

Bold People Will Disturb People



BETTER

Acts 4

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 415-418.

Acts 4:11–20 (NKJV)

11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

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16 saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.”

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

The Boldness Of The Spirit

- The early church had none of the “advantages” that some ministries boast of and depend on today. They did not have big budgets provided by wealthy donors.
- Their pastors lacked credentials from the accepted schools, nor did they have the endorsement of the influential political leaders of that day.

The Boldness Of The Spirit

- Most of their ministers had jail records and would probably have a hard time today joining our churches, let alone leading them. What really was the secret of their success? This chapter provides the answer: the Christians of the early church knew how to pray, live with the power of the Spirit, so that God's hand could work in mighty power.
- When asked to explain the secret of his remarkable ministry, the noted British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon replied, "My people pray for me."

The Boldness Of The Spirit

- St. Augustine said, “Pray as though everything depended on God, and work as though everything depended on you.” Prayer is not an escape from responsibility; it is our response to God’s ability. True prayer energizes us for a boldness in service and battle.
- In this chapter we see the Apostles boldly defending Jesus Christ’s name (*Acts 4:5–14*)
- Once again, the focus of attention is on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Acts 4:7, 10, 12, 17–18*). In this chapter, we see what three groups of people do with His name.

The Apostles Defending His Name:

In the Court

Acts 4:5–7 (NKJV)

5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,

6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done **this**?”

In the Court

- The court was essentially composed of the high priest's family.
- The Jewish religious system had become so corrupt that the offices were passed from one relative to another without regard for the Word of God.
- When Annas was deposed from the priesthood, Caiaphas his son-in-law was appointed. In fact, five of Annas' sons held the office at one time or another.

In the Court

- Somebody has defined a “nepotism” as “a man who, being evil, knows how to give good gifts to his children.” Annas certainly qualified.

In the Court

- This was an official meeting of the Sanhedrin (*Acts 4:15*), the same council that a few months before had condemned Jesus to die. In fact, these officials recognized Peter and John as the associates of Jesus (*Acts 4:13*).
- The Sanhedrin was charged with the responsibility of protecting the Jewish faith, and this meant that they had to examine every new teacher and teaching that appeared in the land (*see Deut. 13*).

In the Court

- They certainly had the right to investigate what the church was doing, but they did not have the right to arrest innocent men and then refuse to honestly examine the evidence.

In the Court

- Their question was legal, but they did everything they could to avoid admitting that a miracle had taken place.
- They were evasive and merely referred to the miracle as “this.” They were probably scornful as well, so that their question might be paraphrased, “Where did common people like you get the power and authority to do a thing like “this?””

In the Court

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Power -1411. δύναμις dúnamis; to be able.

Power, especially achieving power. All the words derived from the stem dúna- have the meaning of being able, capable. It may even mean to will.

In the Court

- It was once again the question of “By whose name?” After all, the Apostles might be in league with the devil! Even Satan can perform miracles!

Luke 10:19 (NKJV)

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

In the Court

- I really think they knew whose name, and by what power it was being done, but they did not want to admit it!

The Case

Acts 4:8–14 (NKJV)

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

9 If we this day are judged for a **good deed done to a helpless man**, by what means he has been made well,

10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, **that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, **by Him this man stands here before you whole.**

The Case

11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

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The Case

- Peter spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.
- Peter respectfully began with an explanation of how the miracle occurred.
- Certainly the members of the Sanhedrin had seen the crippled beggar many times, and perhaps they had even given alms to him and piously prayed for him.

The Case

- How was this well-known man healed? “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth!”
- Those words must have pierced the hearts of the members of the council!

The Case

- They thought they had finished with the Prophet from Nazareth, and now His followers were telling everybody that Jesus was alive!
- Since the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, Peter's statement was almost a declaration of war!

Spirit Was Telling Peter

- Jesus told the disciples the Spirit will give you the words to say when you are questioned.

Spirit Was Telling Peter

Luke 21:12–15 (NKJV)

12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake.

13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.

14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer;

15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

Spirit Was Telling Peter

- The apostle quoted Psalm 118:22, definitely a messianic reference.

Psalm 118:22 (NKJV)

The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

- He made it clear that the members of the council were “the builders” and that they had rejected God’s Stone, Jesus, the Son of God.
- The image of “the stone” was not new to these men who were experts in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Spirit Was Telling Peter

- They knew that the “rock” was a symbol of God
(*Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 31; 2 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 18:2; Isa. 28:16*)
- The Prophet Daniel had used the rock to picture Messiah and the coming of His kingdom on earth (*Dan. 2:31–45*).
- The Jews stumbled over the Rock and rejected Him, just as Psalm 118:22 had predicted.

Spirit Was Telling Peter

Romans 9:32 (NKJV)

Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV)

but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

**However, To Those Who
Have Trusted Him, Jesus
Christ Is The Precious
Cornerstone And The
Chief Cornerstone.**

1 Peter 2:4–8 (NKJV)

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”

7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,”

8 and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

- Peter went on to explain that Jesus is not only the Stone, but He is also the Saviour.
- Peter saw in the healing of the beggar a picture of the spiritual healing that comes in salvation.

“Made whole” in Acts 4:9 is a translation of the same Greek word that is translated “saved” in Acts 4:12, for salvation means wholeness and spiritual health.

- Jesus Christ is the Great Physician who alone can heal mankind's greatest illness, the sickness of sin (*Mark 2:14–17*).
- Peter also had “all the people of Israel” in mind as he spoke because the message was still going out exclusively to the Jews.

Acts 4:15–22 (NKJV)

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16 saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

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20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

The Problem

Acts 4:13–14 (NKJV)

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

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The Council: Opposing His Name (*Acts 4:15–22*)

The Problem

- They were in a dilemma; no matter which way they turned, they were “trapped.” They could not deny the miracle, because the man was standing before them; and yet they could not explain how “uneducated and untrained men”(NASB) could perform such a mighty deed.
- Peter and John were ordinary fishermen, not professional scribes or authorized ministers of the Jewish religion.

The Problem

- They were disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, but—He was dead!
- The council took notice of the courage, boldness, and confidence of Peter and John, as well as the power of Peter's words; and it all added up to perplexity.

The Problem

- Satan can perform miracles (*2 Thes. 2:9–10*) and false prophets can do wonders (*Deut. 13:1–5*). The miracle and the message, in the context of all that had been going on since Pentecost, was one more evidence that Jesus Christ was alive and at work in the church by His Holy Spirit.

- In both sermons, Peter used the Old Testament to support and explain his claims, and this is one evidence of a true prophet of God.

Deuteronomy 13:1–5 (NKJV)

1 “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,


2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’

3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

4 You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV)



To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

- Miracles are not a substitute for the Word of God.

Luke 16:27–31 (NKJV)

27 “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’

29 Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’

30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

31 But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' ”

- Their deliberation (*vv. 15–18*).
- The council did not seek for truth, but rather sought for some way to avoid the truth!
- Had they honestly considered the evidence and humbly listened to the message, they might have been saved, but their pride and hardness of heart stood in the way.
- Their response is proof that miracles alone can never convict or convert the lost sinner.
- Only the Word of God can do that (*John 11:45–53; Acts 14:1–20*).

- Their conclusion.
- They wanted to “let the thing die a natural death.” This meant threatening the Apostles and forbidding them to teach and preach in the name of Jesus.
- This official sentence shows how much the enemy fears the witness of the church, for Satan has been trying to silence God’s people from the very beginning.

- Sad to say, he has succeeded with far too many Christians, the “silent witnesses” of the church. Even the existential philosopher Albert Camus said, “What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out, loud and clear ... in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could arise in the heart of the simplest man.”
- The council did not want the Gospel message to spread, and yet that is exactly what happened! From 120 praying men and women in Acts 1, the church increased to more than 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost; and now there were more than 5,000 disciples in the fellowship.

- In the days that followed, “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (*Acts 5:14; and see 6:1, 7*).
- Satan’s attempts to silence the church only led to a stronger witness for the Lord.