

Voices: Boldness the world needs

May 17, 2017

We live in a culture that thinks boldness is *emphasis*. We wear bold clothing or a bold hairstyle. We make a bold move or say something bold. We do this to emphasize our individuality or our rights. We do this to stick out from the crowd. We do this to keep from being taken advantage of. We do this for ourselves.

In fact, we are so good at emphasizing ourselves that when the Bible tells us to be bold, we think the Bible is blessing our self-promotion. We think the Bible protects our right to boldly get up in someone's face to defend our convictions, opinions, rights and individuality.

Somebody tells us to do something we don't like, so we boldly present our middle finger for inspection. Somebody does something that offends us, we boldly put our boot—somewhere.

We don't read the Bible right.

When the Christians ask God to make Peter bold, it's because he wasn't. Peter was a turncoat. Peter was scared of the guys with spears and swords who arrested Jesus. Peter denied he ever knew Jesus. Peter, despite all his bravado and tough talk, didn't even show up to Jesus' crucifixion.

You may object: What about when Jesus was arrested? Well, yes, Peter did cut off the ear of one of the guards who came to arrest Jesus, but what is bold about wielding a dangerous weapon? Swinging a sword or pointing a gun is no bolder than flipping the bird or spiking your hair.

No, Peter wasn't bold when he preached in Jerusalem. Peter was filled with

the Holy Spirit.

Boldness is the mouse standing on the lion's bottom lip to count the lion's teeth.

Boldness is when a single unarmed man dares to stop a column of tanks. The event is described on the PBS *Frontline* webpage.

By the morning of June 5, 1989, the army is in complete control of Beijing. But when all protest in the city seems silenced, the world witnesses one final act of defiance.

About midday, as a column of tanks slowly moves along Chang'an Boulevard toward Tiananmen Square, an unarmed young man carrying shopping bags suddenly steps out in front of the tanks. Instead of running over him, the first tank tries to go around, but the young man steps in front of it again. They repeat this maneuver several more times before the tank stops and turns off its motor. The young man climbs on top of the tank and speaks to the driver before jumping back down again. Soon, the young man is whisked to the side of the road by an unidentified group of people and disappears into the crowd.

To this day, who he was and what became of him remain a mystery.

1989 was a momentous year.

In October 1989, my family traveled to West Germany. We drove through East Germany to West Berlin, saw the Berlin Wall, went under the wall and through the checkpoint into East Berlin for the day and returned to West Berlin that evening. We spent the rest of October 1989 in West Germany, watching and listening to constant discussion of the mounting protests in East Germany. On Nov. 9, 1989, just a few days after we returned to the States, the wall was opened and ultimately demolished.

Months before our trip, tens of thousands of Chinese university students marched on Tiananmen Square demanding democracy. Eventually, the square was cleared by a huge military response that left hundreds of people dead.

As infamous as Tiananmen Square and the events of the spring of 1989 are, nothing is as memorable as the image of that lone man standing down a line of tanks with nothing in his hands but shopping bags. That's boldness!

People of God, we need that kind of boldness today!

We don't need the American brand of boldness. We don't need any more self-serving self-promotion. We don't need to assert our rights and our individuality.

We need people who have nothing but the Holy Spirit in them to stand before the deadly force of evil running rampant in our world, in our country, in our community, in our homes.

We need people who have nothing more than the universe-creating power of the Holy Spirit filling them to speak God's life-giving word with boldness.

We need people who have nothing more than the gift of heaven, the Holy Spirit, empowering them to point people to Jesus Christ, for ...

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Had the tank man waved a gun in front of that line of tanks, there'd be no story to tell. Likewise, if we use the toys of death to stave off dying, we are beaten before we start. Instead, we must be filled with life through the Holy Spirit.

How else will we stand against the deadly power of drugs and violence, pornography and human trafficking, racism and rage, terrorism and false

gods, money and greed, poverty and want, injustice and disease?

How else will we offer life in a world infatuated with death?

I tell you, it won't be by swinging swords and pointing guns.

It will only be through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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