

Wanted: Courageous Christian Men

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[0 : 00] Amen. Acts chapter 4, verses 5 through 13, then we'll jump down to verses 19 and 20. Acts chapter 4, beginning at verse 5.

On the next day, there rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem! with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high priest family. When they had set them in the midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name do you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we have been examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed?

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.

This Jesus is the stone that was ejected by you, the builders which has become the cornerstone. 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.

[1 : 23] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men, they were astonished, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Wow! Wow! Verse 19. They're threatened. Verse 18, first of all. So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Now verse 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.

For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Thank you, Praise Team. Once again, beautiful music. I'm going to give you a bunch of scenarios.

[2 : 27] Brothers, a bunch of scenarios. People are talking about the exciting things they did over the weekend at work. They look at you.

What do you say? Do you tell them about how God blessed you at church? You're a teenage young man. You're with your friends who are talking about their non-biblical sexual ideas and conquests. They look at you. What do you say? Do you tell them what the Bible says or do you make up your own stories? Or even worse, do you participate?

You're a husband and father and you sense God is giving you the opportunity to start your own business or take another job, but it's risky. What do you do?

What do you do? Again, husbands and fathers, God wants you to lead your family spiritually. Do you abdicate to your wife because she knows the Bible better than you?

[3 : 40] How about this? You see someone or someone's being mistreated at school, at work, or even in our city.

You're right there. You're seeing it. Do you look the other way or do you seek to protect and defend them? How about this one? I'm trying to find you.

I'm just looking. I don't know. Maybe you're teaching a Sunday school class or leading a Bible study and you realize the text you are sharing will speak to the sin of a person or persons in that group.

Do you skip it? Bloss over it because they will or others will say you're targeting them? Welcome to my world, by the way.

To follow Jesus takes courage. It's risky. But there is no courage without fear. Fear of loss is human.

[4 : 51] Yet the gospel is meant to produce courageous Christian men. God doesn't expect us to make ourselves courageous but he calls us to trust in him.

Courage comes by faith in the Lord not in ourselves or our natural abilities. And so I say to you today that such men are greatly needed and wanted.

Now where are we in this text? Are you familiar with this passage? So I'm not going to be able to point too much but you know Pentecost has happened way back in chapter 2. The spirit is poured out on the church in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified.

And now the apostles Peter and John are being called on the carpet having been used by Christ to heal a man who had been unable to walk since birth for 40 years.

They are arrested. They are put in jail until the next day because the arrest took place I assume late in the day and maybe the court officials had all gone home for dinner.

[6 : 02] So now it's morning and he must give an accounting. First of all faith produces courageous men who can stand when opposed.

Verses 5-7 If you have it in front of you look down and look at it. And I want you to notice as you look down at the text notice the list of the officers of the court before whom the apostles must give testimony.

It's an impressive impressive list isn't it? I mean think about it I mean I'm not going to go through all who they are but you get the idea here that you got Annas the high priest Caiaphas who was the former high priest John and Alexander who were evidently influential the high priest's family so I guess they brought his wife and extended family members you got to remember the guard who brought them in who arrested them was probably there as well and so they're surrounded they're surrounded by this court of Jewish officials and they must give testimony remember Jesus' crucifixion was likely only a month and a half passed at this point so these are the officials that killed him these are likely members of the Sanhedrin which is the 70 so you get the impression here that this is not a small group of people this is a large crowd of people surrounding these two men this is Jewish religious and governmental power at its apex and none of them are happy in their mind though they hold all the cards they are the authority here they flex their muscles a little bit by having them arrested now they are coming in for the kill to crush this movement this Jesus moment movement right now they ask the big question in verse 7 this is the big question here in this text by what power or by what name did you do this that is the question two things I want you to notice brothers about this question first of all they are not concerned with the good work of healing that was done even though it was a miracle they're not concerned with that you see you probably can understand all the good deeds that you do if you dig wells in Africa if you feed the homeless if you provide jobs for guys coming out of prison if you give blankets if you try to reform the criminal justice system all the good that you do listen there will be some in the world who will pat you on the back for it there may be many your good works man people will go thank you so much is that enough we're told throughout the new testament that we're to do good works let me give you one of my favorite passages

Titus 2 14 speaking of Jesus who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are not that big word zealous for good works zeal speaks of a burning desire or burning passion and the grace of God listen brothers the grace of God in the gospel that attaches you to Jesus should move in us is that motivating force that makes us want to do good we have a burning desire to be used by God to do good not just random acts of goodness but planned acts of goodness I hope that's you but is that all second thing

[10 : 24] I want you to notice then that was number one they weren't concerned about the good work they were more concerned with how and why they did the good work that was the issue for them brothers what power or by who or by whose power and under whose authority name did you do this now here's the ticket here they already knew that the apostles did this in the name of Jesus they already knew that's why they were arrested chapter three go back and read it they already knew so why ask the question see brothers they hope a night in jail would have cooled their zeal for Jesus they were trying to ice them you you know about that right in football

I mean American football if you're watching my family from England real football when a when a when a team gets close to the somewhere close to the goal line maybe 35 yards out and it's fourth down they know they can't get the first down so they call in the kicker the kicker comes in he's got about a you gotta add a few yards he's got about a 40 yarder but that's kind of a chip shot for today's pro pro kicker he can do that in his sleep almost so he left so the team lines up and just

before the ball is kicked the other team calls timeout I mean they're all lined up and ready to go the kicker is there he's focused he's doing this back and forth he's ready to go and they go timeout then the kicker has to do something he goes to the sidelines sometimes and he's over there doing this you know stretching trying to stay warm right they're icing him see see what they're doing is they're hoping that that distraction and that that stalling will cause him to lose focus will cause him to think too long about what he's going to do so when he gets out there he flubs it that's what's happening here they're icing the apostles and it's an intimidation tactic they're hoping now they would be too afraid to speak for

Jesus they just spent the night in jail thinking about what could happen to them and they're thinking that oh gosh now we got a so let's ask him again by whose name now whoo brothers this is the nature of government or corporate power today you can be Christians privately or even in church but don't bring it into the community don't bring it into the workplace and certainly don't bring it into the government this is more and more our American culture isn't it sliding that way more and more Dr.

Boyce said it it may come a time when preaching the gospel is seen as a hate crime doing good is not the problem and by the way who determines what is good right that's for us we know no one gets angry if you feed the homeless but when you say you did it in the name of Jesus that's a different ball game when you say it's for Jesus sake when they say why are you here I'm here with my company we're doing this charitable work but mostly I'm here because I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ and he calls us to kindness to those in need now it becomes an issue and even that may be a little easy just a little but what if you're in a place where

Christ is not welcome and you're doing good I'm talking about in America now you know the bland freedom of religion what do you say I love what they said in chapter 3 after they healed the man the people gathered around them in verse 16 they said how did you Peter says why are you looking at us is this by some virtue in us this man has been healed he said it is his name by faith in his name Jesus this man has been made strong whom you see and know and the faith that is through Jesus has given this man this perfect health in the presence of you all listen to that by faith in Jesus by faith in his name that's what gives us courage brothers it's faith in his name not your name not my name not in

[15 : 49] I'm from New City I'm from New City Church who cares I want to know I want to know too and whose name did you do it courage comes because we know faith in his name produces works and even sometimes miraculous works we know brothers don't we know that God responds to faith he responds to those who trust in him who value him above all things and trust in him something about faith just moves our God's heart we say he we're saying when you say you have faith in God you're saying he's great you're saying he's able you're saying you trust him Hebrews 11 6 and without faith it is impossible to please him!

for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him we draw near to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through faith in the work of Christ for us not because we're good but because he's good we draw near to God through faith in him and in that same moment we know that he rewards those who seek him that gives courage God rewards seeking faith do you know that brothers so take heart even in the face of opposition speak the truth second faith produces courageous men filled by the spirit this is the key statement a key statement in this passage is verse eight then

Peter filled with the spirit said wow some of us are naturally outspoken even when we shouldn't speak about the things we're speaking about some of us are more introverted and we will not normally volunteer any information about anything some of us are non confrontational confrontational but see those are all natural temperament issues what we have here is not natural it's supernatural it's the spirit of God at work brothers don't look at Peter look at what the spirit is doing look at what Christ is doing through them this is what this is about it's acts of the holy spirit it's acts of Jesus Christ small acts of the apostles

Romans 8 9 just in case you're not sure about this brothers Romans 8 9 you whoever are not in the flesh but in the spirit if in fact the spirit of God dwells in you watch this anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him if you are a Christian if you are a disciple of Jesus brothers believe it you have the spirit the spirit is in you and you are in Christ meaning you are you are able to grow in your ability to be ruled by the spirit rather than your sinful selfish desires of your flesh you are able you have what you need in you for God to change you do you believe that do you

believe that the spirit of

God can override your temperament or are you using your temperament as an excuse I can't witness because I'm introverted who cares you are in Christ the spirit of God is in you never surrender to your temperament never make excuses but that's how my family was or how my daddy was who cares you are in Christ you are a new creation that's what I care about and you should too I'm perfect example example number one I hate public speaking at Temple University I almost failed public speaking because I got froze up I got iced I froze up in front of people I hate speaking in front of people but put this in my hand and the spirit of

[20 : 57] God takes over I'm not I'm still nervous but I'm not scared who don't let don't don't don't surrender to how you think you are be what God has made you now listen what does it mean Peter was filled with the spirit we already saw in Acts chapter two that he'd been given the spirit on the day of Pentecost so what does it mean that he was filled what is this well the the filling of the spirit means the spirit when needed gives his people extra ability to speak or do for Christ and his kingdom as we depend on him I've experienced I'm not trying to make myself the example please I'm just trying to give examples I'm messed up too but I'll tell you the truth how many times I've stepped into this pulpit and

I've been sick I mean just feeling depressed down beat down can't even sing from the pew there how many times and then I step up here and the spirit comes maybe you don't know it but I know it I hope you know it I hope it's obvious that's not just me that's you his spirit will fill you for the task that God lays before you I can't do it okay maybe you can but I know who can Peter who denied the Lord when faced with public pressure is now unable to speak before the very powers that have crucified the Lord you don't think that's God you don't think that's the Lord standing up in him there's no way was he scared

I'm sure his heart was thumping! But courage is not the absence of fear courage is not giving in to the fear Joe Rigney in his book *Courage How the Gospel Creates Christian Fortitude* this won't be on the screen he says courage always appears in the face of real danger no danger near no courage needed more importantly courage only appears in the presence of real fear no fear no courage it's when you're scared it's when you're scared of loss you're scared of embarrassment this is America they probably won't kill us right probably won't kill us but they'll make you feel bad they'll make you feel stupid they'll deny you that promotion you may even lose your job fear is real and so is courage when we prayerfully by faith living lives to honor

Jesus by following his word we are in the place where his spirit can fill us when we need him did you hear what I just said let me back up and say it again we are prayerfully by faith living lives to honor Jesus yes we fail but we're living lives that's our goal living lives to honor Jesus following his word that means we're in the word in that place of humility and service and being available to God we are in the place where his spirit can fill us when we need him he isn't likely to fill you if you're keeping him like this he can I don't know the lord knows but I'm just trying to tell you that's not the likely place you need to be if you want to be filled by the spirit to be filled by the spirit is to be submitted to the lord and saying this is me here I am take me use me for your glory every day do you get I want to challenge you with all my heart that every day you wake up to the lord I'm yours do with me what you will my tongue my hands my feet I'm yours I hope you'll pray that because if you don't brothers so often we just get in we got that brain right work focus focus focus if the first focus is Jesus it helps us it helps us alright if the first focus is lord thank you for another day allow me will you use me today because that's what it's about right we're Christians it's about him about being at his disposal every day it's about getting glory to him it's about walking worthy of the name of Christ as Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 4 that's what it's about right that's what makes us tick to glorify the name it's about a walk of perfection the apostles had moments of failure too notice what happened in

[26 : 19] Peter Paul and Barnabas they split up notice what happened as Peter confronts Paul I mean Paul confronts Peter you know all these things happened the apostles were not perfect men but they were at the Lord's disposal here they were at the spirit's disposal and they're standing before these people and the spirit comes with power to fill them to speak he speaks with courage because he trusted in the name of Jesus notice what happens when they return to the church to tell them what happened I told you to keep your finger in that chapter hope you got it before you here's what happens they leave here and they go back to the church I'm jumping ahead I'm like I want you to know this they go back to the church and they tell them what happened this is down the same

chapter beginning in verse 23 I'll just read a couple verses when they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them when they heard it that's the whole group they lifted!

they scared they go to prayer and notice what they start with God is in control brothers when you're scared when the fear grabs you when you're afraid and you're nervous about standing for Jesus in some way and you're trembling because you know there might be loss listen the spirit will fill you as you cry out for help I like to say it like this Lord send reinforcements now notice if you were to drop down to verse 29 to 31 here's how they finished the prayer 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 and when they prayed the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all washed all filled with the

Holy Spirit and continue to speak the word of God with boldness it's right there I need this you need this fellas will you start praying today don't miss if you can help it pray every day Lord fill me with your spirit for your purposes that I may speak forth and live forth the glory of Jesus standing upon the gospel and his truth I got to ask you a question are you at the Lord's disposal third faith produces courageous men who are faithful to the gospel I mean maybe that goes without saying here but I gotta point it out I mean it's beautiful verses 8 through 12 here Peter stands up he's filled and he begins to speak listen bro before the gospel is bad before the gospel is good news it's bad news you have to grasp the bad news if you're truly going to be overwhelmed by the good news of the gospel that's redundant

I know so you can start by telling people that God loves! no problem but if you never get to why that is strange if you never get to the fact that they don't deserve it if you never get to the point and saying that our sin makes us guilty of the blood of Christ and worthy of divine justice then the gospel that you're sharing will lose some of his impact as a matter of fact we are sometimes I think we are encouraging a sense of entitlement from God rather than a sense of humble reverence and awe at Christ's sacrifice we got people who think that God owes them in the church they get up mad when God don't do what they pray that you you mad because God didn't answer your prayer with the word with the word you wanted to hear so that means you think he owes you that's not reference something else and you fill in the blank but

I want you to notice something here too Luke records this in chapter three not only was this man they healed lame that would have been enough Luke says he was lame from birth demonstrates the magnitude of the miracle right it's undeniable that's what they say that they admit that the leaders admit that it's undeniable you see good deeds done by God bear his fingerprint but you know what's going on here the lameness of this man from birth is also the spiritual condition of all of us we're all lame from birth brothers unable to help or heal ourselves unable to save ourselves Jesus in the gospel reveals our lameness and that makes us uncomfortable maybe even angry and hostile that's what was happening with the religious leaders you see in the face of the name of [32 : 15] Jesus they were helpless they couldn't they were frustrated already and now here he comes again we thought he was dead they felt impotent and that is the religious leaders and authorities today who are not walking with Christ lameness and nobody likes to be shown to be lame but once we surrender to Jesus and his love his mastery we realize that it was good that we saw how weak and lame and beggarly we were it's a good thing when you reckon that's called being poor in spirit it's a good thing brothers when you recognize how messed up you are how weak you truly are it's a good thing for you to recognize that you're lame good thing because you'll call out for the healer have you grasped this truth for yourself because that's where courage will begin

Peter by faith entrusted his faith to the Lord and goes right in for the hard truth this man was healed by the name of Jesus the same Jesus you rejected and crucified but whom God the father his father has raised from the dead and you can find salvation and no one else in all of creation other than in the name of Jesus that's paraphrased but that's what he said to him boom oh by calling him Christ Peter was saying he was the Messiah the Messiah that you were waiting for and that you rejected and killed that's bad news they needed to hear it so they could repent of their sins and that is why all humanity needs salvation and a savior because we've all killed Jesus it's our sins the sins of the world that took him to the cross and God is holy and sin repulses him it breaks this law which reflects his character and it's not good for humanity it says we will not have you to rule over us sin says you will not run my life

I'm gonna do it my way that's what sin says and the gospel confronts us with God's holiness and our foulness but then it says here is Jesus the son of God come to save you from God's justice and your foulness we're often nervous and even afraid to speak to people about Jesus when all they can say to us is leave me alone how much more if they're openly antagonistic did Peter and John have a death wish they wanted to be martyred for the faith kill me for Jesus there have been people like that by the way even today no that's not what was going on G.K.

Chesson said it so wonderfully courage is almost a contradiction in terms it means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die man I love that guy he's dead but I love him a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die that's what Peter is exhibiting he wanted to live but he also found something worth dying for something Bruce worth taking a risk for and so he's able to preach the gospel the bad news and the good news he was able to bring it down bring it down clear and he didn't let anybody escape well I'm going to end with this real quick faith lastly produces courageous ordinary men who live in the presence of

Jesus verse 13 is beautiful passage now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John perceived that they were uneducated common men they were astonished oh what what and they recognized oh I see that they had been with Jesus woo boy striking now these men actually live with Jesus okay it could be they're saying that maybe maybe they're saying hey I remember that guy I don't think so though I think it was the character of these men and their background common ordinary men uneducated didn't go to seminary they were the the commoners the commoners they weren't no there were nobodies people from the hood people from rural areas their families weren't connected there was no money in the family they didn't have any pool no juice they were just ordinary folk fishermen a trader a tax collector a zealot who by any means necessary get the [38 : 00] Romans out he was one of them too Peter and John just fishermen they and he said and look how bold they're speaking to us they're speaking to us like they got something boldness means confident means freedom in speech they weren't they were not whispering or hemming and hawing or trying to make an excuse they owned it it's Jesus that did this it's Jesus I want you to know it's Jesus and he made an impression on that group they thought they could intimidate them but you can't intimidate men who trust in Jesus because Jesus would not be intimidated by anybody the spirit of God will fill you because you live with Jesus you are walking with Jesus brothers every day do you understand the spirit of God ministers the presence of Jesus to you you may not feel his presence all the time but if you are in

Christ his presence is with you all the time and when we open the word or when we pray we are recognizing that presence we are recognizing we are doing life with Jesus we're giving ourselves to him we're getting to know him better because he knows you but you don't know him so he's revealing himself through your life through life circumstances that come your way especially your heart just by the way that come your way Jesus is revealing himself to you as you trust him as you open the word of God and you behold him you say oh that's what you're like I can pray this I can trust you that's how we're growing in our knowledge of Jesus we're walking in his presence and he's going to shape you and mold your character I can say you did it I say he's doing it the fruit of the spirit is what he puts in us but as we're available as we're submitting as we're saying Lord do it you're walking with him do you get it are you walking with the

Lord is he real or is he only real on Sunday morning in this service well I gotta quit that clock is not right Jesus is looking for giants he is not looking for giants but ordinary men whom he will make into giants that he might get all the glory ordinary men ordinary people ordinary brothers who say for Christ I'll live for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain ordinary men saturated by the grace of God who recognize that I have nothing Lord I deserve nothing from you but oh I receive everything you want to give me I receive it all

I have every spiritual blessing and the heavenly places in Christ I have his presence Dr.

Boyce said it so wonderfully the world thinks that it can stop a spiritual movement by threats force imprisonment and death but it cannot a good idea especially a true spiritual idea will always spread they couldn't stop it and that's what happened the Roman empire was turned upside down this little beginning this small group of disciples in this city became this movement that swept the entire Roman empire and swept the entire world that little brittle group right there of terrified disciples boom and they spread and you're a proof of it sitting right here do you do what people expect you to do what do you do what Jesus empowers you to do brothers there's a difference don't let the world dictate to you what it means to be a man it will take courage to be men of God men of his word it

takes courage to hold a biblical sexual living to hold biblical views of gender to hold to biblical views of family to hold to biblical views of ethics right and wrong to hold to biblical truths about [42 : 51] God Christ salvation it takes courage brothers to resist greed selfish ambition and lust it even takes courage now to hold to a biblical view of the church and while we need her in all of these areas you will face steep spiritual opposition for the enemy of your souls and sometimes even sadly from people in the church but fear not Jesus is with you and he will give you the courage and the fortitude you need as you walk with him because our weapons are mighty Paul said it best 2 Corinthians 10 3 nothing can stop the weapons of the word and spirit and love the love of Christ that we fight with brothers nothing can stop the message of forgiveness and grace and mercy in the name of Jesus that we fight with brothers nothing can stop it

Ian Bounce has a book called Power Through Prayer and he says this I'm paraphrasing I'm adding my own Kevin Smith thing to it the world is looking the world and sometimes even the church are looking for better systems better strategies better programming better AI but God is looking for better men men are God's method but here's the truth he creates the better men by faith in his son he makes better men we don't make ourselves better that's cosmetic he moves in our hearts to make us better and we'll be better men for our families better men meaning men of God men of courage men who will stand in on Christ because it takes courage to be a father it takes courage to tell your children no it takes courage to let them talk to you when they're being disrespectful because you know they got something to say because they're hurting it takes courage to let them tell you and not lash out to hold it it takes courage to know who you are in Christ to lead your family to be called all kinds of names today that's that's patriarchy God called you to lead whatever the world says God called you to lead if you have a family he called you to lead with gentleness and respect and love self-sacrificial love according to the word of God but it takes courage when you call out to Jesus for the courage you need father help us help us it's so easy to give in today it's always been easy

I guess father the pressures of the world are real misunderstanding what it means to be a Christian held by people around us real anger against Christ and the church even real people have been hurt real but you still call us to follow you did and you knew it all would happen and you show us in your word that it does happen but you still call us to be men of courage to walk with you in faith so Lord will you do it to my sons in the faith will you do it to my brothers in the faith will you do it to my fathers in the faith will you do it give us courage in Jesus name amen let's stand and sing