

SPECIAL SERMON: ***"The Courage to Be Christian"***

INTRODUCTION

- **The Courage to be Christian** – the courage that ought to characterize us as followers of Jesus as those who are not ashamed of the gospel.

Context:

- In **Acts chapter 4**, the apostles make an amazing prayer request: a prayer for courage.

Acts 4:29 - "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

- In **Acts chapter 5**, the apostles are put in prison by the religious leaders (Acts 5:17-18).

WHAT DOES COURAGE FOR CHRIST LOOK LIKE? (ACTS 5:17-42)

A. The Courage to Speak (Acts 5:17-26)

- **Verse 19** – an angel visits the apostles in prison and gives them this instruction: go back and do the same thing that got them landed in jail in the first place.
- **Verse 25** - The apostles are found in the **very same spot** doing the same thing: preaching the same gospel of Jesus Christ.

B. The Courage to Stand (Acts 5:18-39)

- Remember that the last time Peter was in a similar position, he wavered and denied Christ three times (John 18:17-27).
- Here Peter is standing before the highest court in Israel, knowing that death itself was a likely outcome. His answer: ***"We must obey God rather than men."*** (Acts 5:29)

"Peter stands in the batter's box and he does not move." (Busenitz)

C. The Courage to Suffer (Acts 5:40-42)

- **Verse 40** - The apostles are beaten and charged not to speak in the name of Jesus.

The Apostles' Response:

1. **Joy** – "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (v.41)
2. **Obedience** – "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus." (v.42)

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS THAT MAKE THAT KIND OF COURAGE POSSIBLE? (ACTS 5:29-32)

A. The Apostles Recognized their God-Given Mandate (5:29)

- Peter was so focused on being obedient that courage was the byproduct.

B. The Apostles Remembered their Christ-Centered Message (5:30-31)

- All of the core elements of the gospel are in these verses: the death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation of Christ; the call to repentance and faith in Christ.

C. The Apostles Rested in their Spirit-Empowered Mission (5:32)

- The word witness transliterated is *martus* which gives us our word "martyr" in English.

Sermon Application Questions

January 19, 2020

PERSONAL RESPONSES

Dr. Busenitz defined courage as “the courage that ought to characterize us as followers of Jesus as those who are not ashamed of the gospel.”

- 1 **Acts 5:12-42** gives us an incredible example of such courage! As you think about the apostles' example in this passage, what are some elements of the story that grab your attention, cause you to think, or give personal encouragement in your walk with Christ?

Think about the example of the Apostle Peter. In John 18:17-27, we find *Peter at his lowest*: denying Christ three times before men.

- 2 In Acts 5:29, we find *Peter transformed* into a man of boldness proclaiming: “***We must obey God rather than men.***”

How does the transformation of Peter give hope to each believer in Christ? How does Peter's example give hope to a believer who is struggling or who may feel like a spiritual failure?

DIGGING DEEPER

- 1 Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week's sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

Acts 1:8

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

Acts 2:38-41

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 4:8-12

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:29-31

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Read Acts 4:29-31 and then read Acts 5:40-42.

2

How does the Acts chapter 5 passage give an answer to the prayer that was made in Acts chapter 4?

How does this story give us encouragement to pray for a boldness and a courage that is from the Holy Spirit?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1

Biblical counselor Ed Welch has observed that the command, “Do not fear” is the most frequent command in the Bible. “More than three hundred times God commands his people not to be afraid.”¹

Welch comments: “The sheer number of times he speaks to your fears says that he cares much more than you know. He is not so busy that he attends only to macro-level concerns. Instead, he is close and speaks to the details of your troubles.”

Are there any fears that you are dealing with today that are keeping you from fully pursuing obedience to Christ? Some categories of fear include: fears about the future, fears regarding people you love, fears of losing something important to you.

How does the Word of God address your worries and fears?

2

The church in Acts chapter 5 was: Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, and filled with a boldness that comes through knowing the Word of God and being devoted to fellowship and prayer (Acts 2:42).

Imagine the impact the church could make on the world if it were filled with the same characteristics found in Acts chapter 5.

Perhaps write out a prayer for our church that we would grow in these characteristics.

¹ Ed Welch, When I am Afraid: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Fear and Anxiety