

# Praying for Christian Boldness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this morning with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of Acts, Acts chapter 4, Acts chapter 4, and if we read again at verse 29, Acts 4 at verse 29, 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.

The title of God's message to us today is Praying for Christian Boldness. Praying for Christian Boldness.

Praying for Christian Boldness. Because, you know, in the day and age that we live in, with so much opposition and even antagonism shown towards the Christian and towards the Christian church, and with that opposition increasing and becoming more vocal and more defiant all the time, the question is, what are we to do?

How are we to react? How are we to respond to the opposition and the antagonism of the day? How are we to react and respond when there's opposition that seems to be coming from almost every side?

[ 1 : 45 ] How are we to react and respond with, you could say, the media-driven, and even the government endorsement of LGBT? How are we to deal with that in our society and even coming into our schools?

How are we to react and respond to the threat of our freedom of speech being undermined? How are we to react and respond to, well, if we speak about our belief that that won't be seen as a hate crime?

How are we to react and respond to abortion or even assisted suicide and that being normalized?

How are we to react and respond to the erosion of the Lord's day, the indifference and apathy towards the Lord's cause, the ignorance of even the Lord himself?

As individual Christians and even as a church, how are we to react and how are we to respond to these things? Are we just to bury our head in the sand?

Are we to keep silent in the hope that just one day it'll all blow over? Are we to distance ourselves from anything that will make us stand out as a Christian?

[ 2 : 56 ] Are we to hide our lamp under a bushel from the world and its views on life and society? My friend, how are we to react and respond in our day and generation when there is an increasing opposition from every side towards Christ, the church and the Christian?

How are we to react and respond? You know, this passage, it reminds us that we're to pray for Christian boldness. We're to pray for Christian boldness.

Because we need boldness as individual Christians, and we need boldness as a church to stand up and speak out for Jesus. And you know, that's a theme which takes centre stage here in Acts chapter 4, the theme of Christian boldness.

Now, when we talk about Christian boldness, we're not talking about a trait in someone's personality. Because someone who is typically shy or softly spoken or an introverted person, they can have Christian boldness.

But even like someone who's loud or someone who's outspoken, someone who's very bold, they can also shrink back. So it's not, Christian boldness is not about our personality.

[ 4 : 11 ] Christian boldness is all about a person. Because Christian boldness is acting by the power of the Holy Spirit because of your conviction and your commitment to Jesus Christ.

Christian boldness is acting by the power of the Holy Spirit because of your conviction and your commitment to Jesus Christ. And that's what we see here with Peter and John.

They spoke with boldness by the power of the Holy Spirit because of their conviction and their commitment to Jesus Christ. And so Christian boldness, it's not a personality trait, nor is it an emotion.

It's a God-given gift by the power and enabling of the Holy Spirit. And when we stand up and when we speak out for Jesus with Christian boldness, it's not to be done with arrogance.

And it's not to be done with the intention of antagonism. We're to act in love, not lunacy. We're to be faithful, not foolish.

[ 5 : 13 ] As Jesus says, we're to be wise as serpents. We're to be as harmless as doves. And you know, what we learn here about the early church is that when they faced difficulties and opposition, you know, their first port of call, it wasn't a petition.

It wasn't a protest. Their first port of call was a prayer meeting. Their first port of call was a prayer meeting. And that's what we're seeing in this passage. And so as the theme of Christian boldness, as it takes center stage in Acts chapter 4, there are three things that I want us to note from this passage about Christian boldness.

We see the reason for Christian boldness. Then we see the response to Christian boldness. And then lastly, the request for Christian boldness. So the reason for Christian boldness, the response to Christian boldness, and the request for Christian boldness.

So first of all, the reason for Christian boldness. The reason for Christian boldness. Look again at verse 23. Verse 23, we're told there, when they were released, that is Peter and John, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

Now verse 23, it's, you could say, it's a connecting verse. Because it connects us with what happened in the first half of chapter 4, and even in chapter 3. And it's connecting us with what happens here in this section of chapter 4.

[ 6 : 46 ] Because we're told that when they were released, that is Peter and John, Peter and John were released after being arrested in the temple for preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.

And you'll remember how Peter and John, they had gone to the temple to pray. It was a prayer meeting. And we saw that in chapter 3. Peter and John made their way to the temple for what was a prayer meeting.

And as they made their way to the temple, they saw a lame man sitting outside the church door begging. And this unnamed lame man, he had been there, he had been lame from birth.

And as a result, he was carried to the church door every single day in order to beg from all those who were going to church, from the church goers. Every day this man was holding out his palm, longing for someone to look upon him with compassion and help him by placing a charitable donation in his hand.

The lame man was looking and longing for a gift of grace to be given to him. And in chapter 3, we were reminded that as Peter and John arrived at the church that day, the lame man was calling out to them.

[ 7 : 57 ] But Peter and John, they didn't pass him by. They didn't ignore him. They didn't see this man as worthless like all the other church goers did. No, Peter and John, they knew that this lame man was made in the image of God.

Therefore, he's precious in God's sight. And he also has a precious soul. And as this lame man sits there, holding out his hand, longing to receive a gift of grace, Peter says to him, silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he takes him by the right hand and he makes this lame man stand up and walk. Peter gave to this lame man the greatest gift.

It was a gracious gift. It was a free gift of salvation. And the lame man rejoiced. He was walking and leaping and praising God. And you know, my unconverted friend, that's how you need to come to church.

You need to come to church like the lame man, with your hand open, asking for salvation. You need to come asking that you'll receive this gracious gift.

[ 9 : 14 ] And I have to say to you, like Peter said to the lame man, silver and gold have I none. I cannot give you any money, but all I can present to you is this Jesus.

This Jesus who will save you. This Jesus who will cleanse you. This Jesus who will make your life new. When you ask him for salvation, silver and gold have I none.

But you know what I'd love to give you. And you know it, I'd love to give you Jesus. But that's what this lame man received. He received Jesus just by asking.

And as a result, the lame man, he came into the prayer meeting with Peter and John. He came to the prayer meeting because he had this new desire to worship God. But the arrival of the lame man at the prayer meeting, it led to the arrest of Peter and John at the prayer meeting.

Because it was now, well, the lame man, they'd all entered into church, Peter and John and the lame man. And he's walking and he's leaping and praising God. And the congregation are looking at this man and they're amazed at what's happened to him.

[10:19] They knew who he was because, well, he was the lame man who always sat at the church door. And as the people questioned Peter and John as to what had happened to him, how he was now able to walk, Peter responded by saying to them, it wasn't by our power, it wasn't by our piety, but it was only done by the resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ.

And you know, Peter and John, after speaking about Jesus, they spoke about this resurrected Jesus, but then they were arrested. They were arrested and imprisoned and then put on trial for just speaking about Jesus and the resurrection.

But as this connecting verse reminds us, Peter and John were released. And when they were released, they went to tell the church what had happened. That's what we're told 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.

Now I want us to note, we're told that they went to their friends. They went to their friends. But the word friends that's used here, it's a very interesting word because it's much stronger than the word friends.

It literally refers to those who live under the same roof. Those who are from the same family. They hold the same company. You could almost say they're brothers and sisters.

[11:41] That's why they're called the church. And you know, that's what the church is. And that's how the church should function. The church should function not just as friends, but also as family.

As those who live under the same roof. My friend, the church should be a family. The church should function like a family. Where we know one another.

We get to know one another. Where we love one another. Where we encourage one another. Where we look out for one another. Where we care for one another. Where we support one another.

And like Peter and John, when things in our lives take an unexpected turn, we should be able to share it with one another. The church should function not only as friends, but also as family.

The church should be a family. And when the church functions as a family, we will want to welcome others into the church family. And that's the example we're given from the early church.

[12:45] They functioned as a family. And as a family, Peter and John, they reported to the chief, they reported to the church family what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

Because what the chief priests and the elders had said to them was that they were to stay silent about Jesus and the resurrection. They were not to speak about this Jesus anymore or his resurrection.

But you know, I love how Peter and John responded when they were told that they had to keep quiet and stay silent. They said back in verse 20, we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

We cannot but speak about Jesus. We cannot but speak about Jesus. That was the reason for their boldness. They spoke with boldness by the power of the Holy Spirit because of their conviction and their commitment to Jesus Christ.

And that's how we should be as individuals and as a church, a church family, that we cannot but speak about Jesus. We cannot but speak about Jesus.

[13:58] My friend, the reason for our boldness to speak about Jesus should be our conviction and our commitment to Jesus Christ. Where we want to speak to him, speak about him to others.

We should want to bring him up in everyday conversation. Just bringing him in there somehow. Speaking a word and seize him. We should want to bring him into conversation even to help those who may be struggling or lost to make them see their need of Jesus and turn to him for salvation.

That's how we should be as Christians because of our conviction and our commitment to Jesus Christ. That we live every day of our life saying, I cannot but speak about Jesus. I cannot but speak about Jesus. And I know it's hard. I know that's not easy. But this is what we're to do. We're to seek Christian boldness.

And that's what we're seeing secondly. Because the church, they respond. They respond to the Christian boldness of Peter and John. They respond by calling a prayer meeting.

[15:08] They want to pray about this need to have Christian boldness. So we've seen the reason for Christian boldness. The reason was that they could not stop speaking about Jesus.

But the response of the church, the response of the church was to pray for Christian boldness. So the reason for Christian boldness and the response to Christian boldness.

Look at verse 24. And when they heard it, when they heard what Peter and John had said, 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, quoting Psalm 2, why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain, the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed.

You know, what we ought to notice straight away is that the response of the early church to the opposition they faced and their need for Christian boldness, their response, it wasn't a response of apathy by burying their head in the sand.

Neither was it a response of arrogance by calling for a petition to be signed. Nor was it a response of antagonism, calling for a protest to be made. No, the response of the church was to call a prayer meeting.

[16:30] My friend, the response of the church to opposition and the need for Christian boldness was to pray about it. And you know, that's one of the main themes in the book of Acts, the importance of the prayer meeting.

The importance of the prayer meeting for an active and effective church in its community. We saw that even in chapter 2, right at the beginning of the book of Acts. As the church family gathered together for a prayer meeting, it was then that the Holy Spirit came upon the church in power.

And now here, in chapter, only two chapters later, chapter 4, the church is gathered together for a prayer meeting. And they're gathering together in response to opposition.

And they're gathering with this desire for Christian boldness. And you know, every time I think of the importance of the prayer meeting and the priority it should have in the life of the Christian and the church, you know, I always go back to what Spurgeon said.

He says, we will never see much change for the better in our churches and even in our communities. We will never see much change for the better until the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians.

[17:47] And that's what we see here. The church family, their first port of call, their priority is to gather together to pray. And they're praying in response to opposition.

And they're praying for a desire for Christian boldness. And you know, what I love about their prayer meeting is that they respond by committing all their cares and all their concerns into the hands of the Lord who is sovereign and who's in control of all things.

That's what they say in verse 24. When they heard about the boldness of Peter and John, they lifted up their voices together to God and said, Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

And then they go on to quote the words from Psalm 2. They say, why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves. The rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed.

And you know, reading these verses, there's a great lesson for us here. And the lesson is that if you're ever struggling with prayer and you don't know what to pray about or what to pray for, then read a passage of the Bible.

[19:00] Read a psalm before you pray. Let God speak to you first before you speak to him. Because when you read the Bible first, when you let God speak to you first, then you can respond in prayer to the Lord.

And whether your prayer is going to be a prayer of praise or confession of sin or even petition, read the Bible first. Ask, speak, let God speak to you first and then speak to him in response.

You can pray in response to what you've read in God's word. And that's what the church was doing. They were praying in response to opposition. They were praying for a desire for Christian boldness. But they were also praying in response to the words of Psalm 2. Because Psalm 2, it's a psalm all about the fact that God is sovereign, Jesus is king, and every knee will bow before him. Psalm 2 is all about the fact that God is sovereign, Jesus is king, and every knee will bow before him. And you know, what better prayer to have? What better way to respond to the opposition that's surrounding you?

[ 20 : 10 ] What better way to pray for Christian boldness than to be reminded in God's word first and foremost that God is sovereign, Jesus is king, and one day every knee will bow before him.

And this is something we need to be reminded of when we live out our faith in our community. This is something we need to be reminded of every single day when we go to work, maybe when we drop off the kids at school, when we're going about our business, when we're going shopping. This is something we need to be reminded of even when we're watching the news, when we see all the opposition that's been made, all the media pushes and promotions that are being made against the church of Jesus Christ.

My friend, we need to remember God is sovereign, Jesus is king, and one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

That's what we need to remember. And you know, my unconverted friend, this is something you need to remember. This is something you need to remember. You know, give me your ear for a moment, just for a moment, because what Psalm 2 is reminding us is that you need to remember God is sovereign, Jesus is king, and one day your knee will bow before him.

[ 21 : 30 ] You need to remember that God is sovereign. Your breath is in his hand, not your own. Your life is in his hand, not your own.

He is sovereign, God is sovereign. Jesus needs to be king. Jesus needs to be king in your heart. You need to abdicate the throne of your heart. You need to step down.

And let Jesus take the throne of your own heart. You need to make Jesus your lord and king. And you do that by bowing before Jesus. You bow down before king Jesus and confess that he alone is your lord and saviour.

That's how Psalm 2 even concludes. We'll sing it later on. Psalm 2 concludes with this petition. Kiss the son. Pay homage to the royal son.

Bow down before the son of God. Bend your knee he says before king Jesus and do it in this life because you will certainly do it in the next he says.

[ 22 : 33 ] You know that's the promise of scripture that when Jesus comes in the glory of his father every knee will bow every tongue will confess in heaven and on earth and in hell itself every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is lord to the glory of God the father and you know my unconverted friend this is something you need to remember God is sovereign Jesus is king and your knee will bow but it needs to bow in this life before you will bow in hell in the next you need to bow in this life you need to remember that God is sovereign Jesus is king and every knee will bow we all need to remember it because when we do when we remember that God is sovereign and Jesus is king and every knee will bow we will request Christian boldness and that's what we see lastly the request for Christian boldness as we said the theme of Christian boldness it's taking centre stage in Acts chapter 4 and there are three things that we should note in this passage about

Christian boldness the reason for Christian boldness which is Peter and John they couldn't stop speaking about Jesus the response to Christian boldness that the church gathers for a prayer meeting and then the request for Christian boldness they ask the Lord to make them bold Christians so lastly the request for Christian boldness look at verse 29 it says 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 with all these threats of opposition and antagonism towards the church with it growing all the time and the church family gathering together for prayer asking the Lord to give them Christian boldness because they have this conviction they have this commitment to Jesus and you know the church as we said they knew that God is sovereign they knew that Jesus is king they knew that every knee would bow before him which is why they request for Christian boldness they ask the Lord to make them bold Christians and the Lord grants their

request they continue to speak the word of God with boldness but you know the question we need to ask ourselves and this is where the rubber hits the road the question we need to ask ourselves as individual Christians and as a church family is how badly do we want Christian boldness how badly do we want Christian boldness and one commentator he asks the question do we want it enough that we will ask seek and knock until God answers us how badly do we want Christian boldness or is it the commentator says is it that if we're honest with ourselves we would rather just keep wishing that we're bolder we would rather just keep admiring bold people from a distance and we would rather keep being inspired by biographies of bold people how badly do we want Christian boldness for ourselves so that we will speak to our friends and speak to our neighbours and speak to our work colleagues about Jesus Christ how badly do we want it or is it true to say that we would rather stay where we feel safe and comfortable and not pray for Christian boldness at all but you know that's not an option not praying for it is not an option because the example of the early church reminds us and even challenges us that the responsibility of the church family the responsibility of you and I is that as those living in this community we are to request from the Lord we are to ask the

Lord for Christian boldness and as we mentioned earlier Christian boldness it's not done with arrogance it's not to be done with the intention of antagonism we're to act in love not lunacy we're to be faithful not foolish we're to be wise as serpents and as harmless as doves which means that Christian boldness is not about writing letters to the media to be in newspapers and on websites it's not about posting things on social media that we're looking for a reaction according to this passage and even the example of Jesus that's not Christian boldness because what people write it may be correct it may be biblical it may even be faithful to the word of God but if it's antagonistic if it's calling for a debate or an argument or if it's presented in an arrogant way then that's not Christian boldness that's Christian foolishness and that never helps the cause of Christ and it never helps the witness of the church and you know

[ 28 : 04 ] I'm more convinced than ever that public arguments and public debates and public protests they never solve anything they only cause antagonism from the outside world which breeds resentment and bitterness towards the church yes we're to write to our local council or our MSPs or our MPs and tell them our views but when we do it we have to be like Jesus we have to be like Jesus wise as serpents harmless as doves because you know when we look at Jesus we see the most loving man who ever lived and he was gentle in his approach he was persuasive in his discussion and when he was reviled he did not revile in return so we have to be like Jesus it's interesting that when you look at first Peter when Peter writes a letter he writes a letter to the church family a church family that's facing persecution and Peter says to them about persecution to this you have been called because

Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps he committed no sin neither was deceit found in his mouth when he was reviled he did not revile in return when he suffered he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly my friend because God is sovereign and Jesus is king and every knee will one day bow down before him we should be praying for Christian boldness to stand up and speak out for Jesus because in the day and generation that we live in which is a day of deception it's a day of resistance to the truth we need Christian boldness more than ever as one commentator says boldness coupled with love and humility humility is like a light in darkness boldness coupled with love and humility is like a light in darkness and that's what we're to be as a church family that's what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount we're to be the light of the world we're to be the salt of the earth and Jesus says to us he says to us when we're confronted with our neighbours and our friends and our colleagues do not be anxious about what you're to say for it is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit the Spirit living in you and as we said that's what Christian boldness is Christian boldness is acting by the power of the Holy Spirit because of your conviction and your commitment to Jesus Christ Christian boldness is acting by the power of the Holy Spirit because of your conviction and your commitment to Jesus Christ and a wonderful thing is that when we act boldly in our faith it will challenge and it will encourage others to do the same we see that in Paul's letter to the Philippians it was because of Paul's example of Christian boldness that the church in Philippi they were challenged and they were also encouraged to speak the word of God boldly without fear and that's what we need and you know that's even what we saw on

Wednesday evening those who were out on Wednesday evening which you're all welcome to come to every Wednesday evening we met Eric and Joy Browning they were here from the Society of the Distribution of the Hebrew Scriptures they give Hebrew and English or Hebrew and French or Spanish Hebrew Bibles they give them to those who are Jews and they encourage them to believe in the Messiah Jesus Christ and they do it they go around London in and out of all the streets of London knocking on doors giving Jews Bibles and they do it as Joy said they do it with trepidation they do it in fear but they do it in boldness they do it with boldness because that boldness comes by the power of the Holy Spirit because of their conviction and their commitment to Jesus Christ and that's how we need to be we need to speak to our friends our neighbours our work colleagues or bring Jesus into our conversations and we do it by the power of the Holy Spirit because of our conviction and our commitment to Jesus Christ and we need to pray for it to pray for Christian boldness we need to be challenged and encouraged to pray for Christian boldness we need to follow the example of the early church and stand up and speak out for Jesus us and you know it's a wonderful challenge it's a great challenge to be presented with because the theme of Christian boldness it's taking centre stage here in Acts 4 so we see the reason for Christian boldness the response to Christian boldness and the request for Christian boldness and so as a church family we should pray for Christian boldness so that it would be said about us that we cannot but speak about Jesus we cannot but speak about Jesus may the

[ 33 : 40 ] Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray O Lord our gracious God give to us that boldness we pray that we would stand up and speak out for this wonderful saviour that he has stood up for us he died in our place and Lord the least we can do is tell others how he is able to save to the uttermost we thank thee Lord for thy word for the challenge it gives the encouragement that it presents to us and Lord we pray that we would apply it in our lives that we would live it out by faith and that we would do it in the power of thy spirit O Lord help us we ask help us to leave this place and go into a new week seeking to stand up and speak out for Jesus O Lord watch over us then we pray keep us then we ask and do us good for Jesus sake Amen we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 2 the closing words of that

Psalm it's page 201 we're singing from verse 7 down to the end of the Psalm as we said this Psalm is all about the fact that God is sovereign Jesus is king and every knee will bow before him and in these verses we're being reminded of that very fact that Jesus is the one who has been anointed he has been made king he is the begotten son who has been made king and in verse 12 we're reminded that every knee will bow before him but you know there's this plea this wonderful plea and it's right at the beginning of the book of Psalms pleading with us to come and bow our knee before king Jesus kiss he the son blessed in his ire you perish from the way if once his wrath begin to burn blessed all that on him stay so Psalm 2 from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm to God's praiseath Ô On my only sonless day I have begotten Thee O stomp me and for heritage The heathen I will make Thine Thy whole possession I to Thee Will give births utmost line Vow shalt us with the weighty rod Or fight on, break them all But thus the potter sure thou shalt Them dungeon pieces small Though therefore kings be wise be taught Ye judges of the earth

Serve God in fear And see that ye join trembling With your mirth See the sun last in his hour He perish from the way If once his wrath begin to burn Blessed all that on him stay The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

[ 39 : 00 ] Be with you all Now and forevermore Amen Amen