

Swallow Hard, Die to Your Fears and Speak With Courage

Last week I was the guest speaker for the Monday morning chapel at Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas. It was a few days before Easter, so I could have shared a nice devotional message about the resurrection of Jesus. But the Holy Spirit had been “bothering” me for a few days, nudging me to give a blunt and honest message about sexual purity and the war on gender.

Nobody at the school told me what to speak about. I could go any direction I wanted. It would have been so much easier to give the “safe” Easter message. I’ll admit I was tempted to do that. Why rock the boat? Why speak on something controversial?

But I knew the Lord was leading me to preach the uncomfortable message. I prayed in the Holy Spirit for a long while before the meeting. Just before I stood in front of those 400 students, I told them that my message would not be easy for me to share. Then I read one of the most politically incorrect passages in the Bible—Deuteronomy 23:1.

It was the first time I’ve read that verse in mixed company. It says: “No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord” (NASB). There was some nervous laughter in the audience, but for the next 30 minutes the students were attentive as I talked about how the sexual perversion of ancient times reflects what is happening in our culture today—particularly with the transgender movement.

At the close of my message, after I challenged the students to repent of pornography, fornication or other sexual sins, I shared my own painful story of childhood sexual abuse. I reminded them that no matter what sexual sin they had

committed, or what sexual sin was forced on them, Jesus offers healing, forgiveness and restoration.

When I invited students to come to the front for prayer, some ran from their seats. Some lay prostrate on the floor, some cried in anguish and many lingered after the service was over to get prayer or to share a confession. As I surveyed the scene, all I could think of was how easy it would have been for me to avoid preaching that sermon.

We've all been at that fork in the road where we could take the easy route. In today's culture, Satan's raging can intimidate us into silence. We tend to cower, frozen in fear like the Israelites who were traumatized by Goliath's taunts. What we need is the boldness of David, who dared to challenge his enemy. If you need courage to confront giants, take these steps:

1. Pray for boldness. This was King David's secret. Psalm 138:3 says: "On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul." The Holy Spirit lives inside of you, and He doesn't want to be quiet. If you pray, He will roar through you.

2. Put no conditions on your obedience. Full surrender is the first step toward courage. You must relinquish your fears, die to your selfishness and renounce all worries about what people think of you. Say with the prophet Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa. 6:8).

3. Don't avoid the politically incorrect topics. Evangelist Catherine Booth once said: "If we are to better the future we must disturb the present." We will never bring change by being nice. Truth is a sword with a sharp blade. British preacher Charles Spurgeon said: "You and I cannot be useful if we want to be sweet as honey in the mouths of men."

4. Ask God to give you thick skin. There will always be consequences for speaking truth. Today, if you dare to

challenge Jezebel's authority, you will be insulted, vilified, threatened and canceled. Don't let the criticism bother you. Our job is not to protect our reputation but to love our enemies, and to rejoice that we get to suffer for the name of Jesus.

✘ We can't be excused from persecution, but we can find the grace to endure it. When Stephen preached about Jesus to a hostile mob, he didn't even get to finish his message before they began hurling rocks. Yet his face glowed with God's glory as they killed him.

Our society is becoming increasingly violent, and demon-possessed people are collecting weapons and making plots to kill. I won't be surprised if they begin targeting preachers of the gospel—but we can't let fear of backlash keep us quiet. Please ask God to give you supernatural boldness in this challenging season.

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