

Unwavering Witness – Eph 6:19-20

Eph 6:19-20 (p.979); After a break last week, where Pastor Doug preached a much needed message about suffering, and how to rightly view it as believers . . .

We return this week to the final message in our *Pillars of the Church* series (**Intro**)

The first was **unapologetic preaching**; Then unceasing prayer, unashamed worship . . .
And this week, unwavering witness – sharing the Good News of Jesus with boldness
A pillar of the church since Jesus first declared that he would build it
And he did so, by an unwavering proclamation of the gospel

- Like in **Mark 1:15** where he says – *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*
From the get-go, Jesus was unwavering in his witness*****

As were the apostles; Like Paul who *spoke boldly* to the Ephesians – *reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God* (Acts 19:8)
He was unwavering in his witness; And later on, he asked them to pray for him in that respect; Saying in Eph 6:19 . . .
[Pray] *also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*
2 times in as many verses, Paul asks for prayer, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with boldness; Courage, confidence; And then did it – just like Jesus

And the early church followed suit, the believers; It says in Acts 8, they *went about preaching the Word*; Which is why in Acts 12, it *increased and multiplied* . . .
It spread like wildfire; And the church grew in number and maturity (Acts 9:31)
B/c everyone who was a part of it was unwavering in their witness

Which, when you put it all together, means 3 things

Unwavering witness means:

1. Speaking up when others won't

Jesus did it, Paul did it, the church did it; And so did people like Esther in the OT, who spoke to the king when others wouldn't and couldn't
She was unwavering in her witness

2. Staying true when others aren't

Like Joshua (**Josh 24:15**) who said . . .

*Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River [the river Euphrates in Mesopotamia], or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.******
Joshua stayed true when others weren't; He was unwavering in his witness

3. Standing strong when others don't

Like Caleb, also in the OT, who spied on the Promised Land and gave a good report, when others didn't; While they *wilted* in the face of danger, Caleb stood strong
As did (**Heb 11:32-34**) *Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—[33] who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, [34] quenched the power of fire, escaped the*

*edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.******

They stood strong when others didn't; They stayed true when others weren't; They spoke up when others wouldn't; That's what it means to be unwavering in your witness
Something God continues to use in *our* day to build his church
Take a look at this video (**God @ Work – Jenny Hoffman**)

- I trust you're encouraged by that; And spurred on as well (**Summary**)
B/c if we cease to witness, if we stop speaking about what we've seen and heard . . .
If we stop sharing the good news of Jesus with boldness – the *church* stops

Or, from the other side of the coin – if you start faltering in your belief, or fudging in your disciplines, or wavering in your convictions – the *church* wavers
It happened in John's day to the churches in Revelation 2-3 . . .
It happened in the Dark Ages as people cowered in fear . . .
It happened during the Enlightenment as people grew in knowledge . . .
And it will happen now, in our church, if we're not unwavering in our witness

I can preach unapologetically 'til I'm blue in the face; We can worship unashamed 'til we lose our voice; We can pray without ceasing 'til we fall asleep
But if it never leaves the confines of this building; If it doesn't affect the way we live . . .
If it doesn't bolster our testimony and solidify our convictions so that we're as unwavering in the world as we are in the church – it's all for naught
That's why unwavering witness is and always has been, a pillar of the church

- But it doesn't just happen (**Final Summary**)

If you walk out of here thinking you're going to tighten your laces, firm up your resolve, and just be bold – it won't work
You'll be a flash in the pan, and end up disenfranchised and disillusioned
B/c the testimony of Scripture indicates that **unwavering witness requires** at least 10 different ingredients; 10 prerequisites if you will; The first of which is . . .

1. A relationship with Jesus (Acts 4:13)

Acts 4 (p.912); Several of these ingredients come from the book of Acts and the early church, and the first is found in Acts 4:13

That's where Peter and John are being questioned by the Jewish religious council, and after bearing witness to Jesus, it says . . .

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

They had spent time with him; They had cultivated a *relationship* with him – a relationship of discipleship; Of following him; And learning from him

That's the first ingredient for an unwavering witness – a saving relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord of your life

A relationship where you spend time with him and he with you – in prayer, and worship, and study, and service

Apart from that, you don't have anything to witness *about*; Let alone be unwavering in

2. The Spirit's power (Acts 4:8,31)

At the front end of this episode in Acts 4 where Peter was speaking up, staying true, and standing strong – it says in v8 that Peter was *filled with the Holy Spirit*
That is, he was under the Spirit's influence and control
Not like a robot, but fully sensitive to his leading, and fully obedient to his guidance

And then, after they were released and had prayed w/ the other believers, it says in v31 . . .
When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. You see the link? Unwavering witness, boldness . . .
Requires the Spirit's power, the Spirit's influence; And a yielded-ness to it
B/c all the power in the world is for naught, if you don't use it

3. An appreciation for God's work (Acts 4:20)

I'm not talking about being *thankful* for God's work, I'm talking about recognizing it and highly valuing it; Like . . . (sunset, music, sports)
That kind of an appreciation for God's work; Which Peter and John obviously had

B/c in Acts 4:20, after the authorities told them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus any more, they said – *we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*
They were so gripped by the greatness of God's work, they couldn't *help* but bear witness to it; They couldn't help but talk about it
That's what an unwavering witness requires – an appreciation for God's work

Something I'm a bit concerned about around here; I think we're so accustomed to the miraculous work of God among us, we no longer appreciate it
25 people baptized? Eh, par for the course; 40 people saved? Happens all the time
More and more people serving and giving? What's the big deal?
More ministry and discipleship than we have classroom space for? Whatever
We've become so accustomed to the miraculous nature of God's work among us, we don't appreciate it; We're comfortably numb

I think that's why some of you haven't invited someone to church recently, or ever; It's either passé b/c you've lost that lovin' feeling, or you never had it in the first place
An unwavering witness where you can't help but speak of what you've seen and heard, requires an *appreciation* for what you've seen and heard

4. Fervent prayer (Acts 4:29)

You might even say, unceasing prayer; B/c that's what Peter and John did with their friends upon release – they prayed
And notice what they prayed *for* in v29 – *And now, Lord, look upon their threats* [referring to the authorities] *and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness*

They didn't pray for safety; They didn't pray for money; They didn't pray for relief
They prayed for boldness; They prayed to be unwavering in their witness, even *more*
Just like this 2nd grade girl wrote on a Register a while back – “Pray that I wouldn't be so shy about sharing the gospel and inviting people to church.”
From the mouth of babes; And we'd do well to pray the same; Fervently

5. Deliberate action (Acts 9:26-28)

Acts 9:26-28 – *And when he [Paul] had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. [27] But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. [28] So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.*

Unwavering witness requires deliberate action on your part
Like that of Barnabas who took the bull by the horns, brought Paul to the apostles, and stood up for him; He witnessed on Paul's behalf
Just like Paul did on Christ's behalf – going *in and out among them* and *preaching boldly in the name of the Lord*
In the midst of opportunity, they took deliberate action; Just like Jenny did with Katie

6. Risk in the midst of danger (Acts 21-26)

It's a recurring theme in the book of Acts; Especially in the last several chapters where Paul was beaten by the crowd for speaking *out* . . .
Only to be rescued by the Romans to do it all over again
He took risks in the midst of danger

And then did so *again* in front of the *religious* authorities; And then *again* in front of the Roman authorities; And then risked life and limb *at sea* on his way to Rome . . .
B/c he appealed to Caesar; A risk in and of itself

From the danger of man, to the danger of nature – Paul risked his life and well-being, to witness; To share the good news of Jesus with boldness
It wasn't that way all the time; But when it was, and God compelled him – he took the risk; And we should too

7. A love for people (Acts 28:30-31)

Acts 28:30-31 – This is where Paul is in Rome under house arrest, waiting for an audience with Caesar; And it says in v30 . . .
He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, [31] proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Paul could have said no to visitors; But instead, he welcomed them – all of them; And not just a few, but *great numbers* it says in v23
Showing a love for them that far outweighed his circumstances
No love, no witness; It's as simple as that

8. Confidence in the gospel (2 Cor 3:12)

In **2 Cor 3:12**, Paul says – *Since we have such hope, we are very bold.*
IOW since we have such confidence in the ministry of reconciliation – the ministry of sharing the gospel and leading people to the Lord . . .
And since we're so sure of God's power to save those who embrace the hope of glory – *we are very bold* Paul says; And we should be too*****
But it requires a rock solid confidence in both its *power*, and its *content*

If you don't *know* the gospel, if u can't explain it – you'll never be bold about sharing it
So let me encourage you to educate yourself, by getting on our **website** and reading the
gospel presentations under “How To Know God”

Or stop by Books & Things and pick up a copy of **The Story** – a gospel tract
And familiarize yourself with the Romans Road – various verses from the book of
Romans that explains the gospel
Like Rom 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10; 10:13, 8:1; 5:1; 8:38-39; 12:1-2*****

If you're going to be unwavering in your witness, you have to be confident in the gospel –
in both its power and content

9. Persistence in the face of opposition (1 Thess 2:2)

In writing to the church in Thessalonica, Paul says (**1 Thess 2:2**) – *Though we had
already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had
boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.*
Despite the previous opposition and the current *conflict* – they persisted in declaring the
gospel boldly; They didn't quit; They didn't give up*****
Just like Jenny didn't give up on Katie; Be persistent

10. A passion for souls (1 Cor 9:22-23)

That's why Paul says in **1 Cor 9:22-23** – *I have become all things to all people, that by all
means I might save some. [23] I do it all for the sake of the gospel* [i.e. to magnify the
message], *that I may share with them in its blessings.*

That's a passion for souls – identifying with people any way you can, short of sin, in
order to lead them to the Lord . . .

And share with them in the blessings of life to the full and life forever*****

Passion's a requirement; As is fervent prayer and a love for people (**Summary**)
Not to mention confidence, risk, persistence, and all the rest
Otherwise, the church stops; Including ours

- So as we go to **communion** (Servers/Band), take the time to consider where you are in
this – confessing your failure, receiving God's forgiveness . . .
And considering your next steps; And then make a commitment to put them into practice
Maybe even next weekend with an invitation to someone

Whatever the case, examine yourself

And if Jesus is Lord of your life, if you have a personal relationship with him – join us
If you don't, let the bread/cup pass, and take the time to consider why not
Maybe even making *today* the day of your salvation

B/c the Bible says that if you eat and drink without considering your worthiness to
participate, you'll be guilty of showing disrespect and irreverence toward God . . .
And risk bringing judgment on yourself

So get right with God, receive his forgiveness, and rest in the grace of his sacrifice for you
And when the time comes, I'll lead us in eating and drinking together

- At the last supper, Jesus took the bread, broke it, and said this is my body, broken for u
So that the piece of bread in your hand, represents his sacrifice on your behalf

And then Jesus took the cup, saying – *this cup that is poured out for you is the new
covenant in my blood.*

Which means that the cup you hold and what it contains, is symbolic of the blood of
Christ that secured your salvation

Do this, as often as you drink it [he said], *in remembrance of me*

Prayer – Thank you Lord, for saving my soul; Thank you Lord, for making me whole
Thank you Lord, for giving to me, thy great salvation so rich and free; And thank you
for making us your ambassadors w/ a ministry of reconciliation, and message of hope
Find us unwavering in that, and growing in the requirements
And use our *tithes and offerings* now, to further the miraculous work you've begun, and
open the flood gates of your glory all the more

Close – Worship Album – releases Tuesday on iTunes, CD's available at our N.O.W.

Night of Worship – Friday night, 7 p.m.; Favorites, album, oldies

In between now and then, let's make this a week of unceasing prayer – 6:30-7:30pm,

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

Visitor bags; Meet you