

Speak the Word with Boldness

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[0 : 00] Let me pray now for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, You have entrusted to us the mystery of the Gospel.

That precious message, good news of salvation in Jesus.

And Lord, we want to be faithful stewards of that message. We want to cherish it, pass on the deposit, that apostolic deposit that has been passed down to us.

We want to share the good news of Jesus Christ with our friends and neighbors and our family. But Lord, in order to do that, we need boldness.

We need to be empowered by Your Holy Spirit. So we ask that You would do that tonight by speaking to us through Your Word, in Your Word.

[1 : 29] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Acts chapter 4, verses 13 through 31. 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.

But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, What shall we do with these men?

For that a notable sign that has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 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. And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people.

[2 : 58] For all were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old. When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

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.

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 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.

[4 : 28] This is God's holy and authoritative word. In 1521, Martin Luther stood on trial before the Holy Roman Emperor in the Diet of Worms.

He was being charged for heresy because he published the 95 Theses, which denounced the use of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church. An indulgence was something that believers can purchase with money in order to reduce their punishment for sin.

A popular preacher and really a precursor to the modern prosperity gospel preachers was Johann Tetzel. And the Pope was engaged in the most expensive church building project up to that point, St. Peter's Basilica.

And he needed a lot of fundraisers. And Johann Tetzel was one of the most effective fundraisers he had. He would often repeat this refrain in front of captivated audiences.

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul into heaven springs. But Martin Luther challenged this claim on the basis of Scripture, insisting that forgiveness for sin cannot be purchased with money.

[5 : 50] And that salvation is only by God's grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. And for his stand for this biblical truth, Luther was now standing trial for heresy at the Diet of Worms.

And at the end of the interrogation, after he had been commanded to recant all that he had taught, Luther, standing before Charles V, the emperor of the Roman Empire, standing before Dr. Jeremy Scherf, the Wittenberg professor in canon law, standing before Dr. Johann Eck, the renowned German scholastic theologian, so standing before basically the highest political authority, the academic authority, and the clerical authority, all the movers and shakers of his world, Luther said this, quote, unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves, I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand.

I can do no other. May God help me. Amen. He was immediately declared a heretic and an outlaw, and the council permitted anyone to kill Luther without legal consequence.

But Luther's bold testimony was an inflection point in church history. It propelled the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of world history. But where does such boldness come from?

[7 : 41] What is its origin? What is the basis for such boldness? If you are like me, there have been times you didn't feel bold at all. Perhaps you are familiar with the feeling of being in a group conversation that is disparaging of Christ and His Word, but you are cowered by the sneering and mocking and just go along with the flow of the conversation without saying anything.

Perhaps you are familiar with the feeling of not being able to share the good news of Jesus Christ, even when your conversation with your friend or neighbor presents a wonderful opportunity for it because you feel awkward and afraid, maybe even ashamed.

Maybe you have wondered, how can I be more bold for the sake of Christ? Acts chapter 4, 13 to 31, teaches us this, that we must speak the Word of God with boldness despite opposition from the powers that be.

It tells us the reason to speak the Word with boldness, the authority to speak the Word with boldness, and finally, the power to speak the Word with boldness. So let's look at those three things in turn.

Verse 13 tells us that when the Jewish rulers, elders, and scribes saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men, they were astonished.

[9 : 03] The word boldness refers to how Peter and John frankly, freely, and fearlessly taught the people about Jesus Christ. But it's not simply their boldness that astonishes these Jewish rulers.

It's their boldness despite the fact that they were uneducated common men. Human pride, too, can produce boldness.

Degrees, noble birth, societal rank, fame, celebrity, power, authority, they can make people bold. That's what made these Jewish rulers bold in their own way.

If you remember from earlier in chapter 4, they barged in aggressively, interrupted Peter and John as they were teaching the people, and they apprehended them. They were so bold to do such things because they thought to themselves, well, this is our jurisdiction.

We are the religious authorities. We have the scholarly education and the proper credentials. That's why they were bold. Peter and John had no such things.

[10 : 13] They were uneducated common men, fishermen by trade, manual laborers. They had no formal rabbinical training. They were ordinary men, lay people, amateurs.

And yet, before the leading politicians and scholars and lawyers and judges and the clerics of their day, they had boldness because this boldness rested not on themselves and their abilities, but on

the authority of Christ who had commissioned them.

In Matthew chapter 28, 18 to 20, when Jesus commissions his disciples, he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

Jesus' authority in all of heaven and earth is the basis for the commission to go out and make disciples of all nations. And for this reason, Peter and John needed no further accreditation or authorization from the Jewish leaders.

Likewise, you don't need to have a seminary degree or be a pastor to be a bold witness for Christ.

You don't need to have read all the apologetics books in order to be a bold witness for Christ.

[11 : 38] But you do need one thing. You must know Christ. You need to have been with Him. And the Jewish rulers make this connection at the end of verse 13.

It says that they recognize that Peter and John had been with Jesus. In Mark 3, 14, Jesus appoints His 12 apostles to follow Him.

And He says explicitly that He did so in order that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach. The phrase to be with Jesus is a language of discipleship.

It means to be a follower of Jesus, to accompany Him, imitate Him, to learn from Him, be His apprentice. This is the one condition for bearing bold witness to Jesus.

In order to bear witness to Jesus, you must be His follower. You have to have been with Him. Peter and John say later in verse 20, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

[12 : 40] Peter and John have seen Jesus' signs and wonders. They had heard His teachings. They had a relationship with Him. They knew His character. They witnessed His life, death, and resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

In short, they had been with Jesus and those who have been with Jesus can't help but speak of what they have seen and heard. Because Jesus is so real to them, so compelling to them, they can't be silent.

Peter and John can't help but speak of what they have seen and heard, but in contrast, the Jewish rulers are silenced.

It says in verse 14, But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. The proof of the authority and power of the name of Jesus is clearly in display here with the man who had been born lame now standing healed beside them.

So the Jewish rulers have nothing to say because the proof is right there in that man. They can say nothing to contradict Peter and John's claims. And you would think that this would lead them to faith in Jesus, but it doesn't.

[14 : 04] It says in verses 15 to 17, But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they considered with one another, 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.

But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name. This is in stark contrast to the congregation's response to Peter's sermon earlier in Acts chapter 2 verse 37.

When they heard Peter's teaching, it says that they asked themselves, Brothers, what shall we do? In contrast, here the Jewish rulers in our passage, in chapter 4 verse 16, asked themselves, What shall we do with these men?

They are not concerned with the claim of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the claim of God's word upon their lives. They are not concerned with reforming their own erroneous beliefs and are instead only concerned with shushing up Peter and John, who has become a nuisance for them.

Instead of listening to their message, they are only concerned with shutting them up. This is the kind of hard-heartedness that our sinful human hearts are capable of.

[15 : 27] These Jewish rulers have witnessed a clear miracle. They call it themselves a notable sign, a sign that points to the work of God. They admit that it is undeniable and yet still they try to figure out a way to silence the first Christians.

They don't want the teaching accompanied, accompanying that notable sign that they have admitted.

Here's clear proof that faith is necessary, is a necessary divinely appointed means by which God saves us. It's impossible to demonstrate the truth of the gospel in such a way that no faith is necessary.

It's impossible. No matter how clear the proof, there will always be people who refuse to believe because God has ordained that we can be saved by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. We can only see through eyes of faith. God and what the Jewish rulers are opposing here is clear. Look at verse 17. It says, Let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

[16:44] And again, in verse 18, they charge them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. These Jewish rulers have no problem with the apostles going around and healing people and doing good deeds.

but they do have a problem if they're speaking in the name of Jesus. Isn't this the case in our day and age also?

People have no problem with Christians doing charity work, community service. They have no problem whatsoever with you being a spiritual person.

People don't object to you praying or meditating. Most people don't even object to us talking generally about God and faith. But as soon as we start speaking of the name of Jesus, people squirm and withdraw.

Or at times become downright dismissive or hostile. That's because, as we said early in verse 12, there is no one else.

[17:56] There's salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Satan and his minions know this well.

And as the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this fallen world as the Bible calls it, Satan shudders at the name of Jesus. And he opposes with all his might the spread of the name of Jesus. And as Christians, as followers of Christ, we must expect this resistance and persevere in proclaiming the name of Jesus. It says in verses 19-20, but Peter and John answer 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.

Peter and John are Jews, so they did have some obligation to these Jewish rulers. The high priests, the elders of Jerusalem, the scribes, the Sanhedrin, they were subject to these authorities.

And yet, Peter and John insist that they have a higher allegiance to God. Contrast Peter and John's stand here in verses 19-20 with the Jewish rulers, compromise, and cowardice in verses 21-22.

[19:24] He says, 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.

For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old. The lame man that was healed was more than 40 years old, meaning his healing was well beyond the realm of natural possibilities.

It cannot be explained by anything but a miracle. And because they cannot deny the miracle and knowing that the people were quite excited about this sign from God and were praising God in response, they decide merely to threaten Peter and John and let them go.

They want to do more. They want to put them in jail. They want to punish them. Maybe they even want to harm them. But they're afraid of the people.

Afraid that there might be a riot, an uproar. They make this decision because of the people. In contrast, Peter and John do what they do because that's what is right in the sight of God.

[20:37] This is the difference between the fear of God and the fear of man. Fear of man manifests itself in our susceptibility to peer pressure or our preoccupation with self-esteem.

Both of these things reveal that our lives revolve around what others think of us. And the heart of the problem with the fear of man is that we need people for our own glory rather than loving people for God's glory.

And the antidote to the fear of man is the fear of God. To be so consumed by God's glory, to be so aware of God's importance, that what a mere man says about us matters little.

If you seek to do what is right in the sight of man, you will learn quickly that you cannot please everyone and that human beings are quite fickle. You will need constantly to update your beliefs and behaviors, to conform to their ever-changing whims.

But that's not what Christians are called to do. We are called to do what is right in the sight of God. We are to speak and act not because of the people, but because of God.

[22:02] If we are controlled by the fear of man rather than the fear of God, we will never be bold witnesses for Jesus Christ. Frederick the Great, the 18th century king of Prussia, is said to have once invited some of the nobles and notable people to his royal table to dine with him, and that

included an invitation to all of his top-ranking generals in the army.

One of those generals was Hans Joachim von Zieten. He declined this invitation because he wanted to partake in corporate worship of the church and communion in his church.

And at a later banquet when von Zieten was present to dine with the king of Prussia, Frederick the Great, Frederick mocked the general for his religious beliefs.

And the other guests gladly joined in on the fun, joking about the Lord's Supper, making fun of General von Zieten.

And finally, the general stood up and respectfully addressed the monarch. Quote, Our Majesty knows well that in war I have never feared any danger and have everywhere boldly risked my life for you and my country.

[23 : 24] But there is one above us who is greater than you or me, greater than all men. He is the Savior and Redeemer who has died also for your majesty and has dearly bought us with his own blood.

This one I can never allow to be insulted for on him I repose my faith, my comfort, and my hope in life and death.

And then the general asked to be excused. The stunned guests silently trembled realizing that von Zieten very well might get killed.

However, Frederick recognized von Zieten's quality of character and knew that he was exactly the kind of man he wanted as his courageous general. And so he quickly grasped his hands and asked his forgiveness and requested that he remain.

He promised that he would never again allow such a travesty to be made of sacred things. Of course, the response from people will not always be favorable as was in the case of von Zieten.

[24 : 32] In certain parts of the world, it will lead to overt persecution and even martyrdom. Even in free and open democratic societies like ours, Christians can face ostracism and discrimination for standing firm on their beliefs.

Remember what Jesus told us in John 15 verse 20, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

But regardless of the outcome, we must speak the word of God with boldness despite opposition from the powers that be. Why? Because there is salvation in no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Why? Must we proclaim with boldness because we have been with Jesus.

because we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. This is the reason to speak the word with boldness. Now let's look at verses 23 to 28 which teaches about the authority to speak the word with boldness.

[25 : 46] It says in verse 23, When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. Having been assailed and threatened by others, Peter and John returned to their friends.

The phrase literally means they went to their own. In other words, they went to those to whom they belong. They went to those with whom they shared their allegiance to Jesus.

And then, gathered together, they called out to God in prayer in verses 24 to 25. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, Sovereign Lord, who made heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit.

The Jewish rulers, early in verse 15, conferred with one another, but we cannot, we not only can confer with our friends, with one another, we can also confer with God himself through prayer.

That's the power we have access to. And the disciples explicitly quote Psalm chapter 2, verses 1 to 2, and verses 25 to 26. But in addition to that, they also echo the language of several other psalms in their prayer.

[27 : 03] So first, the way they address God here in their prayer echoes Psalm 146, verses 3 to 6, where God is addressed as the Lord who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them.

It's notable in that very same psalm in verse 3, it says, put not your trust in princes, in a son of man in whom there is no salvation. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament that the early believers used, the word princes is the same Greek word as the one used in Acts 4, verse 5 and verse 8 to refer to the Jewish rulers.

It's the same word that is used in the citation of Psalm chapter 2, verse 2 and verse 16 to refer to the rulers. And this allusion to rulers is intentional. We are not to put our trust in human rulers, including these Jewish rulers, because there is no salvation in them, as Psalm 146 makes clear. Instead, we are to put our trust in the Lord Jesus, King Jesus, in whose name alone there is salvation. Anas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, the members of the high priestly family, the rulers of Israel cannot save anyone.

They do not offer salvation, which can only be found in the name of Jesus Christ. So Peter and John and the other Christians who are praying in this moment are saying, is the temple your domain, you Jewish rulers?

[28 : 32] Is Jerusalem your jurisdiction? Well, we are praying to the sovereign Lord whose jurisdiction is the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything that is in them.

It is by His authority that we proclaim the name of Jesus and His authority trumps yours. This is the authority to speak the word with boldness.

And then in verses 25 to 26, they quote Psalm chapter 2 verses 1 to 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 main point of Psalm 2 is that even when we are embattled by the nations and their rulers who oppose God and His anointed, we can take refuge in God because He remains enthroned as King over all.

It's a wonderful psalm that we can't explore in all its fullness right now, but in it, the nations of the earth and their rulers oppose God and His anointed King, which points to Jesus, the Messianic King.

[29 : 44] And they conspire together and marshal all their forces against God. But it says in verse 4 of Psalm 2, He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision.

The phrase He who sits is a literal translation that can be rendered He is enthroned. and it highlights God's sovereign worship. When the kings and rulers of the nations are plotting and assembling together against God, God is not standing up and leaning forward, looking out, concerned.

God is not pacing around wracked with anxiety as the nations are gathering together and marshaling their forces. No, He is rather sitting and laughing.

When I was a young boy, I used to love wrestling with one of my uncles. Being an undersized but spirited boy that I was, I always thought I had a fighting chance and I'd use all my strength to try to trip him up.

But my uncle, being the strong and heavyset man that he was, would never budge. And it drove me crazy that every time he wrestled, he was laughing.

[31 : 06] I'd be grunting and sweating and straining and he'd be laughing. He was laughing because he was having fun and because he was never at any point threatened.

He was laughing because it was amusing to watch me struggle. In a similar way, God cannot be threatened.

He is the sovereign Lord. The word Lord means master. And this is highlighted further by the repetition of the word servant, which can also be translated slave in verses 25, 27, 29, and 30. We are God's servants. King David is God's servant. Jesus was his holy servant, the set-apart servant, special servant like no other. God is the sovereign Lord, the master, and there is no higher authority.

He is not accountable to anyone. He is not subject to anyone. He can do as he pleases. That's what it means to be sovereign.

[32 : 19] And then verses 27 to 28 explain the significance of this reference to Psalm 2. For truly in this city there were gathered together against their 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.

Jesus is the Lord's anointed king, mentioned in Psalm 2. He is the one whom God has appointed to reign forever over all the people. But the kings of the earth set themselves up against him.

They gathered against him, both Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate. They represent respectively the Jewish ruler and the Gentile ruler.

Along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, including all the Jewish elders, scribes, high priests, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish rulers, were gathered all conspiring against the Lord to oppose Jesus Christ.

But they are saying, the already Christians are saying, it was all in vain. Because they could not stop what the Lord, what God's hand and plan had predestined to take place.

[33 : 33] Verses 27 to 28. The reference to Jesus as God's servant is an allusion to Isaiah 53, where Jesus is described as the suffering servant of the Lord who bears our iniquities, our sins and transgressions and dies on the cross in our place so that we might be forgiven and redeemed from our slavery to sin.

And these rulers of the earth thought that they had gotten the better of Jesus, the Lord's anointed, by crucifying him. But God raised him from the dead triumphantly, and Jesus ascended into the right hand of God the Father, there to reign forever.

And that's the word, that's that good news of Jesus and his reign, the salvation that is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus. That is the word that we are to boldly proclaim.

And it's because we are commissioned by the unimpeachable sovereign Lord, and because we are commissioned by the ascended Lord Jesus who reigns from the right hand of the Father, we have the authority and the warrant to speak the word with boldness.

But where does the power to speak the word with boldness come from? We've looked at the reason to speak the word with boldness and the authority to speak the word with boldness, but where do we get the power to do so?

[35 : 01] Authority is the right to do something. Power is the might to do something. authority authorizes you to act in a certain capacity.

Power enables you or empowers you to act in a certain capacity. And we see the answer in verses 29 to 31. 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 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. This is a very challenging prayer and I think if we are honest with ourselves, we'd admit that the way these believers pray is quite different from the way modern day Christians pray.

Imagine that you were threatened with bodily harm and charged to never again speak in the name of the Lord Jesus by the very people who killed our Lord Jesus just over a month or so ago.

How would you respond? How would you pray? We might pray for God's protection protection from their threats.

[36 : 33] We might pray for God's wisdom about how we might go about preaching the gospel in light of these new threats. We might pray that God would change these rulers' hearts for a change of policy so that one day in the future we might speak God's word.

But the early church doesn't do that. They do not pray for protection from the threats of the Sanhedrin. They do not pray that they might be spared from persecution and execution.

They are completely disposed to the will of God as his servants or better as his slaves. Instead they pray that God would help them to continue to speak God's word with all boldness.

they are not concerned for their safety and well-being but for the exaltation and the spread of the name of the Lord Jesus. That's what drives them.

And this is why this passage began with the mention of Peter and John's boldness in verse 13 and it ends with the prayer for continued boldness in verse 29 and 31.

[37 : 47] God is comforting us and exhorting us by the hand of Luke to be bold in our witness for Jesus. We don't need to concern ourselves with how people respond to our declaration of Jesus.

Some people will be receptive. Others will be resistant. Some people will listen and believe. Others will reject our message. Some people will honor us and thank us.

Others will revile us and persecute us. But their response is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is simply to speak the word of Christ.

To proclaim the gospel of Jesus. This is why I don't want any of you to be discouraged when people that you share the gospel with don't turn to Jesus in faith.

God if you have shared it if you have spoken the word then you have been a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus. Don't count how many people have been converted by your witness to Christ for that's

not ultimately in our control.

[39 : 02] Count instead the number of times you have shared the good news of Jesus with those who do not know him. verses 29 and 30 compliment each other.

It says 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.

To put it simply we do the speaking God does the healing. We do the telling God does the saving. We do the proclaiming God does the demonstrating. Leave God's part up to God and focus on your part.

The signs and wonders that God performs are God's sovereign prerogative. They are not something we can manipulate and control with different formulas and rituals.

[40 : 04] We can't guarantee God's healing by naming it and claiming it. We can't demand that God heal because we have faith or because we have already given thanks to God ahead of time for the miracle.

Such attitudes betray human pride and presumption rather than humble dependence on God. We can in faith ask God to heal certainly and we should but we must leave the results to God. God it is God who stretches out his hand to heal. It is our task to speak God's word with all boldness.

Let me bring your attention back to the way scripture is described in verse 25. It says that God through the mouth of our father David said by the Holy Spirit.

What that means is this. The author of scripture ultimately is God. The humans who write it or speak it are merely instruments. The means through which God speaks.

[41 : 12] It is therefore the scriptures are inspired by God. They are inerrant. They are infallible. It is what God said by the Holy Spirit and when God speaks things happen.

Creation obeys because he is a sovereign Lord with all authority in heaven and earth. This is why the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 45 that his speech and his message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the spirit and of power so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of man but in the power of God.

Don't worry about appealing to the wisdom of man. don't worry about being eloquent and powerful in speech. With the ability you have, with the knowledge you have, just speak the word and let God verify the proclamation of his word with his power.

19th century pastor and preacher Charles Spurgeon once said this, there seems to me to have been twice as much done in some ages in defending the Bible as in expounding it.

[42 : 34] But if the whole of our strength shall henceforth go to the exposition and spreading of it, we may leave it pretty much to defend itself. I do not know whether you see that lion.

It is very distinctly before my eyes. A number of persons advance to attack him, while a host of us would defend him. Pardon me if I offer a quiet suggestion.

Open the door and let the lion out. He will take care of himself. Why? They are gone. He no sooner goes forth in his strength than his assailants flee.

The way to meet infidelity is to spread the Bible. The answer to every objection against the Bible is the Bible.

Let the word of God out. Let the lion demonstrate his power. Speak the word with boldness and let God work in power through it.

[43 : 38] There are a couple of things that we can identify as the source of this boldness highlighted in this last section. First, there is a contrast between the gathering of the enemies of God and the gathering of God's servants.

Verse 26, that the king says, the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed. Verse 27 says, for truly in this city were gathered together, against your holy servant Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.

But contrasted with these unholy gatherings is the gathering of the people of God. He says in verse 31, and when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken. there's a physical manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit where his people are gathered together. Brothers and sisters, the enemies of God have gathered themselves together.

The world and the devil have conspired against the Lord and his anointed to snuff out the name of Jesus from under heaven. They systematically undermine and discredit the name of Jesus.

[45 : 02] They oppose those who proclaim the name of Jesus. And it is for that reason, it's all the more important that we gather together in the name of Jesus.

In a football game, before the players go out to face their opponents, they gather together in a huddle to face their friends, to plan together, to encourage and exhort one another, so that they might make a concerted push against their opponents.

Remember verse 23, when Peter and John were released, where did they go? They went to their friends. They went to their own. When we are bombarded with counter messaging and pressure from the world, day in and day out, when we are faced with innumerable temptations, day in and day out, we need the body of Christ to remind us we believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

God's God's God's God's word read and preached, when we sing God's word to one another, when we partake in God's word embodied in the sacraments, we are renewed, recalibrated, reminded.

[46 : 36] It is no surprise then that Ephesians 5, 18 to 20 command us to be filled with the Spirit by addressing one another in psalms and hymns of spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

It's when we are addressing one another with the word of Christ, when we are giving thanks to God together, when we are submitting to each other in humility and mutual servanthood, that we are filled with the Spirit of God.

And that leads me to the ultimate source of power for bold witness. It says in verse 31, 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.

The power to speak the word with boldness comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit, which in turn comes through the means of prayer. If we want to be bold, we must be filled with the Spirit, possessed and controlled by the Spirit, and this boldness is not something that we can conjure up with our sheer willpower.

This boldness that Scripture speaks of is not a force of personality. It's something that is supernatural in its origin. It's something that comes from the Holy Spirit. J.

[48 : 10] Edwin Orr, one of the great historians of Christian revival, says this, no great spiritual awakening has begun anywhere in the world apart from united prayer.

We see again and again throughout the book of Acts that the early church's success in the spread of the gospel had nothing to do with brilliant human strategy, well-packaged programs, or sociological and marketing principles.

It had everything to do with speaking God's word in the power of the Holy Spirit and the appropriation of that Spirit's power through prayer.

prayer. It's good to pray for the conversion of our friends and neighbors, but we also need to follow Apostle Paul's example in Ephesians 6, 17 to 20, where he tells us to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication or prayer for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

[49 : 50] We are to wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and we do that by praying at all times in the Spirit. This is why we must pray that we might boldly proclaim the gospel.

That's one simple reason why the early church was bold, that they prayed for boldness. Prayer is not something that we add on at the end of our important activities.

It is one of our most important activities, because it helps us realize that the most important agent the actor in our ministry is not us, but God.

So let's let God do His work, and let's be faithful to do our part in speaking the Word of God with boldness, despite opposition from the powers that be.

Please take a moment now to think about that. how is God convicting you, calling you to respond to this message? Take a moment to think about it in silence, and then we're going to respond together corporately by praying.
[51 : 09] on.ch