



Sermon Series Notes

“Bold Witnesses for Christ” (Acts 3-4)

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3:1 Prayer was key to the early disciples' lives. Prayer, & the repeated filling of the Holy Spirit.

3:2-5 What this beggar expected to get was money. What he ended up getting was far better!

3:6-10 Jesus must have walked by this beggar many times. The apostles would have walked past him many times as well. The people all recognized him as the beggar who regularly sat at this particular gate. So why was he not healed before? The only answer is it was not God's will until now.

Is God still doing miracles today? See I Cor.12:7-11. Why do we not see more miracles here at Calvary Chapel? I think at times it could be a lack of faith. Do you ever feel like the father whose son was demon possessed and said to Jesus, "...if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus then replied, "If you can? Everything is possible for one who believes." The father then said, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9)

O Lord, would you increase my faith? Would you increase our faith as a church body?

While I believe that God is still doing miracles today, I also believe the apostles had a unique ministry, and miracles were more common for them in order to authenticate their message. II Cor.12:12 says that the marks of a true apostle included signs, wonders, and miracles.

THE MIRACLE

3:11-26 THE MESSAGE

The miracle gave an opportunity for the gospel message to be shared. See Acts 8:6.

Sometimes the open door is not through a miracle, but quite the contrary; See Gal.4:13; Acts 16:16ff; Phil.1:12-13.

4:1-12 The early church grew from 120 to 3,000 to 5,000! It grew because the disciples were sharing both the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. See Acts 8:4-5ff. The greatest potential for any local church to grow is by each member of the church proclaiming the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each one of us have been called and commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to "all creation."

Mark 16:15 he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Acts 1:8...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Some of us may feel inadequate for the task. If that's you, pay attention to the next verse in our text. Read 4:13.

THE MEN GOD USED

Unschooling = illiterate; Having little or no education

Ordinary = Idiotes; Idiots; a stupid person

See I Cor.1:26-29

I love the heroes of the Bible; Gideon (see Judges 6:12, 15); David (I Samuel 16:1-12). Even Jesus, Isa.53:2b...He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Saul of Tarsus started out impressive, but God stripped him of everything he was proud of, and it was only then that he was fit to be used in a powerful way by the Lord.

God is not looking for ability, he's looking for availability.

4:14-22 Isn't it amazing how hardened these Jewish leaders were to the truth? After all they had heard Jesus say & do, after the resurrection, and now after miracles continuing to be done in Jesus' name, they still refuse to accept Jesus as their Messiah. You cannot find hearts harder than these! They not only refuse to believe, they persecute those who do.

Can you imagine being threatened by the Supreme Court not to proclaim the truth about Jesus any longer? What would you do? What did Peter and John do?

4:23-24a See II Chron.20; Phil.4:6-7

And their prayer is very specific: They pray for the miraculous, but they also pray for boldness to speak the Word of God.

Eph.6:19-20 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I will declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Fear has kept many people from doing God's will; Gideon's army (Judges 7:2-3); Saul & the army of Israel (I Sam.13:5-7).

Even some of the greatest servants of the Lord have given in to fear; Elijah after Mt. Carmel; Peter after his bold proclamation that he was willing to die for the Lord.

Proverbs 29:25a Fear of man will prove to be a snare...

Deut.31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Joshua 1:7 Be strong and very courageous...18...be strong and courageous!

Joshua 10:25 Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous...

Last Wednesday's teaching was from Deut.20. God gives characteristics he's looking for to be in his army. Read Deut.20:1-4. The first quality he's looking for is courage.

II Tim.2:3-4 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

Did you know that God is a warrior? Numbers 21: 14 That is why the Book of the Wars of the LORD says... See Joshua 5:13-15; II Kings 18:17-20, 31-35; 19:15-19, 35; Rev.19:11-14.

God wants us to be in his army. But he does not draft people, it is a volunteer army. And courage is essential, because we will face opposition. Courage is also essential because fearful people tend to influence others to fear (See Deut.20:8).

It is natural to fear (see Matthew 14:22-27); The only way to overcome fear is to grow in faith; Jesus in the boat sleeping during a storm, watching the disciples in the boat during a storm from the mountain, then walking on the water intending to pass them by.

Even God's greatest servants need encouragement to overcome fear. See Acts 21:27-23:11 (summarize the story).

In the same fearful people influence others to fear, courageous people influence others to have courage. One bold witness for Christ can encourage others to be bold; See I Samuel 14:21-23; Phil.1:14.

Scene from Lord of the Rings, Aragorn's speech at the Black Gate

Matthew 16:16,18...Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God..." "...and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

Conclusion

Alexander the Great was judging men for their failure in battle. One young man stepped forward, and the offense was cowardice in battle. The man was asked his name, and he replied, "Alexander, sir." The king then said, "Son, change your conduct, or change your name."

I Peter 4:14-16 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Witnessing Advice:

1. Don't make Jesus look like a jerk

Found this online: I was talking on the phone with a friend who I had recently added on Facebook. She had looked at my bio and something about my Facebook account struck her as odd. She said, "I was surprised to see that you are a Christian." I nervously smiled on the other end of the line and asked her why. She said, "I don't normally like Christians, but I like you."

We talked a little more in depth about the issue and she let me know that most of the Christians she had met in her life had made her feel badly about herself, they had made her feel judged, and 'not good enough.'

I thought about what she said and I couldn't help but feel like Jesus has been so poorly represented by many of his followers. I am not saying that I am the perfect 'Jesus Follower'—I am not—but if we (those who follow the teachings of Jesus) represented him authentically, the word 'Christian or Christ-followers' would be more likely to illicit a positive response than a negative one.

There was a song I used to sing in Sunday School when I was little called "They will know we are Christians by our love." My hope is that this will be a true statement in the lives of all of us who follow the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus was accused of being a friend of tax collectors and sinners. May we be accused of the same.

2. Consider these very clear Scriptures: Matt.12:19; I Thess.4:9-12; Titus 2:9-10; I Peter 2:12; Daniel 6:3-5, 25-27.
3. Never disobey an authority unless to obey means you would be disobeying God (Romans 13; Daniel 3:13-18ff).
4. Pray for God to open a door for the gospel (Col.4:2-3).