nothing, free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage. It's all speech. Before I begin to give you some keys to boldness in evangelism, let me attempt a definition. Holy boldness in evangelism is the Christian virtue of being able to speak about God and His Gospel with frank, unashamed openness, unhindered by the fear of man or what other people will think. Boldness of speech is consistent with a variety of personalities, gifts, and callings, and is consistent with discretion, sensitivity, and gentleness.

I'm privileged to have in my life, as perhaps you have in yours, certain individuals who are examples to me when it comes to boldness in evangelism. Men that I can imitate as they better imitate Christ than I do. One is an 85 year old ex-Amish man. Left the Amish in 1965. I tell him, "you're of the class of '65." And this man, 85 years old, sharp as a tack. I'm in a Bible study with him every Saturday morning. He's always got his pockets loaded down with tracts. He just witnesses freely. It's just wonderful to see. The other is a dear friend of mine and is in his early 70's, with whom I meet regularly who for more than 40 years has done prison ministry. He was an angry young man, incarcerated for armed robbery several times. And I do believe that there will be in heaven hundreds, if not thousands, of men who will be indebted to him for sharing the Gospel with them in prison. I'm thankful for these men. This brother says he's got the gift of spiritual can opener. It's wonderful to watch him turn the conversation around in a very friendly way to the things of the Gospel. And I've learned a lot from him.

Let me give you eight keys to boldness in evangelism. When I preached this sermon some years ago I had seven keys. I've added one and I hope I have time to bring that 8th one.

Key #1: Conversion

What is the first key to holy boldness in evangelism? I'm saying it is conversion. Turn with me to Ephesians 3. And by the way, brethren, I'm always preaching topically when I'm here.

I can preach in an expository way. I do that, but you're getting topical sermons when I'm here. Ephesians 3 And Paul is here talking about the mystery. Verse 4, "By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." Verse 9, "that he was called to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things." Now the mystery has to do with that which previously was not revealed clearly, but now through the apostles is being revealed. In this context, it's the fact that Jew and Gentile are on equal footing in the body of Christ. But what I'm after is found in verses 11 and 12. "This mystery was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whom (this is what I'm after), in Whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." There's our word: boldness. "In Christ Jesus, we have boldness and confident access."

Now, you ask, confident access to what? Or to whom? Look at chapter 2:17-18. "And He, Christ, came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." We have bold access to the Father through Jesus Christ. And friends, what I'm saying to you is that boldness before men doesn't begin there. It begins with a vertical boldness with God through Jesus Christ. And if you looked up Hebrews 4:14-16, you would see that Jesus as our high priest gives us bold, confident access to the throne of God's grace. That's where boldness begins. Boldness before God. And isn't it an amazing thing that we can have boldness before God! It's an amazing thing that we can even approach the all holy God, but as Wesley's hymn says, "Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown through Christ my own." With all that we know about the holiness of God, and all that we know about our own sinfulness, it is amazing that we can approach God's throne boldly. It is only because we have a great Christ that bridges the gap between holy God and sinful man. But it's reality. And boldness in evangelism begins with boldness before God.

Now, it's possible for unsaved people to witness to Christ and even win people to Christ. I have a friend who decades ago was converted at the liberal Riverside Baptist Church in New York City. They didn't preach the Gospel, but somehow, something was said, and my friend said, "I was nailed to the pew." And he was converted. I know some of the young men that influenced me initially in the Christian life proved not to be converted. Someone may have witnessed to you, and you came to Christ, and that person later turned out to be unconverted him or herself. God uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines, right? But generally speaking it's not so. Generally speaking, you're not motivated to tell the Good News unless it has become Good News to you. And so I say that the first key to evangelism is conversion. You need to taste and see that the Lord is good. And that He's a Savior before you're generally inclined to go out and spread that Good News.

Key #2: Confidence in the Authority of the Message

But the second key to boldness in evangelism is confidence in the authority of the message. If your Bibles are open to Ephesians 3, flip over to Ephesians 6:19-20. And Paul says, "And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness (there's our word) the mystery of the Gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in proclaiming it, I may speak boldly, (there it is as an adverb) as I

ought to speak." And I'm picking up on that little phrase, "as I ought to speak." Pray that I would preach boldly as I ought to speak. That's a little Greek particle of necessity. It's the same word used when Jesus said, "I must go through Samaria." It is necessary that I go through Samaria where He converted that Samaritan woman. It's the word used in 1 Timothy 3, "an overseer must be..." Well, pray that I'd be bold as I ought to speak.

Now, you say, why must Paul "ought to speak" the Gospel boldly? Why does the Gospel demand boldness in proclamation? Well, I submit to you, it's because of how Paul describes the Gospel in Romans 1:1, as the "Gospel of God." Because it is the Gospel of God, it demands authoritative boldness. It's the Gospel of God in that it originates from God, and because it is a message about God. One of the names for a preacher is "herald." And that speaks of the man who brings the message from the king. And when a herald came in ancient times or later, he didn't come to a crowd of people saying, "Excuse me, excuse me... I'd like to make a few suggestions to you from the king... excuse me..." He came in the name of the king and said "hear ye, hear ye!" The trumpet was blown. And people were silent. Because if they didn't give attention, they'd have to answer to the king. It has nothing to do with himself. There's no authority within his own person. It's not arrogance on his part. He's bringing a message from the king. And so, he didn't come tentatively with some suggestions. He came with authority. This is what the king says. If you don't like it, you're going to have to deal with the king. I'm only the king's messenger. And so, boldness comes from the fact that we have a message from God. The Apostle Paul in Galatians 1:1 says, "Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." I have been sent not by human authority, but by God and by Christ. And so he exercised that apostleship with authority. And if you understand that the message you are bringing is not your message; it wasn't hatched in your little brain; it is the Gospel of God; it's the message of God; you will speak it with authority.

Let me give a weak illustration. If you're in a field of work where there's a recognized authority. Some of you are in certain fields of work and there are certain men who are recognized experts in that field. And maybe they've written a book. And you're having a discussion with your colleagues about a matter, and you happen to have read the book of the recognized expert in the field. And so, all of a sudden, you speak up and you say, "Well, so and so says..." And all of a sudden there's a hush. Oh, he does? That comes with authority, because he's the recognized expert to whom everybody looks. You don't speak tentatively. You speak with confidence. I happen to know what the recognized expert in the field says. Well, we're speaking from the expert in the field: Almighty God. It's His message. And so boldness springs from confidence in the authority of the message.

Key #3: Confidence in the Power of the Message

But a third source of confidence: Boldness comes from confidence in the power of the message. You know how Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and then the Greek." It is the dunamis - the dynamite of God - unto salvation. We know that the Gospel message has inherent power. Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul says, "For our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in

power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." And knowing that, Paul could say in 2:2, "But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you in the Gospel of God amid much opposition." What fueled his boldness there? He knew that God was able to own the message and accompany it with His power. And that fueled his boldness. Not only is there confidence in the authority or source of the message, but there's inherent power in the message itself when God chooses to own it.

Let me ask you, when you speak the Gospel, where is your confidence? Is it in the person you're talking to? Their free will? And their ability to respond? I hope not. You know what the Bible says about man in his natural condition. 2 Corinthians 4, "If our Gospel is hid, it's hidden to those who are lost in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe." Ephesians 2 says, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned."

D. James Kennedy, of Evangelism Explosion fame, used to say, "Everyone we talk to has a slight impediment. He is blind, deaf, and dead in his sins." A slight impediment. Your confidence can't be in the person receiving the message. Is your confidence in yourself? You may be a very persuasive person; a very eloquent person. But can you by the power of your words open blind eyes and give life to dead sinners? No. Our confidence is not in the power of the person to believe. It is not in ourselves and our ability to persuade. But thanks be to God, when God chooses, when you give that message, it will come with power. And He will do what we can't do. That's why in 2 Corinthians 4, after saying Satan has blinded the minds, he goes on to say, "For God Who said light shall shine out of darkness is the One Who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Praise be to God that the same power that said, "Let there be light," in the beginning of creation, is the God Who is pleased to say to some sin-darkened souls, "Let there be light!" And all of a sudden, the scales fall away, their eyes are opened, they see themselves as sinners and they believe in Jesus Christ. So our confidence or our boldness comes from confidence, not only in the authority of the message, but in the power of the message to open men's hearts.

Key #4: Communion with Jesus Christ that is Present and Vital

Here's a fourth key to boldness: Communion with Jesus Christ that is present and vital. Acts 4:13 You may turn there or just listen. Acts 4:13 says, "Now as they observed the confidence..." (the boldness, the *parresia*) "of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus." Do you see the connection between the boldness with which they spoke and the fact that they had been with Jesus? Here is the Sanhedrin. And they're hearing these fishermen. You're not supposed to know about God and religion. All you know is about how to catch fish. But they're speaking boldly about the things of God to the recognized religious leaders of the day. And they were doing it without apology, without tentativeness. They were declaring boldly. And they saw that boldness, and they said, this is *deja vu*. We have seen this before. Ah yes, we saw it in that brazen rabbi from Nazareth. These men have been with Jesus. That's why they're speaking with such boldness. Because they've been with Jesus.

And brothers and sisters, we are not with Jesus in the flesh because He is in heaven, but we do commune with Jesus. We commune with Him in His Word and through prayer. And it is as we commune with Him personally that we will take on His characteristics. Jesus chose men to be with Him. And a disciple, He said, when He is fully trained, will be like His teacher. And as we are trained by Jesus, by communing with Him in His Word and in prayer, something of Jesus rubs off on us. And remember what it said of Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He spoke as One Who had authority, and not as their scribes. So the more we behold Him, we become like Him, and we become bold like Him, and we speak with authority as He spoke. And the more we commune with the Lord, the more we come to know Him, the more we see Him working in us, working through us, answering our prayers, don't you become more convinced of the reality of the Lord? Like He really is. And He really is alive. Oh, He was real to me when He converted me. I can't account for my life except that He's alive and He turned me from death to life. But that reality grows as you commune with Him and you see more of His reality, more of the truthfulness of His Word, more of Him working in your life, and working in the lives of your brothers and sisters, and working through you. And you're more and more convinced that Jesus is alive. And that communion with Him fuels your boldness. Remember in Acts 4 a little later when the disciples Peter and John are called on the carpet, and they say look, essentially, to paraphrase, do to us what you must. We can't stop speaking the things we have seen and heard. We've seen too much. We've heard too much. We know too much about the reality of this Christ. Do to us what you will. We can't stop speaking. Because He's real to us. And we're trying to make Him real to others. And so, another thing that will give you boldness, is the cultivation of your communion with Jesus.

Are you meeting with Him daily? In His Word, reading, studying, meditating, calling upon Him, pouring out your heart to Him, repenting of your sins, confessing your sins, asking Him to work in you, asking Him to work through you, asking Him to work in your brothers and sisters? By those means of grace, you will see His reality in your life. And it can't help but increase your boldness.

Key #5: Corporate Prayer and the Community of the Saints

Here's a fifth reason or key to boldness in the Christian life; boldness in evangelism: I'm calling it corporate prayer and the community of the saints. I'm in Acts 4 still. After Peter and John are called to account, they are threatened by the authorities in Acts 4:18. "And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." Quit teaching about Jesus. "And then Peter and John answered, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge. We cannot stop speaking about the things we've seen and heard.'" But then, it says in verse 23, "But when they had been released, they went to their own, and reported all that the chief priest and the elders had said to them." And they called upon the body of Christ to pray. And they prayed this amazing prayer. Verse 24, "When they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord, and said, 'Oh, Lord, it is You Who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.'" Essentially, they were pulling rank on the authorities. We're threatened by the authorities. They have power over us. But, we're appealing to God as the One Who has power over them. God, You're the sovereign God. You have the heart of the king in your hands. They were taking

refuge in the higher authority than the authorities that were threatening them. They also made as the basis of their prayer the purpose of God. Verse 28 "You anointed your holy Servant Jesus, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." Appealing to the power of God. Appealing to the purpose of God. We are carrying out your purpose in preaching Jesus Christ.

And notice what they pray for in verse 29. "And now, Lord, take note of their threats. And grant that your bond servants may speak Your Word with all confidence." Boldness. *Parresia*. They didn't even pray for safety. They prayed for greater boldness. We often know the efficacy of a prayer by the way it's answered. How did that register in heaven? Verse 30. "While You extend Your hand to heal and signs and wonders take place through Your name, the name of Your holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the Word of God with boldness." God was pleased with that prayer. He honored it. And He gave them the thing for which they asked. The boldness. And they began to speak the Word of God with boldness.

Now what do we learn from this passage? First of all, if we need boldness - and we do - let's ask God. You don't have because you don't ask. God, I need more courage. I need more boldness. Ask God! That's where we start. But in this context, not only ask God individually, but ask God corporately. Ask God in the gathered church. God is pleased when we pray to Him in concert with one another. And verse 32 says, "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them." The prayer for boldness that God honored was a prayer made in concert with the body of Christ, but it was a body of Christ that was in unity. They were in community together. They were of one heart and one soul. And they were sharing with one another. They were not divided. They were not factious. And so, would we have boldness in evangelism? Let's ask God in prayer, but let's ask God together, as a corporate community with one heart and one soul.

Key #6: A Conscience that is Clear

Another key to boldness in evangelism is a conscience that is clear. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2, and track with me as I read the first several verses of that chapter. Paul says, "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God (there it is - there's our word: *parresia*) to speak to you the Gospel of God amid much opposition." We were bold. What fueled his boldness here? Verse 3, "For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak - not as pleasing men, but God Who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech as you know, nor with the pretext for greed, God as witness, nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority." Do you see where his boldness comes from? It comes from the fact that he has a good conscience. I know why I came to you. It wasn't to be praised by men. It wasn't to get something from you out of greedy motives. Now, there were false teachers who had all kinds of false motives, but Paul said, not so us, by the grace of

God. We didn't have false motives. God knows our hearts. And you know how we conducted ourselves. And so, his boldness was born of a good conscience. And there are other places that affirm that. In Acts 24:15-16, Paul also points us to the value of a good conscience in evangelism. He's testifying before the Jews, and he says, "Having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." In view of this - in view of this coming resurrection, and in view of the eternal destiny of man, "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men."

In another place in 1 Peter 3:15, he talks about the value of a good conscience in witnessing. 1 Peter 3:15 "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence, and keep a good conscience, so that the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. Again, in the context of evangelism, maintain a good conscience. And one more text from the Old Testament. Proverbs 28:1 "The wicked flee when no man is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Matthew Henry comments, "Guilt makes cowards of us all." The righteous are bold as a lion. Now, we are righteous with the righteousness of Christ. Yes. But we are also called to walk righteously and to walk with a blameless conscience.

And brothers and sisters, isn't it your testimony, that you are more likely to be bold in telling other people the Gospel, when you're walking before God with a good conscience? If you have bloodied your conscience with sin, and you've not repented of it, that's not the key to opening your mouth in boldness. You're shrinking back. You're feeling a sense of shame and guilt. Now, we have to be careful of the devil and his accusations. Sometimes when we have sinned, and we have confessed, the devil will still accuse us and make us feel guilty and try to silence us. We must not allow that. We must say, wait a minute, I have sinned. I have repented. I have confessed. I am cleansed. And there's no reason why I can't speak the Gospel. Satan, be gone! Jesus' blood covers me. So don't fall prey to the lies of the devil who will make you feel guilty or want to make you feel guilty when you're not guilty. But on the other hand, let's be like Paul who takes pains to maintain a good conscience toward God and toward men. Maintain short accounts. As soon as you sin in thought, word, or deed, confess it; repent of it. Keep your conscience clear. A good conscience is a powerful weapon in the Christian life for evangelism.

Key #7: Confidential Knowledge that You Have About People

Well, the seventh of eight keys to boldness is what I'm calling confidential knowledge that you have about people. Turn with me to Acts 26. Confidential knowledge. Insider information that you have about people. Acts 26 Paul is testifying before a couple of Roman officials. There's Agrippa and there's Festus. Begin with me at verse 19. "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first and also at Jerusalem, and then throughout all the region of Judea and even to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God performing deeds appropriate to repentance." Paul's giving a travelogue of his ministry. "For this reason, some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the prophets and Moses said was going to take place. That the

Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." Then, he's interrupted. While Paul was saying this in his defense. Festus, another Roman official said, in a loud voice, "Paul, you're out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.' But Paul said, 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king..." King Agrippa, who was a follower of Jehovah, and the Jewish religion - "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence." Boldness. "Since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do.' Agrippa replied to Paul, 'In a short time, you will persuade me to become a Christian.'"

Now, what gave Paul special boldness before King Agrippa? Because Paul knew what Agrippa knew. He was a convert to Judaism. He believed the Old Testament prophets. Those prophets prophesied about the coming Christ. Paul knew that Agrippa knew the prophets and knew that the prophets prophesied about Jesus. He also knew that Agrippa was aware of the circumstances that had taken place surrounding Jesus of Nazareth. He was aware of the life and ministry and death and burial and proclaimed resurrection of Jesus. So, Paul knew what Agrippa knew. He knew he knew those things. And based on that knowledge, he was bold to say to Agrippa, "Do you believe the prophets? I know that you do." And Agrippa was impacted by it. Almost persuaded to be a Christian.

Now how does that relate to us? How will that fuel our boldness? In this way: When you're talking to an unbeliever, you know what he or she knows, whether they're willing to acknowledge it or not. What do all unbelievers know? They know there is a God. Romans 1:21, "Even when they knew God..." Not savingly, but they knew by His divine power, by what they'd seen in creation, they know there's a Creator God. Even when they knew God, they did not honor Him as God. All men know innately that there is a Creator God. Because God put that knowledge within them. What else do they know? They know that there's an eternity. Because Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has put eternity in their hearts. Animals don't have that sense of eternity. They eat, they drink, they sleep. They mate, they play, they die. Eat, drink, sleep, mate, play, die. That's an animal existence. Not so man. You go anywhere on planet Earth and people have a sense of eternity. That's why religion is so universal. There's a deity that needs to be placated, because we know that we're going to give account. They know innately that this life is not all there is. Eternity has been put in their hearts.

What else do they know? They have a basic sense of morality. Right from wrong. Why? Romans 2:14 says what the Law requires has been put on the heart of every man since the creation. What else do they know? They know that there's a coming judgment. Because Romans 1:32 tells us, after a catalog of sins, Paul says, "although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." They know there's a coming judgment. And I'm saying, brothers and sisters, this should be a great source of boldness to us. We have insider information about the unbeliever. He may deny it. She may deny it. She may not acknowledge it. But we know it's true. You can come to any unbeliever and know that they know there's a God, they know there's eternity, a life after this one; they have a sense of right and wrong, and they know they've done wrong and that they're going to face judgment.

Doesn't that give you confidence to declare the Gospel boldly? You've got an ally inside of them. They may not like that ally. They may try to push down and push away that ally. That ally, unless their conscience is utterly seared as with a branding iron, that ally is speaking and affirming what you're saying on the inside. That is another source of boldness in evangelism.

Key #8: Contemplation of the Terror of Judgment

Now previously, when I've preached this message years ago, I only had seven. But just in the last week, I've added an eighth. And we'll close with that. It is this: What will fuel your boldness in evangelism? What ought to perhaps more than any other? Contemplation of the terror of the judgment. Turn to 2 Corinthians 5, and brother, I'm glad you read that passage. Because I want to end with that. 2nd Corinthians 5, as was read in the early verses, he's talking about our ultimate state. Putting off this earthly tent. Pitching this tent for another body in the resurrection. But picking up at verse 9, he says, given the fact that we're going to stand before the Lord, "Therefore, we also have as our ambition whether at home or absent to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." The bema seat of Christ. "So that each one may be recompensed," Rewarded. "For his deeds in the body according to what he has done whether good or bad. Therefore, in light of the coming judgment, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. But we are made manifest to God and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."

Now let me take a couple of minutes to explain my understanding of this, because commentators differ in their interpretation. Some would say that when he says, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, that Paul's only concern is to persuade his detractors of his sincerity and integrity. Now to be sure, if you study 2 Corinthians, he is defending himself against accusations by the Corinthians who have been influenced by false teachers. He is seeking to defend his integrity and sincerity. That's why he says in verse 11, "We are made manifest to God." God knows what we're about. "I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences." I hope you know our sincerity. He is defending himself. And he's basically saying my motive is not underhanded, crafty, manipulative like the false teachers. I operate in the fear of God. But what is the ministry he's defending? In the fear of God, we persuade men. His ministry is one of persuasion. And as you track that word and its usage, you find this in Acts 18:4. "And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks." Persuade them about what? That Jesus is the Christ and they need to believe in Him. And in Acts 28 - the last chapter of Acts, and verse 23, Paul is in Roman custody. He's witnessing. And it says in verse 23, "When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging, (Jewish people), in large numbers, and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the Kingdom of God and trying to persuade them, (there's our word) concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets from morning until evening."

When Paul is persuading, he's persuading men to believe in Jesus. His ministry, the one he's defending in motive, that his motive is the fear of God is a ministry of persuasion. And so he says knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. Now, part of that would be, he's going to stand before the judgement seat of Christ. And He has a reverence for the Lord. And He wants to be able to give a good account. He wants to be faithful to his ministry. He wants the Lord to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've carried out the mission I gave you."

But in persuading men, is not part of his mission to recognize what the fear of the Lord will be for unbelievers? It will be terror for them. And knowing that for unbelievers the day of judgment and the fear of the Lord will be terrible judgment, he persuades men. So I am convinced that this text does apply to evangelism. And that Paul was motivated to persuade men that Jesus is the Christ and that they must believe in Him for eternal life, because He knew the horrible judgment that they would face in the end.

And so I believe, brothers and sisters, that one of the greatest motivations to our boldness in evangelism is the contemplation of the horrific fate that those will face. Some of our own family members, loved ones and friends and co-workers, the destiny they will face apart from Jesus Christ. They will go to a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. They will go to a place of outer darkness, separated from the presence of the Lord. A place where they will be tormented in body and soul, day and night. A place from which they will never be released. And I, beginning with myself, we all need to think more frequently about the horrors of hell and the torments of hell and the fact that some of our loved ones are going there. Not in a morbid sense, but in a realistic sense. Hell is real. No one taught more about hell than the loving, compassionate, gracious Lord Jesus Christ. It's real. And it's endless. And we're not going to get to the end and God say I was only joking, you know I just wanted to scare you, just a little scare tactic - no! What God says, He means. And hell is real. That alone should overcome our silly fears. What does it matter what some person of flesh thinks about me? When they're going to eternal hell? That alone should motivate us to overcome our silly fears and be graciously bold in telling people the Good News.

I close in talking to you, believers, with a quote from Spurgeon. One that I do not live up to and I need more grace from God to practice. Perhaps many of you know it. Spurgeon said, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions. And let not one go unwarned and unprayed for." May that motivate us to be bold in our evangelism.

But before I completely close, I want to appeal to those of you here who have not yet put your trust in Jesus Christ. I've been talking about Christians being bold in evangelism. That's not where boldness must begin with you. You must begin with attaining boldness before God. How can you, a sinner, filthy in your sin, having broken all of the laws of God, ever stand before an infinitely, holy, pure God? Let alone come boldly, come striding boldly into His holy presence? Hebrews 10:19-22 tells us. "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place..." There's our word: confidence. *Parresia*. Boldness. "... to enter the holy place, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh, and since we have a great High Priest, a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." My unbelieving friend, you are a very great sinner. Jesus said, if you just lust after a woman you've committed adultery. And you've committed adultery hundreds, if not thousands of times. Jesus said if you're just angry and hateful towards someone in your heart, you've committed murder in your heart. You are a great sinner. And God is a greatly holy God. How can you come boldly into His presence? Because there's a great Savior Who did a great work. And the cross of Jesus Christ spans that great gulf

between holy God and sinful man. That is your only hope of ever entering God's presence with boldness. Put your trust in Jesus. His perfect life lived for you, which you could not live. And the death suffered for you which you deserved to die, but He's willing to offer His death on your behalf to suffer for your sins, so that you will never have to suffer separation from God now or in eternity. You're a great sinner. God is a greatly holy God. Come to the great Savior Jesus Christ.

And once you do, then you'll find that you'll want to tell others. And the boldness you have before God will then translate into boldness before men. By nature, I am not a very bold person. I'm a rather timid person. Before I was converted, I never had boldness to tell anybody anything. I had no message for anybody. I had nothing to give. I wasn't in anybody's face about anything. But when Jesus Christ saved me, and so convinced me that He was the only mediator between God and man, He took even a fearful, timid person like me, and turned me into a bold witness for Him. But boldness begins with boldness before God. Only one way to attain it. Through Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Our Father, forgive us all for our fears, our cowardice, our selfishness, our lack of love and compassion for lost sinners. Break our hearts, Lord, help us to be more bold. To love sinners better. To love ourselves less. To be willing to risk the estrangement, the alienation, the persecution that will come. Give us a sight of eternity. Give us more of Your heart, Lord Jesus, for those who are lost. And then honor our labors, that through us You might redeem more of Your elect. We pray in Your name, Amen.