

**Acts 4: 13-31; “We Cannot But Speak”, Sermon # 19 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on November 27th, 2011, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Do you speak to others about the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have the boldness to speak to others the things which you have seen and heard about the truth of God’s Word? The Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word are what we as Christians take our stand on. Christ is our life. Christ is our eternal life, our joy, and our happiness. Faith in Him is the only way to find these things. The Apostles, when they were commanded by the council not to speak anymore in this name of Jesus said, “We cannot help but speak”. Is this you? Can you say the same thing as Peter and John said when they were told to be quiet? This is what I want to speak to you about this morning. The importance of having the grace to speak boldly and publicly of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in relation to the progress of the kingdom of God in the various cities, societies and nations of the world, cannot be overemphasized. This issue came to the floor right at the ground level of the building of the Church of Jesus Christ by the Apostles of our Lord. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, and He is today building His Church. But we see here, that as the Apostles began to labor to raise up this holy temple of the Church, through their building upon the finished work of their Lord Jesus Christ by means of their public preaching, that they encountered great opposition. They were arrested. They were thrown in prison, and then they were brought forth to give an account of themselves before the council, the highest of the Jewish leaders. And yet, they did not wither; they did not retreat. And even when they were told to be quiet, and not to speak in Jesus’ name any more, they were enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak boldly.

One of the reasons for this, humanly speaking, was because they deliberately did not speak the truth of the gospel in private only. They had boldly proclaimed the gospel in public. Theirs, however, was not a fleshly boldness. They did not simply speak in order to assert their freedom to speak. They spoke in order to bear witness to the truth of God, on Christ’s behalf. Theirs was a holy boldness. What does having a holy boldness require of you the believer? It requires these 3 things. 1st – It requires your “having been with Jesus”, not your obtaining a theological education (verses 13-16) 2^{ndly} – It requires listening to God more than listening to men who oppose the gospel. (verses 17-22) And 3^{rdly} – It requires prayer that God would grant continued boldness to all in the church to speak God’s Word. O may we together know more of the reality of these truths in the life of our church.

1st of all – It requires your “having been with Jesus”, not your obtaining a theological education. (verse 13-16)

Verse 13 says, “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.” The boldness of Peter and John was their asserting that it was by the name of Jesus that this man, who had been lame, had been made whole. Their boldness was seen in their declaring that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, even though these men who they were speaking to had helped put Him to death. They had no fear of speaking this truth. They went on boldly to declare the exclusiveness of the gospel; that there was no other name by which a person must be saved. Now this personal confidence to speak in this way, I am saying, came from their “having been with Jesus”. It did not come from their having had theological training to speak this way by any of the Jewish schools of that day. Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men. Their boldness to speak came partially from their having walked so closely with Jesus for three and a half years. It came from their having been with Him and having seen Him do many mighty miracles. It was because they were with Jesus on the day when He was raised from the dead, that their eyes were opened to this great truth, that He was the fulfillment of the Scripture’s prophecies concerning His being their Messiah. They knew that their Lord and Master had called them, specifically, to bear this kind of a witness to all the people around them. They knew that God Himself had arranged the circumstances where they would be able to be his witnesses. Their having done this good deed, their having performed a miracle of healing upon this lame man in the name of Jesus, led to their witnessing to the council. The Risen Christ Himself orchestrated these events in connection with the Father’s will and purpose. He gave them the power by His Holy Spirit to declare boldly the truth of the gospel which led to the conversion of 5,000 men it says in verse 4.

They had walked with Jesus, and they had been with Jesus for three and a half years. They had been taught by Jesus the many truths related to the gospel, and yet at the end of that time, Peter who boldly stated that he would follow his Master to the cross, denied him three times. He did not understand at that time where true boldness comes from. It does not come from ourselves and our own strength of determination to follow Him, support His cause, and promote His truth. It comes from being with Him in our heart; holding fellowship and communion with Him in our heart. It comes from “being with Him” in this holy way of secret communion in our heart and being taught by Him as we read the Scriptures. We then begin to understand that He is giving us power to be His witnesses. It takes the baptism of the Holy Spirit to become Christ’s witness. Acts Chapter 1, verse 8 – “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.” This is what happened to them all on the day of Pentecost. Every believer in Jesus was baptized with the Holy Spirit and power; and the New Testament Church was formed. That Day the Holy Spirit came to reside with Christ’s Church forever. He came to give them power to witness to Christ’s glory, and His great salvation, that Day when 3,000 people believed the gospel at Peter’s

preaching of it. Those who believed also received the Spirit's baptism and they were added to the Church by the Spirit's working to place them in the spiritual-mystical body of Jesus Christ. This first Baptism of the Holy Spirit had filled those who spoke with power to be Christ's witnesses. Now, just a few days later we find a repeated pouring out of the Spirit upon Peter and John giving them boldness. This was not another Baptism of the Holy Spirit, for that had already been given. There is only one baptism of the Spirit for the Church, at Pentecost, and there is only one Baptism of each and every believer at the time of their conversion. But what we see here was the Spirit's giving them a new and fresh filling to empower Peter and John to speak and to witness. Verse 8 says, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, etc."

I want to draw some conclusions from this. Here are Peter and John who have never been to the schools approved of by the Sanhedrim, or any other of the Jewish authorities, and yet they have the boldness to be able to speak for Jesus. This is truly a marvelous thing. To be able to speak boldly for Christ was not something taught them by men, but it was something brought about by the working of God. The same will be true for you. Even though you are a believer, you may be scared to death to witness for Jesus. But after you hear about Peter and John you can ask yourself this question. Is it possible for a person to become a bold and faithful witness to Christ without having gone through a course of instruction, without receiving a degree or some formal commendation from those who are leaders in the Church? Yes, it is not only possible, but it is what Christ would have you do at whatever level of Christian maturity you are at. These verses show us that being a witness is something not so much that we do. It is something that we are. Instruction from the pastor of the church, or help from other believers is good, but if you have the Spirit you are a witness, and you will be able to witness by His power at work in your heart.

We should remember, however, that these leaders of the Jewish Church of that day were not believers in Jesus Christ. They were religious men who did not understand that they needed to be saved. And we should also remember that God in all times of Church History has mightily used and owned the Biblically sound and Spirit-filled teachers of His Word in many theological colleges and institutions, formed for the purpose of equipping prospective ministers of His Word to be able to better fulfill the calling to which He has called them. We should not disdain a good education and we should seek to promote the good theological education of young men for the ministry. But we must also realize that it is not this instruction that gives any person the boldness to speak the truth of the gospel or the word of God in situations of oppositions from men who do not live by the truth of the Bible themselves. Many religious people in positions of authority do not think that they need to be saved from their sins by believing in Jesus Christ. They see this as a threat to their understanding of the meaning of life and their being able to continue to think that they will be saved by their own sacramental

and ceremonial works. Righteous boldness, whether we are theologically taught or not, comes from God. True God honoring spiritual boldness comes from your “having been with Jesus”. We will now proceed to talk specifically about what this means. For -

2ndly – Boldness requires listening to God more than listening to men who oppose the gospel. (verses 17-22)

Verse 18 says, “So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.” “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.’ “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” I have said to you that spiritual boldness comes from having been with Jesus. Here is the principle of principles when it comes to dealing with men in political or religious authority who try to get us to stop speaking about Jesus as being the only Savior and Lord of all men. We must not listen to them if they are attempting to stop the progress of gospel truth; if they are trying to stop our speaking the truth of the whole Word of God. They may have the highest authority in church or in state, and yet must speak and teach in the name of Jesus no matter what they say. If we have to go to jail over this issue, to jail we will go. The Christian does respect lawfully ordained political and religious authorities. And he seeks to submit to them where their orders, rules, and laws do not contradict the teaching of the Bible. But he must refuse to obey those who tell him not to speak in the name of Jesus. The only thing that will give us this kind of boldness will be our having already been with Jesus in secret communion and fellowship before the confrontation occurs. Peter and John had been with Jesus, in His physical presence, in the time before His ascension into heaven. They were able to see Him and walk with Him in the days of His flesh. They were able to listen to Him speak to them as a real Person – The Son of God. They saw Jesus’ confrontations with the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the rulers of the nation of Israel. They learned from Him directly. You and I no longer have that privilege. We no longer know Christ after the flesh. But we indeed have something which the Father and the Son think is just as good for us; indeed far better. We have Christ living and dwelling in our hearts, if we have believed in Him. We have the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus Himself to abide with us forever; the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot see or know. But you who believe all know this. You have this Anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. “Why is it,” you say, “that as a believer I do not sense the presence of the Spirit of God with me, so I can feel His power and thus be a bold and better witness for Christ?” “How am I ever to be bold?”

Well turn with me over to John Chapter 14, verse 15. Jesus is going to the cross in a little while, and so He says here: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him,

for He dwells with you and will be in you.” “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me.” “Because I live you will live also.” “At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” “And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” I insist that this is what caused Peter and John to be bold that day; the Lord was with them. Now I want you to notice the connection which I believe is established here between having Christ and having boldness. All believers have been given the Holy Spirit when they first believe. He is given to abide with you forever. He will not leave you as an orphan, without help or without spiritual strength or resources. He came to the Apostles in that day, and He comes also to you who believe in this day. A Christian becomes more bold as he or she learns to keep the commandments of God. Keeping the commandments of God and Christ is an outgrowth of your love for God. If you truly love God you will keep His commandments and in lovingly keeping His commandments Christ comes and manifests Himself to your heart and mind. All of these words were spoken directly to the Apostles, and no doubt they apply to them in the primary sense of the fulfillment of these words. But this does not mean that the principle being taught here by Christ does not extend to every Christian. It is not that all Christians have the gifts and calling of an Apostle. By no means. But every Christian has been given the Holy Spirit. They are given the Holy Spirit so that they will have the power to be bold in situations in which they find themselves being opposed by wicked religious men. They are given the Holy Spirit so that, having consciously attempted by the power of the Holy Spirit to keep the commandments of God, they can know that God will help them as they try to do His will.

Now turn over with me to 1 Peter 1, verse 8. “Whom having not seen you love.” (That is Christ) “Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” You do not see Christ now, in this time of your earthly sojourning, but because you have true faith, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory....” How is it possible that a Christian can love the One whom he has never seen? It is because Christ has made Himself known to them by means of His Spirit. There is the ability to rejoice with joy unspeakable and to be filled with the glory of knowing Him so much that it makes it entirely possible for the Christian to be bold in situations where he is opposed. Now look over at 1 Peter 3, verse 13. “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” “But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed.” “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile you good conduct in Christ may be

ashamed.” “For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” We can see here the connection with boldness. It is “sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts. Now this is setting apart Christ in our heart to fellowship with Him; to ask Him to help us and teach us what to say for a defense as to why we believe and hold to the truths that we may suffer for. We set apart Christ in our hearts and we have been trying to keep a clear conscience in relation to everything that we do and say. They will revile us and defame us for our good conduct anyway, but we are to remember that it is God’s will, His leading us into this confrontation with wicked men, and therefore having Him with us, we can be bold.

This requires that we not listen to the words and threatenings of the wicked men who oppose us, when they tell us to be quiet and not speak the truth of the gospel and the Word of God in Jesus’ name. We must obey God rather than men. Let me say that this is a very great deception and temptation in the day in which we live. Wicked men all around are telling us that all religions are valid, and their supposed Scriptures and holy writings should be respected. We must calmly and boldly respond with the statement that there is only One true and living God, one true religion, and only one true and holy book. It is the Bible. There is only one Savior and Lord who is able save people from their sins and bring people to heaven. It is Jesus Christ our Lord. We must be bold to assert this truth that Jesus alone could die as a satisfaction to God’s justice so that the person believing in Him is saved. Mohammed could not do this. Krishna could not do this. Buddha could not do this. They were mere men. They were in many ways sinful men. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and sinless. We must not listen to the false arguments of people who assert that the Koran or the Bhagavad Gita hold any truths that can save the soul. They do not. The supposed scriptures and holy writings of their religions have no value and no authority spiritually over any man in any culture or any society in all the world, because they do not speak of Jesus Christ. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who has all power in heaven and earth. It is He who is to be worshiped and adored. All false religions do not acknowledge our Jesus to be God’s only-begotten Son, the only One who was a sinless person, the only One who has the nature of God and the nature of man in His one Person. He was the only One who was capable of bearing my sins and dying for them; the only One who has been raised from the dead to prove that my sins are all forgiven and now atoned for by the shedding of His blood. You and I must be bold to declare these facts. It is by resting our faith upon these facts of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ that we will be made bold. The Holy Spirit witnesses to these facts in our soul, all of which are according to what the Word of God clearly teaches, for every person who will read it, or hear it and believe it. You and I who are Christians have many reasons to be bold. And we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

And then 3rdly – To have holy boldness requires prayer that God would grant continued boldness to all in the church to speak God’s Word. (verse 23-31)

“And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders and said to them.” “So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord you are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.’” They then quote Psalm 2 where it says, “Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things?” “The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.” They then acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the death of Jesus Christ. They say – “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” Then they pray making this marvelous request. “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” What a mighty prayer! They who had been severely threatened prayed not to be protected or delivered, but rather they prayed for more boldness to speak God’s Word. Let us understand that we as Christians will not automatically be bold in all situations. Elijah was bold to confront the 450 prophets of Baal, but then later fled at the threat of Jezebel taking his life. Peter was bold to confess Christ before the other disciples, bold to state that he would follow the Lord to prison and to death, and yet he denied even knowing Him with curses and swearing when confronted by a maid in the courtyard of the high priest, at the time of Jesus’ arrest. No, you and I need to understand that we are not at all times equally bold. And therefore we may start out well and not obey the commands and demands of wicked men, but then if we are not careful we may cave in to their demands and expectations that we be silent in regard to our declaring them the truth of our Christ. The only way that there will be any measure of consistent boldness in our witness, will be if we will see our need to pray.

Prayer is absolutely needed for you and I to be consistent in our confession of Christ, and in our witness for Him. Let me ask you now whether you are becoming more of a man or woman of prayer? Are you praying for the strength to speak the truth of the Word of God with boldness? Even the Apostle Paul knew that he needed to pray this way, and he asked others to pray this way for him. In Ephesians 6: 17 he says, “Above all, take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” If you do not feel that you can speak, surely you can pray that others who can, will

speaking. Pray for your pastor in this way. But pray for all of us here together to be able to speak the word with boldness. You notice the results of the prayer meeting of the Apostles with their companions in the early church. “And when they prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Here are found the tremendous workings of God to grant boldness which came from earnest fervent prayer, because God would make His Word powerful. And you and I must pray for these things too. When we do, we shall together see greater things yet, develop in relation to our witness when we pray. You need not be educated or trained to be bold for Christ. You only need to read the Word and pray, and listen to God and not to wicked men.