

Book of Acts Series - Part 5 | Always Bold

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the necessity of boldness in proclaiming Jesus amidst persecution and societal pressures.

Duration: 34:26

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a childhood experience of being asked to speak about Jesus on a street corner, and the fear that struck him. He prays for God to take away fear and give courage to all believers to speak boldly about Jesus. The sermon then focuses on the story of Peter healing a man who had never walked, and how Peter used this opportunity to preach about Jesus. The sermon concludes by discussing the first persecution of the Christian church and the importance of not being ashamed of Jesus.

Transcript

We started this series on the book of Acts, and let me bring you to where we're at, if you weren't here on Tuesday. We got a snapshot of the church, the early church after the first sermon was preached in the Christian era by Peter, and we learned that the church continued together in the apostles' doctrine. They kept studying the word of God as it was taught by the apostles.

Remember, no written New Testaments, no Bibles, no Old Testaments available to easily read, and the New Testament hadn't been written yet, so it was verbal teaching. But they continued steadfastly in that. Thank God we have the Bible now.

Can you imagine all the attacks on false doctrine that must have happened when there was no document to say, no, this is the truth? We learned that they continued steadfastly in that, in fellowship, sharing with one another, breaking of bread, which meant eating meals together, and probably the Lord's Supper, and in prayers. They continued in prayer together. God was adding to the church daily those that were being saved after that momentous moment when it was kicked off in such sensational form.

Chapter three in the book of Acts tells us about an incident when Peter and John go to the temple at three o'clock in the afternoon for the hour of prayer, and they see a crippled man laying there, and then led by the Holy Spirit with some kind of supernatural faith imparted to them, they see the man staring at them and asking for something, and something triggers in them the response, look at us. And he looked at them thinking he'd get some alms, some money, and they said, silver and gold we don't have, but that which we

have, we're gonna give you. And this man, who was lame, crippled, from birth, suddenly these words are spoken to him.

In the name of Jesus, get up, and grabbing him by the arm, they lift him. His legs are healed. He starts to jump, make a commotion.

It's miraculous. A crowd gathers because they know this guy has never walked, he's a regular at the temple gate begging. So now a crowd gathers.

Every time at the beginning when a crowd gathered, Peter would use it to preach another sermon. So in chapter three of Acts, we have the second sermon of the Christian era, and it's focused on Jesus, just like the first one that we studied last Sunday. And he talks about, I didn't do this by my own godliness.

No, I didn't do this on my own power. No, it's faith in the name of Jesus, and the faith that comes through his name that made this man whole. And then he preaches Jesus crucified for the sins of the world and resurrected on the third day.

The people are just looking and watching because there's a changed life right there in front of them, this man who has been touched by the Lord. Well, we pick up now the story in chapter four, which is the first persecution of the Christian church. The church has undergone, as we'll find out, many persecutions over the centuries.

And right now, Pastor Park is an expert. He will tell you around the world where Christians are being most persecuted. But this is the first persecution of the Christian church.

Jesus said it would happen, and now it's gonna happen. Now, the name of this message is Always Bold. Always Bold.

We're gonna get to that in a moment, but let's just get a snapshot of what happened. Peter preaching, they're listening. Let's see what happens.

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. That's the sermon I just told you about. They were greatly disturbed, why? Because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. This is the first imprisonment of a Christian. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about 5,000.

So that's 2,000 more than happened the first sermon. They were 3,000 converted. The next day, after a night in the slammer, the next day, the rulers, the elders, and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.

Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the other men of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them. By what power or by what name did you do this? So I want you to get this picture, and now we're gonna follow what Peter says, but I want you to get this odd juxtaposition of this weird picture that Luke is painting for us in the book of Acts.

Peter was effective in his sermon. People are turning to the Lord, but they're arrested. They're arrested by who? By the same people that crucified Jesus about two or three months before.

So you gotta know there's a great temptation here for fear. They're thrown in the prison overnight, and now the next day, we see two sides ready to face off. On one side are all the religious leaders, Annas, Caiaphas, the high priest, the Sadducees, all the experts in the law, all the powers that be in the religious establishment of the Jewish faith in Jerusalem, and on the other side facing them are two fishermen, Peter and John, no degrees, high school dropouts.

They had to go and fish to make a living. They'd been with Jesus for three and a half years, but at the end when he was arrested, they weren't very strong, especially Peter, who denied the Lord three times. That just happened a few months before.

So now we have on the attack these people, the establishment, trying to wipe out Christianity, being used by the enemy to bring about the enemy's purpose. Now on this side, we have representing Jesus Christ two fishermen, simple believers, not educated. This is important.

What is the goal, what is the motive of the people here on this side? What is riling them up? What's bothering them? Because this has not changed for 2,000 years. What they're saying to him is, by what power and by what name did you do this? Because the report they heard that sent the soldiers out to arrest Peter and John is that they're mentioning that name again. We gotta stamp out the mention of the name of Jesus.

We crucified him, but these characters are now mentioning his name again. You gotta understand this, brothers and sisters, if you're gonna understand the meaning of always bold. Later on, after something we're gonna read, Peter and John give them a response, an answer, which we're gonna find out about.

They tell Peter and John to, all right, get out of the room. We gotta confer and talk about what we're gonna do, because the guy was healed. There was a changed life.

So notice what they say behind closed doors. Look, but to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men, Peter and John, to speak no longer to anyone in this name. Next verse, then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

The battle going on then and going on today is there are powers that are working through the media, through people we know, through the Board of Education, through political parties, through government around the world. Stamp out that name. They don't even mind if you say God or Lord or creator.

If you wanna make a half hour argument that there must be a first cause and a creator that set this whole world in motion, they don't even mind that. Just keep it God and creator or Lord. Don't say the name Jesus.

Take away the nativity scene. It reminds us of Jesus. Get the cross out of there.

It reminds us of Jesus. You go on a TV program or you're interviewed on the radio, you can keep fairly politically correct if you know how to maneuver around that, you know, a supreme being, a power, but just say the name of Jesus and all hell breaks loose. That has not changed.

You have to understand that. So when we feel these powers and forces and persecution or pressure, you shouldn't say, what's going on? It's always been this way. Jesus said it would be this way.

You'll be hated by all men for my name's sake. Why? My name. There's something about the name of Jesus.

It's either the sweetest name you've ever heard or you end up hating it. How many love that name? Just lift up your hand. That's why we're here today.

We love that name. We celebrate that name. Isn't it something that a carpenter who grew up in Nazareth, who never traveled 200 miles from where he was born, isn't it funny that 2,000 years later, his name is being used when a drug deal goes down and someone says, for Christ's sake, will you give me the money? Why would they use that name in vain? If he's just an ordinary person who doesn't mean anything to anyone, why his name? To demean it, to make us callous toward that name.

How many have ever heard someone take his name in vain and it's like a sword when you hear his name? Now we get to the response as we study the book of Acts and this is the lesson. There was a man named Catiline who lived as a military leader, who lived about 75 years before Jesus was born and he wrote these profound words. In battle, the greatest danger always threatens those who show the greatest fear.

In battle, in warfare, spiritual too, the greatest danger always threatens those who show the greatest fear. Boldness is a place of safety. In battle, the only one who wins is the one who's bold.

To show weakness and fear, to have timidity, is to lose. Napoleon, the great French general and then emperor whose strategies in battle are still being studied today in military schools, Napoleon said, when you're confronting boldness, you must be bolder still. When the enemy is bold, you can't back down, you have to be bolder than the boldness of the enemy.

And a German historian who focused on military matters said, boldness is always the stamp of the hero. All heroes are bold, men or women, women or men. Heroes always have in some form, some way, boldness.

In battle, the greatest danger is to the one who has the greatest fear. Boldness is the place of safety. No, boldness means risk, no, boldness is safety because if you're not bold, now you're in trouble.

We don't think that way. When confronting boldness, Napoleon said, be bolder still. In all sports, the victory goes to the one who's bold.

To the person who doubts and is timid, whether it's basketball, football or whatever, they're gonna lose. It's the one who's bold, audacious, in your face. In fact, you try to break the will of the opposing team right at the very beginning of the contest, whatever the sport is, why? You wanna break their will, you wanna take away any idea that they will be bold.

You're bold, they're afraid. That has to be established. It's amazing that how these fishermen answer this tribunal that is set against them.

With power, with some military force behind them, educated to the nth degree, and now over here you got two fishermen with no money, no connections to political power, nothing, nada. The word Christianity is not even known that much. And notice how Peter answers them and how Peter answers them in terms of inspiration.

Look, then Peter, after he's asked, what power, what name do you do this in? Then Peter, filled with the Holy, ah, filled with the Holy Spirit. Why would Luke write that? Because he wants to tell us, because he's filled with the Holy Spirit, he answers this way. No one trained him to answer this way.

He was the biggest coward two months before. But now Peter, controlled, filled means controlled by another person, now by God himself, the Holy Spirit. He said to them, rulers and elders of the people, if we're being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, look, stop there for a second, he's asking, is this what you're trying for us? You're putting us on trial because we helped someone.

Oh, that's really rich. We helped someone, now you're putting us on trial. What wisdom God gave him.

Then know this, you and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified. You don't go there, I don't believe you went there. He not only says the name that they hate, he tells them, and you crucified him.

Now, by any law of speaking and psychology, this is not a way to win friends and influence people. You do not tell people that they crucified the son of the living God, but you can when you're full of the Holy Spirit. Think how wishy-washy church has become and preaching has become in so many places.

If we heard a man like Peter, he would frighten us, wouldn't he? No, no, you wanna know how we did it? I know the name you wanna stamp out. It's by that name, the name of Jesus. I say it to your face, whom you crucify, but whom God raised from the dead.

Notice the emphasis is more on the resurrection than on the cross. The telltale sign of the early church was not just the cross and what it meant, but resurrection power, he's alive. We don't have just a doctrinal position, he's alive.

We just don't meet and say his name, he's alive. It's through that that this man stands before you healed. He is the stone you builders rejected, you religious leaders who are building your sanctimonious monument.

You rejected that stone, but he's become the capstone, the cornerstone. Now, here is this verse. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Can we all say amen to that? Moses, Moses will not save you, and they were disciples of Moses. Moses will not save you. I'll go further, Buddha won't save you.

Muhammad can't save you. Someone says, well, that's very narrow. It's as narrow as the Bible.

It's as narrow as the Bible. There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved. The ministers who say, well, all roads lead to God, it doesn't matter which way you go, that is false according to the Scripture.

Peter says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there is no other name through which you can be saved. You can't be saved by living a good life. You can't be saved by going to church.

You can't be a Baptist and be saved, or a charismatic. You can't believe in another God or another leader. You have to believe and have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Can we all say a loud amen? Come on, let's clap our hands. Look at the boldness of that. What crust, what chutzpah, what courage.

Are you kidding me? These are the people who killed your leader and that's how you talk to them? We would've been, well, you know, we believed, but you know, we're, don't you happy to see the guy can walk? No, God has not given us a spirit of fear, the Bible says. This is one of the problems with a lot of our lives. Here's the point I wanna make.

Christianity cannot be successfully lived unless you're all out bold. Listen again. One of the problems with a lot of us here in this room and across the street, the only way Christianity works victoriously and successfully and God does his plan in your life, you have to be crazy for Jesus.

No, it's just, wait, wait, wait, wait. It's proven by the Bible. This is insane, their answer.

Put yourself historically back in that picture. They want to wipe out that name. They speak that name right to their face.

Yeah, but what if they kill him? They got the soldiers, they just crucified. It doesn't matter. They're bold.

No hemming, no hawing, no trying to figure out what do they wanna hear? I go to, I speak in pastor's conferences and this is a current trend now over the last 15, 20 years especially and it's corresponded with a great decline in church attendance in America, decline in Christianity. Find out what people wanna hear and tell them that because then they might come back. Do not go where you shouldn't go.

Avoid hot button topics. Keep it neutral, keep it bland, keep it vanilla. That is not the message of the Bible.

These men told them, no, you wanna know how the man's healed? You wanna ask? You ask what name? I will tell you the name. And you crucified him. I mean, why would you say that? Just, you know, he died.

We're not sure who really did it, but no, you did it. You did it. But God raised him from the dead.

The Sadducees taught there was no resurrection of the dead. He goes right at them in love, filled with the Holy Spirit. And we wanna tell you one last thing.

There's no other name. There's no other name whereby you can be saved except the name of Jesus. And that includes you, religious leaders.

I mean, where do you get that boldness? Brothers and sisters, let's be real. Let's do real talk. Isn't it true a lot of us hem and haw? We have a hard time just standing in the office for Jesus.

We let people take his name in vain in front of us when in some certain situations, we should say I prefer if you not use that. You know, there's all kinds of politically incorrect words that you shouldn't use in society, all kinds of racial epithets and their words that should not ever be used. But isn't it funny no one ever says, why don't we stop using Jesus because it offends Christians? You think they're ever gonna do that? No, no.

For all other peoples and races and sexual preferences, you don't use those names and we shouldn't use those names. We shouldn't offend anyone. But do you see any groundswell for, let's stop saying, ah, for Christ's sake.

Ah, Jesus Christ. Let's stop saying that. That hurts Christians.

You think anyone's gonna do that? No one will do that. No one will ever do that. But we have to counter them with more boldness.

Not bull in a china shop, not insultingly abrupt with people, not condemning them to hell to their face, but standing firm and saying we believe in Jesus. Jesus has changed my life. I'm really not interested if you wanna hear about it or you don't wanna hear about it.

I have this opportunity to tell you the truth. Jesus is the savior of the world. He died 2,000 years ago and he was raised from the dead.

People saw him. They gave their life for him. That's how sure they were he was alive and that's what Christianity is about.

If you choose not to believe, God bless you. I pray for you. But you will not make me back up.

I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the living God. I meet people who are quicker to defend the Democratic Party or the Republican Party or President Obama or President Bush, no matter what decisions they make which are wrong. I've watched over the years President Clinton.

They'll rush to their defense, but Jesus, he gets thrown under the bus. Am I right or wrong? Of course I am right. Just mentioned, hit a top button topic and you'll see people react, say something about their island.

What'd you say about Jamaica? What did you just say? But Jesus, I wanna stand for Jesus. How about you? I wanna stand for Jesus. And the only way you'll stand for him is you have to be bold.

And wouldn't you say that for some of you here, one of our weaknesses in our lives is we're not audaciously bold. And we're in a warfare. A lack of boldness only means weakness.

Fear, timidity, wondering what people are gonna think and how they react. Someone said to me recently, well, you know, could this, I forgot what the event was. Well, you can't sing that song because it mentioned Jesus.

Then we won't sing. We'd like you to do that radio interview, but you can't mention Jesus. Then I won't do the radio interview.

No, but this will give you publicity for your book. I'm not doing the interview if I can't mention Jesus. That's what, what am I gonna do? Go by your set of standards? We're Christians.

We're Christians. What are they gonna do, kill us? If they do, we go to heaven. I mean, am I right or wrong? Come on, let's say amen to that.

We need an injection of boldness. So now listen, watch. On their release, when they answered that way and said there's no other name given, it says that the leaders looked at them and they marveled at their courage and their boldness and they saw they were simple, uneducated, dropout type of people.

And they could tell that they had been with Jesus. The leader said, yo, what is this about? They talk right back to us with such boldness, but they're under control. They're not mean-spirited, but they're so firm.

Don't they know who we are? They do, but they still say what they say. And they took note of them. They saw their courage.

Where do you find men this bold? Oh, they've been with that Jesus. Oh, they've been with that Jesus. Wouldn't that be a great testimony for us? People don't have to agree with us, but at least they'll see that we have courage and boldness.

They laugh at it. What does it matter? They laugh. When Christ returns, no one's gonna be laughing except us.

We're gonna be rejoicing and praising God. Now's the time to get the word out and to share Christ and to be bold. I found out that in counseling, in prayer, in faith, the only people that succeed are bold.

You have to be bold in your faith. When you pray, you gotta pray bold prayers. God, forgive us.

Let's pray bold prayers this Tuesday. Come up with some incredible needs. Bring them on Tuesday.

We'll pray bold prayers, bold faith, bold love. You gotta be bold. You gotta be aggressive.

You gotta be aggressive. Because we're involved in a spiritual battle, and timidity and fear get you nothing. Boldness wins the day.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a love, power, sound mind, and a boldness, it also said. So now, as we close off this little snapshot into church history, the Bible says they threatened them again, and they said, all right, get out of here. They didn't know what to do with them because the guy had been healed.

So they kicked Peter and John out of the precincts of the leaders, and where do you think they go? They weren't like, phew, wow, we got out of that one. No, you know where they went? They went to a prayer meeting. They went to a prayer meeting.

They saw what was happening. The first persecution of the Christian church was going down, so look what they did. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people, I love that, their own people.

Who were their own people? The Christians. I wonder who your own people are. I love that phrase.

You know who my own people are? I'm half Ukrainian, half Polish, but you know who my own people are? You. I don't identify with Ukrainians or Polish. I identify with you and with all Christians around the world, that's my people.

Because heaven is not for Ukrainians or Polish people only, but heaven is for Christians only. They went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. And when they heard this, they raised their voices to God together in prayer to God.

By the way, for some of you who don't like the idea of everyone lifting their voices in prayer like we're doing, it's very biblical. You see what it says in the New Testament? They all lifted their voices together. But that sounds rather chaotic.

Don't worry, God is sorting out the whole thing. There's a time where one person prays, but there's some times where we're going all, like Tuesday night, bring the miracle that you need. We're gonna flat out call on God.

We lift our voices together. We're gonna be praying the week after that for a country that needs God desperately. We're gonna call on God for our children, two Tuesdays, that God will protect them for the summer.

We're all gonna lift our voices together. It's not charismatic or Pentecostal or Baptist. It's biblical.

They all lifted their voices together in prayer. Here's the end of their prayer. Now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Now it's not Peter and John, now it's all the believers. They realize, uh-oh, the attack is on. They wanna stamp out that name.

Now Lord, we lift up our voices to you. God, help us, grant us, Holy Spirit, the power to be able to speak your word with boldness. Speak what? Your word, what's the word? The good news of Jesus.

Help us to speak the good news of Jesus, even though we know the people do not wanna hear it. These guys are trying to stamp it out. Help us to speak it with boldness.

Not just speak it, speak it with boldness. Not just speak boldly, speak the word boldly. Not the word only, the word boldly.

Not just boldly, speak the word boldly. And while we're doing it, stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant, Jesus. In other words, while we're doing that, Lord, would you please work with us? Do something, stretch out your hand.

We don't tell you what to do, but work with us as we speak your word boldly. I tell all of you now, in the name of the Lord, you begin to speak God's word boldly. Begin to tell people about Jesus, and you'll see the Holy Spirit start to do things that you've never imagined.

Live in a closet and just hang out with Christians, you're not gonna see what God can do. Begin to speak the word of God boldly. Pray for people, call people.

Obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Tell people, Jesus is alive. And as you do it, the Holy Spirit will begin to work.

Can we say amen to that? Let's say amen to that. After they prayed, after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. Oh, would to God.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And notice, and they spoke the word of God what? Boldly. Boldly.

Boldly. Whatever you're gonna do, be audacious. Nothing worse than a half-baked Christian, isn't there? That's for all of us.

Now I'm speaking to myself, am I right? What did Jesus say to one church? You're neither hot nor cold, but what are you? And because of that, I'm gonna vomit you out of my mouth. I can't take it. He laid down

his life, and now we're not gonna be bold.

He took a spear in the side, he wore a crown of thorns, he shed his blood for us, and now we're gonna be embarrassed because of what people might think. I was standing behind someone who obviously wanted to buy something at a newspaper store, which is selling more than newspapers, near where I live down here, town here. And the lady walked in and just said to this Indian dude behind the counter, she said, you sell weed here, don't you? And he just looked at her and like, you're not supposed to say that.

She just, he just looked at her. She said, no, no, I just wanna know, you sell that, right? So he went just like that, and then she went up, she put some money, he reached under and all of that. Just, it is what it is.

I thought of how bold people are and how lonely women must be. I'm walking on Smith Street here last Saturday night. Have you ever heard a worse come on than this by a guy? And have you ever heard a weaker comeback than a woman? I'm walking behind this attractive 30-something-year-old woman, and she's walking by, and the guy's leaning against there, and he jumps up, and he just comes right next to her, and he goes, you know I love you, baby.

So she says to him, I'm walking right behind him, she goes, how can you love me, you don't even know me. So he goes, that's right, but I could get to know you. And she goes, yeah, that's right, so what's your name again? Look at me, look at me.

What if we were that bold for Jesus? Have you noticed that sinners and sin and practices that are against God are getting bolder by the day? Am I right or wrong, just bolder? It's like, we don't care what you think. We don't care what you think. We don't care what you think.

We're gonna be bold in what we believe. We need the Holy Spirit to make us bold. I wanna be bolder.

I wanna preach bolder, in love. I wanna be biblical, but I wanna be bold. How many just have a yearning in you from reading this story? Lift your hand up.

Close your eyes. Jesus, we wanna represent you better. We wanna be bolder for you.

Please fill us and control us by your Holy Spirit. Take away fear, take away timidity, take away fear of the face of man, being rejected by even family members. Don't let us hide our light under a bushel, but help us to put it on a stand so everybody can see it.

Help no one in this room to be ashamed of you, because you said in your word, anyone who's ashamed of you, you will be ashamed of them when you come in your glory. You know where we all struggle. You know the situations we live in.

You know the students here from that school in Kansas. You know what they face. You know what Karen and Esther and James face behind me.

God, I pray that you'll grant me boldness, all of us, boldness. The boldness of the Holy Spirit. We pray with the early disciples.

Lord, help us that we might speak your word with boldness. Help us not to speak other words, but your word to people. And Lord, as we speak your word this week, even today, as we obey your promptings to pray for someone, minister, counsel them, however you lead us, help us not to be frightened wallflowers afraid to step out and obey you.

But as we do obey you and we speak boldly, God, would you please stretch out your hand? Stretch out your hand and do things that only you can do so that people will know that Jesus is not dead, but he's alive. We speak, but you have to give the amen, the affirmation, the confirmation. Take away fear, insecurity, timidity.

Help the people who think they don't know enough Bible to talk for you. Take that away. Lord, I'm thinking back to that day as a little boy when they took me out on a street corner for a street meeting and I was probably nine years old.

And they said, get up on the box, Jimmy, and say something for Jesus. And Lord, when I looked out at those strangers watching, you know the fear that struck me. How am I gonna speak your word? Take that fear away from all of us, Lord.

Make us bold to speak about Jesus. Give us courage. Let the people say of us like they did of Peter and John.

They took knowledge of them that they were so courageous and bold. And they were unlearned, they weren't schooled, they weren't trained. Who were these guys? They had been with Jesus.

As we spend time with you in church and alone, grant us that boldness that we can represent you. Father, I thank you for that person who's coming back to you today, that while I was speaking, they realized they have drifted away from you and they're coming back home to you today. I thank you.

And for others, Lord, who don't have a personal relationship with you, oh God, I thank you that you've opened their heart to the good news of Jesus. Help them now to just turn, confess their sin, turn to you, put their trust in you, Jesus. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

We thank you, it's that simple.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24912.mp3>

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