

## Acts 4 – With All Boldness

### Get on the Bus –

- **No Fear T-shirts** – *I am little older than most of this crowd which is crazy to say, so I don't know if you remember but there were these popular t-shirts when I was in HS called "No Fear T-shirts!"* – They had "No Fear" in big letters on there and then some slogan, like **"fear does not exist in this dojo!"**
- **And man when I had one on I thought I was something** – *walked a little taller that day* – For my office fans it must have been something like what Michael Scott feels when he wears Jeans!

Well today's sermon could have been titled **No Fear: Peter isn't scared anymore** – *Maybe I should make my own T-shirt and put Peter's face on it!* And it is my hope that as look at Peters we also will have no fear in our witness!

- **Unbeliever and Exclusivity** – *This is a good Sunday for you because today's text addresses one of the things that troubles non-Christians the most – **that is the exclusive claims we make about Jesus, and so I am glad you are here and will get to see why it is we make those claims!***

### Prayer

**Opening Illustration** – *A week ago I became aware of a video being circulated that detailed the marching down to seashore 21 of our Egyptian Christian brothers where they were made to kneel down with their ISIS captors behind them with swords (likely given a chance to recant – NO God but Allah) – **Then when they would not their captors systematically beheaded our 21 brothers in cold blood for this crime as our brothers were mouthing to themselves, "Jesus, Help me!"** Their crime? **Being People of the Cross!***

- **And so it is and has been for our brothers and sisters throughout our history** – *We have been opposed, arrested, persecuted, sought to be silenced...* and NOW we come to a section in Acts where the opposition to the people of the cross gets HEIGHTENED
- **And as we consider the history of opposition to our people and as we approach this text we must ask ourselves are we opposed?** *And if not, is our mission or message any different?* Or is it possible we have a nimble faith that evades opposition?
- **I heard a preacher say this week:** *everywhere Paul went there were riots and everywhere we go there are conferences!*
- **Now to be clear I don't think we go seeking persecution or opposition (nor is all opposition the same)** – But might we consider if our boldness is the same as Peter's and if that has something to do with the amount of opposition we face?

### Transition to the text

- **Peter knew what it was like to cower and be afraid** – *Not even a 100 days before this he had cursed and even denied knowing Christ in front of a little girl (You know how scary little girls are!)*
- **He had betrayed His master in front of a little girl** – *what Judas did for profit, Peter did for free!*
- **But there is something different about Peter now** – *lets look at why this man who had been so fearful in the face of a little girl is now fearless in the front of the religious elites that just crucified his master!*

### Recap (1-4)

- *We pick up the scene after they have healed the lame man and were arrested because the leaders were greatly ANNOYED that they were proclaiming the Resurrection (I love that phrasing – they were annoyed)*
- **The Apostles are a one song band – Preaching Resurrection** – *Easter isnt just once a year, Easter is our life, Easter is our message...* (Unbeliever our message is not rules but resurrection and this has ticked off the Leaders)
- **And yet, even though they are in chains** – The Word of God is not bound and there is explosive growth in the church in those that have believed their message!

## I. (5-12) – Peter is Bold before the Powers

**(READ Verse 5 – 6)** – They are set before the Religious Power Players in Jerusalem and in particular the Sadducees who don't believe there is any resurrection and who see this message and these men as a threat!

- **Both Annas and Caiaphas who figured prominently in the trial and condemnation of Jesus are here – And so we have two men against all the powers of Israel, why such firepower for 2 ordinary men? Because they see them as a threat to their power!**
- **And Ironically the Authorities ask by what power/authority do you do these things?**

**(Read Verse 7)** – **(IMAGINE THIS SCENE)** Peter and John are standing there before the powers that had just tried, arrested, and murdered their Lord – Memories of that must have flooded the Apostles mind, they must be wondering will history repeat itself? Were they to suffer the same fate?

- **Or imagine being on that shoreline before people that have enough power to kill us!**
- **How will Peter who just days before was cowering in front a child respond? With all Boldness!**

**A. (READ v. 8-10) Be bold because you have the Spirit (v. 8) – Peter shows no fear, why? Because when Peter was before that little girl he was by himself, but now he is filled with the Spirit!**

- **Some may be thinking wasn't he already filled? Yes!** This does not call into question the permanence of the Spirits indwelling in our life – Luke is highlighting fresh in-dwellings particularly given so that one can preach boldly!
- **This is a fulfillment of Lk 21:12 – “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.”**

**I think IN VERSE 9 Peter gets a little sarcastic in his response (it warms my heart to think that anyways! I think Sarcasm is one of my spiritual gifts!) – He's like if we are in trouble because a guy can walk now – but if so let me get us in even deeper (Ever done that when you are in trouble – Ashley upset with Maddy and Emma)**

- And so Peter is about to get them even more enraged and goes in to the gospel, both their guilt and the way they can be saved

**B. Be bold because there is resurrection (v. 10) – In verse 10 his fearlessness grows as he accuses the Sanhedrin of their role in Jesus' death – Here's who's name we are doing it in, the guy you just had killed!**

- **And we now see why Peter is emboldened – this man you put to death he just healed a guy... how is that possible? Well God raised Him from the dead**
- **The apostles will not be silenced because they know there is Resurrection and so even your crucifixion cant ultimately touch me – “The body they may kill, His truth abideth still!”**

**(Read V. 11-12) C. Be bold because God is in control of History (v. 11) – Peter now points to fulfillment of prophecy (Psalm 118:22, Matt. 21:42, 1 Peter 2:7) and God's control of events in the working out of His plans**

- **We do these things in the name of the one that you all tried to discard (you beat him, humiliated him, killed him, and tossed him out) – but someone came along and decided to make him the foundation/the corner piece to a new Temple and that someone was God Himself!**
- **This is a shot at their power – The old Temple that you are using to exploit people and stay in power is nothing compared to what God is doing in this New Temple the Church**
- **He looks in the face of the men most responsible and says you did this – Can we say Awkward? #GUTSY**

Peter is telling them your plan didn't work – **This Jesus who you think you discarded and who you thought you killed** – He just healed a man which means He's not dead and that means the Resurrection is true, which means you are on the wrong side which means you are in big trouble! **So now who is on trial?**

- **This helpless, crippled man whom you consider nothing (maybe occasionally you tossed a coin his way without even looking at him) is on the right side** – and you need what he's got!
- **Peter's preaching demands an answer (from them and us) – Why? *Because the only name that is good to save is this name you don't want us saying, but we cant help but say it – JESUS!***

**D. Be Bold because of love for neighbor (V. 12) – Why should we speak boldly? Love of Neighbor!**

**Peter's exclusive claim is an implicit invitation to the Powers to trust in this name** – *the name that just brought physical deliverance to the lame man is also the only one that can save anybody in an even greater deliverance*

- **Peter moves from healing to salvation** – *He sees one mans physical cure as a picture of spiritual cure (salvation) offered to all in Christ*
- **No other name under heaven** – *Mohammed cant save you, Krishna cant save you, Buddha cant save you, Joseph Smith... Jesus, only Jesus!*

**Now this is an offensive message I know** – *no matter what you hear from some squishy Christianity today it is clear the early church took the exclusive claims of Christ seriously and I think they did so for a couple of reasons:*

- 1) **Saying there would be another way would not be loving** – *God provided one way and if that is true then to acquiesce on this is hateful and actually condemns them to hell (Even if their faith is sincere as Tony alluded to last week, sincerity of faith doesn't save, the object of our faith saves!) – And this would undermine our impetus for global evangelism!*
  - a. *That means that those that haven't heard need to hear, and if we love God and neighbor we will go!*
- 2) **To imply there is another way is disrespectful to Jesus** – *it implies he didn't really have to be crushed on the cross and drown in His own blood – there is another way!*
  - a. **This is why we go – we love Jesus** (desire for him to be rightly esteemed as He deserves) and **we love neighbor** desiring for them to delight in Christ – *they are on the wrong side now and we desire for them to be on the right man's side!*

**Unbeliever** – **I know you may be here and think what I am saying is narrow-minded or hateful** – *we say these things knowing it may make some think we are strange and you may not even like us* – but I say this because I think it's true and I desire for you to have what I have (I would never want to be a doctor who had the only one cure but wasn't willing to share it!) – *There is a Great Physician (ONLY ONE) with the only one way of healing and he freely offers it to you! REPENT and CALL out to Jesus!*

**Believer** – **Be bold and willing to suffer opposition and mocking but do so because you love Jesus and neighbor more than your reputation** – *It would be easy for the sake of being liked and avoiding awkwardness to capitulate on this but that would actually be hateful!*

- **If we preach this message we will face opposition** – **Question:** *Is it possible that we don't see same sorts of conversions because we rarely say anything bold that could potentially offend? And could it be that our lives are passively teaching something else about our view of exclusivity?*

**Keller points out:** *They were both attractive and growing, yet hated and attacked. This description of the early church cuts us two ways. If on the one hand, we experience no attacks or persecution for our faith, it means we simply are being cowards. We are not taking risks in our witness, we are not being bold. On the other hand, if we experience attacks without a... fruitfulness and attractiveness (i.e. if we get lots of persecution and no affirmation), it may mean that we are being persecuted for being harsh or insensitive or strident. Jesus said we would only be blessed if we were persecuted "for righteousness' sake". It is quite possible (indeed, it is very normal) for Christians to be persecuted not for their faith. but for their discourtesy. insensitivity. and lack of*

warmth and respect in their dealings with others. **Insensitive, harsh Christians will have persecution but not praise. Cowardly Christians will have praise but not persecution.** Most Christians (whose walk with God is weak) actually get neither! But Christians who are closest to Jesus will get both, as he did.

- And lets make sure that our rigid belief in exclusivity gives way to an all-embracing inclusivity in our appeal

## II. (13-18) The Powers cower before Peter – Be Bold because Jesus is on your side

**(READ Verses 13)** – One thing that particularly enrages the leaders is that these men were common men – they didn't have the proper credentials in these leaders minds to teach publically

- This doesn't mean that they were illiterate or unintelligent but simply they didn't have the credentials of the Pharisees and Sadducees – The Greek word did look like the word for Idiot, but kids we don't say that word ok!
- **And likely even more enraging they were being effective** – how could these rednecks be so confident and effective?
- **The term for boldness is used 3 times in this chapter and it carries the idea of speaking with confidence in the face of danger** – Men like them were not expected (Duck Dynasty) to speak with such courage and confidence before the supreme powers of the land
- **There was nothing about them impressive or remarkable... and yet you have to love this line** – THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS (Tombstone – well spoken of)

**Application – What does this tell us?** Gospel power is shown in that God can use anyone in his service, even men from Ky!

- **God can use anybody** – just consider this, the next Billy Graham maybe hungover right now. The next John Piper could be in jail this morning from a DUI!
- All of us can be used in the King's Service!

**(READ Verse 14)** – What is their response to Peter's boldness? It's awfully similar to what it was with Jesus – **They had nothing to say! Why?** Well the crippled man is standing next to them – More precisely the ex-cripple man!

**(READ Verses 15-18)** – so the leaders get in a little side huddle and they are in a real mess – **On the one hand a notable miracle has taken place (40yrs old) in a very public way that they cannot deny (the guy is standing there) and on the other they must stop this thing from spreading**

- **So what can they do... ah, I got it: lets warn them to be quiet and not say that name anymore that is healing people** – Just see the powers cowering and disoriented in the face of Uncle Si! I love this TEXT!

**Why do they do they give this prohibition? V. 17 tells us so that it wont spread** – *These leaders act out of fear of the people, rather than fear of God so that they wont lose their power and influence*

- **Instead of saying what must we do to be saved they say what must we do to keep our power (because they loved the glory that comes from man...)** – Even though they are admitting that an obvious sign has occurred and yet rather than repent they do damage control!
- **The Sadducees had buddied up to the Romans – they didn't believe in Resurrection and so they saw the Kingdom of God as merely an earthly thing and they are in Power** – *They see the Apostles and their message a subversive/revolutionary movement that threatens their power and so rather than repenting they entrench and threaten*
- **And believe me the apostles are a threat to their power because they are acting against the decrees of Caesar saying there is another King, Jesus!**
- **Question** – is there anyone in here who values their standing and power above Jesus and His truth?

**This is incredibly sad to me** – they didn't believe the resurrection and yet a man they thought they had rid themselves of only a few weeks prior is still making lame man walk!

- **Shouldn't they be rejoicing that Resurrection is true?** *Not if they were the ones that had crucified the one who has been raised and if they are the ones who will lose their power if it is true!*
- **And so instead of rejoicing, that there is actually resurrection and trying to get in on they try to intimidate the apostles in to silence** – *The leaders see the clear threat, these men are claiming the Sovereign power of a man they just tried to discard and so people cant listen to them – But Peter isnt afraid anymore* (every time I wrote that I thought of Home Alone – but not Peter!)

### III. (19-22) Peter is bold in response to the threats – Be bold and faithful in the face of opposition

**(READ Verses 19-20)** – I am imagine Peter's initial response to them not wanting it to spread like Liam Neesen in the newest Taken, "Good Luck!" – **You really think you are going to stop this? Peter says you can be the judge but as NASB says, "we wont stop,"** – *we wont fear man, we will fear God for you would have not authority if it had not been given you from above*

- **We don't care if you beat us, arrest us, kill us, and if we end up in the ground as two dead bodies** – *because we've seen a dead body come back to life!*
- **And this should be the call of every Christian – we have seen and heard great things** – *in a very real way we were there the day our Lord resurrected because our brothers and sisters have been passing down for 2,000 years this truth... and I am here to tell you today, Jesus is Alive!*
- **We will look at this more in Chapter 5 – but this does gives a paradigm for right Civil Disobedience** – *if ever we are given a prohibition that requires us to disobey God's explicit commands then we must obey God rather than man* – and as we will see, we must be willing to suffer the consequences!

**(READ VERSES 21-22)** – What is the council's response? NASB says, "*Finding no basis on which to punish them*" – sound familiar? So they decide to let them go after giving a few more what must have seemed like hollow warnings (**please just don't do this again – I IMAGINE THEM** like the mom in Wal-Mart who's bargaining with her kid who's in the middle of a Hissy Fit because her threats ring hollow – they are powerless before the Apostles!)

### IV. (23-31) The church is bold in Response – Be bold because we have prayer and one another (QUICKLY!!!)

**(READ VERSES 23 – 24, Together to God)** – Peter and John immediately seek out the church, tell them what happened and they pray – *Here we see them devoting themselves to the Fellowship (PERSECUTION WILL BRING CLOSENESS) and to the Prayers!*

**(READ V. 24b - 30)** – Lets notice quickly some marks of this prayer:

- **(24b) It is rooted in God's attributes** – *The Sovereign Lord – means ruler with unchallengeable power – Before they prayed they reminded themselves of God's control over creation and then History (25ff) and praised Him for His attributes!*
- **(25-26) It is rooted in the Scriptures** – *Particularly here they are reminding themselves of the gospel and God's control of events for His eternal purposes as His prophecies always come true!*
  - o **Why should this make them bold?** *God told them beforehand that all of the enemies would line up to stop His plan and He just used their plans to accomplish His own and bring it crashing down on them!*
  - o **So Believer trust His promises come true and let that make you bold** – When you see God as ruler and that nothing happens without His permission (that He is not caught off guard) and that He is working for your greater Good and His greater glory you can be faithful and fearless!

- **They didn't just ask for boldness they reminded themselves of truths from the Scriptures that should make them bold!**

**(27-30) They pray for the mission above their circumstances – In this prayer, they actually align themselves with Christ in His sufferings seeing Psalm 2 as not only being fulfilled in Christ but in their current circumstances – AND SO THEY TAKE COMFORT THAT THEIR SUFFERINGS NOR CHRIST'S catch God off guard as they acknowledge that what evil men meant for evil God turned for His glory and He can do it again now!**

- **The Cornerstone imagery used often by Peter is to encourage because it display that ultimately the Cross was not a show of human power (though these men were morally culpable) – But of Divine Power “what His Hand and His Plan” had predestined would happen – How does all this work? TONY WILL EXPLAIN THAT NEXT WEEK!**
- **And so in light of this the prayer is quite interesting – they don't pray for persecution to go away, nor do they pray for fire to come down on the rulers – Instead they simply pray for more power and boldness to directly disobey the command of the rulers and despite their threats and that God would do mighty things through them to validate the message!**
  - **How would we have prayed in our American prosperity prayers? *I do not think it would've have been bad to pray for persecution to go away but we should always pray for the greater purpose***
  - **Are our prayers more about our circumstances or more about God's greater glory?**
  - **Application – So when we pray for someone suffering or facing opposition it is not a fully complete prayer just to pray alleviate this – But Lord if you choose not to may the gospel advance because of this!**

**(READ VERSE 31) – God answers the prayer as again they are filled with the specific task to preach BOLDLY and they do with NO FEAR – Our early Church Father Chrysostom says of the room being shaken, “*That made them more unshaken!*”**

- **They cannot help speak ... with all boldness!**

**Conclusion – Brothers and sisters we live in a world where our brothers are being killed – *And yet we so often worry ourselves with such silly things and get bent out of shape about petty things and cower out of fear – And so I have to wonder why aren't we seeing a move of the Spirit like we see here?***

- We may not necessarily be like Peter afraid in the face of a little girl, but are worried about our standing or reputation?

**Why was Peter scared before and bold now? Something changed in those 50 or so days later – Peter had seen the nations take their stand against God and against His Christ (*he was there when they showed up with swords to arrest the King, he cut a guys ear off*) **and he saw them take God's anointed and discard Him like a piece of trash and humiliate Him as hour after hour he hung on a tree until He breathed no longer****

- **But there was an ancient promise that on the last Day God would show who His people are by raising their dead bones and lifting them out of their graves – ON THAT SUNDAY MORNING that happened and one man walked out!**
- **Why can Jesus make exclusive claims? Because the powers took their stand against him and they lost!**
- **And the promise is that He is only the FirstFruits of the Resurrection – **His people will one day walk out of graves... and even there heads will be back on!****

**So what is our response?**

- **Unbeliever – I want to be clear so I am going to say to you what Peter said to them – *This Jesus whom you crucified (yes your sins are responsible for nailing Him to that Cross) God has raised from the dead which means He's God's man and if you aren't on His side your taking a stand against Him – But the glorious news is that if you will just call out that name in repentance and faith He will take***

**you in and He will be with You!** (I don't say this to you out of arrogance but I do because I desire for you to experience the forgiveness in Christ that I have experienced!)

- **Believer – There is No Room for Fear in this Dojo – Meditate on the Power within us: *We have the same Spirit, We have the Same Resurrection Coming, We know God's power over History, We have one another, and we should love our Neighbor!***
  - o **Let these truths give you a joyous confidence**

**Brothers and Sisters, 2000 years ago our brothers were before Human powers that Killed our Lord and they were released, and last week 21 of our brothers were before Human powers that cut their heads off**

- **What do we have to say to ourselves in a world like that? Well A Former-Corpse is making lame people walk, and spiritually dead people live, and He will take care of His people**

**Some in this life and some in the life to come because we know that some of our brothers: *“through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, THEY WERE KILLED WITH THE SWORD ... – of whom the world was not worthy”***

- **Moody that great preacher said, *“One day you will read in the paper that Moody is dead, don't you believe a word of it at that moment I shall be more alive than I am now!”***
- **Our 21 brothers last words on the shore was “Jesus” and then they opened their eyes to see Him face to face and are more alive than they ever been – No Fear!**