

## **Be Bold**

### **Ephesians 6:10-20**

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

Put on the whole armor of God,  
so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh,  
but against the rulers, against the authorities,  
against the cosmic powers of this present darkness,  
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God,  
so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day,  
and having done everything, to stand firm.

Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist,  
and put on the breastplate of righteousness.

As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready  
to proclaim the gospel of peace.

With all of these, take the shield of faith,  
with which you will be able to quench  
all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,  
which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.  
To that end keep alert  
and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Pray also for me, so that when I speak,  
a message may be given to me to make known with boldness  
the mystery of the gospel,  
for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

# Be Bold

Ephesians 6:10-20

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## I.

Today's scripture reading from Ephesians 6 is a powerful, intimate, and tender passage. The Apostle Paul is writing from prison, calling himself an "ambassador in chains." He is writing to encourage the congregation to be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of God's power. Then, Paul famously launches into a section about the whole armor of God. Finally, he asks (quite revealingly) that the people of the Ephesian church pray for him that he might make known "with boldness" the mystery of the Gospel; that Jesus, the Christ, the incarnate child of God, lived, died, and was resurrected to redeem the cosmos (that's the short story in a nutshell). Which, considering he is already in prison, is a fairly odd thing to say because his boldness in proclaiming the mystery of the Gospel is the very thing that landed him into prison in the first place.

## II.

Boldness, as a concept, is actually fairly narrowly defined: somewhere between brashness, which connotes flagrancy and ostentatiousness, and foolishness which is ill-conceived, and outright reckless. Boldness, though, is a *deserved daring*. Boldness certainly assumes risk, or even danger; and, yet, is in no way unwarranted. Boldness, while not necessarily safe, is sensible (for the most part) if seen in a certain light, and if one possess a proper and accurate understanding of the larger context. Though boldness certainly carries with it some degree of risk, the purpose of being bold is not merely to *push* boundaries, but to *expand* boundaries so as to create a space that is bigger and deeper while at the same time increasingly intricate and nuanced.

## III.

Often times, when we witness other people acting with boldness in *their* lives, we assume that it is such an easy thing is for them; as if *they*, somehow, do not suffer from the same anxiety, fear, and apprehension we feel welling up inside of us when *we* consider what it would be like to act, or live, with a similar degree of boldness in *our* lives. Being bold, in whatever form it takes, and regardless of who is doing it, is never the "easy" thing to do. What Paul should have asked, to be more accurate, is that the congregation in Ephesus

pray for him to *continue* in his boldness, as he is now vividly aware of the consequences of that boldness. He is sitting there in prison. He feels his own fear and anxiety creeping in. He knows that such a circumstance befalling him will be foreboding news for those in the church, and act as a deterrent for them being similarly bold.

#### **IV.**

And, so, Paul instructs them to put on the whole armor of God, which we can only imagine is the same advice and comfort that he, himself, needs to hear at this point. For Paul, the battle is being undertaken is on a cosmic level; with our adversaries being the powers of this present darkness, and the spiritual forces of evil which exist in the heavenly places. So, very high stakes stuff, to be sure.

I do not doubt that such enemies exist, nor should you, but as we go to war with these enemies recognize that the more usual battlefields are those which exist not across the cosmos but within our own nation, within our own communities, within our own churches, within our own relationships and, especially, within our own hearts.

#### **V.**

Remember that earlier I told you that boldness was narrowly defined as a *deserved daring*; something that assumes risk, or even danger, but is in no way unwarranted. That while not necessarily safe, it is sensible if seen in a certain light, and against the backdrop of the larger context. For Paul, the larger context is this cosmic battle which, to me, gets played out at the local level. The battles we fight to be bold in our every day lives are the very means by which the cosmic war is won. But, what makes such an undertaking neither brash or foolish, neither flagrant or reckless is the daringness we deserve through the whole armor of God.

#### **VI.**

As people of faith, as Christians, we are in possession of the *truth*, we know what is going on; so real and comforting it can be worn as if a belt around our waist. We are in command of *righteousness*, we understand the difference between good and evil, between right and wrong; it stands as a breastplate not only to *protect* our heart, but to *nurture* it as well. Our gifts and skills are like

new shoes on our feet: cross-trainers which give us the support and agility to be ready to proclaim God's peace on any court, track, or field of endeavor. We possess a faith which serves as a shield, deflecting and repelling anything which might seek to harm us or keep us from our calling. We wear our salvation like a helmet, safe in the knowledge of where we are going and to whom we belong. And we wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, which pierces every heart.

## **VII.**

Finally, we seek all things through prayer in the Spirit. Asking for comfort, for healing, for mercy, for miracles, for direction and guidance and, to live each day with boldness, with a deserving daring which God has endowed us. Boldness to expand, deepen, and nuance our relationships. Boldness in planning for our future even if this means undertaking endeavors which challenge us and keep us up at night. Boldness in proclaiming the mystery of the Gospel in how we live our lives and exhibit ourselves by being *the* church.

## **VIII.**

Boldness in what we, as *this* church, will manifest in our world; equipped as we are by the whole armor of God. And, boldness, by joining in the cosmic battle, each and every day, in what we do and say. As summer winds down and comes to a close, I hope this coming year will be one which we will remember all of our lives because of the bold action, imagination, and faith upon which we will soon embark. Thank you for the part you will be playing in my life in the months ahead, and for allowing me the privilege of sharing in yours. Amen.