

Acts 4:23-31. ²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One." Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

We Will Speak the Word of God Boldly

- 1. The Word is made certain in Christ Jesus**
- 2. God brings his message to others through his humble servants**
- 3. God graciously gives his Holy Spirit to help us proclaim his word.**

Their eyes were fixed on him. He had just read these words from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. ¹⁸ ***"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*** He read those words with authority, he calmly rolled up the scroll, and then he sat down. The eyes of everyone in his hometown synagogue were fastened on him, and just as calmly and confidently as he read the words from the scroll, he looked them in the eyes and announced to all of them saying, ***"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*** (Luke 4:)

Can you imagine how the jaws of all those gathered in the synagogue that day just dropped? This was the carpenter's Son. This was Jesus from just down the road. This was Mary's boy. How could he make this claim? How could he say that he had been anointed to preach the good news to the poor? How could *he* bring good news that would bind up the broken hearted? Who was *he* that he could set the captive free and announce the year of the Lord's favor?

Well, Jesus could say this because this is why he was sent. He came from heaven to earth to proclaim the good news. He came to bring spiritual release, spiritual freedom. He came to bind up those whose hearts had been broken by sin. He came to bring spiritual riches and to proclaim good news to those who were not proud and haughty but poor in spirit; to those who knew they needed a Savior. He came to proclaim the good news of free

salvation to all those who held on tightly to the promise of the Messiah. This was indeed the year of the Lord's favor. This was a special time of God's grace. The promised Savior, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, the Word, was in the flesh and stood before them.

There were those who were amazed at his teachings. They heard him proclaim the Word with authority and they were brought to faith. There were also those who were not impressed. In jealousy they plotted against him. They plotted his death. But even this was according to God's plan. Through the mouth of God's humble servant David, God would foretell of how the nations would rage and the peoples would plot in vain in an attempt to stop the Anointed One. In vain they would try to silence the Word, the world would try to snuff out the Savior, but by doing so they would fulfill the Holy Scriptures. Christ Jesus could not be stopped. His message of salvation, his plan of salvation would be fulfilled. Therefore, Jesus spoke with confidence, he spoke boldly, he taught with authority.

With a similar authority Peter and John proclaimed the message of Jesus. They proclaimed the message of salvation through the promised Savior Jesus Christ even in the face of fierce opposition. They spoke with power before those that doubted, in the presence of those who hated them. Even in the face of death they spoke without fear to those who wanted nothing but to shut them up and get rid of them. They spoke with authority. They spoke the truth. They spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Previously in the book of Acts we hear of a great commotion that had come about after Peter and John had healed a crippled man. This man had been crippled all his life and every day he sat at the temple gate begging for money so that he could survive. As Peter and John walked to the temple gate Beautiful they met this beggar who asked them for help. Peter and John looked straight at him and Peter said to him, "Silver or gold have I none; but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And the man went leaping and jumping and praising God. (Acts 3)

This had caused quite a commotion among the people. But Peter asked the people why they were so surprised. After all, God had glorified Jesus because Jesus had completed the work of salvation. Jesus was the Savior of the world who was now seated again in his position of power as King over all the earth. Jesus name was a name of almighty power. With boldness Peter proclaimed the name of the LORD Jesus and proclaimed the word that Jesus had given to him and all the others to proclaim. This was the word that Jesus had fulfilled. With confidence Peter quoted from the Old Testament showing the people how this all had to happen. He proclaimed the fulfilled and saving truth of Jesus, the truth of salvation. He proclaimed God's Word to the very people who had a hand in killing the creator of the universe and the Savior of the world. As the people looked attentively at Peter he looked straight at them and said. *You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.* (Acts 3:13-16).

The leaders of the people were enraged. The priests, the teachers, and all the leaders, (headed up this time by the Sadducees who were dead set against the concept of the resurrection) rounded up Peter and John and threw them into jail. But that could not stop this powerful preaching from taking effect. Many who heard the message preached by Peter and John believed and we are told that the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000. With boldness these humble servants spoke and the Spirit of God blessed the Word.

The leaders tried as they could to silence this teaching. The rulers, the elders, the teachers of the law, the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, and others gathered together and had Peter and John hauled in front of them so that they could question these men. Yet even in the face of such an imposing panel of judges, even under such scrutiny, Peter and John did not wilt under the pressure, they did not hold back. Instead they proclaimed God's Word of truth. With the power of God's Word fully behind them and fulfilled in Jesus, they quoted Old Testament Scripture saying, He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." (Psalm 118:22) They explained the importance of Jesus' work. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

This intimidating panel saw the courage of these men and they were astonished. After all, these were ordinary men, unschooled fisherman. But there was nothing the leaders could do. The man who had been healed was standing right there with them. The people believed in the name of Jesus. The word was doing its work. Therefore those who opposed them had to release them. They continued to threaten them, but they released them. Peter and John then reported all of this to the other apostles and their fellow believers. They reported the threats issued by the leaders and then they prayed together.

In their prayer they gave thanks that God had fulfilled his word. David had foretold the Savior's death and God brought it about as he had planned. Even though it appeared that Pilate, and Herod, and other evil men were plotting against Jesus this was part of the Father's will. God's will had been done and so they prayed that God's will would continue to be done. They prayed that the message of Christ would go out into the world; that the powerful, saving message of Jesus would be shared. Despite the threats against them they prayed that the Lord would stretch out his mighty hand to protect them and guide them. As they prayed they were confident that God would answer this prayer to their benefit and to his glory. ***29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:29-31)***

The threats, the anxious moments, the condescending looks, the chains, the prison cells, none of this mattered when the ground shook. They had the Word of God. They had the Spirit of God. They were going to speak with authority and power much like Jesus had spoken.

Dear friends in Christ, the power of the word gives us confidence to speak with authority too. The mighty Spirit of God shakes away all our excuses. *Who am I to share the word? Who am I to announce that sins are forgiven? Who am I to comfort a broken heart, to heal those spiritually broken with the gospel? Who am I that I could proclaim the good news to a*

childhood friend, or speak against sin among those who know me and know what I have done? Who am I? Who are you? Who are we?

You and I have been given the Spirit of God. You and I have been given the confidence of God's Word fulfilled in Christ. You and I have firsthand experience of the healing power of the gospel and how it has changed and affected your life and mine. You and I have experience the comfort, the power, and the victory that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus can bring at the funeral of a friend or a loved one. You and I have seen the miracle that is Baptism: the creating of faith, the washing away of sin when simple water is connected to the Word of God. You and I have seen among us how faith, which is graciously planted in a child's heart, can grow and produce lovely fruits of faith. You and I have seen among us how the Spirit can make a young man bold enough to stand up in front of an entire congregation and publicly confess his faith.

As we soon gather for our annual meetings, and listen to the written reports, and look back at a year of ministry, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has been at work through the precious means of grace. He has sustained you through trouble. He has lifted you up in his joy. He has touched your heart and brought the healing of Jesus to your sin sick soul. He has brought spiritual sight to eyes born spiritually blind, and therefore by his grace you and I daily get to see the goodness of God in his word. You and I get to understand and rejoice in his grace. And now by his Spirit you and I are made bold to share this message.

The apostles were not scholars who received training so that they could speak eloquently and with authority. They were ordinary men, but they were given the confidence of the Word of God fulfilled in Jesus. They were with Jesus and they learned from him. He taught them from the Old Testament, he gave them his only holy words, and then he granted them his Holy Spirit to make them bold to speak. You may not have received special training to speak eloquently, you may consider yourself ordinary men and women, but you too have the powerful word of God. You too have the words of the Old Testament. You too have the words of Jesus and his apostles in the New Testament. You too have the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that Spirit of God works through that Word of God and he makes you bold to speak. The Spirit of God shakes loose those excuses that we make. When he is at work in us those excuses fall off and we are left standing with a calm boldness. We are enabled to speak boldly against sin and proclaim the good news of Jesus. We are nothing but humble servants who are enabled by his mighty Spirit to carry the powerful word of God. What a blessing God has given us! What a privilege and honor to read and to speak the very words that our God and Savior spoke and then share with others what they mean about Jesus and what they mean for our eternal salvation.

And so instead of shying away from sharing, instead of looking away when opportunities present themselves, we look those opportunities straight in the eye and we share the word of God. We share that word of God with confidence because we know it is fulfilled in Christ. We share that word courageously because we know that God has chosen to spread his message through his humble servants. We speak with boldness because God has graciously given us his Holy Spirit.

O God, creator of the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them; stretch out your hand and bless our efforts to share your word. Bring your message to others through us, your humble servants. For in your powerful word you reveal that Jesus is our promised Savior, and through this mighty word you grant us your Holy Spirit. Amen.