

Praying Together for Courage
Acts 4:23-31
Sermon Handout

If God can raise the dead, he can change the heart of any person.

That means not only those who oppose the gospel, but He can also change us to have the courage to speak the gospel.

“But you aren’t supposed to be comfortable. He doesn’t want you to be in a comfortable position. He wants you to speak out and be bold for him.”

- Matt Forte, NFL running back

“Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication for all the saints, and **also for me**, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth **boldly** to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, **that I may declare it boldly**, as I ought to speak.” *Ephesians 6:18-20*

Boldness in sharing the gospel is one of the proofs of the power of the resurrection. It’s not natural. It’s supernatural.

I. We need to view evangelism/mission as our collective responsibility as the Church. Acts 4:23

“When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them.” Acts 4:23

*The cause of Christ and the witness of the gospel is a community effort.
We rise and fall in effective evangelism together.*

“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:24-25

“For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and a more abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.” Hebrews 10:34-36

“We live in a broken world where everything calls us toward selfishness and despair. Sin steals joy, our bodies break down, our plans falter, our dreams die, our resolves weaken, our perspective dims ... When encouragement is absent from the life of a church, people will feel unloved, unimportant, useless, and forgotten. God knows his people are in need of grace-filled reminders, so he calls us to encourage each other every day until his Son returns (Heb. 3:13).” Garrett Kell

II. We need to see prayer as our first priority and highest privilege in encouraging one another in evangelism. Acts 4:24

“And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God...” Acts 4:24

“No longer is the temple the center of prayer, but it is wherever the Messiah’s people gather... The apostles have a community that supports them and they together seek God’s face.” Patrick Schreiner

Prayer is a primary activity of the Christian community because the kind of courage we need is more than something we can give to one another.

- ***Pray for your enemies:***

Luke 6:27-28 “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”

- ***Pray for the Holy Spirit:***

Luke 11:13 “If you then who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

- ***Pray for Perseverance:***

Luke 22:44-46 “And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”

- ***Pray for Courage:***

The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us courage.

2 Timothy 1:7 “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” (NIV)

III. Prayer is the act of collectively shifting our focus away from our earthly fears to our Sovereign Lord. Acts 4:24-30

“And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.’”

Acts 4:24

Prayer is the act of shifting our focus from our fears to our Father.

Prayer is an exchange: Lord I am going to fix my focus on You and I am going to let You fix your focus on my problems.

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

1 Peter 5:6-7

- ***Remember God’s Sovereignty in Creation:***

“Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,”

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Revelation 4:11

- **Remember God’s Sovereignty over Opposition:**

“who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Anointed.’” (Acts 4:25-26)

“So Pilate said to him, ‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’ Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.’”

Luke 19:10-11

- **Remember God’s Sovereignty over the Crucifixion:**

“... for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.” (Acts 4:27-28)

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.” Job 42:2

“The greatest of all sins (the cross) was God’s plan for the final destruction of sin...There was saving design in it. There was a plan. There was a purpose.” John Piper

- **Remember God’s Sovereignty Over Our Evangelism :**

“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.” (Acts 4:30-31)

The disciples are praying for God to do a miracle in them as he is doing miracles through them in Jesus’ name. Courage is a miracle God gives and not merely a characteristic we muster.

IV. Courage is a continual work of the Holy Spirit that is given as we collectively “encourage” one another through prayer and the Word. Acts 4:31

“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God with boldness.”

*“...And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, **but be filled with the Spirit**, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with*

*your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” **Ephesians 5:18-21***

My obstacle to evangelism is not the resistance of others but the emptiness of my own heart. I need fresh strength, fresh grace, from the Holy Spirit.