



Acts 4:23-31 “Grant your servants to speak with boldness”

Intro:

After a heated confrontation with the members of the Sanhedrin over the healing of a lame man, Peter and John were arrested, questioned, and threatened for teaching and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Yet, instead of being intimidated, they boldly testified to their faith and challenged the authorities to judge for themselves whether it was right to obey human leaders rather than God.

V.23. The Report

“When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.”

- The word friends comes from the Greek “idios” (G2398) which means “pertaining to oneself, or one's own”. The church was functioning as God intended, walking “in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1a-3)
- The report to their own must have included the fact that the religious leaders were greatly annoyed that they were preaching about Jesus (v.2), that they had been arrested (v.3), questioned about “by what power or by what name” they had healed the lame man (v.7), commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (v.18), and further threatened before being released (v.21). Opposition and persecution had just begun. The early Christians understood that they would need God's power to boldly fulfill the great commission entrusted to them.

V.24-28. The Recognition of God's Sovereignty

“And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, ““Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed” for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

- Instead of lamenting their situation, feeling sorry for themselves, or shrinking back in fear, the church lifted its voice in one accord, proclaiming God's greatness and worth. Their prayer declared two foundational truths: God's creative power and God's sovereign rule.
- “When we pray, we often forget just who it is we pray to; or worse yet, we pray to an imaginary God of our own ideas. The disciples had power in prayer because they knew who they prayed to.” – David Guzik
- Their prayer was full of scripture, in this case, they quoted Psalm 2:1-2 which declares God's sovereignty over the futile rebellion of the nations. Rather than focusing on the threats they faced, they anchored their confidence in the truth that God reigns over every human authority.

V.29-30. The Request

“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and *grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*”

- At a first glance this request seems counterintuitive, the disciples are asking for things that will inevitably lead to more confrontation, not less. Their prayer is consumed with God’s cause and the advance of His kingdom, not their own comfort or safety. They recognize themselves as Christ's servants (Matthew 10:24), entrusted with one primary mission: to proclaim His name to the nations.
- The word **boldness** comes from the Greek “parrēsia” (G3954) meaning “**freedom in speaking or fearless confidence**”. It conveys the idea of speaking openly, courageously, cheerfully, without concealment, ambiguity, or hesitation. The term appears 31 times in the new testament and is frequently used to describe the way Jesus addressed His audience during His ministry.
- This same boldness became the defining characteristic of the early church as believers became empowered by the Holy Spirit. Confident that the gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16), they proclaimed Christ fearlessly despite opposition. This courage marked the apostles from the very beginning of their ministry and continued to characterize their witness throughout the book of Acts.

V.31. The Response

“And 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.”

- Similar to the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit’s presence was manifested in a visible way. More importantly, however, those who gathered in prayer seeking God’s help were freshly filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in every believer at the moment of salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14, John 7:37-39). At the same time, believers are commanded to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), so that we may walk by His power, be led by Him (Galatians 5:16-18), and bear fruit that reflects His character (Galatians 5:22-23)
- God answered their prayer by filling them with His Spirit and granting them the boldness to proclaim the Gospel without fearing the temporary consequences, even to the point of death.

Conclusion and Main Idea:

The church has never needed easier circumstances, human tactics, or corporate planning to fulfill its mission. The real need has been and will always be having boldness to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection as the only means for salvation. That was true of the first church, and it remains true of ours today.

