

Boldness Boosters

Acts 4:23-31

Halifax: 9 October 2011

Introduction

My brothers and sisters,

- Today as we continue our sermon series in Acts,
 - we get to see more about how the church responded to the first opposition that came against the gospel.

- In God's word, *firsts* are very important...
 - Genesis is a book of firsts...
 - We have the first temptation and the first sin,
 - the first pronouncement of judgement and the first promise of mercy.
 - the first persecution (the murder of Abel) and the first excommunication after the fall (Cain is exiled).
 - the first marriage and the first Sabbath.
 - We are taught many important lessons from these firsts...
 - They are given to us for instruction...
 - The first marriage and the first Sabbath are presented to us as a pattern for us to follow.
 - The first temptation, sin, and judgement serve as a warning to us.

- In Acts, we also have many firsts—firsts that occurred after the greatest event in History—the completion of redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ...
 - We have seen the first NT prayer meeting, the first NT sermon, the first NT filling of the Spirit, the first NT community...
 - You will remember I pointed out that the church seems to be presented in its ideal state in Acts 2...
 - There is zeal for the word, for prayer, for the sacraments...
 - There is mutual care and encouragement among the members who sell their possessions to help each other in need...
 - These early days are presented as a model for all ages to follow.

- And now we are looking at the first persecution...
 - We began looking at this last week when saw how Peter and John responded in the persecution.
 - This week, we will look at how they responded *after* the persecution.
 - Their example is wonderful!
 - Their response is given to us as a pattern for us to follow!

Before we begin let's take a moment to look back and review what has already happened.

- You will remember that they had performed a very notable miracle that no one could deny...
 - They had healed a man that had been completely lame from birth—so lame that he had to be carried around.
 - He was over forty years old and for years he had been carried up to the temple to beg for his living.
 - There he was, day after day, a very familiar fixture.
 - But Peter and John had given him something he had never dreamed possible.
 - Going up to pray at the time of the evening sacrifice, they saw him Peter told him to look at them, and then he said...
 - **Acts 3:6: "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."**
 - **Acts 3:7: And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.**
- And this fellow was not at all quiet about what they had done.
 - He went leaping about and praising God!
 - This got a lot of people's attention—they knew this guy—he had never walked—but there he was, jumping around praising God for his healing!
 - No one could deny it.
 - It wasn't like those cheap imitation miracles—like the one I heard about in Halifax a couple of weeks ago where the faith healer claimed to turn metal pins into bone.
 - Peter and John's miracle was done on this man that everyone in Jerusalem knew—it was a true sign that the Lord had worked!
- So a great crowd gathered and Peter made the most of the opportunity...
 - He began to tell them all that this man had been healed by Jesus Christ whom they had crucified!
 - He told them that God had sent Jesus to turn Israel away from their sins.
 - That in Him was forgiveness and refreshment and restoration for all who would come to Him as their Messiah.
 - As Peter continued to speak, many believed!
 - The number came to 5000 households!
 - But opposition also rose up against Peter and John.
 - The Captain of the temple and the Sadducees came and took Peter and John into custody.
 - These leaders were greatly annoyed, not so much that there had been a healing, but that Peter was preaching Jesus and the resurrection!
 - They could heal all they wanted, but it was the preaching of the gospel that offended these men—as it always is.

- And we saw how they brought them before the Sanhedrin the next day.
 - And we saw how they tried to intimidate them by asking them questions—by what authority this man had been healed!
 - They surely thought that Peter would be afraid to tell them—for Jesus had been crucified only a couple of months before by this same court!
 - But to their amazement, they are not intimidated.
 - Instead, Peter and John speak boldly of Jesus...
 - Peter says:
 - **Acts 4:10: 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.**
 - He just spells it out plainly.
 - What an example he is!
 - He doesn't play politics.
 - He doesn't soften the message at all.
 - He even identifies Jesus as the one that they had crucified!
 - And then He quotes Psalm 118 to show from scripture that their rejection of Jesus and God's acceptance of Him was all prophesied beforehand...He says:
 - **Acts 4:11: "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'**
 - And then he even tells them that Jesus is the only way for anyone to be saved! He says:
 - **Acts 4:12: Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**
- The Sanhedrin marvel at this fisherman's boldness!
 - It brings back disturbing memories of their encounters with Jesus, the very one that Peter is preaching to them.
 - They don't know what to do, so they send Peter and John out to confer.
 - They can't deny that a notable miracle has been done.
 - They refuse to admit that Jesus is the risen Lord.
 - They decide to use the bully method and threaten Peter and John that they dare not speak in Jesus' name any more.
 - But Peter and John respond by saying:
 - **Acts 4:19-20: 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.**

- The Sanhedrin do not know what to say—they just threaten them and send them on their way...
- But with these threats, the arrow of persecution is made ready to shoot.
- If Peter and John do not obey their orders, there will be consequences!
 - They hope that the threat will make them think twice before they preach any more about Jesus.

Now my brothers and sisters, this is a crucial moment for the apostles.

- They have honoured the Lord in this matter.
- They have been very bold before their persecutors.
 - But what will they do now that they have been released?
- There are times when we can be very bold before the authorities,
 - but then find ourselves so unnerved after it's all over that we no longer speak boldly in Jesus' name.
 - This is tragic!
 - Boldness does not characterise the church in North America.
 - Jesus is risen and He is Lord of all and He commands all men everywhere to repent!
 - But we act as if there is no such authority given to Him.
 - Far from speaking with boldness, we shrivel up and apologise for being His disciples.
 - There is all this nonsense today about Christians being part of the community and embracing the culture!
 - My brothers and sisters, as disciples of Christ we are not here to embrace the culture!
 - We are here to call the culture to repentance and to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
 - The Bible knows nothing of this new movement of embracing the culture.
 - The church in Acts was forming a new culture of those who follow Jesus as Lord!
 - We see all the way through Acts that people are called to repentance.
- But that kind of confrontation requires boldness!
 - Peter and John had it and we don't have it... but we ought to have it.
 - And so we need to learn from them!
 - So we need to learn from their example.

- We need to see what they did when they left the court to boost their boldness.
- And then we need to imitate them!
 - I want to show you four things from their example that you can do to boost your boldness.

I. First, you can boost your boldness by going to your brothers and sisters in the church.

A. If there is anything that is clear in the book of Acts, it is that we need each other.

1. We have already seen that when the disciples went to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit, they did not all go their separate ways.
 - They gathered as Christ's ekklesia—His assembly—His church.
 - They gathered and they prayed together with one accord—
 - They were united by one holy passion.
 - They gathered and they organised themselves to prepare for their work to be Christ's witnesses.

2. We have also seen that as soon as the 3000 believed at Pentecost, they were immediately baptised and added to the church.
 - They did not hold themselves off.
 - You will never see someone in Acts who is said to believe, but who does not immediately get baptised and unite with the church.
 - Those who did not join were not considered to be disciples of Christ.
 - A true disciple does not hold himself aloof from his brothers and sisters.

3. Well now, what do Peter and John do after they are released from the court?
 - They do not go home to fret about it.
 - They do not go home and watch a DVD to get their mind off of what happened.
 - They do not go home and get depressed.
 - No, it tells you what they do in verse 23:
 - **Acts 4:23: And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.**
 - As soon as they are released, they go immediately to their own—
 - probably not the whole church as there were 5000 families now, but to the leadership—the Presbytery—
 - not a closed meeting of presbytery, but to their fellow apostles and their wives and to some of the others who were leaders among the people.
 - They go and they report to them all that has happened!

B. My brothers and sisters, we need each other!

1. What a great comfort and help it is to be able to go to our own companions!
 - What a blessing that in the church we have people who care and who want to know what has happened to us.
 - Our own people who stand in solidarity with us—the whole church would be affected by the verdict of the Sanhedrin.
 - Our own people who encourage us and cheer us on that God is with us and will not forsake us.
 - Our own people who will pray with us and for us.
 - Our own people who will give thanks to God for helping us stand and who are ready to help us.

2. Do you do this when trouble comes to you?
 - Do you talk to your brothers and sisters in the church?
 - Do you even do this in your own family?
 - Do you talk to your parents or to your spouse to receive encouragement?
 - And are you there for your brothers and sisters when they have been bullied by the world?
 - We need each other!
 - God has put us together as a church and as families that we might support and encourage each other.

3. In this way we greatly strengthen each other.
 - a. Those who have been bullied strengthen us by their example, and we strengthen them by our concern and our solidarity with them.
 - You see that once again we are told that the disciples are together with one accord.
 - They share the one holy passion for Jesus and the gospel.
 - They are united with Peter and John in this matter and are ready to stand with them for Jesus Christ.

 - b. Perhaps you have heard the old illustration about the coals on a fire.
 - What happens if you separate one coal from all the others and set it on the hearth?
 - It starts to go out!
 - It needs to be with the other coals if it is to keep on burning.
 - So it is with every disciple of Christ!
 - We need each other!

 - And in the case of Peter and John,
 - they were burning brightly and so were able to ignite the rest of the coals.
 - They did not deprive their brothers of their influence.

- And you can be sure that the elders who were gathered would have taken this encouragement back to the local gatherings that they led.
- If we are going to be bold for Jesus Christ, we need each other.
 - Hebrews 10:23-25 says: **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**
 - That is what all of you need to be doing.
 - That is the first way that we boost boldness.

II. Secondly, you can boost your boldness by confessing that God is supreme master of all!

- A. You see how the assembly addresses Him together in prayer with these words:
- **Acts 4:24: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them...”**
1. The first word is not the usual word that is translated *Lord* in the New Testament.
 - It is the word δεσποτης (des-pot'-ace) from which we get the English word *despot*.
 - This refers to Him as sovereign master—as the one who is absolutely in charge!
 - He is the one who has ultimate authority.
 - There is no one to above Him to appeal to.
 2. And then it is added that He is *God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them*.
 - He is the owner of all things!
 - He is the reason we exist and the reason anything or anyone exists.
 - He is not just the despot or master of the church, but of the whole creation!
- B. Do you see how helpful it is to confess the Lord as supreme master in times of opposition?
1. Peter and John had just been before the Jewish Supreme Court!
 - a. This was the highest court among the covenant people.
 - God had given authority to this court.
 - It was still their God-given responsibility to render judgement about false teachers among the people.
 - b. But these men had just now rendered a judgement that was unjust.
 - It contradicted what the God of heaven—the supreme Lord of all who had appointed them to judge—had commanded!

- And so it is that the assembled church remembers that God is indeed the supreme Lord who appointed these men!
 - They may be gods, but they will die like men!
 - They will have to answer to God for they have done.
 - The very fact that they are in the place of highest authority among the covenant people will make their judgement all the more severe.
2. Remembering that God is supreme master is a tremendous boost to boldness!
- a. It doesn't matter before whom you are called to stand!
 - Whoever they are, whatever power they may have,
 - God is high over them and whatever He says overrules them.
 - They have their authority from no other source but Him.
 - b. That means that you do not need to be afraid of their threats or be intimidated by them.
 - The more clearly you see the supremacy of the Lord, the less intimidated you will be!
 - You don't even have to be naturally bold to be bold for Him when you truly see who He is!
 - Seeing God as supreme Lord is what makes you bold.
- Let me illustrate this with something that happened to me when I was a new believer.
 - There was a guy on my hall who was a big and a bitter atheist.
 - He wore a scowl and went through room mates very quickly.
 - I had invited him to a Bible study in my room over and over and he finally came, but with no other purpose but to blaspheme.
 - But his vile blasphemy backfired on him.
 - The night he came, there was another visitor.
 - This other visitor left the room in the middle of the blasphemies and I was disheartened...
 - But then he came back smiling and testifying that he had gone to his room and dropped to his knees in repentance because he realised that by resisting the Lord's call to salvation,
 - he was no different than this atheist!
 - The atheist had helped this young man come to Christ!
 - This atheist was so angry that I thought he was going to explode.
 - He turned red and was shaking and sweat was rolling off of his face...
 - And he cried out and said "you fool!" and left the room.

- A short time later, I was standing in the hall just outside the door of this atheist—he lived right next door to me in my student residence...
 - He began to threaten me because I invited him to church or something—maybe I said something about the Lord.
 - He was very hostile and I was not sure I could handle him if he started to assault me.
 - But suddenly I became very bold.
 - I wish I could say that I was bold because I realised that the Lord was with me, but it was not that.
 - I became very bold because out into the hall stepped my Christian friend Richard—
 - a strapping chap well over six feet who used to enjoy going to bar where fights broke out before his came to Jesus.
 - I could see him and the atheist could not.
 - Richard had heard the exchange.
 - He stood there, poised, with a very tough look, ready to come and defend me if necessary.
 - Suddenly I had tremendous boldness that unnerved the atheist as I told him how he needed to repent.
- In my weakness, I needed my friend Richard to have that boldness...
 - But do you see the point?
 - If you see someone with a lot more power than your enemy who is with you, you don't have to be naturally bold to be bold!
 - In fact, your fear is what makes you bold!
 - If you see the Lord as He is, you fear displeasing Him a thousand times more than you fear displeasing whoever it is that is threatening you!
 - Seriously, on the day of judgement when the glory of Lord is openly revealed and we see who is who,
 - do you think *anybody* will be afraid of other people?
 - Of course not!
 - God's enemies will be looking for rocks to hide under!
 - By faith, we need to see our Lord as the supreme master that He is *now*!
 - We need to see that He is the ultimate Lord who is God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is!

3. I tell you that too often we don't confess God's majesty in our prayers!

 - Very often we come in with our petitions and don't stop to really consider the one to whom we are bringing our requests!

- And even when we do confess His glory, we often do not take it to heart!
- If we did, we would be bold around everyone—
 - not because we are naturally bold, but because we fear God more than we fear any man.
- We need to think about who He is!
 - We need to engage our hearts when we sing psalms of praise to Him in which we confess His glory and majesty!
 - We need to have faith to see Him who is invisible so we will not fear the face of man.
 - How it will boost your boldness to remember who He is!

III. Thirdly, you can boost your boldness by remembering how desperate the enemies of Christ are.

A. What folly it is for them to oppose the Lord of glory!

1. See how the early church takes up Psalm 2 in their prayer at this time.

- They remember the part in the Psalm where the psalmist marvels at the foolishness of those who try to fight against the living God.
 - **Acts 4:25-26: ‘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 are taking this Psalm that speaks about the opposition of the world and they are applying it to the leaders their day.
 - This was not a novel interpretation.
 - The Jews had already begun to interpret this Psalm as speaking about opposition to the Messiah when He came.
 - They had begun to write about it at least as early as the century before Jesus came.
 - They felt that the initial opposition began with Pharaoh against Moses and would climax in opposition against the Messiah Himself when He came.
 - They were, of course, quite right about this,
 - it expressly speaks of the Messiah—God’s anointed one—
 - but little did they know that among those who opposed the Messiah would be their own people and their own rulers!
 - The apostolic interpretation is given in verse 27...
 - **Acts 4:27: 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.**
 - This opposition to Christ, God’s anointed, goes on to this day.

2. How foolish and desperate this opposition is—so absurd.
 - a. Why do the nations rage and plot vain things against the Lord and against His anointed?
 - What do they possibly hope to gain by it?
 - What victory do they hope to obtain?
 - Are they just being like the demons who begged Christ not to torment them before the time?
 - Do they just want to oppose Him as long as they can?
 - Can't they see that it is a battle that they are sure to lose?
 - b. They are indeed like Pharaoh when he opposed the Lord.
 - He kept seeing the signs and miracles—one plague after another—but he simply could not make himself bow before the Lord.
 - His own counsellors asked him if he was going to let the whole land be destroyed.
 - c. Unbelief is absurd—it is the most irrational thing ever!
 - People fight against the God who made them and the Christ who came to save,
 - not because it makes sense—though they try to pretend that their unbelief makes sense...
 - But they do it because they are fallen sinners with hearts that are so corrupt that they can't stand the thought of submitting to God...
 - Even though He comes with mercy, they cannot bear to think of being slain by the gospel so as to submit to the Lord.
 - There is too much pride in them to do that.
 - It is unthinkable to them!
 - This unbelief is in every last one of us until God's grace comes to us and imparts life to us.
 - No matter what happens, we will not yield until the Holy Spirit renews our hearts—
 - We have to be born from above to see the kingdom.
 - That is why we who believe cannot boast.
 - It is only by the grace of God that we have repented and turned to Jesus.
 - We never would have done it if we had been left to ourselves.
 - Sin makes us so obstinate that we choose to fight against God and to resist Jesus Christ to our own destruction!
 - What folly!
3. And you see what they gain by their opposition!
 - All they do is accomplish the Lord's purpose.
 - Their opposition does nothing but bring more glory to Him.

- a. Pharaoh did more to glorify God than most people...
 - But he did it in trying to oppose the LORD
 - His opposition only gave the LORD more and more occasion to make His power known in sending one plague after another.
 - If Pharaoh had simply said,
 - “Sure, you can go and worship the LORD,” when Moses had first requested it,
 - God’s glory upon Egypt would have never been seen.
- b. In the case of those who had opposed Christ when He came to earth,
 - They put Him on the cross in all their malice...
 - But all this did was procure the salvation of the world.
 - It was precisely what God had purposed should be done.
 - They were gathered together, but all they ended up doing was, despite themselves, to carry out God’s plan and purpose.
 - **Acts 4:28: whatever Your [God’s] hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.**
 - They did their work and crucified Him, but then He came forth from the grave proclaiming salvation in all the world!
 - Such enemies, if they will not repent, will glorify God on the day of judgement when they receive what they deserve.
 - Their cause is absolutely desperate.
 - But they are so obstinate that they cannot bring themselves to bow to Jesus.

B. Recognising how hopeless their cause is boosts boldness.

1. What comfort there is in knowing that God is in absolute control!
 - That even when they persecute you—
 - when they mock you and laugh at you
 - when they accuse you of evil
 - when they torture you and even kill you...
 - It is all for the furtherance of God’s purpose and glory.
 - There is no need to try to avoid their wrath by being sheepish.
 - God has the whole matter in hand.
 - You will only gain an opportunity to see His hand and receive His word if you do not draw back...
 - Just as Jesus did when He went to the cross...
 - Just as Daniel’s friends did when they went to the fiery furnace.
 - Just as Hezekiah did when he withstood Sennacherib.
 - Just as Peter and John did.

2. Instead of fearing your enemies, you ought to pity them... and keep on urging them to repent and believe the gospel.
 - Their cause is so hopeless!
 - They are fighting against the Most His God.
 - If they could only see Him, they would give up at once!
 - It is so senseless.
 - It is for you to just keep on trying to make them see!
 - Just keep on boldly telling them the truth.
 - Isn't this what animates all the martyrs who stand as victors,
 - preaching to their enemies even as they die,
 - pleading with them and praying for them...that they will come to know the mercy of the Lord.
 - The man in the flames knows that he is in the superior position...
 - It is far better—far batter—to be the one who is persecuted than the one who is persecuting!
3. Yes indeed—when you see clearly how desperate the cause of your enemies is,
 - You realise all the more just how good you have it!
 - Just think, but for the grace of God, you would be where they are—raging against the Lord and against His anointed—imagining a vain thing!
 - But instead, you are forever reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus!
 - He is your God and you are His son or daughter!
 - Declare His mercy to the nations with boldness!

TRANS> Yes indeed—we have every reason to be bold...

- We have seen three boldness boosters!
 - The encouragement we have from one another in the church!
 - The assurance we have that the supreme Lord is God over all!
 - And the recognition of how desperate and hopeless the cause of Christ's enemies really is...
- How effective these boldness boosters are...if you retain them...
 - But you know what happens!
 - The day of battle comes and we faint.
 - We see the enemy and we grow weak.
- It is for this reason that in our humility, we need the fourth boldness booster!

IV. The fourth boldness booster is prayer.

- The prayer is given in verse 29-30:
 - **Acts 4:29-30: 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.**

A. This is a prayer for God's help!

1. They just ask Him to see the threats—to take note of them—and then to give them boldness to keep on speaking the word.
 - They want God to take note of the situation—of the danger and the place of temptation they are in—and to help them!
 - Peter and John are so different than they were in the garden when they were so sure that they did not need to pray—
 - that they would never deny Christ!
2. Even though Peter and John had been very bold before the Sanhedrin, they know their own weakness.
 - They understand that their help is in the name of the Lord.
 - They understand that without Him, they will not stand in the evil day.
 - The very reason they were able to stand is that they were men of faith and prayer.
 - They were weak, but in their weakness God's strength was made perfect.
3. Isn't this so typical!
 - There are two types of persons...
 - Those do not pray for boldness because they don't think they need to.
 - These are the ones who fall in the day when persecution comes.
 - Those know their weakness and pray earnestly for boldness.
 - These are the ones who stand in the day of trouble.
 - And people look at them and say—
 - "Why are you praying for boldness—you are one of the boldest people I know."
 - Peter and John were bold because they prayed for boldness.

B. It is essential that you ask for God's help if you are to be bold!

1. A moment ago, I described two kinds of people to you...
 - Those who think they are bold and do not pray...
 - And those like Peter and John who think they are weak and pray for boldness...
 - But I fear that many of us fall into a third category...
 - We are humble enough—oh yes—we know that we are not very bold and we are not ashamed to admit it...
 - but unlike Peter and John, we don't pray about it because we don't care—
 - We don't really want to be bold!
 - We are content to just stay as we are!
 - We are not bold but we are cold!

2. My brothers and sisters, this needs to change!
 - We have an exalted Saviour who has been given all authority in heaven and earth!
 - He is Lord and He commands all men everywhere to repent!
 - I do not say that you all have to preach, but I do say that you all have to stand up for Jesus without wavering,
 - and I do say that you ought to be urging those who do not know the Lord to come and hear the gospel proclaimed,
 - and I do say that you ought to be ready to speak a word for Him when you are asked about your hope.
 - You need to care about exalting your Saviour!
 - You are part of the church that has been given the mission of making Him known and you must have boldness to do your part.
 - Some of you have lost your first love!
 - You have turned into a coward and you need to repent.
 - You need to pray earnestly that God will make you bold.
3. Look at how the early Church goes on in its prayer...
 - Having prayed that they will speak with boldness,
 - they also pray to God (v. 30)
 - that the LORD would stretch out His hand to heal and that sings and wonders would be done through His holy servant Jesus!
 - a. Do you see?
 - They want to be conspicuous!
 - They want the working of Jesus Christ to be obvious and evident!
 - The name of Jesus was the very thing that God them in trouble, but this is what they want to be most obvious about them!
 - That Jesus is at work among them!
 - b. This is what I am saying...
 - Too often, we don't care if it is evident that Jesus is working among us.
 - We prefer to be incognito!
 - But we need to be praying that everyone would know that we belong to Him—that His work would be obvious!
 - c. Now listen, we do not live in the age of prophecy—
 - God always works miracles in such times—to confirm new revelation that is being given.
 - There are three great periods when this was done—

- In the time of Moses when God first gave the law and the first five books of the Bible.
 - In the time of Elijah and Elisha—when God worked signs to confirm the prophets whom He had sent.
 - And then again in the time of Jesus and His apostles when God worked signs to confirm the truth of the gospel they preached.
- But now that that revelation is complete, those signs and wonders have long since ceased.
 - Those who try to resurrect them do more harm than good—with their cheap miracles—and their hooting and falling on the floor and all the other silly antics that look more pagan worship than Christian worship.
 - No, unless you can do the real thing, don't bother with such things.
 - We have something else now that is to be the great evidence of God's truth!
 - The very church itself—with lives that have been transformed by the gospel!
 - We have once angry people that are now true peacemakers.
 - We have perverted people who are now chaste and holy.
 - We have idolaters who now worship God.
 - We have blasphemers who now sing praise and give thanks.
 - We have thieves who now serve others and give to the poor.
 - The apostle's have given us the word, accompanied by signs and wonders.
 - There is nothing more to add to what they have said.
 - What is left for us to live according to the new life we have in the gospel of Jesus so that people see that Jesus is with us.
 - That the world will know that we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another.
 - That is the signs and wonders that we need to pray for to support the preaching of the word!
 - People need to come to church and not only hear the gospel, but also see people living it out...
 - so that it is not just theory, but reality.

TRANS> So tell me, do you want to be conspicuous Christians?

- Do you want it to be evident that Christ is with you so that you can tell the world about Him?
 - Or would you just as soon be invisible and blend in with the wood work?
 - Then you won't have to be bold because nobody will notice you.

- But if this is your prayer—and it really must be your prayer if you are a true disciple of Jesus...

C. God will answer it!

1. God made it very clear that He was pleased to answer their prayer.

- Verse 31 tells us what happened:
 - **Acts 4:31: And when they had 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.**
 - You see three things here...
 - A sign was given to show that God has answered them—
 - The place where they were assembled was shaken.
 - They were all filled with the Holy Spirit—they were given fresh power and grace to serve the Lord.
 - They spoke the word of God with boldness.
 - God answered their prayer and gave them boldness.

2. Do you even want this to happen?

- It puts you in the place of ridicule and of danger!
 - Do you want that?
 - You will notice that the disciples do not pray that they will escape from the danger or that their enemies will be eliminated...
 - They just pray for power and boldness to stand up for Jesus in this hostile environment and God gives it to them!

3. You do not need to expect the place to be shaken.

- Remember what I told you before about Acts...
 - God makes many things conspicuous when they are done for the first time and then He expects us to trust Him after that.
 - When Israel first set up the tabernacle and later the temple, the glory cloud went and filled it to show that God was with His people.
 - But when the second temple was build, the cloud did not come.
 - The people had already been taught that God dwelt in the temple and the cloud did not need to come again.
 - It didn't need to be done with every generation.
 - So it was with the coming of the Holy Spirit...
 - There were signs given—the tongues of fire, the rushing wind, and speaking with tongues...

- and these signs were repeated when the Samaritans and the Gentiles first trusted the Lord to show that they too received the Holy Spirit.
- But after a while, the signs were no longer needed...
 - God has already revealed that He gives the Spirit and successive generations are to believe His promise and the signs that have already been given—not look for new signs.
- Well here in Acts 4:31, we have the evidence that God answers His people when they pray for boldness and for the power to witness...
 - When they truly do ask Him for this, He comes to them and fills them with His Spirit to empower them.
 - We do not need a sign again.
 - We need to believe that sign that He gave in Acts 5:31.
 - By that sign, we have God's assurance that He will grant boldness and power to us when we ask.
- And then we will be changed!
 - Then we will go forth speaking the Word of God with all boldness— together as the church of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Oh brothers and sisters!

- We need this boldness!
 - We have not represented Jesus Christ that we ought to!
 - We need our boldness to be boosted!
 - Encourage one another as fellow members...
 - Confess the Lord as the supreme Lord over all...
 - Recognise how desperate our enemies are—they are fighting against the most High!
 - And pray that God will give us boldness.
 - Pray for it with sincerity and He will give it to you.