

# Ambassador III - Character

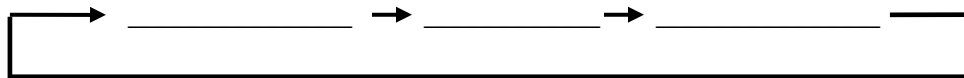
Ambassadors, the Fear of Man, and the Holy Spirit

*White Board Exercise:*

- Is it "fair" to command someone to do the impossible? (levitate for an "A")
- Did Jesus command the impossible of people? If so, name some...
  
- What happened in each case?

*As essential to Spiritual life as breathing is to physical life ...*

*The Cycle of Sanctification --- A life of continuous \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_*



*This week: Knowing the Fear of the LORD, an ambassador is growing in boldness and courage, putting to death the fear of man.*

## Introduction

We often fear evangelism discussion/classes/sermons because we are all so inwardly focused that we expect to walk away with little more than an increased burden of guilt on our backs and a new but shaken resolve to "do better." Today's topic could easily become the "guilt session" of Amb-III. That is not at all the direction I want to take us today.

### THE WALL OF GUILT

Unfortunately, many believers are afraid of the subject of evangelism and may even plan to miss a church service when the announced sermon topic is outreach. Why is this? The sad truth is that frequently preaching and teaching on evangelism operate by trying to produce guilt.

Pastors can easily and with the best of intentions fall into the trap of berating their congregations with commands to evangelize or illustrations about evangelism that seek to motivate by created the maximum amount of guilt in those who hear. This may appear to be successful in the sense that everyone vows to do better in the future. Yet, after a period of carefully induced misery, everything returns to the state of minimal outreach, except that those with a tender conscience are carrying a bigger burden of guilt than before. There is an obvious problem here. Jesus promised that He came to set us free--free from sin, free from condemnation, free from a guilty conscience. It ought to be evident to anyone who teaches God's Word that laying a burden of guilt on believers can never be the best motivation to help us make known the freedom from guilt that the Gospel of Christ grants us.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barrs, Jerram, *The Heart of Evangelism*, Crossway Books, Wheaton Ill. 2001. pp. 129-130.

## *An Ambassador Ought to be Bold Eph 6:18-20*

### *Boldness and the Fear of Man*

#### *Paul had the fear of man.*

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<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 2:3-5** And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

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Boldness is not a lack of fear. It is faith in something bigger than our fears. Confidence in something bigger than our fears gives us strength to do the right thing in spite of opposition or persecution.

If anything is needed in Christian witness today, it is boldness. We don't need bigger music ministries, longer prayer walks or nicer church foyers. We need boldness--wise boldness, gracious boldness, boldness rooted in the hope that we have in the gospel, boldness mixed with love, but boldness nonetheless.

Most Christians admire boldness in other people, and most Christians long for more boldness in their own lives. Boldness inspires us.

#### THE BASIC OBSTACLE TO BOLDNESS

So we must ask why we are timid. Why is it that we desire to have the strength to face the raised fist yet can barely face the raised eyebrow? The basic obstacle to boldness is the fear of man. It's a plague and we have a bad case. Moreover, it's deadly to healthy evangelism.

The phrase "fear of man" comes from Proverbs 29:25: "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, /but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe." **The fear of man is the fear that another person might expose, shame, or harm you.** And it's the greatest single obstacle to evangelism. Fear of man replaces God and sets people as our chief end, our chief idol. Nowadays, rather than bending the knee to carved wood and metal idols, we bow to people, so much so that the fear of man has become the idolatry of our age.<sup>2</sup>

Stiles says it is "a plague and we have a bad case." How do we cure ourselves? *Does it seem kind of hopeless? ... impossible?*

### *Biblical Alternatives to the Fear of Man*

**1. The Fear of God (as Judge)** *Luke 9:25-26; 12:5*

**2. Honoring Christ's Lordship** *1 Peter 3:14-15; 2 Tim 2:15; John 14:15*

*Be sure to distinguish a call to obedience from legalism. Very different things...*

**3. Tapping in to the Spirit's Power** *2 Tim 1:7-9*

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<sup>2</sup> Stiles, J. Mack, *Marks of the Messenger*, IVP Books, Downers Grove Ill. 2001. pp 82-83. Stiles credits much of the content of this chapter to Edward Welch's book *When People are Big and God is Small*, P&R Publishing.

## *The Promise of Power Acts 1:8-9*

### *An Ambassador Prays*

- To a God whom he fears and holds in awe and wonder, confident in God's ability to bring it about.
- For \_\_\_\_\_. *Eph 6:19*

Our best response to fears is to pray, and get others to pray for us...

Paul also asks for boldness in telling the good news. .. If Paul requests prayer to be fearless with the gospel, we should endeavor to gather prayers from others for ourselves. When was the last time you asked for prayer that you would be fearless with the gospel?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 6:19** [praying] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,<sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

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It does not help anyone to pretend that you are always a bold and ready witness, and such pretense certainly does not please God. He is delighted when we acknowledge our weaknesses to Him.<sup>4</sup>

If we confess our sins and shortcomings in the area of witness, just as in any other area of our lives, Jesus promises not only to forgive our failures and inadequacies but to come to our aid and to teach us what to say and how to say it.<sup>5</sup>

### *Courage---Step by step*

I find three general areas where we need boldness over and over again ...

First, we need boldness to simply expose our faith to others. Fear tends to isolate and compartmentalize our faith...

The second area ... is when the door is opened in actual conversation. This means acting in ways that show we are unashamed of the message we bear...

Finally, we need boldness to invite response to the message once we've presented it fully. This is overcoming fear of rejection... We tend to hate putting people on the spot, but the gospel is not really the gospel without letting people know that a response is required.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stiles p. 86-87.

<sup>4</sup> Barrs Jerram, *The Heart of Evangelism*, Crossway Books, Wheaton Ill. 2001p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Barrs p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Stiles p. 87-89.

*Beyond the topic of “fear of man,” the ambassador also prays for ...*

- For \_\_\_\_\_ . (open doors) Col 4:3
- For \_\_\_\_\_ . -- the Colossians 4 text continues... Col 4:4
- For \_\_\_\_\_ .

In every part of Scripture it is evident to us, even with the most cursory reading , that God delights in extending His kingdom through families... So we begin with prayer for those we live with and those we love.<sup>7</sup>

- For \_\_\_\_\_ .

Our next circle of prayer will be for those whom God Providentially places in our lives a work, at school or college, in our leisure activities, in our neighborhoods ... God rules over our lives ... the people we meet during the course of our regular daily activities are not there by chance.<sup>8</sup>

**Breakout--**

- **In what areas of Christian life and ambassadorship do you sense your need the most for the power of the Holy Spirit?**
  - Fear of man--When is the last time you asked someone to pray for you to have boldness?
  - How satisfied are you with your prayer life? How confident you will want to pray as an ambassador ought to pray?
  - How easy do you find it to love your neighbor?
  - Power to resist particular sins that bring reproach
- **Apply the lesson of the white board--Can you find hope for change?**
  - Do you understand that the power for this kind of change doesn't come by sheer force of will?

**Schedule for Upcoming Sundays:**

May 15 - Wk 6 -- *Fruits of the Spirit --Love*  
 May 22 - Wk 7 -- *Fruits of the Spirit II*  
 May 29 - *Off-- Memorial Day weekend*  
 June 5 - Wk 8 -- *Fruits of the Spirit III*

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**Suggested Reading:**

*The Heart of Evangelism- Chapters 6-8*  
*Decision Making and the Will of God--Chapter 8*

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<sup>7</sup> Barrs, p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Barrs p. 47.