

Holy Boldness

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Acts 4

“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.”

ACTS 4:29

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Introduction

Would you find the book of Acts, turn to chapter 4, and as you’re finding it, may I ask you a question: Are you a bold Christian? Or, perhaps, are you a cowardly Christian? May I put it this way: If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Do your neighbors know that you are a Christian?

A little boy had a mongrel dog, and a man asked him, “Son, what kind of dog is that?” “Oh,” he said, “he is a police dog.” The man said, “Well, he doesn’t look like a police dog.” The little boy said, “Well, he’s in the secret service.” I think we have a lot of Christians today who are cowardly Christians. They are saved, but somehow they are in the secret service.

There is the curse of cowardly Christians. They don’t want to be seen in the office with a Bible on their desk. They don’t want to be seen in the cafeteria bowing their head and thanking God for their food. They don’t want to witness the saving love of Jesus Christ when there’s an opportunity, afraid that someone may dislike them, or criticize them, or whatever. Now they’re saved, but they are cowardly Christians.

Well, we’re going to look at some verses today—chapter 4, verse 13—and I want

you to notice the word *boldness* that is used in all three of these verses that I'm going to read: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13) Now, go to verse 29: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." (Acts 4:29) That's the second use of the word *boldness* in this chapter. Now, go down to verse 31: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31) Three times in this chapter he uses the word *boldness*. One time, it's associated with God the Son; the other time, with God the Father; the third time with God the Holy Spirit: *boldness, boldness, boldness*.

Are you a bold believer, or are you a cowardly Christian? Do you want to be a bold believer? What is boldness in the first place? Well, some people think that they are bold, and they're just arrogant. They have bad manners, and sometimes bad breath to go with it. That's not boldness. Those people turn more people off than bring people to the Lord Jesus. We're to be gentle, apt to teach, and in nothing give offense. Don't think that if you go around getting in people's face that you are necessarily bold. Boldness is not arrogance; and boldness is not presumption, where you just do things to show how much courage that you have.

For example, there are people who in some churches, in certain areas of the United States, that handle snakes—big, long, juicy rattlesnakes; pick them up and handle them to show how bold they are. That is not boldness, friend; that is stupidity. Now they are sincere. You have to be sincere to pick up a venomous rattlesnake.

One time I heard of a gospel quartet that went into one of these churches—you've probably heard the story—and they did not realize it was a snake-handling church out in the backwoods. When they brought the rattlesnakes out, this one man in the quartet said to the preacher, who was sitting next to him, "Does this church building have a back door?" He said, "No, it doesn't." He said, "Where would you like one?"

Arrogance. Presumption. This is not boldness. What is boldness? Boldness is having the courage to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of opposition.

Now as we look here at this particular passage, what has happened is this. There has been a man that was healed. He was lame from his birth, and the apostles healed him right there at the beautiful gate. We read about that in chapter 3. It's the gate leading into the eastern side of the temple. It was made of Corinthian brass. It was incredibly glorious and beautiful. This poor beggar was on the wrong side of the gate, and he was asking alms. And Peter and John said, "*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk.*" (Acts 3:6) And a miracle was done.

And those Pharisees and Sadducees, and others who hated the Lord Jesus Christ, whose hearts were filled with venom, could not deny the miracle, but they thought, “Perhaps we can contain it if we tell the apostles not to preach any more in the name of Jesus.” Well, of course, they were not able to stop them and keep them from preaching. They brought them before the apostles. Look in verse 9. They asked him, “How are you doing this?” And they said, *“If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified...”*—now this is Simon Peter talking. He’s not cowardly anymore. He’s not denying Jesus Christ anymore. They put him on trial, but he is not the defendant; he becomes the prosecuting attorney—*“whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.”* That is, “We didn’t raise this man from the dead. Jesus Christ raised him from the dead.” *“This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.”* And now I want you to notice how bold he is: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:9–12)

And let me just pull over and park here for just a moment. Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. Now if you say that today, the world is going to come down on you like a hammer. They’re going to call you arrogant. They’re going to call you bigoted. They’re going to call you narrow. Whatever else they may call you, they also ought to call you a Bible-believing Christian. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* Now that was a bold statement. I mean, it is bold to turn to those who crucified the Lord Jesus and say, “You crucified Him. God has made Him the head of the corner. There is no salvation in any other.” *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”* (Acts 4:13)

What is the basis of our boldness? It’s linked to the Holy Trinity. And we’re going to see that right now. And I want to tell you how to be a bold Christian, and I want to give a testimony. What I am saying today is not something that I have learned out of a book; it is something that I have found from the book, the Word of God, and something that I have experienced in my life, and continue to experience, as I preach and witness and testify. Here is the basis of my boldness. This can be the basis of your boldness. These three things can keep you from being a cowardly Christian and being intimidated by Satan. The Bible says we are in nothing to be terrified by our adversary. (Philippians 1:28) And if there were ever a need for a bold Christian, this is the time; this is the day; this is the hour.

I. Keep Company with God the Son

Number one: Keep company with God the Son. Now we're going to talk to you in a moment about God the Father and God the Spirit. But, first of all, keep company with God the Son. Now, look in verse 13: *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and took knowledge of them,"*—what?—*"that they had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4:13) They were keeping company with the Son of God. You cannot walk in His presence and be a coward; you just can't do it. Now Jesus is alive and well on Planet Earth. They said, "How did this man get healed?" They said, "Don't blame it on us. Blame it on Jesus. Give Him the glory. By Him, by His name, by His presence, this man was healed."

Now, walk with Jesus. Make certain that Jesus is real to you. I want to say to you—and I say this from my heart in all sincerity: Jesus Christ is real to the man named Adrian Rogers. He is real to me. He is just as real as that man that I sat next to—and more real to me. I have talked with Him. I have fellowshiped with Him. I love Him. He is real to me. He is not somebody that I read about in a book.

I love the song, Brother Jim—sometimes the people want to take it out of the hymnal because they think it's ephemeral and syrupy—it's one of the greatest songs in hymnody: "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses, and the voice I hear falling on my ear the Son of God discloses. And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own." And the voice I hear is the voice of Jesus. No one else knows what we know as believers. Jesus Christ is not in heaven peering through the clouds. Jesus said, *"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* (Matthew 18:20) Jesus Christ is here. That's the reason you ought to sing. That's the reason you ought to worship. That's the reason you ought to rejoice. He has not left us alone. He is here with us always.

One of the first times I was ever called on to witness, I was just a kid; I had not been saved very long. My dear sweet mother, who is in heaven right now, was a young lady in the church, and they gave my mother an assignment taking a survey. That is one thing my mother did not want to do, go from door to door taking a survey, a Christian survey. And, bless her heart, she unloaded that on me. She said, "Adrian, will you take this survey for me?" And I said, "Yes, Mama, I will." And there in West Palm Beach, Florida, I went to my first door and I said, "Oh, I don't want to do this. I don't want to knock on that door. I'm afraid. I don't know what's behind that door. I don't know what anybody is going to say." And at that moment the Scripture came to me. Jesus said, "You go and make disciples; and, lo, I am with you." (Matthew 28:19–20) *"Lo, I am with you."* I cannot tell you the change that made in my heart just as a boy, a new Christian. I said, "Well, listen, Jesus: we're going together to this door," and I went down that street with Jesus. You see, that's where the boldness comes from: knowing that the Lord

Jesus Christ is with you.

They're telling us we can't take Jesus into the public schools. Oh, we can. Let me tell you how we can take Him into the public schools. I was coming back to this country. And, you know, when you come back to this country, if you've been overseas, you have to go through security. And there are several things they won't let you bring when you go through security. You can't bring in, you know, fruits and vegetables, and animal life, and certain products, food products. And there was a man in front of me. He had some gourmet cheese. And the inspector there said, "I'm sorry, sir, you cannot bring this cheese into this country." But he said, "I paid a lot of money." "No, you can't bring it in." He said, "I will bring it in." He said, "You will not bring it in." He said, "I will, too, bring it in." He walked back there and ate it, and then walked right on through. He said, "I'm going to rewrap it." Pretty smart.

Listen. They may say that we can't take Jesus in the public schools; but, friend, He's in us. He is in us. There is no way that they can keep Jesus out. As long as Christ is in us, then boys and girls can go to school with Jesus, and we just permeate every school in Memphis with Jesus Christ, because He is with us—actually, literally, within us.

They marveled and took knowledge of them. They said, "They're unlearned. They're ignorant. They haven't been to seminary. They haven't been to college." "Yes, but they have been with Jesus." That's the basis of boldness: you keep company with God the Son. You see, Jesus didn't come to get you out of trouble, mister; He came to get into trouble with you. And He will be with you.

II. Have Confidence in God the Father

Now, here's the second basis of boldness: Not only, keep company with God the Son; but, number two, have confidence in God the Father. Now they told them not to preach anymore; but now, notice in verse 24: "*And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God*"—he's talking now about God the Father—"with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which has made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants,"—here it is again—"that with all boldness they may speak thy word." (Acts 4:24–29) They said, "Don't speak anymore." And they said, "O God, just give us more power to do exactly what they told us that we could not do."

Now they not only were keeping company with God the Son; they were having confidence in God the Father. You know, you have to get things in perspective. If you don't get things in perspective, you're going to get spooked. The devil is going to have you on the run. But when you have things in perspective, when you see God, who He is really is, the man who can kneel before God can stand before anyone else. One fear—a holy fear of God—removes all other fears. You see, they saw God.

A. Confidence in God as the Creator of All Things

Look at this now. Here is the confidence they had. They had confidence in God as the creator of all things. Look in verse 24: *“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.”* This is God who scooped out the oceans, who heaped up the mountains, who dotted the universe with stars, billions and billions and billions of stars, out over the velvety blackness of space; and they were saying, “God, you made it all. Why should we tremble when you are our Father? Why should we be intimidated when a God who can do such things is on our side?”

A college student asked his pastor, “Pastor, do you believe there’s life on other planets, other places out in space?” The pastor said, “No, son, I really don’t believe there is.” He said, “Now, Pastor, think about it. There are billions and billions and billions and billions and billions of stars, and you don’t believe there’s life out there anywhere?” He said, “I can’t prove there’s not, but I just don’t believe there is.” And then the college student said, “Well, Pastor, why did God go to all that trouble to make all that stuff?” The pastor said, “What trouble?” There it is. Only God could do that. He spoke, and universes drip from His fingers. What a mighty God we serve!

B. Confidence in God as the Controller of All Things

You see, they had confidence in God as the creator of all things. And so it follows, as night follows day, they saw God as the controller of all things. Now, listen. You’ve got to get your perspective right. Look, beginning in verse 25. They speak of God the Father, *“who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord...”*—boy, can you see that as they stand on their two big feet, stick out their big chest, and shake their puny fist in the face of Almighty God? They stand up—*“together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,”*—now, watch this—*“for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”* I love it. God is the creator of all things, and He is the controller of all things.

Do you think dark Gethsemane and bloody Calvary were a mistake? Do you think

things got out of hand? Do you think God is walking up and down in heaven saying, “Oh, no; oh, no, what am I going to do now? What am I going to do now?” Do you think the Holy Spirit ever meets in emergency session to say, “Oh my! Look now what has happened! Look! They’ve crucified the Son of God”? Oh, no. Not a blade of grass moves without His permission. *“To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”*

C. Confidence in God as the Conqueror of All Things

Look up here and let me tell you something, friend. God has never lost control, and God never says, “Oops.” God is in control. Now that ought to give you courage. And know that He is the creator of all things. He is the controller of all things. And therefore He is the conqueror of all things. Peter here is quoting Psalm 2, and he says, “The kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and His Christ, His anointed.” But Psalm 2 goes on to say, *“Yet have I set my king upon the holy hill of Zion.”* (Psalm 2:6)

I want to give you good news: We win! Jesus Christ is going to be enthroned in Jerusalem. Sin can’t win. Faith can’t fail. Things are not right in this world right now, because, as I’ve told you before, things are out of place. The church is the bride, and the bride belongs with the groom—and we will be at the Rapture. Jesus is the King, and the King belongs on the throne: He will be when He comes again. Satan is the criminal, and he belongs in the dungeon—and he will be when Jesus comes again. *“Yet have I set my king upon the holy hill of Zion.”* You know, sometimes you look at the ebb and flow of things, and you get the idea, “Well, everything has gone wrong. Maybe God has failed. Maybe the Bible is not true.” No! No! Sin cannot win. Faith cannot fail.

I was raised in Florida on the east coast. I love the ocean. I love to watch the ocean. I love what a poet wrote when she said:

*On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam,
While still the sea behind them urges its forces home.
Its song of triumph surges o’er all the thunderous din:
The wave may break in failure, But, the tide is sure to win!
Oh! Mighty sea, thy message in clanging spray is cast.
Within God’s plan of progress it matters not at last
How wide the shores of evil, How strong the reefs of sin.
The wave may be defeated, But, the tide is sure to win!*

PRISCILLA LEONARD

Now, don’t you get your eye on some little old wave. I’m telling you, God’s tide is moving, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. (Revelation 11:15)

Now, what is your problem? Think about it today. Have you got it in your mind? Now,

double it. Make it twice as bad. Now, double what you've doubled. And now I want to ask you a question. Is that big to God? Of course not!

What is the basis of boldness? You must keep company with God the Son. You must have confidence in God the Father. When these people were terrified, they took their eyes off of man and put their eyes on God. The Bible says, "*The fear of man bringeth a snare.*" (Proverbs 29:25) Take your eyes off of your problems. Focus your eyes upon Almighty God who is the creator of all things, who is the controller of all things, who is the conqueror of all things. That is the basis of your boldness.

III. Receive Courage from God the Spirit

Now, here's the third thing if you would be bold today. Number one: Keep company with God the Son. Number two: Have confidence in God the Father. He is over all. He cannot fail. He must prevail. Have faith in God. Number three: Receive courage from God the Spirit. Now, begin reading again in verse 29 where we left off: "*And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*" (Acts 4:29–31)

The first time, we mentioned God the Son. The second time, we mentioned God the Father. Now we're mentioning God the Spirit. And boldness is in the triune God. When we keep company with God the Son, when we have confidence in God the Father, then we receive courage from God the Spirit. God the Holy Spirit will give us the courage that we need to live for Him.

Now, notice what the apostle said: "Lord, look at their threatenings." Look, if you will, in verse 29: "*Behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.*" The word *servant* here is the Greek word that means "bondslave." Are you a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ? I try to make it a habit every day to lift my hands in surrender to the Lord, to say to the Lord, "I am your servant." Not really just simply a servant; this word means a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Boldness is not for rebels. You will never have boldness—true boldness—until you can say, "Now, Lord, grant your bondservant—your slave—boldness." Now when you do that, the Holy Spirit of God will give you courage. You know, if there is any unconfessed sin in your life, any unsundered area, you're not going to have boldness. The Bible says, "*The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.*" (Proverbs 28:1) The wicked flee when no man pursues. He's always wondering, you know, do they know this? Have they heard that? Will I be discovered

here? Whatever. Oh, but when you can wake up and say, “There’s nothing between my soul and the Savior. Lord, I am your servant. I am your slave. Jesus is with me. God the Father is above me. Holy Spirit of God, you’re within me. Grant boldness to declare your Word.”

Now, what did they want courage for? All right, receive courage from God the Spirit.

A. Courage to Express God’s Word

They wanted courage to express God’s Word. Look again in verse 29: “...*with all boldness they may speak thy word.*” I think the curse of the twenty-first century is cowardly Christians who are not expressing the Word of God. These apostles did not ask for safety. They asked for courage. They asked for the ability to do more what got them in trouble in the first place.

By the way, I want not only courage for the man and woman in the pew. Do you know what I’m praying for, and what Joyce and I prayed for this morning? Courage for pastors. We need more pastors with courage. Now I don’t hold myself up as the paragon of excellence in that area, but *I’m truly convinced there’s not a whole lot wrong in America that could not be radically, dramatically, and swiftly put back in place if all across America we had a generation of preachers who would open the Word of God, filled with the Spirit of God, and preach the Christ of God, without fear of intimidation, or worrying about being politically correct.* Preach the Word of God.

B. Courage to Extend God’s Hand

They wanted courage to express God’s Word. They wanted courage to extend God’s hand. Look in verse 30: “Lord, give us courage, *‘by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy hold child Jesus.’* O God, let your miracle-working power flow through our hand.” Well, you say, “I thought Jesus did it.” Yes, He does. Look in chapter 5, verse 12: “*By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.*” (Acts 5:12) And the word *by* actually means “through.” Jesus Christ is doing it through us. Anything that you’re doing that can be explained apart from Jesus is not worth anything.

C. Courage to Exalt God’s Son

Now, what did they want? They wanted courage to express God’s Word. They wanted courage to extend God’s hand. They wanted courage to exalt God’s Son. Look again in verse 30: “*By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.*” The *name* means the authority of Jesus.

Did you know that people don’t want you to mention the name of Jesus anymore? I just read an article the other day where Alan Dershowitz, a Harvard law professor, I believe, took great exception when Franklin Graham prayed the inaugural prayer in the name of Jesus. You know, the name of Jesus today is the name people don’t like. You

can pray; just don't pray in the name of Jesus. Just don't lift up the name of Jesus.

Friend, I want to tell you something. If there was ever a generation that needs boldness about Jesus, it is this generation. And don't you let them dumb you down about praying in the name of Jesus. You know, I go to a public occasion somewhere and they call on me to pray—well, friend, if they don't want me to pray in the name of Jesus, then they ought not to ask me, because that's the way I pray.

It would be a form of religious persecution and bigotry to tell me I ought not to pray the way I pray. I don't expect a Jew to pray in the name of Jesus. I wouldn't have respect for a Jew who prayed in the name of Jesus if he didn't believe in Jesus. I'd have more respect for him if he prayed the way he normally prayed. I would have no respect for a Muslim who prayed any differently in public than he prays in private. I want him to pray the way he prays. I want a Jew to pray the way he prays. I want a Christian to pray the way he prays.

And all they do, they prate about pluralism. They don't mean pluralism. What they mean is syncretism. Just dumb it all down so it means nothing to everybody, and then we'll let you mumble a little mumbo-jumbo. No. Don't be ashamed of Jesus. Don't be afraid to lift up the name of Jesus. Holy Spirit of God, give us courage to express your Word, to extend your hand, to exalt your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now not everybody will believe in Jesus. And I would not force Jesus on anyone. But I don't want anyone telling me I cannot express the Lord Jesus and I cannot exalt the Lord Jesus.

Now, what happened? When these people were filled with boldness, go down to verse 31: *"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."* Now, look in verse 33: *"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."* (Acts 4:33) And there were multitudes who were swept into the kingdom of heaven.

Conclusion

Now as I bring this message to a close, let me tell you something. I'm calling upon Bellevue Church to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in Shelby County and any surrounding county that is in that general circumference. Now we won't do it in a year, but this is the Year of Evangelism, and the challenge to Bellevue today is to make Jesus known to our neighbors. And we don't want to be here in this county without making certain that everyone understands who Jesus Christ is and how to get to heaven. They will not all believe, but we're going to share the Lord Jesus Christ with them.

You say, "Adrian, the day of evangelism is passed." You are wrong. You say,

“People are not interested in Jesus.” You’re wrong again. Surveys have been taken, and today research shows us that there is today, in the hour and the day in which we live, a harvest of souls greater than any that the apostles witnessed here in the book of Acts. There are massive victories being won in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity is growing three times faster than the world’s population.

Every day almost 200,000 profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity is the fastest growing faith in the world with a 6.9 percent growth rate compared to 2.7 percent Muslim, 2.2 percent Hindu, and 1.7 percent Buddhist. Listen to that again. Our faith is the fastest growing in the world. Listen. More than seventy percent of the progress of world evangelization, from the time of Christ until today, has occurred since 1900—more than seventy percent. Now seventy percent of that progress has happened since World War II. And seventy percent of that progress has happened in the last sixteen months.

Souls are coming to Jesus Christ every day by hundreds of thousands, and they will come to Jesus in our world today if we will stop being cowardly Christians, if we’ll stop being in the secret service. You may be a little afraid. You may feel a little intimidated. But remember, I’m not talking about arrogance. I’m not talking about brashness. I’m talking about courage to express God’s Word, to extend God’s hand, to exalt God’s Son.