

Being Bold

"I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy." 2 Corinthians 7:4

The Acts of the Apostles tells about Paul's travels. It really would be an **under**statement to say Paul occasionally took a trip. As if he were merely going from Neapolis to Philippi and back. No, the word **trip** is a very weak description of what Paul did. Instead we speak of Paul's Missionary Journeys. Paul didn't merely travel from Neapolis to Philippi, he went from Antioch across Asia minor through Turkey and up to Europe – and then down to Athens Greece and on he went over to this place called Corinth. Now, folks, that's a journey!

But the other thing I think of when I think of Paul and his movement is the word **boldness**. For example, in Ephesus there was a huge uproar when the Christians were speaking of a living God as opposed to the handmade gods that silversmiths and many craftsmen were making loads of money from.

Those craftsmen and sellers were very upset with these Christians talking about a God that was alive in them, a God who created the whole world. They got a crowd together and fomented anger among them so much that they were taking Paul's traveling companions to **trial** -- and **Paul** wanted to go in and help defend them, but his disciples wisely held him back. They knew the crowd was under the force of emotional craziness and that things would not end well for Paul.

But this is just one small example of Paul's boldness. He displayed incredible courage, determination, and fortitude throughout all his journeys. He was a **bold** guy. But his boldness was not just a virtue. He made it crystal clear that his energy came from the **Holy Spirit**. That is pretty clear to me as I read about Paul: I looked at the map of his journeys, I read his writings like the opening scripture from his second letter to the Corinthians "I am acting with great boldness toward you," he said.

Now personally, boldness is a characteristic I exhibit only in small doses. I am proud of myself if I'm bold enough to do my back exercises three times a week. I could blame this lack of boldness on my advancing age and I am sure I often do. But if I am honest, it is also because I only allow the Holy Spirit to impel me a little bit here and a little bit there. When I compare myself to Paul, I look puny.

But I am encouraged by the 18th chapter of Acts in which it became clear that Paul relied on two **lay people**, Priscilla and Aquila, for assistance. It is also clear that many pastors rely **on us laymen and laywomen**, we saints of the church, to do our part, to step up.

But I think God wants more from us. I can see that the Holy Spirit is spreading his grace upon many churches. But I also know that many church members, including me, have **not** been particularly bold.

I don't think I always believe in the church like I should. But that is because **my faith is not as strong** as it needs to be. It is not about me believing in **US**. It is about me believing in **God** to **use** us, to **take care** of us, to **grow and revitalize** us. That is **my** challenge of faith ---- **God is ready**.

I hope we are all ready to be **bold** in our **expectations** of our churches and of what God can do in them. I getting older, but I'll tell you --- sometimes I **feel like a child** because I still have so much to learn, and a such long way to go.

I have become quite at home in my church community, but what I have to **remind** myself of is "don't get too comfortable." I am into comfort to the point that it seems to be a weakness.

I am reading a book by Tom Rainer and he tells of a pastor who said that at one time he led from a posture of either **fear of failure** or **fear of conflict** and how **that kept** him from being a good leader.

I am grateful for pastors who lead with boldness, who do not let any fears they have keep them from believing in their people and in the Holy Spirit.

I think those same fears that I have heard numerous leaders confess can keep Christians from believing in what God can do and is doing in the church. **I hope** we can **step up** and **step out in faith** like Priscilla and Aquila did and

- be **bold in our expectations and courage,**
- **be bold in our belief that the Holy Spirit is here now and ready for us to latch on to his bright lasso,** and let him take us to the next level – wherever that is. -

“I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.” That’s how Paul said it to the Corinthians, and I think that is what he would say to me... to us in our churches.