

Face Your Fear and Start to Speak

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[0 : 03] I'm just going to read a few words from Romans chapter ten, just for wider context. Romans ten from verse five. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the Commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down, or who will ascend into the abuse that is to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say?

The word is near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith that we proclaim. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

For the scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between you and Greek for the same Lord as Lord of all bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him and whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not never heard?

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent as it is written? How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news, but they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us. So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

So that's just a kind of overall passage just to keep in our minds as we remember that God speaks of his own sovereignty and the promise that everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved, secure, firm, true. But then he goes on to say, well, how will they be saved unless someone speaks to them? And so there's that whole divine sovereignty and our responsibility. And I guess that's what we've been wrestling with over these last weeks and months together. So tonight we're just going to look at a couple of things in conclusion which are based before you share your faith.

[2 : 40] Chapter four and five, Facing Your Fears and starting to Speak, which kind of brings it all together, brings it all around to some of what we've discussed and some of what we'll see. So just the first thing I want to say is, I think a recognition that we all know is that fear happens. Fear is going to happen when we share our faith, when we live our lives as Christians and enemy territory. We're going to be afraid. There are times when we're going to be afraid and God knows that we're going to be afraid.

And that's okay. That we're afraid. It's what we do with that fear. Of course, that's important. That's how we respond to that.

If we're paralyzed by that fear or if we recoil because of that fear, then that's not what we're called to do, but we are called to recognize and face up to that and understand what we're to do with it in our lives. And as Christians may be broader than just witnessing and sharing our faith, but specifically when it comes to telling other people that we know and that we're around about Jesus. And I think we need to remember three things very quickly. We need to remember we have God, we need to remember we have each other, and we need to remember we have an enemy. And we recognize all these things when we live our Christian lives and we are challenged to share our faith with other people.

So we recognize we have God with us in this. And so God tonight, God knows that we're afraid, and that's okay. That's not a problem to him. I don't think he expects any difference. You know, that whole reality of God speaking into our fears, do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. But we often have that fear. And maybe one of the fears we have is either that God isn't with us or that God isn't going to change this person or God can't change that person. And so we constantly need to remind ourselves of who God is and how we take our fears to

Him.

[5 : 01] There's a nice little verse in Luke chapter twelve, for Jesus is painting his disciples, and he's just talking about faith and the need to trust in God. And he says to them in verse 32, he says, Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. And it's a tremendous little verse. It's just a few words, but it's a really helpful one because it reminds us that God is our shepherd, that God is our Father and God is our King. All in that small little verse, fear not, little children, for yours.

It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. And so we remember that as we live our lives and as you rub shoulders with people and you wonder whether his Kingdom is coming and what place you have to play in that, you recognize his sovereignty, you recognize his whisper into our lives that he is the one that we can trust and not be afraid because of who he is, because he's both our shepherd, to lead us, our Father, to encompass and our King. And that's very important that we have a God. And within that same verse, we're reminded that we have each other. If you're not little flock, and we are a little flock tonight, and even when it's pretty fooling here, it's still a little flock in many ways.

And that's really important when we are afraid of sharing our faith. And I imagine we're all afraid to lesser degree of doing that. We have each other as a family, and I don't mean so much in terms of evangelism. Organizationally, we have the Church. The Church is there to organize evangelism and to organize the preaching and the sharing of faith.

I'm speaking of it more as a culture, an evangelistic culture within the Church family, which is what we try and develop. We've tried to develop here a sense in which we're evangelizing together because there's great fear in the isolation of evangelism. Now I know we're all in workplaces and we're alone and surrounded by people aren't Christians. All the more reason to lean on and to use the community of believers to talk about it, to enthuse one another, to pray for one another as we witness, to be part of our DNA, to mix our friendships so that our unbelieving friends and our Christian friends come together and broaden the base of evangelistic opportunities. And we help each other recognizing we share a calling to evangelize the loss together.

We learn from one another, we help one another in what we do, and we share our experiences. So we're a flock together and fear is assuaged when you're in company. We're much more likely to be afraid when we're alone, when we think there's no one else doing what we do. We have a God who promises his sovereign, who is using us for his glory. We also have an enemy who will play on our fears.

[8 : 52] And that's important to remember as well.

The whole concept of vision, of the armor of God is being prepared because we have an enemy of our soul whose task is to silence our good works, silence our Christian life, our faith, and our sharing of that faith. So we need the armor of God on to enable us to withstand the fear that is within our hearts. So fear will happen. But it's important within that to remember that that's natural because we've got an enemy and we can help overcome that by supporting and encouraging one another and by remembering the promises of God and understanding his sovereignty. All of these things we've spoken of before, there was a quote in the book, it was kind of related to the sovereignty of God and overcoming our fear.

And I tweaked it because I think my tweaks better than the quote because the quote was about walking in a graveyard and speaking to the coffins. And it was God's job to open the coffin. So that was fine. But I thought it was a bit impersonal because it's not coffins. We convert it to people. So I said, the world is a spiritual grievance. Our job is to walk through the Cemetery and speak to reason with and persuade the dry bones there. It's God's job to bring them to life so I can infuse the picture in the book with a biblical picture from Ezekiel and brought the two together, because now we're walking, there is a bit of a fear of walking in a graveyard and spiritually, obviously more so. But our calling is to walk through that Cemetery, reason, persuade and speak to the dry bones. It's God's job to bring them to life.

We can leave that with them. So dealing with our fears, that's the first thing. The second thing is starting to speak, and that's a good place to finish our study. I think about gospel conversations. So in one Corinthians, chapter two, one Corinthians, chapter two, and verses three and four, Paul says, For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified, and I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

[11 : 49] My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and the power, so that your faith might not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

And we are reminded there of the reality of sharing our faith. And again in Ezekiel chapter six, the great passage about the armor of God. And again, Paul brings it to a conclusion by praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication to that and keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the sense and also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. So there's these two great examples of Paul moving from fear, but moving into, into the importance of speaking. And that's really the biggest challenge we have, I guess, is that conversation, the gospel conversations that we pray about and we're looking for.

But the first thing I want to say is that the starting to speak starts with our conversation with God. We need to be speaking to God about our evangelism. That's hugely significant, that we take our fears and our struggles, our need for wisdom, our lack of love, maybe the lack of concern we have and also bringing the people that we're evangelizing or looking for the good opportunity to evangelize, to bringing that to God in prayer, we need to be speaking to him about these things. And so again, part of what we try to do here, I don't know whether it's been successful or not in some ways, no, because we don't see many converts is a prayer culture where we seek to bring or seek to focus our prayer on praying for the lost. You know, that was always the aim of the seven days of prayer, wasn't it? We had three friends we'd pray for for seven days together.

We'd mention them, we'd talk about them, we'd pray about them, we'd pray for each other's friends. And 1271, the same. And I think as leaders, it's so easy to forget, to remind each other and remind all the congregation that that is a significant aim of when we come together for these times of prayer, that we're praying for the people, praying to the God for whom these people need to come to be saved. And we pray about the struggles we have in sharing the gospel. That's where we go, that's where we mention their names and that's where you can become a prayer friend to someone you've never met, praying maybe for someone else's friends, just become a prayer friend for them.

[15 : 07] And we've seen it. We've seen it here, praying for some people that we've never met before because someone else has brought them before us. And that can be a very powerful and significant thing. H. B.

Charles, who wrote a book on prayer, says the things you pray about are the things you trust God to handle. The things you neglect to pray about are the things you trust you can handle on your own. Absolutely wider than evangelistic prayer, but it's interesting, isn't it? Sometimes maybe that's we struggle with it, but we may be failed to bring it to God in prayer. And so the reminder is to first of all, concurrently along with what we do, speak to God about those that are lost that we have the contact with.

And you have heard this 100 times from me. You may be the only person in the world that brings that person's name before God. That person may never be brought before God in prayer unless you bring their name before God. I can think of several people that I presume no one else prays for. And you know, in the story of conversions of people, it's nearly always somewhere along the line someone has prayed for them, someone has been praying for them, someone has granny prayed for them, someone always remembered them before the race, even if they never had a Christian connection.

So prayer, speaking to God, then? I think it's also good sometimes, even if we're not particularly gifted in it, to speak to random people, you know, the way Jesus did, taking the God opportunity with the woman of Samea who you'd never met before, and he spoke to and spoke to so wisely and graciously. Now that might not happen very often. It might not be something you're habitually good at doing. It might be something you don't feel gifted at, but there will be you will find God appointments, you will find opportunities with strangers.

A lot of what we've talked about is making friendships and developing trust and building relationships, which are all really important today. But there may be the God opportunity which you know that the Spirit of God is poking you in the back and saying, speak to this person, the opportunity has arisen. Take it sense it, be ready for it. The promptings of the Holy Spirit in these moments when maybe you're on a train or a bus or a plane or you're at a party and you end up sitting beside someone and you just know that there's a good opportunity. You're not ramming it in,

you're not forcing it.

[17 : 52] It's something clearly that you see God has opened. And you see, I'm tired of speaking to people. I'm on this plane. I just want to watch a film. I just want to be quiet.

I don't want to open up. But, you know, there's that opportunities, and you sense that wrestle. Take the opportunity and leave it with God. So speak to random people when you can, and also speak to your friends. Of course, it's the greatest act of love.

Answer them without dodging the question. What did you do the weekend? Nothing much. Tell them where you were. Tell them what you were doing.

Tell them about your Christian family. Take the opportunities, ask the questions that will challenge them about their preconception. Find out what their functional belief is and challenge it gently.

We're not going to preach at them. We're not going to pass on facts simply to them.

We're going to be loving them, speaking into their fears and their emptiness. Sharing our Story And I think it's important for us to relentlessly work at sharing our story that focuses on Jesus Christ not so much in Church, not so much on philosophical understanding, not so much in morality, but in the person of Jesus Christ. I once was lost, but now I'm found. And how we say that today, how we say that into a lost world, much of the other stuff will come following that. I preach Christ Jesus, and I'm crucified.

[19 : 38] That's what people need to hear about today, and that's hard to get that into the mindset and the thinking of people. But relentlessly work at telling your story around Jesus and pray through that. So I think probably over the last two or three months we've done this. You probably have come across lots of different obstacles to evangelism. And I know what the greatest obstacles to evangelism is in my life.

It's me. It's not anything else. It's me. And we have this great responsibility, great challenge, great privilege of working through that obstacle, working through the fears, working through the insecurities and trusting in God's sovereignty. Loving God's sovereignty because it's God's sovereignty that gives us the passion and the vision and the desire and the assurance that what we're doing is not in vain and just rely on him and on his greatness.

Remember, God loves saving sinners. Genesis 22 when he promises through the Covenant to Abram, he says, there will be more people who are Christs who are part of the Covenant than there are grains of sand in the sea, our stars in the sky. And we need to remember that in this day and age here in Western Europe, where things seem particularly bleak and plead, his promises and faithfully follow him. So before we turn to prayer, just for a few minutes, we've probably looked a lot about people's defenses and people's rejection and different arguments they come up with. But can I just ask?

Throw out some answers quickly before we turn to prayer. What are the things and sharing the gospel today in your situation, or any time for that matter? What is it that people need to know? What are the essential things that people need to know as we go out and live our lives and as we think about sharing our faith? What do I need to know?

Do you think? Fire me. Some things that people need to know if they're going to come to faith.

[22 : 13] Brian, life can change. We're not fearless. What other things do they need to know?

This world isn't all there is. Eternity. Yes.

What sin is?

That's a really big one. And I think it's a challenging one because I think people are preconceptions about what sin the word means, but it's absolutely essential that they recognize that they are sinners before a Holy God. However, we put that across to people, however we do that in a way that we think they can understand a bit more. Anything else, the uniqueness of God, the fact that there is a God, that's quite a big one. Today, many people don't even believe in God.

And you work through how you're going to get them to that position almost in that pre evangelistic stage, how are they going to hell is not a problem to people who don't believe in God, is it?

[23 : 48] So there needs to be a basic recognition of the reality of God that might help.

Yeah. I mean, I kind of gave that away because I said that, but I'm glad Jack picked up on that.

Jesus is really significant, who he claimed to be. I was really encouraged by I mentioned this somewhere else. I think it was maybe our city group, our staff meeting last Monday or whatever on Zoom.

Robin, we go around the Zoom group and we ask how everyone's doing and any prayer points and things. And Robin said, Robin from Winchborough. He said, I'm buzzing today. He said it was great. I've just come in from putting the kids to school and had a great discussion with the lollipop lady who asked about Jesus.

And he said, and I left her saying, you can't just muck about who Jesus. You've got to think about who he says he is. He's either who he says he is or he's a Nutter. And he just left it up and walked away. And that's not a great line because that speaks to people where they are and makes them think, okay, who is he?

Why is that significant? Yeah, absolutely. Jesus. And then all that he claims. Anything else that people need to know?

[25 : 22] I don't have a list that I'm taking off the ear. I'm just wondering if you think there's other things that they themselves are not perfect or that you're not perfect. Now, that's hard. I know, because we all think you're perfect. But yes, that's very true that we associate with people and we're not preaching down at them.

We're not self righteous, which is probably the biggest accusation people have against the Church. These are their hypocrites. They're just self righteous. They're just pointing their finger. They're moralistic.

So somehow coming across and probably the best way is telling your own story, how you've come to faith, how you recognize that before God, you can never be right before God, because a lot of people think obviously Christianity is just for bad people, which it is, but they don't count themselves as bad people and they don't think you're a bad person. So, yeah. Anything else? Getting the old Gray matter working on a Wednesday night. It's hard going.

I know.

Yeah, great. Christianity is liberating rather than restrictive. So there's a freedom and that should be reflected in our lives and the way we live it. So we're not being legalistic in the way we reflect our faith to others who are not Christians. The challenge of all things to all men, that's a good one.

[27 : 01] We're not going to that tonight. Maybe a couple more that I think would be really important. Forgiveness, I think that's a huge one today.

People don't know why they're Guilty, but they are. And we can say, well, we know why you are because you're made in God's image and you can't explain guilty in a sense without morality, and you can't explain morality without something outside yourself. There's avenues in there that you can use.

Hope, another huge issue for a day yet, because there's a lot of hopelessness and a lot of nihilism and a lot of just despair. I would say there's two other things that are also really important that sometimes maybe we forget, maybe a part of that's cultural with us. One is that Jesus loves people. I think Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so is a powerful apologetic.

And I've seen that melt people sometimes who you don't think it would affect because it's very simple and it's very challenging.

And obviously there's a lot more to that. And it's not a simple concept in many ways. But the other thing I think also it's a great weakness, I think in my own efforts to share faith is the call to trust, is that people are actually called to make a decision. And when asking people to not just think about, just consider over a long period or not just take it or leave it, I think there is a calling as believers to provoke people, to put they have to put their trust in him. It's not that he's done all this amazing stuff and that he loves them, and then it doesn't matter what they do.

[29 : 12] They're called to repent. We talked about that and forgiveness and then we're called to trust so I think it's good to think through in our own modeling of our story and the way we share our faith some of these things these things don't all need to happen you don't need this spectacular moment where you get all in the winter it might take a long time, it might just be drip feeding may be one area that particularly God uses to appear someone's conscience but there are important things that people need to know and how will they know if nobody tells them.