

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Don't Fear Men – Teach Them (Proverbs 29:25)

by Dempsey Collins

It was a golden opportunity or so it seemed. For weeks I had wanted to say something to them about their soul, but so many questions and negative thoughts kept getting in the way. “When would be the best time and what will I say when the occasion arises? Maybe I am just not cut out for this kind of work. It is so unlike me to initiate anything with other people, let alone a Bible study with someone I hardly know. There are so many others who can do this better than I can, maybe . . .”

Perhaps you recognize the dilemma. If so, you also realize that often in the midst of such thinking the opportunity slips away with nothing being accomplished. When we let such occasions to sow or cultivate go by because of self-doubt, it is time for some serious soul searching and decision making. Can I blame my neglect to “confess Christ before men” upon a shy personality or is it simply spiritual cowardice? Even if it is timidity, will the Lord allow that as an excuse for not teaching His word or for that matter doing other activities, such as leading prayer in public, reading the Scripture, etc.?

To the evangelist Timothy, Paul wrote: *“God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline”* (II Tim. 1:7).

The amplified translation reads: *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity of cowardice of craven and cringing and fawning fear - but He has given us a spirit of power and of love and of calm and well balanced mind and discipline and self-control.”*

Too many souls were lost in sin. Timothy could not afford to be shy with the only means of cleansing and neither can we.

Someone had the courage to teach us the gospel (which may have been no easy task), but would never had done so if they tried to excuse themselves by blaming timidity. Paul went on to tell Timothy that being timid with the gospel is equivalent to being “ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (v.8).

There are three basic problems involved in timidity. The degree of any one of these depends on various factors during our upbringing. While some are definitely shy than others, all of us must fight this battle, even the greatest of speakers.

- A feeling of inadequacy is part of the problem. We feel inadequate to meet the situation. We fear that we are incapable of the task or at least of doing it well. Moses (Ex. 3:11); Gideon (Jud. 6:15); Saul (I Sam. 9:21; 10:22); Solomon (I Kings 3:7-9); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6) and many others had such feelings. If they would have let these feelings govern them they would never have accomplished the great things they did. But one was made to realize that he had a task to do and that with the Lord's help he could do it. We must believe the same about ourselves. The Lord has work for us to do: teaching His word (Matt. 10:32; Heb. 5:12; Acts 8:4); edification of His body (I Cor. 14:26; Heb. 10:24); showing hospitality (Heb. 13:2) etc. You ARE God's man or God's woman for the job! God does not require the impossible, but requires what is needful and provides grace to make it possible.

If God has the power to help us put away bad habits (I Cor. 6:10-11), to help us harness our thoughts for Him (II Cor. 10:5), to transform our will (Rom. 12:2), He also has the power to help us overcome timidity (Phil. 4:13).

- Fear of failure is another obstacle that often gets in the way. While the first shows a lack of confidence in our work: "Maybe it won't be good enough;" Moses sought to excuse himself from his task by saying "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?" (Ex. 4:1) Moses feared failure. The Lord in answer provided Moses with the tools and credentials he needed to convince the people of Israel: the signs of the staff, leprous hand, and water to blood. In other words, that which would persuade the people did not rest upon the ability of Moses, but upon God and His word. Herein our confidence must also lie, not upon ourselves, but on the power of the gospel; use the tools and credentials God has provided. Sow the gospel seed the best you can WITH the intent of bringing someone to a decision and let God provide the increase. If we sow the precious seed and one still continues in sin, the only failure will be in his refusal to obey.
- The third obstacle we must strive to overcome is fear of rejection. We fear that others will not approve of us. This is perhaps the strongest deterrent of the three. Though all of us have a desire to be liked by all, Jesus plainly said "*Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.*" A man who stands for the truth is not popular with the majority in any generation. Teaching the truth will expose sin and guilt and that guilt can sometimes get very ugly. The person may lash out at you, but rather than feeling sorry for yourself, feel sorry for him in view of what he has actually rejected, God's word and salvation. Rather than fearing the rejection of man we need to fear the rejection of God, if we do not teach His word (II Cor. 5:11). The Lord is our greatest friend. No matter what others may do in reacting to the word, the Lord will "stand by" you and "strengthen" you as He did Paul when no one supported him (II Tim. 4:17).

Do not let fear of people or circumstances rule you, but let Christ rule the circumstances through you. "*For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord . . .*" (II Tim. 1:7-8).