

Coach House Church BEACONS

ARE YOU AFRAID

16TH NOVEMBER 2020

Sometimes we have a real fear of failure. I felt that this week when I was doing my couch to 5k run. I am an asthmatic and have dodgy knees so running is very difficult. Add to that the fact that I tried different knee supports that didn't help my knees as they should. I ended up having to give up very early into the run because my knees were in intense pain which was very disheartening and upsetting. Then when I went on my next run it took all my mental strength to keep going because I didn't want to be forced to stop because my body couldn't take it. I didn't want to fail.

We feel this in lots areas of life. We fear not being good enough to meet standards set by ourselves or society or our friends. We fear rejection by those around us. This can lead to us hiding an important part of who we are - our faith. We don't want to tell those we work with or those we meet about our faith because of the public opinion of Christianity. The media doesn't portray Christians well and even other Christians sometimes don't show the best of our faith.

There are harsh warnings in the bible about hiding what we know about God and our faith in Him. Luke 12:8-9 says "I tell you whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God." We need to be really careful that we don't disown our saviour and our heavenly father. Jesus has done so much for us, we need to be shamelessly telling others of what He has done.

This reminds me of a verse in Romans, Romans 1:16 says "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." This verse was central to a youth group that I was a part of. We wanted to recognise the importance of keeping Christ central in our lives and everyone around us knowing about it. This verse was

written by Paul at a time where the early church faced real persecution. Paul himself was beaten and whipped and put in prison for preaching what he believed. We don't face that kind of persecution in this country today. All we face is someone maybe changing their opinion of us. But it still seems difficult to overcome. So how do we do it?

First we need to remember what the gospel has done for us. The gospel has taken us from death to life. We have received life when we deserved death. We will be with God eternally when we deserve eternal punishment for each sin that we have committed, for each time we have tried to be God of our lives instead of putting God in his place. We have been snatched from the jaws of death.

Also, we have been given a personal relationship with God. We have the absolute privilege of coming to God whenever we want to with our repentance, our desires and our hopes and we know He hears us. We have a God who is in control and cares for our welfare. We have a God that knows us all personally and has a plan for each of our lives that is the best for us. We have the Holy Spirit to enable us to do what we thought was impossible, to enable us to live how God wants us to live and in the way that is best.

Secondly, we need to remember we're not alone. God doesn't send us into the world to talk to others and expect us to do it alone. We don't have to grow the seed. All we have to do is plant and maybe water it. We have the Holy Spirit within us to help give us the words. We will not always get our point across perfectly. I am a great one for realising what I should have said a few hours after or even a day or so after I am in the moment. But, the Holy Spirit will be there at key moments. He has amazing power as seen in Acts when the Holy Spirit first came upon the disciples. There are lots of occasions in the bible where the Holy Spirit came upon the believers and enabled them to speak boldly of the gospel. So if we want to be bold, we need to ask God for more of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we will fail, but the important thing is to try again.

Thirdly, if we live with Christ's love, people usually won't reject us. There are people and times where people do reject us just based on our faith, but usually people will see the love that we have and how we act with goodness and will accept us, even if they disagree with our faith. Galatians 5:22-23 says "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." What this means is that all people can see the value in these virtues and if we live with them, people

will find that they often can't help but feel positively towards us. If we love our enemies and we do good to those who hate us, they are likely to change their opinion towards us.

We also need to be careful to not use our standards and try to impose them on others. We can't expect other people to be free of sin. We need to show them the right way, because it's better for them, but not try to force them to act in a way we think is right. We need to remember that Christianity is not solely about how we act. If we acted righteously on the outside but our hearts were still far from God, we would not be saved. If we don't have a living relationship with God, our religion would be worth nothing. We would be like the pharisees, those that think they are righteous by themselves and therefore can treat others with disdain. Jesus warned against this in Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." So we need to get our hearts in the right place and show those that are prisoners of their sin love, just like Jesus did.

So let us not be ashamed of the gospel, fearful of worldly rejection because first of all we probably won't be rejected but also because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. People need to know about this great news and God's included us in His plan to save them.



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