

**March 17, 2024**

**God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing**

***The Book of Acts Pt 6***

***Acts 4:1-31 – Courage in the Name of Jesus***

Our theme for 2024 is God's Good News Story, Continued... "***The Church Alive & Growing***". For the past few weeks, we have been looking at the basic descriptions and the **true call & purpose of the Church**... The powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Today we pick up right where we left off last week. The message last week was "Power In the Name of Jesus", today it is 'Courage in the Name of Jesus'. The story today is the follow-up to the the miraculous healing of the crippled man by Peter by the "Powerful Name of Jesus". Peter & John had performed a great miracle through the power and Name of Jesus. As you would imagine, people are curious beings and love anything exciting and mysterious. Large crowds of people had gathered around and the atmosphere was electric with energy and questions. This caught the attention of the Jewish religious leaders who were very jealous of their religious power and control over the people. This miracle and the preaching of Jesus by Peter & John was a serious threat to their power and their pride. This is where we pick up in Chapter 4>>>

**Acts 4: 1-31**... *As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the*

*Sadducees came up to them, <sup>2</sup>being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they laid hands on them and put them in prison until the next day, for it was already evening.*

*A commentary note here ... Luke, who is the author and compiler of ACTS, takes the opportunity to interject a note of victory and positive encouragement here as his way of saying, though the enemies of God try to defeat His work and will, God will always prevail by His authority and power....*

*<sup>4</sup> But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.*

*<sup>5</sup> On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; <sup>6</sup>and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. <sup>7</sup> When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, <sup>9</sup>if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the NAME OF JESUS CHRIST THE NAZARENE, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health.*

<sup>11</sup> He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. (from Ps. 118:22) <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else; for there IS NO OTHER NAME under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we MUST BE SAVED.” <sup>13</sup> Now as they (the Jewish leaders) observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. . <sup>15</sup> But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, <sup>16</sup> saying, “What are we to do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let’s warn them not to speak any longer to any person in this name.” <sup>18</sup> And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, make your own judgment; <sup>20</sup> for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” <sup>21</sup> When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; <sup>22</sup> for the man on whom this miracle of healing had been performed was more than forty years old. <sup>23</sup> When they had been released, they went to their

own companions and reported everything that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> And when they heard this, they raised their voices to God with one mind and said, “Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN THEM, (from Ex. 20:11.... <sup>25</sup> who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘WHY WERE THE NATIONS INSOLENT, AND THE PEOPLES PLOTTING IN VAIN? <sup>26</sup> THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’ (from Ps. 2:1,2) <sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and purpose predestined to occur. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, <sup>30</sup> while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” <sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness & courage.

Again, there is sooooo much that we could address in this chapter, but the Key Story Line here is...

Faith Over Fear.  
Courage Over Cowardice.

**I believe that fear actually** was a key element in the minds and actions of Peter and John that day.

Let's look at two options... They could have been driven by...

(1) Fear of man > inward fear

They could have let their fears and anxieties of what people might do to them define them, which produces an inward-focused fear of "what might happen to me."

Or

**(2) Fear of God > outward courage**

A healthy fear of who God is, a respect and awe for Him, produces outward courage that helps us focus on God, His will, and the needs of others more than ourselves.

**Proverbs 1:7... *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.***

As we think about evangelism like Peter and John, we don't need to be afraid but to obey God. When those in power tell them to stop evangelizing it doesn't go well.

Let's look again at verses 18-20 and see which one of these two options Peter and John choose...

**Acts 4:18-20... <sup>18</sup> Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the Name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! <sup>20</sup> As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."**

They are so focused on God and telling people about him (outward courage) that they're not afraid, or if they are, their courage overcomes their fear.

It is obvious they chose to Fear God, which produced a Bold Courage.

In today's world we as Christians are faced with so many situations that force us to choose either Fear of Man or Fear of God. **Let's see how Peter & John and the early Church** chose to let their Fear/Respect of God produce Courage, and may they be our models and examples to do the same today and in the future.

1. Courage and Faithfulness in Preaching the Gospel
  - Proclaiming the Truth Fearlessly [Acts 4:13]
  - Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition [Acts 4:18-20]
  - Demonstrating Confidence in God's Power [Acts 4:29-31]
2. Courage and Confidence in the Midst of Persecution
  - Enduring Trials with Strength [Acts 4:3-7]
  - Trusting in God's Protection [Acts 4:29]
  - Rejoicing in Suffering for Christ [Acts 4:21]
3. Courage and Power in Prayer through the Holy Spirit
  - Boldness Received through the Holy Spirit [Acts 4:8]
  - Unity and Support from Fellow Believers [Acts 4:32]
  - Miracles and Signs Confirming the Message [Acts 4:30]

Outline adapted from <https://sermonoutline.ai/app/ai-sermon-outline-generator>

Let me close with the following fears that you and I may struggle with and then give the answer to these fears...

### **1. FEAR OF HARM**

GOD'S ANSWER = HOPE IN THE RESURRECTION.

Harm and danger are regular possibilities in the world today. God has promised numerous times in the Bible that He would protect us and shield us. However, we need to realize and accept that harm and or death may come our way, but even if we face the worst, we have the best outcome.... Because of the Resurrection we have Hope for Eternal Life!

### **2. FEAR OF MAN'S AUTHORITY**

GOD'S ANSWER = HOPE IN CHRIST'S AUTHORITY.

Peter & John made a decision to choose God's authority over men. It's not that they were teaching an open rebellion against governing powers, because the scripture says we are to obey our leaders. But, when there comes a clear conflict with human authority and God's Word & Will, we must choose to follow God's will, no matter if it is convenient or not. In the end, remember, *"every knee will bow, every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord."* (Phil. 2:10,11)

### **3. FEAR OF LOSS**

GOD'S ANSWER - HOPE IN LIVES SAVED.

Peter & John were putting everything at risk. The Jewish leaders had power to ruin their lives vocationally and financially. But they chose to follow what Jesus had taught them in the Sermon on the Mount in

**Matthew 6:19-21...<sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

"If we want to get past fear of loss, we need to focus on the lives Christ can save through us, and invite. If you never try, you'll never know. How many of us have never tried because of fear, but really, that's the best reason to try. We want to see them repent of their sins and come to Christ so that one day we won't lose them, so that we'll get to spend all eternity with them. Hope in lives saved overcomes fear of loss".

<https://www.cornerstonewestford.com/sermons/outward-courage-acts-41-22/>

### **4. FEAR OF BEING INADEQUATE OR EMBARRASSED**

GOD'S ANSWER = TRUST IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Listen to these verses that show we can trust God's Holy Spirit to give us what we need when we need it.

**Acts 4:13...Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.**

**Acts 4:29-31...<sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, <sup>30</sup> while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the**

*name of Your holy servant Jesus.”<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*

This verse by the author of Acts in his Gospel account verifies this truth.

**Luke 12:11,12**...*And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”*

***We must choose Courageous Faith  
Over Cowardly Fear***

THIS KIND OF FAITH IN JESUS CAN TRANSFORM  
INWARD FEAR INTO OUTWARD COURAGE.

Portions adapted from <https://www.cornerstonewestford.com/sermons/outward-courage-acts-41-22/>