

## They Spoke God's Word With Boldness

Acts 4:8-31, Trinity Sunday IV

July 1, 2007

Beloved of the Lord.....Throughout history, the Word of God, and ministers who preach the Word of God, have been under attack. Our lesson today, of wicked men who tried to suppress the preaching of God's Word, is only one page in the library of history, whereby men have tried to silence the preaching of the Gospel. Even today in our own halls of Congress there are evil forces at work, trying to silence our freedom of speech and religion. There is a "hate crimes" bill, that if passed, will make it illegal for ministers to preach against homosexuality. Already in Canada, a similar bill has been passed, and some ministers have been persecuted unjustly for preaching God's Word. Those who serve Satan, hate God and His Word. Just as Jesus was persecuted for preaching the truth, so will God's children be persecuted. Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Jn. 15:18

Nevertheless our good and gracious Lord, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has given us a promise which we must never forget. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Mt. 24:35 While nations rise and fall according to the divine will and purpose of God, and while evil rulers, spiritual wickedness in high places, try to eliminate God's Word, they will never be victorious: God's Word will prevail. Verse two of our hymn said it well: *By powers of empire banned and burned, By pagan pride rejected spurned, The Word still stands the Christian's trust, While haughty empires lie in dust.* God's Word will always outlast and endure long after evil empires perish. Yea the everlasting Word of God will endure long after this world is consumed by fire on Judgment Day. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word will never pass away! *Abiding steadfast, firm, and sure, The teachings of the Word endure. Blest he who trust this steadfast Word; His anchor holds in Christ the Lord.*

You too, dear Christian, by the grace of God, will endure and outlast this world, just like the Word of God, as long as your anchor is firmly implanted in the grace of Jesus Christ, your Savior. This great country, the good-ole USA, though it presently enjoys freedom of speech and religion, will one day perish under the weight of its own sin, as all other nations have in the past. Yet God's Word, and those who trust God's Word, will live forever. Therefore let us boldly speak God's Word to others. Let us not be fearful of their faces, nor ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation!

I. By the name of Christ, our sins are blotted out. Continuing now from last week, we remember that a great miracle had been done, God healing a lame man at the temple. God provided this miracle to support the Word preached by the apostles. Peter then preached the law telling the people that when they killed Jesus, they "killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead.....Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." But Peter also preached the Gospel saying "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

When the priests and elders heard Peter preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and when they saw the people being taught God's Word, they laid hold of Peter and John putting them in prison. Oh how this world hates the preaching of God's Word! We remember that when Stephen preached Jesus Christ to the Jews, "they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord." With violence they took him out of the city and stoned him to death! Such is this world's hatred for the Gospel! Yet before he died, Stephen saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God! As for Peter and John, though they were imprisoned, God's Word bore fruit. "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." FIVE THOUSAND souls were converted to the Lord that day by the grace of God! Oh how the angels rejoiced in heaven!

But how exactly is this work of conversion done? How does man repent of his sins and turn in faith to the Lord? First, no one can be converted unless they first look with terror at their sins. Just as the Jews realized there was blood on their hands for killing the Prince of Life, so ought we to realize there is blood on our hands, for our sins merit death and damnation! We too have crucified Christ the Lord of glory! Yet this dreadful knowledge does not convert nor turn our hearts to God. Nor is repentance a simple matter of saying to God, "I'm sorry." Repentance is a broken and a contrite heart, a heart crushed by the law of God as it condemns and damns us for sin. (Miller) Yet even then, such a broken heart is not yet converted. It needs to hear the Gospel. Hear now God speaking to your heart in Isaiah 44:22. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." God is not saying *I will forgive you if you return unto me.....* God is saying *I have already blotted out all of your sins....Like a fog which lays upon the land, I have removed all you sins like a strong wind that takes away every trace of the fog. In my heart I have already forgiven you....I am at peace with you even now, so do not be afraid of Me. I have laid all my anger aside and now I hold only love toward you. Therefore return to me*

for I have bought you with my own blood. Be at peace with me. You see it is God's Gospel Word, His Words of love through Christ Jesus, that turn our hearts toward Him. We cannot turn ourselves. God through the Gospel turns us to Himself. The heart that believes, is nothing more than the heart which has received God's grace in the joyous knowledge that God has already blotted out their sins. It is the same Gospel Word at work when you commune. God through the Word gives you His body and blood, the same body and blood He already used to purchase your forgiveness long ago.

II. We should pray for our pastors, that they may speak God's Word boldly, having no fear of man's threats or intimidation. Oh, what a precious doctrine the Gospel of Jesus Christ is! Oh how it should ring in our ears, and echo endlessly for joy in our soul! For who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIES! This Gospel joy is what made the hearts of the apostle bold! When the priests and elders questioned by what authority they were preaching God's Word, Peter being "filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, ...that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,.... even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." These words of God were like thunderbolts upon the hearts of the priests! The very Man they bitterly hated had risen from the dead, and by His name the lame man was made whole! "Neither is there salvation in any other!" Christ Jesus is the only name whereby man can be saved! Peter and John were not ignorant men, "they had been with Jesus."

With the priests and elders we see the strong power of unbelief! They could not deny the miracle, nor the power from whence the miracle came, yet they refused to bow and humble themselves before the mighty hand of God! Their pride prevented their repentance! But how dare they defy the living God! How long can any man stand before an angry Lord and go unpunished? Yet they stubbornly continued in their evil ways. They held counsel together and threatened the apostles, "that they speak henceforth to no man in this name [of Jesus]. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus!" And once again, boldly, fearlessly, Peter and John answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." In other words, "We are not here to please man, but we are here to please God." We preach Christ crucified, and the full truth of His Word!

Brethren, such boldness, such zeal, such strength, can only be the work of the Lord! We give all glory to God, and not men, that both Peter and John were not fearful of imprisonment, nor punishment, nor torture, nor

death. They would not sacrifice one jot nor one tittle of God's holy and sacred Word! When they returned to their fellow Christians of their company, they reported the wondrous things which God had done, not only the miracle, but more importantly the receiving of the truth by thousands of souls! And oh how these Christians rejoiced to hear the blessed news! They glorified the holy God, who had come down to earth as the holy child, Jesus! They knew that all these things happened according to the foreknowledge and will of God, even the efforts of Herod, Pilate, and others to silence the Christ. They then prayed that God would give strength to the apostles, that they preach and teach God's Word BOLDLY! "Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word!" And God answered their prayer! The very room they prayed in shook like an earthquake! "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness!"

Beloved of the Lord, all ministers of God's Word need your prayers in the same way today. Pray for your minister, and all Gospel ministers, that they preach God's Word without fear, without timidity, boldly, fervently, courageously! Ministers need your prayers, and I beg you for them! Pray that your ministers will not be afraid of the faces of those who oppose the truth of God's Word. For God said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee." 1:8 Wherever the truth is being taught, the flesh of man will naturally oppose it, for it wounds his pride. Yet ministers are not to strive as they try to overcome the flesh of sinners. For God instructs His ministers, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." 2 Tim. A minister must preach and teach in such a way that even those Christians who have fallen into error, are led to repentance so that their soul is saved "to the acknowledging of the truth."

And finally, and most importantly, pray that God will direct your minister to teach and preach the pure Gospel Word. For God through that Gospel Word, converts and changes the stony heart of man's flesh, into a soft heart which is filled with God's love. May God therefore help all the ministers whom He has called to His flocks, His congregations. May they preach His Word with power, boldly, courageously, and without fear. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Brethren let us never be ashamed of Christ, for He has blotted out our sins and iniquities. God is at peace with us. Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd. Corcoran, MN 55340, 763-494-5164, solideogloria96@comcast.net srmn0635