

The Fears that Shut Our Mouths

Throughout the Scriptures, believers are exhorted to declare God's message of salvation. However, at least five fears regularly cause us to opt for silence despite the opportunities that the Lord gives us to speak. This workshop will explore:

- The primary fears that stop a verbal witness
- The impact that these fears can have upon our ministries and lives
- The "antidotes" to the fears that the Scriptures provide

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I. Introduction – Acts 18:1-11; a decision that altered world history

A. Paul's effect on Corinth (cf. vv. 6 – 8) -- a fruitful ministry

1. Some were receiving the word and believing
2. Others were ejecting the word and opposing

B. Corinth's effect on Paul (v. 9 cf. 1 Cr. 2:3) – fear

C. The threat to the ongoing ministry – silence

D. The Lord's surgical intervention (vv. 9-10); He give Paul:

1. An exhortation
2. An assurance

E. Pauls' fateful decision (v. 11) – He overcame his fear an continued to proclaim the word

F. Our task:

1. To look at the fears that provoke us to silence
2. To look at the biblical antidotes found in the Lord's assurances
3. To look at the consequences if we succumb to the fears

II. The Perspective

- A. The commandment to fear not, to *proclaim* and not be silent (v. 9 cf.. Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47)
- B. What are the fears that shut our mouths? (The five fears; three are found in the Acts passage above)
 - 1. The fear of abandonment
 - 2. The fear of harm
 - 3. The fear of failure
 - 4. The fear of incompetence
 - 5. The fear of rejections

III. The Fear of Abandonment

- A. Apparently, Paul feared laboring on his own, so...
- B. The Lord's assurance, "I am with you" (v. 10)

IV. The Fear of harm

- A. Apparently, Paul feared physical harm
- B. So, the Lord's assurance, "No one will attack you" (v. 10)
 - 1. Not just a guarantee of physical safety, but of spiritual safety
 - 2. Later, Paul came to understand the reality of that assurance (cf. Phil. 1:21; Rom. 8:31, 35-39)

V. The Fear of failure and Futility

- A. Apparently, Paul feared laboring in vain (cf. Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16)
- B. So, the Lord's assurance, "I have many people in this city" (v. 10)
- C. Whenever the Gospel is proclaimed, God is producing at least five fruits:
 - 1. Saving faith (cf. Rom. 10:13)

2. Biblical division (cf. Matt. 10:34; 2 Cor. 2:14-16)
3. The vindication of God (cf. Ez 2:4)
4. Sanctification/clean hands (cf. Ez. 33:7-8)
5. Conformity into His image (Rom. 12:1-2)

VI. The Fear of Incompetence (cf. Ex 3:10-11, 13; Ex. 4:10)

- A. Moses' fear – “Who am I?...What shall I say?...I’ve never been eloquent...”
- B. The Lord's assurance (3:12, 14)

VII. The Fear of Rejection – Ex. 4:1

- A. Moses' fear -- “What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say?”
- B. The Lord's assurance (3:18; 7:4)
- C. How to deal with this fear
 1. Understand the “irrelevance” (cf. Ez. 2:5)
 2. Identify with the One being rejected (cf. 1 Sam. 8:7)
 3. Embrace the honor of identification (cf. John 15:20)
 4. Rejoice in our acceptance by *God* (cf. Rom. 15:7)

VIII. The Negative Impacts on our Lives and Ministries when our fears shut our mouths

- A. Disobedience
- B. Shame
- C. Ongoing fear
- D. Delay
- E. Diversion

- F. Inaccuracy
- G. Displacement
- H. Theological compromise
- I. “Negative” accountability

IX. The assurances that keep our mouths open, proclaiming the Good News

- A. We are never alone
- B. Nothing can really harm us
- C. Our labor is never in vain
- D. God is competent
- E. Whether we are rejected by people or not, we are beloved and accepted by the Lord

X. Further Reading

- A. *Called to Controversy*, Ruth Rosen
- B. *Not Ashamed*, Ruth Tucker

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