

Live Bolder – Living Convinced

8.6.23

2 Corinthians 5:21

Sunday AM

In my early 20s when I was living in Europe, I got into high adventure sports like rock climbing/repelling, adventure hiking, mountain biking, and snow skiing. And while I was never crazy radical, I have to confess that I enjoyed the exhilaration of the moment. I enjoyed mustering the courage required to boldly step over the side of the cliff, shoot down a narrow rocky trail, and weave my way down a double-black diamond mogul run. Engaging in such activities has given me the confidence to dare to face the untold challenges that we all face in everyday life. I learned how to have boldness in the face of both opportunity and difficulty – and I learned that I'd rather try something and fail at it than to have never tried at all.

2 yrs ago, after getting *Unleashed* from our church's past debt, we launched into a 6 yr missional plan called *Aim Higher, Dream Bigger* – in which we set out to accomplish (6) ministry imperatives to lead our church into the immediate future in our fast-changing world.

In yr-1, after 20 yrs of deferred maintenance, our conviction was to take an in-depth look into every ministry/facility need we had to lay out a plan for re-invigorating, refreshing, and renovating our ministries to enable us to *Shine Brighter* – *b/c the light that shines the farthest, shines the brightest at home.*

In yr-2, our challenge was to *Think Smaller* – that is, to think more personally/relationally by prioritizing *people* over *programs* and to put key relationships w/ God, our families, and others at the forefront of our lives to spur one another toward love/good deeds.

As I've reflected on these past 2 yrs, we have made some remarkable, noticeable progress – and I'm so thankful for your engagement and the Lord's favor.

Today, we officially take up the mantle of yr-3 – which is the call to *Live Bolder*. To Live Bolder is about consciously living daily on mission where we live, work, and play to influence/introduce others to the God who loves them w/ an unconditional, eternal love.

It's about living *equipped, encouraged, and engaged* lives where we're *excited* to be *salt/light* to our family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors so that they might experience the sweet/gracious love of God thru our investment of Jesus in us into them. It's a reminder for us to live *go and tell* lives as we ask the H.S. to connect us to relevant opportunities to be the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus to those our lives intersect w/ each day.

To **Live Bolder** is to live w/ *courageous intentionality*. It's to be so confident in what you believe that you're willing to take calculated/necessary risks to share/express it. It means waking up each day w/ a God-ordained, missional purpose to go into your world to represent/share His love/truth w/ others.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Paul encouraged us to *live bolder* when He informed us that God has called us to be His ambassadors and ministers of reconciliation.

*Christ's love compels us, b/c we're convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view, although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come – the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself thru Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ by not counting people's sins against them. And now, He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's*

*ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal thru us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. He made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**IOW** – God has entrusted His grace/truth to each of us so that we are now His representatives to everyone our lives engage w/ where we live, work, and play.

Essential to engaging in such a terrific calling is the **conviction** that Jesus was who He said He was and that He did what He said He'd do.

It's to be so **apprehended** by the truth/grace of God, that we can't help but share w/ others the hope w/in us. It's to be so **convinced** of the reality of the work of Jesus in our own lives that His *love, mercy, and hope* overflow from us to quench the soul thirst in others as they become fully aware of the reality/vitality of Jesus.

Over the next (4) weeks, we're going to dive deeply into this passage to help us not only understand our calling but to encourage us to live boldly for His glory. But today, I want to start at the end in vs. 21 to establish the essential ingredient – **Living Convinced!**

*He made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

This is easily one of the most important/prolific truths in the Bible for it contains the **Gospel in a nutshell**. In this (1) sentence we see the *love, grace, and mercy* of God on full display to reveal the truth of the atonement and the heart of God – that *God so loved the world...*

In this sentence, we find a simple yet profound truth – *when we could not help ourselves, when we were dead in our trespasses/sins, God in His great love did for us the unimaginable* – **He took our place**. He laid down His life to give us life – and it's on this sole conviction every aspect of the Christian life hinges – b/c God gave Jesus, who was w/out sin, to bear the sin of all humanity, so that anyone who'd believe in Him, and receive His grace, would be made right w/ God.

So, **knowing the weight of this verse**, I want to briefly exegete it and then speak of its value to our lives.

**He** – refers to God the Father. Now, what can't be missed is that ever since the Fall, it was always the Father's plan to make His sinless Son bear the sin of humanity upon Him to rescue humanity into a relationship w/ Him. Meaning – God, in His great love for you/me, **acted of His own initiative** to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. In Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection – *He paid a debt He did not owe to atone for our debt that we had no ability to pay.*

**Even more** – Jesus is God's one/only solution to the problem of sin. As we discussed in our series in the Spring – Jesus isn't **A** way to God, He is the **ONLY** way to God – ***There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*** (Acts 4:12).

**Or as I often ask** – if there was any other way for a person – to be rescued from sin, forgiven, and brought into a loving relationship other than the cross (as in being a good person, having some religious beliefs, etc.) – then why the cross? If the cross is not the single mechanism to rescue a person from condemnation, then it is the greatest, most pointless tragedy in history.

This brings us to the next portion of this passage.

**God made Him who knew no sin to become sin** (*poieo*) to make something/someone into something else referring to how God caused Jesus, the holy Son of the Trinity to become something He was not. While He was holy, He bore our sins to offer us forgiveness.

This phrase is incredibly vital for us to appreciate. For in the fall, **everyone/thing was lost**. Sin/death entered into the world and all of creation was separated from the God who created it. So, to reconcile it, God had to provide a sinless, holy offering as a single means of redemption. Paul speaks of this in Romans 5:12-19.

*Just as sin entered the world thru one man (Adam), and death thru sin, and in this way death came to all people, b/c all have sinned... <sup>(17)</sup> For if by the trespass of the one man, death reigned thru that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life thru the one man, Jesus! Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as thru the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also thru the obedience of the one man (Jesus) the many will be made right. Rm. 5:12, 17-19*

**IOW** – Jesus was made an offering of sin for us. **He wasn't made a sinner but a sin offering** – He was our substitutionary, sacrificial lamb. Thus, while He bore our sin, He never ceased being righteous/worthy.

**Result** – *it is by His wounds we are healed...* Is 53:5

*Only He who was entirely w/out sin of His own was free to bear the sin of others. Only God-become-man could achieve this unblemished victory over Satan and death for our fallen, rebellious race. Such a Mediator was absolutely essential for our reconciliation w/ God.*

**Result** – **in Him we might become right w/ God** (*ginomai*) to cause to be or to come into existence. The Greek word speaks of a once and for all completed action that's ongoing from this point on.

**IOW** – When we place our faith in the finished work of Christ, God miraculously makes us righteous before Him based solely on the atonement of Jesus having nothing to do w/ us and everything to do w/ Him – providing us w/ His certainty/security of our salvation.

As **2 Cor. 5:17** says in the transaction of salvation based on my faith reply to God's grace of Jesus dying in my place – I've received an entirely **new identity**. I'm no longer lost, I'm found! No longer dead, I'm alive! I'm no longer stained, I'm clean! I'm no longer hopeless, I'm hope-filled – forever a new creation!

So, what is the significance of this truth? If you have truly experienced the life-changing grace of God...

1 You have been **S – SET APART**

You've been set apart from sin **to** God w/ the mandate and H.S. to help you to live set apart from sin **for** God.

*He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves so that in Him we have redemption thru His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14*

Paul said that when we were drowning in sin, God rescued and set us apart from sin unto Himself transforming us from sinners to saints and making us heirs of His grace.

*I have been crucified w/ Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me – and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20*

Set apart from sin to God to live set apart from sin for God.

2 You have been **A – ADOPTED**

To adopt a child is to make them a legal son/daughter. In Scripture, adoption is one of the metaphors used to explain how Christians are brought into God's family. In Galatians 4:5 Paul said Jesus came so *we might receive adoption to sonship*. In Romans 8:15, he said – *you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as His own children*.

**In the Roman world**, adoption was a momentous yet common practice. Today, we write a will and leave our wealth to anyone we want, but in Roman times, w/ few exceptions, a man had to pass his wealth on to his son(s). If a man had no sons or felt his sons were incapable or unworthy of managing his wealth, he'd adopt someone whom he'd make a worthy son. These adoptions were not infant adoptions, but the adoption of an older boy and adult man. When the adoption was legally approved, the adoptee would have all his debts canceled and he'd receive a new name. He'd become the legal son of his adoptive father and entitled to all the rights/benefits of a son. A father could disown his natural-born son, but an adoption was irreversible.

The same is true for us in salvation – an irreversible, legally binding transaction occurs in which God changes our name, our identity, our desires, and our eternal destinies – **we become His inheritance**.

3 You have been **V – VALIDATED**

When I speak of being validated by God, I'm speaking of His approval over our lives. B/c of the work of Christ, our lives are substantiated on the basis of His *mercy*, and not on the basis of our *merit* – *as all our righteous deeds are but filthy garments*. Thus, whatever we have in our lives that is of any eternal value is nothing less than a blessing/gift of God.

Jesus spoke to this idea in Luke 18 in the story of the (2) men who went into the temple looking for God's approval/validation. The 1<sup>st</sup> man, a Pharisee, said a long prayer listing all he'd done while the 2<sup>nd</sup> man didn't boast b/c he knew his life fell far short of what God required. Instead, the 2<sup>nd</sup> man prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus said the 2<sup>nd</sup> man went home justified or validated by God.

The approval/validation of God is never earned but received. It doesn't come to us on the basis of our effort but on the basis of *grace*. The value of our lives and ministries never flows from our attempt to win God's approval but flows from the joy of receiving and abiding in His validation thru Christ alone.

4 You have been **E – ENTRUSTED**

In 1 Thessalonians 2:4 Paul writes – *Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted w/ the gospel, so we speak not to please man, but to please God, who tests our hearts*.

**entrusted** – is to put something/someone into the care of another. When it comes to our faith and the Gospel, God has put His truth/grace into the hands of those who've believed/received Him as Lord/Savior. We are now the vessels (*His workmanship*) God uses to share the reality and hope of His love.

As we see in the 2 Corinthians text which we'll discuss in more detail later, ***God's made us His ambassadors entrusting us w/ the ministry of reconciliation***.

**Folks** – this is a BIG deal! Instead of beaming us up to heaven upon our salvation, God has placed the truth of His saving grace into our hands – meaning that how we live and how we engage our world matters.

We have to look no further than the G.C. to understand that God has a plan for spreading the news of His grace and the blessing of His love to the world. Having entrusted us w/ His Gospel – He sends us out into the highways/byways of life to represent His life where we live, work, and play to influence others to Him.

We find this in His G.C. in **Matthew 28:19-20** – *As you are going into the world, make disciples of all nations – baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and H.S. – teaching them all I have commanded.*

We find His strategy in **Acts 1:8** – *You shall receive power when the H.S. comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world.*

And then, to live out this missional strategy in this crazy, upside-down world, in **Romans 1:16**, Paul says – b/c He is absolutely convinced of the death, burial, and resurrection to transform lives and reconcile people w/ God – *I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone.*

Paul says – God calls, equips, and expects His people – to **Live Bolder** – *to live w/ courageous intentionality for God where we live, work, and play.*

To do this requires that we (1) become convinced that Jesus was who He said He was and did what He said He'd do. (2) It requires we walk w/ God on a daily basis abiding in Him to walk under His authority, and (3) it requires that we know why we believe what we believe so that we have the confidence to live out and speak up w/ those our lives intersect w/ daily.

I don't know if you know this or not – but the Christian life was never intended to be safe, comfortable, and convenient. Instead, God has always intended for the Christian life to be the greatest, most breathtaking adventure one could ever endeavor. But along w/ faith, it requires w/ *courageous intentionality* to live bolder for His glory. And after 45-yrs of following Jesus – I know this to be the truth. Will you let go and take a leap of faith to live bolder for God?