

The Spirit Gives Boldness

(Acts 4:1-31)

Introduction

One of the last things Jesus told his disciples before He ascended into Heaven was to go into the world and make disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (20) Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus wants us to go out and tell everyone the Good News that He came to save us from the penalty of our sins. We call that "witnessing" or "testifying." But sometimes it can be hard to talk to people about the Lord.

Ask: Why can it be hard to witness to others about the Lord?

[Teacher, discuss problems that make witnessing difficult — feeling of shyness, not knowing who to talk to; being afraid of ridicule or persecution; not knowing what to say.]

We have learned that the Holy Spirit enabled Peter to stand up and boldly tell thousands of people about what the Lord Jesus had done for mankind. He became a powerful witness for the Lord.

If you are a true believer in Jesus, you have the same Holy Spirit living inside you that enabled Peter to be a bold witness. Today we are going to learn that the Holy Spirit helps us be a strong witness; He gives us the power to share the Good News about Jesus with others.

Opening Prayer

Father, I want to be a bold witness for You. As we study the Holy Spirit this morning, I pray that we will gain confidence as we go out and tell people about what You came to do for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Lesson

Chapter four is a continuation of the story we learned about last week. The people are gathered around in awe at the miracle that had taken place. Peter and John told the people that it was by faith in Jesus' Name that the lame man was healed. However, whenever God is at work in the hearts of people, God's enemy doesn't like it.

Ask: Who is God's enemy? (Satan/devil.)

We are about to see God's enemy at work in chapter four.

Acts 4:1-3

*While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. (2) **These leaders were very disturbed** that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. (3) They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning.*

Ask: What do we know about these priests, the Temple guard, and Sadducees? Why do you think that these Jewish religious leaders were *greatly annoyed*?

These were the rulers or leaders of the Jewish religion and they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. And they thought when they put Jesus to death that would be the end of Him. But here was Peter and John, proclaiming that Lord Jesus died on the cross, was buried and three days later was raised from the dead. And, they were saying it was this same Jesus who performed this miracle.

Whenever the power of Jesus is being proclaimed, God's enemy will try to interfere. The last thing Satan wants is for people to put their faith in Jesus and be saved.

The crowd at the Temple courts that day had witnessed an amazing miracle and they heard Peter preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit had given Peter the words to share the Good News that if the people would repent from their sins and believe in Jesus, they could be saved. And many people came to faith in Jesus.

Acts 4:4

But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

The crowds' reaction to the teaching of God's Word was belief; now there were about 5,000 believers. [Note there were now 5,000 believers total: 3,000 in Acts 2:41 + 2,000 here in Acts 4:4.]

Peter and John were obeying Jesus' command to tell others the Good News and many people believed.

The next day Peter and John were brought before the religious leaders for questioning.

Acts 4:5-7

The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. (6) Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. (7) They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

Ask: What question did the Jewish religion leaders ask Peter and John? (*By what power or by what name did you do this.*)

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the courage to boldly set the record straight.

Acts 4:8-10

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, (9) are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? (10) Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that **he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ** the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.*

Peter makes it clear that the man was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ.

Ask: What makes the name of Jesus so powerful? When Peter and John told the lame man, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk,*" (Acts 3:6), they did not mean that the word "Jesus" had the power to heal. It was Jesus Himself that healed the man.

Ask: When you speak Jesus' Name, what comes to your mind? Hopefully it is His many character traits, like His mercy or forgiveness, His almighty power to overcome evil or disease.

Peter went on to proclaim to the Jewish religious leaders:

Acts 4:12

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

The lame man was healed by faith in the Name of Jesus, He is Almighty God. There is power in no other Name.

While Peter was speaking to the religious leaders, they saw the courage he and John had.

Acts 4:13

*The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. **They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.***

Ask: What made the Jews think the disciples had been with Jesus?

They knew that that Peter and John were just ordinary men. But because Peter and John had the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of them, it was hard not to notice something was different about them. It was obvious that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

Ask: If you spend time with Jesus, what will people notice about you?

They should see the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If we are believers, people should be able to see that we are different because we know and follow Jesus.

Acts 4:14-16

*But since **they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them**, there was nothing the council could say. (15) So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves. (16) “What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can’t deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it.*

The religious leaders didn’t know what to do with Peter and John. They wanted to put a stop to Peter and John telling people about Jesus, but they couldn’t deny that an amazing miracle had happened. Everyone in Jerusalem knew that the lame man had been healed. The man who had been lame was standing right there among them.

So this is what they came up with...

Acts 4:17-18

But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus’ name again.” (18) So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Because the Holy Spirit lived inside of them, Peter and John knew that they could not obey the religious leaders’ command because they would be disobeying Jesus’ command to go into the world and make disciples.

Acts 4:19-20

But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? (20) We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

The religious leaders threatened Peter and John a bit more and then released them.

Acts 4:21-22

The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn’t know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God (22) for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

The Jewish religious leaders saw everyone praising God because of this miracle. They knew if they punished Peter and John further, the people would start a riot so they just let them go.

When Peter and John were released from jail, they went back to the place where the believers met and shared with them what had happened.

Acts 4:23

As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said.

They went to God in prayer and praised Him.

Acts 4:24

When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—

Now let’s look down at verses 29-30 to see what they prayed for.

Acts 4:29-30

*And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and **give us**, your servants, **great boldness in preaching your word**. (30) **Stretch out your hand with healing power**; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

Ask: What did the believers pray for?

Then they asked God enable them to continue to speak God's Word with boldness and to continue to heal others in the Name of Jesus.

God heard the believers' prayer and something amazing happened.

Acts 4:31

After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

There was an earthquake and the Holy Spirit gave them the power to speak God's Word with boldness. The Holy Spirit gave these believers the courage to share the Good News.

If you have believed in the Name of Jesus, you have the same Holy Spirit living inside you that Peter and John had. He will give you courage to follow Jesus and do what He wants you to do each and every day.

Next week we will continue to take our journey through the book of Acts.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that the Holy Spirit lives in each of us to help us be brave! We can count on the Holy Spirit to give us courage and boldness. Now give us a heart to tell everyone about You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Basket Ball

For every right answer, the child gets three shots at basketball. Each basket is worth 200 points. [You can use a trash can and paper wadded up.]

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What does it mean to "witness" to someone?
2. Who doesn't like it when God is working in people's hearts? (God's enemy, Satan, doesn't like it.)
3. Why were the religious leaders very disturbed? (They thought when they put Jesus to death that would be the end of Him! But here were Peter and John teaching the people about Jesus.)
4. What were Peter and John teaching the people that made the Jewish religious leaders so upset? (That Jesus rose from the dead and that faith in Him alone would save them.)
5. Why did they put Peter and John in jail? (Because many who heard Peter preach the Good News believed and came to faith.)
6. How many people believed the message of the Good News? (5,000 total: 3,000 in Acts 2:41, 2,000 in Acts 4:4.)
7. What question did the Jewish religious leaders ask Peter and John? ("*By what power or by what name did you do this?*")
8. What did Peter mean when he said it was the name of Jesus that healed the man? (Faith in Jesus is what saves you, not the saying of His name.)
9. When you speak Jesus' Name, what comes to your mind? (His mercy, forgiveness, almighty power...)
10. What made the Jewish religious leaders think the disciples had been with Jesus? (They saw the boldness of Peter and John; the power of the Holy Spirit.)

11. If you spend time with Jesus, what will people notice about you?
(The fruit of the Spirit.)
12. What did the religious leaders command Peter and John? (Not to speak or teach at all in the Name of Jesus.)
13. Why did the Jewish religious leaders finally let them out of jail?
(Because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. Everyone knew the truth of what happened.)
14. Why couldn't Peter and John stop telling people about Jesus?
(They knew if they did that, they would be disobeying Jesus' command to go into the world and make disciples.)
15. What did the believers pray about after Peter and John were released? (Vs 29-30: They asked God enable them to continue to speak God's Word with boldness and to continue to heal others in the Name of Jesus.)
16. After Peter and John prayed, how did God answer their prayer?
(Earthquake and gave them boldness to speak God's Word.)

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