



Living Walking Serving

FAITH AND GRACE CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY NOTE ON THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH (A BOOK STUDY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES)

(Rom.15:4, Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5)

STUDY 20-20: BOLDNESS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Acts 4:1-31

INTRODUCTION

Boldness was one of the first characteristics the Holy Spirit imparted when He came to indwell believers after Jesus ascended into heaven. The followers of Jesus had been hiding in fear of the Jewish authorities, praying and encouraging one another. Then the Holy Spirit came upon them, and those formerly terrified disciples became fearless preachers (Acts 2). A short time later, as the disciples faced persecution from the authorities, they prayed for boldness (Acts 4:29). Their prayer was answered, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and "spoke the word with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

Acts Chapter 3 records the healing of the paralytic at the Gate Beautiful and Peter's preaching to the gathered crowd. Acts Chapter 4 records the consequence of this great miracle.

(Act 4:1-4) The arrest of Peter and John.

Being greatly disturbed: The **Sadducees** would be **greatly disturbed** that Peter and John taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead; they did not believe in the afterlife or the resurrection at all.

Put them into custody until the next day: Normally, this would be an intimidating experience for Peter and John. Suddenly arrested, **greatly disturbed** officials, handled roughly (laid hands on them), threats made against them (Acts 4:21 implies this), thrown into jail. The entire atmosphere was intended to make them afraid.

The number of the men came to be about five thousand: Despite the opposition coming against the gospel, the number of Christians kept increasing, growing to 5,000 from 3,000 at last count (**Acts 2:41**). Opposition did not slow the church down at all.

Acts 4:4 shows that the power plays, the threats, the intimidation was all ineffective. More people started following Jesus, not less.

(Act 4:5-7) Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin.

Rulers, elders, and scribes... were gathered together: This was a scene of power and intimidation. This same group of leaders had recently condemned Jesus to death, and they wanted them to know that they had the power to do the same thing to Peter and John.

(Act 4:8-12) Peter boldly preaches to the Jewish leaders.

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit: He was instantly filled with the Spirit again, evident by his supernatural boldness and ability to speak the gospel directly to the heart of the matter. The filling of the Holy Spirit Peter experienced in Acts 2:4 (along with other disciples) was not a one-time event. It was something God wanted to continue doing in their lives.

If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man: The tone of Peter's reply shows that he was not intimidated by this court, though humanly speaking, he should have been intimidated by the same court that sent Jesus to crucifixion

Nor is there salvation in any other: Peter didn't merely proclaim Jesus as a way of salvation, but as the only way of salvation. The idea that **there is no salvation in any other**, and that **there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved** is hard to accept for many but is plainly stated.

The Jewish rulers react to Peter's sermon.

(Act 4:13) What they saw in Peter and John's character.

"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".

They were uneducated and untrained men: The greater importance of these two things – more important than formal education – has been proven in the lives of God's servants again and again. It has been proven true through such servants of God as Charles Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, William Carey, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Hudson Taylor.

Yet it is helpful to remember that God has used many who were greatly educated. Moses, Daniel, and Paul are all Biblical examples. Augustine, Martin Luther, and Billy Graham are just a few historical examples. **It's just as wrong to think that formal education disqualifies someone for effective service as it is to think that it automatically qualifies someone for effective service.**

They saw the boldness of Peter and John: Because they had been **with Jesus**, they were naturally bold. When one is a servant of the all-powerful God, they have nothing to fear from the judgment of men.

They realized that they had been with Jesus: This means that their boldness was coupled with a radiant love characteristic of Jesus. If we will preach no other Name, we should also make it evident that we have **been with Jesus**.

In the Greek the word boldness is *parresia*, meaning "telling it all". Boldness can be described as the courage to act or speak fearlessly, despite real or imagined dangers. When a person acts boldly, he or she takes action regardless of risks. No one attribute is more needful today for Christ's witness than Holy Spirit boldness due to Holy Spirit fullness.

(Act 4:14-20) With boldness, Peter and John respond to the command to stop preaching Jesus

(Act 4:21-22) Peter and John are released with threats of future punishment.

They all glorified God for what had been done: This whole situation started out looking pretty bad. Peter and John were on trial before the same court that sent Jesus to Pilate for crucifixion. It was meant for great evil, but when it was all over, see what God did:

- 2,000 more people came to believe on Jesus.
- Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit again.
- Peter got to preach Jesus to the leaders of the Jews.
- Hostile examiners confirmed a miraculous healing.
- The enemies of Jesus were confused.
- Peter and John were bolder for Jesus than ever before.
- God was glorified.

The early church prays for boldness. Acts 4:23-31

They acknowledge their God.

They raised their voice: They prayed vocally. It is certainly possible to pray silently in our minds, but we focus our thoughts more effectively when we speak out in prayer.

With one accord: They prayed in unity. There was no strife or contention among them.

Lord, You are God: They began by reminding themselves who they prayed to. They prayed to the **Lord** of all creation, the God of all power.

They pray in light of the Scriptures. (Act 4:25-28)

They ask for more boldness, more power, and for more trouble (Act 4:29-30)

The place where they were assembled together was shaken: They were given an earthquake as a unique emblem of God's pleasure. We don't know the extent of the shaking; it may have been confined to the house itself.

The presence of the Holy Spirit was so wonderfully manifested that even dead walls felt the power of the Spirit of life – matter responded to spirit.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit: They were filled with the Holy Spirit, again. The experience on Pentecost was not a one-time experience. For Peter, this counts as the third time he is specifically said to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The idea that we are "Spirit filled" only at an experience known as the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" is wrong, though there may be a wonderful and first yielding to the Spirit's power. We must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, and make our "immersion" in Him a constant experience.

They spoke the word of God with boldness: They received the **boldness** they asked for.

This **boldness** is necessary today; we need to "tell it all". We often deliberately hide the work of God in our life from others who would actually benefit from hearing about it.

Their **boldness** was a gift from God, received through prayer. It was not something that they tried to work up in themselves. God gives us boldness when our objective is to obey and glorify Him with it.

NEXT: THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH CONT'D (ACTS 5)