

## Boldness in the Face of Opposition

Acts 4:1-22

"In 2015 a horrific video was circulated on the Internet, detailing the brutal executions of twenty-one Egyptian Christians by the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group. The video, which I do not recommend watching, showed ISIS soldiers marching the brave Christian martyrs to the seashore. Then, with swords in hand, the ISIS captors made the Christians kneel down and gave them a chance to recant their Christian faith. Remaining true to their convictions, however, the Christian men would not recant. In response, their captors systematically beheaded all twenty-one of our brothers as they quietly mouthed, 'Jesus, help me!' Their crime? These men were 'people of the cross.' So it is and has been for our brothers and sisters in the faith throughout history. We have been opposed, arrested, persecuted, and muzzled. And this section in Acts highlights an early situation in which opposition to the people of the cross was heightened."<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The **Opposition** to the Message (Acts 4:1-3)

- Ray Stedman writes, "Peter and John didn't advocate the overthrow of the Roman government. They didn't call for the destruction of the temple. They didn't protest the social evils of the day, which were many, or the widespread practice of slavery, or the cruel and unusual practice of crucifixion. They didn't protest rampant taxation or the warmongering policies of the Roman government. They simply preached Christ."<sup>2</sup>
- *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matthew 5:11).*
- *"And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).*

### 2. The **Opportunity** of the Message (Acts 4:4)

- Despite opposition, the gospel advanced: 5,000 men believed (Acts 4:4), not counting women and children.

### 3. The **Offense** of the Message (Acts 4:11-12)

- The religious leaders were offended because Peter and John proclaimed Jesus as the cornerstone.
- **Key Truths from Acts 4:10-12<sup>3</sup>:**
  1. **Authority** – "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."
  2. **Accusation** – "Whom you crucified."
  3. **Announcement** – "Whom God raised from the dead."
  4. **Acknowledgment** – "By Him this man stands before you whole."

<sup>1</sup> Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ray Stedman, *God's Unfinished Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2008), 61.

<sup>3</sup> Source unknown

- The exclusivity of Christ (“There is no other name under heaven... by which we must be saved”) is offensive, but it is the truth believers must proclaim.

## 4. The **Obligation** of the Message (Acts 4:20)

- Peter and John boldly declare, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). The truth of the gospel compels us to share it.
- “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1).
- “The real secret of Christianity lies in that great tribute once paid to the Scottish reformer John Knox: ‘He feared God so much that he never feared the face of any man.’”<sup>4</sup>

### **William Tyndale - First English Bible (1525) - from Greek & Hebrew**

A clergyman hopelessly entrenched in Roman Catholic dogma once taunted Tyndale with the statement, “We are better to be without God’s laws than the Pope’s”. Tyndale was infuriated by such Roman Catholic heresies, and he replied, “I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the scriptures than you!”

William Tyndale began to translate the Bible into English. Due to opposition he went to Germany where he completed his translation and prepared to print it. After months in setting the type, he went to bed one night and was going to start printing the next day. But, that night vandals destroyed the type. Patiently, he had to reset it all. And, his printing was finished late in 1525. He wanted to get his Bibles out of Germany back into England so he smuggled the Bibles in. He put them in barrels of flour so that people could have the Bible in their mother tongue. As a result of this work, Tyndale was arrested.



“On Friday, October 6, 1536, Tyndale was executed. He was led out and permitted to engage in a few moments of prayer. With fervent zeal and a loud voice he cried, ‘Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!’ Then his feet were bound to the stake, the iron chain was fastened around his neck, with a hemp rope loosely tied in a noose, and sticks and straw were heaped around him. At a given signal the rope was tightened, and Tyndale was strangled to death. Then the torch was applied, and the body was quickly consumed.”

### **APPLICATIONS:**

1. **Spend Time with Jesus** - Just as iron in fire becomes red-hot, spending time with Jesus will ignite your passion and boldness for Him (see Acts 4:13).
2. **Pray for Strength** - Pray for the power to face opposition with courage. “Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks.” – Phillips Brooks
3. **Share Your Faith** - Be ready to give an answer for the hope you have (1 Peter 3:15). Let the love of Christ compel you to share the gospel.

### **Scriptures for Reflection**

- **On Persecution:** John 15:18-20; John 16:2; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 2:21
- **On Boldness:** Proverbs 28:1; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Jeremiah 20:9

***Adrian Rogers once said, “If you please God, it doesn’t matter who you displease. If you displease God, it doesn’t matter who you please.”***

<sup>4</sup> William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3rd ed., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 46.