

## How To Be Bold For Jesus – Acts 4:1-22

Welcome. Livestream. I trust you'll be able to join us in person as well.

Acts 4. We're on a *journey* through the book of Acts under the theme of *Compelled*.

Because that's what we find. People just like us who were . . .

Compelled by the Spirit, compelled by the message, and compelled by Jesus. Especially in this chapter. Which is why we find such *boldness* on display. **(Intro)**

Being compelled and being bold go hand in hand. No compulsion, no boldness.

No Spirit-led, Spirit-enabled unction to act, no boldness to act.

We pick the narrative up in the midst of Peter's explanation to the crowd about the lame man he healed in chapter 3, and what they should do in response.

Which was believe and repent. That was the purpose of the miracle. And the reason it was recorded. That we would believe in Jesus and repent of our sins.

So follow along with me to see what happens. V1.

➤ [1] *And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, [2] greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

The *priests* were those who oversaw the temple rituals, the *captain of the temple* was the chief police officer, and the Sadducees were a religious sect of Judaism.

And not an obscure one. They were the dominant landlords, they were cozy with Rome, the occupying force, and they held the power.

Not only that, but they didn't believe in a resurrection. Of Jesus *or* us. Which is why they were "sad, you see?"

Nor did they believe in a coming *Messiah*. Because in their minds he had already come. In the lineage of the Maccabees. About 200 years earlier.

Put all that together and you can see why they *came upon* them and were *greatly annoyed*.

Because Peter and *John* were teaching the people instead of the *priests*, and they were *proclaiming in Jesus* [the Messiah] *the resurrection from the dead*.

That because *he* rose again, we will too. Completely *contrary* to the Sadducees. .

[3] *And they arrested them* [Peter and John] *and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening*. [And the powers that be didn't meet in the evening. Only the morning.] [4] *But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand*.

Whether that's a *total* of 5 thousand, including those at the end of the chapter 2, or 5k from this situation alone, we don't know.

What we *do* know, is that the gospel had an amazing impact despite the imprisonment of the apostles. All they did was preach and teach it.

All they did was let the lion out of the *cage*.

Which, by way of example, is the first way for *us* to be bold for Jesus:

### 1. Proclaim his gospel with great confidence and hope. (v1-4)

If we're going to be *bold* for Jesus, we have to proclaim the good *news* of Jesus, with confidence and hope.

The good news about who he is, what he did, and the implications for our lives.

Namely, that he left heaven, took on flesh, lived among us, died for our sins, and rose again so that we could too someday. To spend all eternity with *him*, instead hell. And in the meantime, *live* for him. Indwelt by his Spirit to live for his glory. If, we believe and repent. That's the gospel. The very thing Peter and *John* proclaimed.

And if we're going to be bold for Jesus like *they* were, we need to do the same.

We too need to talk about it. We too need to live it out.

It's not just for *pastors* to teach and preach, it's for *all* of us.

And the confidence and hope part comes down to 2 reasons: that's where the power is, and God will use it.

The Apostle Paul says in **Rom 1:16** – *I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*

We can proclaim the gospel with great confidence and hope, because that's where the *power* is. The power of God to save people from the consequences . . .

And bondage of their sin.

And second, God will use it. His word will not return void. Like he says in **Is 55:11**.

[11] *It* [my word God says] *shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

That's where the confidence is. That's why we can proclaim the gospel with hope.

Because God will use it.

Maybe not to save 5000. Or save right now.

But plant a seed? For sure. Water someone's faith? Absolutely. Encourage the church?

Totally.\*\*\*\*\*

If we're going to be *bold* for Jesus, we have to trust the good *news* of Jesus. And then proclaim it accordingly. **(Summary)**

➤ [5] *On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, [6] with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.*

These were the mucky-mucks. The official ruling body under the authority of Rome.

Called the Sanhedrin. Kind of a Supreme Court and Senate all in one.

And it was comprised of the high priests, *rulers*; respected leaders, *elders*; and teachers, *scribes*. 71 in total, mostly from the Sadducees at that time.

And it was dominated by the high priest *Annas*. Who *officially* held that position 20 years earlier, but went on to appoint 5 of his sons, 1 son-in-law, and 1 grandson to the role. Including Caiaphas and John, and probably Alexander. Nepotism at its worst.

[7] *And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"* [8] *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit* [meaning, under his power and control], *said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, [9] if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, [10] let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> way to be bold for Jesus, is . . .

## 2. Don't be ashamed to name his name. (v10)

We talked about this last week, and we'll see it again in weeks to come.

Jesus himself said, "*Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words*, I'll be ashamed of them when I return. (Mk 8:38) Don't go there.

When a situation warrants it, speak Jesus' name explicitly.

Don't hide behind "Lord" or "God" or "him" or even Christ. Say *Jesus*.

If Peter had said in v10, "by the name of Yahweh, or Adonai, or Elohim this man was healed," that would have been the end of it.

Even "in the name of the *Lord*" would have been fine.

But that's not what he said. Because he wanted to make sure credit was given where credit was due. He wanted to make sure *Jesus* was exalted.

If we're going to be bold for Jesus, unashamed to name his name, we have to care more about *his* glory than ours. Because it's not popular to be so overt.

We have to care more about exalting *him* than offending others.

We have to care more about the needs of those who don't *know* him, than we do about the preferences of those who *hate* him.

We have to care more about his *love* for people, than our *fear* of people. (Summary)

If you want to be bold for Jesus, like Peter and John, don't be ashamed to name his name.

➤ [11] *This Jesus* [Peter continues in v11] *is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. [12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*"

The *cornerstone* metaphor in Scripture is intended to portray one of two things:

That Jesus is the solid *foundation* of God's kingdom, like in Is 28:16; or he's the *completion* of God's kingdom. Like in Ps 118:22.

And that's the case here. Because Peter *quotes* Ps 118, and the word *cornerstone*, in *both* places, is literally translated "*head of the corner*."

Implying something that's high and prominent.

And sure enough, 1<sup>st</sup> century writings confirm that. "Head of the corner" was a phrase used to refer to the final capstone placed on the summit of the Jerusalem temple . . .

To *complete* it. (EBC, 304)

So when Peter says that Jesus has become the cornerstone, he's saying in *this* context, that Jesus is the pinnacle and *completion* of God's kingdom. Even though he was rejected.

And what's more, *there is salvation in no one else*. He's the completion of God's kingdom, and the only way to enter it.

*For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*"

In the face of 71 men who could make his life miserable or even snuff it out, he held firm to the truth that Jesus is preeminent and exclusive.

And if *we're* going to be bold for Jesus, we need to do the same.

## 3. Hold firm to the truth that he's the only way to be saved. (v12)

There was no compromise or accommodation in *Peter's* testimony or teaching, and there shouldn't be any in ours.

No matter *what* the cultural pressures are. No matter *how* sincere your friend is in their faith or religion. Sincerity has *never* equaled salvation. Fervor alone *never* saves.

Hold firm. Lovingly and graciously, but firm.

And make no mistake, we *will* be criticized for this. We *will* be marginalized. Even ostracized.

We can say "Jesus saves" all we want. But the minute we say "Jesus *alone* saves," it's a problem. Because it makes every other religion false and idolatrous.

And those who are secular uncomfortable.

All of which will result in more and more backlash, and more and more pressure to live and let live.

But we must not succumb. We have to hold firm. Because . . .

(A) It's true. Jesus *is* the only way to be saved. Straight from God's Word.

(B) It's a matter of life and death. For those who hear.

(C) It's the most loving thing we can *do*. Because truth saves, while error condemns.

Hold firm, graciously and lovingly, but firm. (Summ)

➤ [13] *Now when they* [the council] *saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.*

It wasn't as though Peter and John couldn't read or write, but that theological discussions were thought to require advanced rabbinic training in those days.

*And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. [14] But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.*

The word "but" at the beginning of v14 indicates that their recognition of the apostles having been with Jesus was not a positive in their minds.

"These guys are uneducated, *Jesus*-followers of all things, but what can we say? The beggar's right here. *Standing* beside them." That's the idea.

And what a compliment. Back-handed or not. Their relationship with Jesus was *that* noticeable.

Which gives us our 4<sup>th</sup> point of application. If you want to be bold for Jesus . . .

## 4. Make sure your walk with him is a notable feature of your life. (v13-14)

Whether you're respected for it or not. The aroma of death or the aroma of life. Death to those who *don't* believe, or life to those who do (2 Cor 2). Either way, you should stink.

Pastor Grady, our family pastor, carries a cup of *coffee* with him around the office, almost everywhere he goes. And you know he's near because you can *smell* it.

Especially the stuff he's drinking *these* days. It smells like maple syrup or something.

I'll walk into a room and know *instantly* he was there. Or stand in hallway and know that he's coming. Because his stink precedes him.

It's a notable feature of his life. Why? Because he spends so much time with it.

If we're going to look like Christians, little Christ's; if our walk with him is going to be a notable feature of our lives . . .

We have to spend *time* with him. Time in prayer and time in worship.

We have to *abide* in him, making him the constant companion of our thoughts.  
We have to *follow* him, living and thinking *his* way. We have to *know* him.  
That's where boldness for Jesus *starts*. That's how boldness arises and grows. (**Summ**)

➤ V15, they had nothing to say to Peter and John – *But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, [16] saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. [17] But in order that it may spread no further among the people [it, being word of their miracles and testimony for Jesus], let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.”*

How Luke *knew* about the closed-door discussion, we don't know. But the most plausible explanation I think, is that Paul was a member of the council at the time.  
Or, his teacher Gamaliel was. And later on, *after* Paul's conversion, he told Luke about it. Whatever the case, the council wasn't happy. In fact, they were desperate.

*[18] So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. [19] But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, [20] for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” [21] And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. [22] For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.*

The last way to be bold for Jesus is the most obvious, and most difficult.

#### **5. Don't hold back in speaking for him. (v20)**

*“Whether it is right [v19] in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.* As if to say, “That's not even on our radar screen.”

“We have no *interest* in debating such things. And if we did, it wouldn't matter.

Because push comes to shove, we can't help it.”

*We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.* (20)

“We're compelled. Busting out. Overflowing.”

It's like trying to hold back a sneeze. Etiquette gurus can argue all day whether it's good or bad, but at the *end* of the day, you just can't help it.

When you have to sneeze, you have to sneeze. And trying to hold it back isn't healthy.

Same when it comes to speaking for Jesus.

When you're compelled by what you've seen Jesus do (cross), speak up.

When you're compelled by what he's done in *you*, speak up.

When you're compelled by what he's *going* to do, speak up.

When you've compelled by what he *can* do, speak up. Don't hold back.

Peter and John didn't. They couldn't hold back, and wouldn't hold back.

And while this applies on a *personal* level, and always has, in conversations at the water cooler, or lunch counter, or classroom . . .

It also applies at a *cultural* level. In the public square.

We *have* to speak. We have to uphold biblical principles.

Despite the consequences.

The day isn't far off when holding to a biblical ethic and speaking for Jesus on things like homosexuality and transgenderism and gay marriage, will be considered a hate crime.

Already in some states, it's illegal to counsel a child to resist or change their same sex tendencies or gender dysphoria. Illegal. 13 states.

And declaring the exclusive nature of the gospel isn't far behind. If current trends continue, despite the reprieve we're experiencing right *now* in our government . . .

Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in *Christ* alone won't be tolerated.

And yet, we must not hold back.

When cultural pressure or government authorities forbid what God requires, or require what God forbids, *some* form of civil disobedience is necessary. And inevitable.

Because we can do no *other* than speak of what we've seen and heard (Bible).

Don't hold back. Be bold. Walking with Jesus, holding firm to his truth, naming his name, and proclaiming his gospel.

Prayer – Oh God, how we need your help. Bolster us. Compel us. Capture our hearts and captivate our minds with a boldness *from* you, and *for* you.