

“Speak God’s Message with Boldness”

Acts 4:23-31

We cannot forget the iconic photo of the young Chinese student standing in front of a Chinese army tank in Tiananmen Square, protesting the Communist government’s oppression and murder of innocent citizens. His courage was admired by millions around the world.

During this pandemic, we have been inundated with information about the virus, and how it spreads and how it is 4x’s more contagious than the flu. We have stayed in, we have washed our hands until they were cracking due to dryness, and used hand sanitizer like never before. We saw our state and nation get shut down by the threat of this mysterious virus.

However, we have seen the courage of many who have delivered meals, run errands, and helped sick and struggling family members and friends. We admire the courage of our medical workers and first responders during this pandemic, often putting their own health at risk. Some churches have stopped having services indefinitely, and others have never stopped meeting. Some are reluctant to start back due to threat of spreading the virus or being in trouble with the authorities. The Zion Hill family have been compliant to the local and state authorities. We have tried to be cautious, but continue our ministry the best that we can under the circumstances. We have taken comfort in God’s Word about being ***“strong and courageous.”***

The courage of the apostles’ before the Jewish leaders is to be respected. They were told by these powerful leaders to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. The apostles had no standing politically, socially, or economically. But they had standing with Christ. They knew that they were obeying the command of Jesus by proclaiming His death and resurrection. They were not intimidated, they did not back down, and they did not cower in fear. They prayed that they would ***“speak God’s message with boldness”*** (v. 31b). What can we as a church family learn from these courageous early believers?

In speaking God’s message with boldness, we must:

1. Praise God for His sovereignty (4:24)

“Master, you are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them.”

- God is sovereign, meaning that He is in control of world events. The early believers praised God for His sovereignty, being in control of their world and their lives. They praised Him for being the Creator of the world. They were courageous because of God’s sovereignty.
- Courage comes from knowing that God is God; that He is in control of our world and our lives. Though it may not seem like it, He is in control and His will (what He wants) will be done. God will even use unbelievers to bring about His will. David said: ***“O Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer, who shields my***

head in the day of battle—do not grant the wicked their desires, O Lord; do not let their plans succeed...” (Psalm 140:7-8).

- Paul, speaking of Jesus, said: *“No one can see God, but Jesus Christ is exactly like Him. He ranks higher than everything that has been made. Through His power all things were made—things in heaven and on earth, things seen and unseen, all powers, authorities, lords, and rulers. All things were made through Christ and for Christ” (Colossians 1:15-16).* Praise God for His power and sovereignty which gives you courage.

2. Praise God for His Word (4:25-26)

“You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant: Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against His Messiah.”

- The early believers praised God for His sovereignty and for His Word. The Word of God gave spiritual strength and nourishment to the apostles so that they could boldly proclaim Jesus’ death and resurrection. God’s Word gave them direction and discernment. They quoted from the 2nd Psalm, where David spoke of secular leaders taking their stand *“against the Lord and against His Messiah” (v. 26b).*

- The apostles knew that according to God’s Word that God will prevail, and those who oppose Him will be destroyed. Paul said: *“...At the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11).* They may rebel now, but they will submit later.
- If you are discouraged or fearful, read God’s Word. The Scriptures give us encouragement, direction, correction, and wisdom. The psalmist said: *“You are my shelter and my shield; I put my hope in Your word” (Psalm 119:114).* He said, *“Your words brings light and gives understanding to the inexperienced” (Psalm 119:130).* Let God’s Word help you like it helped the early believers.

3. Praise God for the power of prayer (4:31)

“When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness.”

- When the apostles gathered with their fellow believers, they praised God for His power and help. They prayed to Him for boldness. Again, they were not men of means. They were only humble men, but they had God in their corner. The politicians and religious leaders were against them. But they prayed to God for help. They prayed: *“Lord, consider*

their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness, while You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs, and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus” (vs. 29-30).

- Jesus commanded His disciples to pray. Prayer is seeking God and His help. Prayer is praising God for who He is and for what He has done for us. When you pray in faith, meaning that you believe God can do what you need Him to do, your prayers will be heard and responded to just like the apostles.
- There is power in prayer. It is asking God to intervene in our circumstances. Moses prayed, and the Red Sea was divided. David prayed and was saved from his enemies. Hezekiah prayed and was healed and delivered from his enemies. The apostles prayed and the building where they were was shaken (v. 31). James said: *“The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours; yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit” (James 5:16b-18).* Praise God for the privilege and power of prayer.

Warren Wiersbe said: “Believing prayer releases God’s power and enables God’s hand to move.” Find boldness to live out your faith in praising God for His sovereignty, His

Word, and the gift of prayer. Boldly share your faith with others. Boldly share what God has done for you.