

10-11-20 Boldness

Acts 4:23-31

Last weekend we were encouraged to imitate the example of Peter and John to weather the waves of persecution/trials/ridicule that is headed our way.

We were personally challenged to dedicate ourselves to seven resolutions.

Expect Opposition (4:1-7)

Stand Firm in the Truth (v.2, 10)

Rely on God's Spirit, The Holy Spirit. (verse 8)

Share the Good News of Jesus at Every Opportunity. (verses 9-12)

Spend Time with Jesus (v. 13)

Don't Quit, Keep Preaching Jesus! (verses 14-20)

Give All Glory to God (verses 21-22)

In reflecting on the collision that takes place when culture comes up against Christianity, I recently come by something by Theo Hobson called, "Marks of a Moral Revolution."

1. What was universally condemned is now celebrated.

2. What was universally celebrated is now condemned.

3. Those who refuse to celebrate are condemned.

Our text today is **Acts 4:23-31**. Let's set the context.

Be bold and don't fold when hard times come. If we don't want to fold, we need to be proactive, prayerful, and prepared. First, let's look at three ways to be proactive.

Be Proactive

1. Find support. (v.23)

- The first thing Peter and John do when they're released from jail is to join with their people. Look at **verse 23**.
- The NKJV says, "companions," ESV says, "friends," the KJV says, "company." They knew they needed to be with those who had been praying for them. The word in the Greek is "idios" pronounced Ee-d-oh-s, meaning "one's own, some sense belongs to, friends."
- Do you have a group of people you can go to when the going gets tough? Who are your people?

Warren Wiersbe says, *"One test of a Christian's character is where he finds fellowship and companionship."*

- Some of us need to start hanging out with new people because the friends we have tear us down, instead of building us up. They act like they are there for you, to only turn around and stab you in the back.

Proverbs 13:20, “He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.”

- I am so thankful for the people here at Bethel, Christian brothers, and sisters and many in this community.
- If you are like me, there have been times in your life that one of God’s People spoke into your life at the right time. There have been times your back is against the wall and an “idios” come up beside you and strengthen you.
- Those tough trials and days come, and you see the song, **“Lean on me”** come true. You see **Proverbs 18:24** come true.

Proverbs 18:24, A man who has friends [f]must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

2. Focus on God’s Sovereignty (v.24)

- **Read verse 24**
- Because they gathered as God’s people, the first thing they did was praise and pray together. A primary benefit of persecution can be greater solidarity.
- I see a pattern in **Acts 3-4** that is duplicated throughout the Book of Acts: Preaching leads to persecution, which leads to praise and prayer.
- Notice what they didn’t do. They didn’t complain to the authorities. They didn’t organize a protest, attack the religious elites, or boycott the temple.
- They were earnest and united as they offered urgent and unselfish praise to the Almighty.
- God is King. This is the word “despot” in Greek, which has the idea of a master with absolute authority.
- God is Creator. God is overall because He made all. Not only did He create the Heaven and the earth and the sea, but everything in them.
- Brothers and sisters, we serve a Creator who is in control of the universe. He deserves our praise!
- God is above all and over all, He doesn’t need our permission to do as He seems fit. He isn’t taking a straw poll to see what the popular opinion is. The problem I see all too often in my life as well as the lives of well-intentioned believers is, we want God as a consultant rather than a king.

Kyle Idleman (not a fan) writes: “The biggest threat to the church today are fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them.”

- God either allow circumstances/situations or He sends circumstances/situations our way. He is always at work in the lives of His people.



3. Fortify your heart and mind with Scripture. (verse 25-28)

- One of the best ways to change your thoughts is to fill your mind with the Word of God.
- **Read verses 25-26**
- We see both the human and divine element of inspiration here. The words came through David's mouth, but the message was from the Holy Spirit. Because of the situation they were just in, they quoted from **Psalms 2:1-2**

Psalm 2:1-2: "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."

- The word for "rage" was used of a wild horse snorting and came to refer to someone who was haughty. Even though the people plot, their plans are empty, aimless and in vain.
- **Psalm 2:4** tells us what God does when He sees how proud people are: "**He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord holds them in derision.**" Meaning He makes light or fun of it.

Isaiah 8:10, "Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For [h]God is with us."

- David predicts a time when kings and rulers will come "**against the Lord and against His anointed.**" The word anointed is "Christos," which refers to the Messiah. Because these followers of Christ knew their Bibles, they were able to see what was predicted some 900 years earlier had been fulfilled right there in Jerusalem.
- **Verse 27**
- Because they were saturated with Scripture, they understood God was weaving His will and His ways according to His sweet supremacy. Even though what the people did was evil, it's exactly what God had foreordained to happen according to **verse 28**.
- **Verse 28**
- If we want to be bold and not fold when hard times come, we must be proactive by finding support from others, by focusing on the sovereignty of God and by fortifying ourselves with Scripture.



Be Proactive, Be Prayerful



1. It's ok to ask God to see your situation.

- **Read verse 29...** "Lord, look on their threats..." They are asking God to pay attention to what is being done to them. Nothing wrong with that.
- These persecuted people are simply affirming the truth God sees and knows everything. God invites us to call Him by name and one of those names in Hebrew is El Roi, the God who sees.

2. It's ok to ask God to help you speak boldly.

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- **“and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,”**
 - It's incredible that during so much opposition, these believers asked for boldness, not for their problems to go away. They asked for power, not protection.
 - Notice they see themselves as “servants” before a Sovereign God. This is the word for “bond slave.” Slaves were expected to render absolute submission and unconditional obedience to their masters.
 - These servants are literally asking something like this: “Grant us now with all boldness to go on speaking.”

3. It's ok to ask God to perform a miracle.

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- **Verse 30**
 - These miracles authenticated the message of the gospel and gave credibility to the Christians. It showed people that God's power and presence was real and relevant.
 - These last couple of weeks I was reminded of the miracles God did in our personal lives 10 years ago.
 - Does God still heal today? Absolutely. Does He still send signs and work His wonders? All the time. So, here's a question. What has God been using to get your attention? Is there a sign or situation that is propelling you to take your next step?



Be Proactive, Be Prayerful and...Be Prepared (To do God's will)

1. God will shake things up.

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- **Read verse 31**
 - The word for “shaken” means, “unexpected rocking, waving, and tottering.” Something similar happened in response to Paul and Silas singing praises when they were in prison in **Acts 16:26**:

“Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.”

- Sometimes God shakes us up to get our attention, doesn't He?
- Is He shaking you today?
- If you're not saved yet, He's shaking you until you come to faith in Him.
- If you're saved but drifting, He could be rocking you right now, so you surrender to Him
- If we were honest, we don't like it when God shakes things up. I prefer to be rocked, not shaken, but rocked does what? (Put's me to sleep, I need to be alert and ready!)

2. God will fill us with His Holy Spirit.

- **Read verse 31, “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,”**
- Notice it was not just some of them but “all” of them. This is the third time for Peter. The word “filled” means, “to make full, to be complete.”
- Could you imagine what God could do in and through us, if each one of us was fully filled with the Holy Spirit and totally surrendered to Him? Our church would be different, and our community would be as well.

3. God will give us boldness.

- **Read verse 31, “and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”**
- The word “boldness” means the ability to speak freely and frankly. It is in the imperfect tense, meaning it happened “over and over, again and again.”
- The book of Acts is full of examples of God answering prayers for boldness.
- **Acts 9:27 tells us Barnabas vouched for Paul’s conversion, pointing out “how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”**
- **Acts 13:46: “And Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”**
- **Acts 14:3: “Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord...”**
- **Acts 19:8: “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.”**
- **Acts 26:26: “For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.”**
- **Acts 28:31 is the very last verse in Acts: “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”**
- Are you a bold believer? Or are you an undercover Christian?

Conclusion

In his book, “The Embarrassed Believer,” Hugh Hewitt contends most Christians do not talk about their faith or church. They don’t have Bibles on the corner of their desks and never engage others in spiritual conversations: “Too many of us are embarrassed, silent, secret agents for God...Christians in America trying to save the lost, comfort the suffering...and bring joy to the despairing will not make a significant and lasting impact unless they do so openly and without apology as Christians.”

- More than ever we need believers who are bold. Do your classmates know you are a Christian? Do your co-workers know you worship Jesus? Do your neighbors know that you know Jesus through the new birth?
- Brothers and sisters, you are my people! Be bold and don't fold when hard times come.
- Let's be proactive by finding support from others, by focusing on the sovereignty of God, and fortifying ourselves with Scripture.
- Let's be prayerful by asking God to see our situation, by asking Him to help us speak boldly and to do the miraculous.
- Let's be prepared for God to shake things up, to fill us with the Holy Spirit and to grant us boldness.

I'm going to read it and when I'm finished, I will ask you to raise your hand if you're ready to say, "I'm in!"



"I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His and I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I'm done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity.



I don't have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognized, or praised, or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power. My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable, and my mission is clear. I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice or hesitate in the presence of the adversary. I will not negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.



I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He does come for His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear!"

If you're in, would you raise your hand?