

ACTS 4:1-13

ACT LIKE MEN! COURAGE!

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“On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”¹

Fear is known by everyone. Some fears are justified; many are irrational. There are people who suffer from hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia. Such individuals probably are uncomfortable in the services I lead.

Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia is defined as “a fear of long words.”² Other fears include ablutophobia, fear of bathing, washing or cleansing; astraphobia, fear of thunder and lightning; and atychiphobia, fear of failure. It would be unfortunate to experience chaetophobia, fear of hair, when in my presence. Others have experienced decidophobia, fear of making decisions; and many people suffer from dentophobia, fear of dentists or dental procedures.³

Christians, especially as they live in the light of eternity, cannot help but be courageous. That this is so becomes abundantly clear when we consider the assertion made by the Apostle Paul which is recorded in his second Letter to the Christians of Corinth. The Apostle attested, “We are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-8].

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Christians will be marked by boldness. When they believers were threatened after the incident that is described in our text, the disciples returned to their friends. Together, the believers prayed, and what a prayer they presented before the Master. “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia?qsrc=3086>, accessed 28 April 2012

³ List of phobias, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_phobias, accessed 28 April 2012

““Why did the Gentiles 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’—

“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 peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 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 4:24-30].

Simply stated, their prayer was, “Make us bold!” It is as though they said, “Master, enable us to disregard threats and persecution, remaining focused on You and Your will. Enable us to fulfil the charge we received to declare your Name to all peoples. One must love the concluding summary of the manner in which God granted what they asked. “When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” [ACTS 4: 31].

I need to pause for a moment to dispel a myth of modern evangelicalism. Among evangelicals an error of epic proportions persists. There is a perception that when one is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” they lose control over themselves. Nothing could be farther from reality. In the New Testament, we have multiple examples of people filled with the Holy Spirit.

John, the Baptist, would be “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” [LUKE 1:15]. His ministry was marked by boldness; there is not a hint of ecstatic utterances. Elizabeth, mother of John, was “filled with the Holy Spirit” when Mary came into her presence [LUKE 1:41]. Her response to this filled was to praise God, declaring His majesty and power. Likewise, Zechariah, when “filled with the Holy Spirit,” prophesied, or boldly declared the glories of God [LUKE 1:67-79]. In these instances, the evidence of being filled with the Spirit was to declare the glories and might of the Lord God.

Jesus is said to have been filled with the Spirit when He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil [LUKE 4:1]. There is not a hint of anything other than full control of Himself as He faced the evil one. Filled with the Spirit, the Master answered the wicked one by pointing to the Word of God. Surely, if He is our example, we should consider seriously this example of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Another statement of when the Master revealed the power of the Spirit informs us that after being tempted by Satan, “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” [LUKE 4:14]. The power of the Spirit was demonstrated through confronting the people, teaching in the synagogues and bringing praise to His Name [LUKE 4:15].

Some argue that the disciples “were all filled with the Holy Spirit” at Pentecost. The focus of those who point to this singular occurrence tends to exaggerate the fact that they are said to have begun “to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” [ACTS 2:4]. Two responses must be made to such an assertion. First, those who witnessed this phenomenon heard them speaking in the language of those listening. If those who advocate that this is the necessary evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit today wish to make this universal, they must argue that anyone listening will hear what is said in a language that is readily understood.

Secondly, those hearing the disciples witnessed men that had formerly been cowed into silence now boldly proclaiming Christ the Lord. They heard a message drawn from the Word and applied to their own hearts with the impact that they were convicted and convinced just as the Master had said the Spirit would act [ACTS 2:14-41].

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly and bravely stood his ground when attacked by the craven mob. Despite being confronted by the enraged mob, his final words were not ecstatic utterance; rather, he made a bold proclamation of the grace and mercy of the Master [ACTS 7:55-60].

Saul of Tarsus, filled with the Holy Spirit, arose from his self-pity and boldly identified with the Risen, Living Master [ACTS 9:17-19]. Again, when Paul was confronted by Elymas the magician during his initial missionary journey, he was “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Rather than breaking out in ecstatic utterances, he boldly proclaimed judgement on the evil man, resulting in salvation for the proconsul who witnessed these events [ACTS 13:4-12].

Those who are filled with the Spirit of Christ are made bold and enabled to stand courageously; those filled with the Spirit of God are equipped to teach with authority. To contend that those who are filled with the Spirit have an ecstatic experience is to debase the power of God into something tawdry that is squandered on our own desire. God’s Spirit is given for power. The surest evidence that contemporary Christians are not filled with the Spirit is the lack of bold preaching in this day! The resort to process and liturgy rather than bold declaration of the revealed will of God stands as a powerful witness that we know little of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When we preachers are more concerned about having a sermon than we are about delivering a message, we need to be filled with the Spirit. When we Christians are more focused on being liked rather than being truthful, we need the filling of the Holy Spirit. When we fail to attempt great things for God, expecting great things of God, we are condemned as those who are yet unfilled with the Spirit of God.

I want us to examine one instance of courage in the early church, endeavouring to learn what made the disciples courageous in the face of powerful opposition. If we can discover the source of their courage, we will be equipped to draw upon that same source to stand courageously in these last days. Join me, then, in reviewing how to be courageous.

ANNOYING THE RELIGIOUS — “As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”

Let your mind turn back to a matter of mere weeks prior to our text. The disciples were gathered in a locked room “for fear of the Jews” [JOHN 20:19]. It was at this time that Jesus appeared in their midst, confronting them in their fear. Even after walking in and out before them for forty days, even after they had witnessed His ascension into the heavens, the disciples returned to an upper room. It is obvious that they were intimidated by the prospect of confronting the religious and civic leaders—the very people who had crucified the Master.

The incident before us began with Pentecost. One hundred twenty Spirit-filled disciples came down from the upper room at Pentecost. They boldly proclaimed the message that Jesus, recently crucified and buried, had conquered death. Having been raised from the dead, He was seen by those to whom He revealed Himself and ascended into the heavens where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

The message was powerfully used by God to bring over three thousand individuals to believe the message of grace—the message that calls everyone to repent and believe the Risen Lord of Glory. Those who believed demonstrated their commitment to the Master by immediately identifying in baptism. They began the growing process through receiving instruction in the Faith, through fellowship and through telling others of what God had done in their lives.

As an aside of great significance, all who come to faith are called to identify openly and quickly through submitting to baptism after believing. The new believers are urged to seek out a fellowship of disciples. If that fellowship meets the criteria of the New Testament, the following elements will be evident. The elders will present sound doctrine, adhering to the Word of God. The believers will worship, enjoying the presence of the Risen Lord. The worship will consist of knowledge of His presence because He is glorified through the Word that is declared and because the people are obedient to His will as revealed in that same Word. The disciples will invest their lives in praying for God to be honoured and through seeking the good of His people. The members of the fellowship will prefer one another in love. And they will seek to tell others of the Master who has redeemed them.

It was not long after that glorious day of Pentecost when Peter and John were going up to the Temple to pray. It was about three in the afternoon. They saw with new eyes a man who was laid at the Temple gate almost every day. There, he begged for a living. This particular day, Peter and John gave him something better than a pence—they gave him healing in the Name of the Risen Son of God.

The man made such a commotion that a crowd gathered to see what was going on. Witnessing the wondering crowd, Peter seized the opportunity to declare the wonders of the Living Christ. His preaching was not like so much of that which is offered today. He confronted the sinful condition of those to whom he spoke, calling on them to turn from their wickedness to embrace the True and Living God. “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness” [ACTS 3:12-26].

Such preaching will convict the sinner who seeks salvation, but it will annoy religious people. So it was in this instance that the priests, the captain of the temple guard and a number of Sadducees happened upon the scene. The text informs us that they were “greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” [ACTS 4:2]. Pause to note that they were not annoyed that a crowd was present, nor were they provoked because the Temple was being used for a meeting they hadn’t approved, nor were they irate that a lame man could walk. Doctor Luke is careful to note that they were annoyed because the Apostles were “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” Nothing much has changed in the ensuing millennia; religious people are still irked at the message of Christ; for when people believe Him, the powerful of this fallen world no longer have any authority.

If we preached a sermon that met with the approval of this fallen world, it would declare, “Repent, after a fashion, and believe, such as it were, or be damned, in a measure.” Such a message would never disturb anyone; neither would a message such as this transform a life! If our message permits people to feel good about themselves, to feel satisfied with doing their best or even to encourage them merely keep on trying, no one will be terribly agitated. However, when we tell people of freedom in Christ, we may anticipate opposition. When we call people to forsake dependence upon their effort and rest in the grace of God, they will be enraged.

So, the religious and civic leaders that happened to hear the Apostles had them arrested. Since it was evening by the time of their arrest, they were put in gaol until the following day. Nevertheless, because they had seized the opportunity given by God, five thousand men entered into the new life with Christ the Lord. To the people of God, I say without apology, preach the Word, declare the grace of God, call people to righteousness, anticipate that God will bless you as you declare His mercy and as you reveal His majestic grace. But always know that through your actions you will annoy the religious.

Haven’t I heard the whine of such religious individuals? “Oh, why don’t you leave us alone,” they moan. “Why do you have to speak of our sin? Why can’t you just let us continue in our sin?” Increasingly, we live in a world characterised by the wickedness of fallen mankind and a world that expresses annoyance toward anyone who makes an effort to live righteously. I have long been amazed by Paul’s statement written for the Pastor of the Church in Ephesus. Paul warned, “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” [2 TIMOTHY 3:12, 13]. You need not live a godly life to be persecuted; you need but desire to live a godly life and you will be assailed by the denizens of this dark world!

The Apostolic statement mirrors the “encouragement” given to new Christians in Lystra, in Iconium and in Antioch when Paul and his compatriots were returning from the first missionary journey. “[The missionaries] returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” [ACTS 14:21, 22]. Most of us among the contemporary churches would find such encouragement hard to accept. We are accustomed to being shielded from the hardships that attend this life; we seem to be persuaded that we should not speak of trials—real or imagined—that the newborn people of God may face.

Peace at any price is too high a price. It is the height of cowardice to avoid facing unpleasant facts. If we will honour God, we must stand firm in the face of opposition and threats, knowing that we are destined for afflictions [see 1 THESSALONIANS 3:2-4]. If you endeavour to follow the Master, you will irritate the religious people of this world; and in their irritation, they will seek to injure you. However, stand firm, be courageous.

ASSAULTING THE RIGHTEOUS — “On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’”

Annoyed, irritated, angered—all because message the Apostles preached offended them. Should it be surprising that the message of salvation is offensive to those who are lost? People who are dependent upon their own efforts to satisfy God will be offended when confronted in their error. People who are proud of their own religious achievements will take offence at hearing they must humble themselves and depend upon the grace and mercy of the unseen God. Paul declared, “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” [1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-24].

The affirmations sting, searing the heart of those who are proud of their own accomplishments. “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing.” “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.” Let me give you insight into the power of the Apostle’s language; let me point out his choice of words. “The word of the cross is folly—*mōría*, moronic, foolishness—to those who are perishing.” “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block—*skándalon*, scandalous, shocking—to Jews and folly—*mōría*, moronic, foolishness—to Gentiles.” The message we have received and with which we are entrusted, is scandalous to pious Jews and moronic to those of this perishing world.

Thus, the proud man assaults the righteous man, because the message that is preached strips away the façade that has been so carefully constructed. Everyone knows **JOHN 3:16**—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” However, few bother to memorise the verses that immediately follow. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” [JOHN 3:17-21].

The unsaved individual lives in darkness; her eyes have grown accustomed to the dark. She is wrapped in chains created out of her own desires. She cannot break free, though she tells herself routinely, “I can leave anytime I want; I do not need to remain bound.” Then, when confronted by the light brought into the darkness of her pitiful existence, her chains are exposed.

“I hate this light,” she screeches! “I can’t stand to see this squalid existence.” Thus, rather than struggle against the chains that hold her in thralldom, she condemns the light for exposing her condition. It is more painful for her to witness her wretched condition than to seek One who will break the bonds to deliver her into freedom. Therefore, she strikes out at the one who bears the light, accusing him of exposing her shameful situation.

Since the one exposed is enraged, he strikes out at the one exposing his condition. However, his rage is directed at the Master who calls him to turn from his sin and to receive the grace proffered. He cannot reach the Master, and so he lashes out at the one representing the Master—he seeks to injure the messenger, thinking that by doing so he will strike the Master. Jesus cautioned us that this is what would happen. You will no doubt remember these words, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’”

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you” [JOHN 15:18-16:4].

I witness the intensifying opposition to the message of Christ in this day, and I realise that what the Master foretold is even now coming to pass. To His own brothers, the Master testified, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil” [JOHN 7:7]. The one who declares the message of righteousness is assailed by those who use their bigotry to silence the exposure of sin. The message of the world can be concisely stated as, “You are free to practise your religion, so long as you keep it to yourself.” Of course, if we follow the Master, we cannot keep our faith to ourselves; we must tell others. He commanded us to do so when He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” [MATTHEW 28:19, 20]. Also, we cannot be silent for we bear Good News that will set the captive free. We know that when we speak of the freedom we have found in Christ, some will believe, discovering the freedom we ourselves possess. God has said:

“Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

[PSALM 82:3, 4]

In the wisdom of this dying world, we may speak of salvation, but we must permit man to cling to his private sin. We can speak of purity, but we must not identify the impure acts of fallen people lest it injure their pride. We can testify to the grace of God, but we cannot imply that sinners are not already good people. We can sing songs of praise, but we must not hint that salacious songs filled with gratuitous sex are wrong. The situation that now prevails in our western world seems to anticipate fulfilment of the Master's prophetic word, "Because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold" [MATTHEW 24:12].

ACCOSTING THE WRONG — "Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

The sweet singer of Israel sings:

"In the LORD I take refuge;
how can you say to my soul,
 'Flee like a bird to your mountain,
for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
 they have fitted their arrow to the string
 to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
if the foundations are destroyed,
 what can the righteous do?'"

[PSALM 11:1-3]

Listen to the advice David received. His enemies were even then gathering for an assault. His advisers counselled that he must flee because there was nothing else he could do. "The enemy is too strong," they advised. "You must not delay, you must flee now. You must hasten away for safety and to preserve your soul." The advice is that the land is lawless and chaotic. In such an environment, the righteous can do nothing. Therefore, they have but one option, and that is to flee. Run away, because the enemy is too strong.

Is that not the same counsel given by much of contemporary Christendom? The godly people are beset by powerful foes. Government redefines truthful speech, classifying such honest speech as hateful. If the godly do not accept every perversion as normal, they must be isolated, censured and kept from providing the services they have rendered for many years. Human Rights Tribunals call the preacher to account should he dare speak the truth in love. Therefore, the counsel delivered by the majority of wise spokesmen is, "We cannot stand against the threats of the wicked. We must keep our heads down. Do not draw attention to yourself; do not agitate the wicked."

David didn't look at the circumstances; he looked to the LORD. He declared:

“The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD’s throne is in heaven;
his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.
The LORD tests the righteous,
but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.”

Then, the Psalmist commits those who oppose him to the True and Living God.

“Let him rain coals on the wicked;
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
For the LORD is righteous;
he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face.”

[PSALM 11:4-7]

God is still on the throne; He has not abdicated His reign over the earth. Though the wicked strut through the earth, they are destined for destruction. People ignore that which is no threat; therefore, the wicked who attack the churches and condemn the preaching of the Word of God reveal their deepest fear—that they must one day face the True and Living God. They know that when that day comes, they can give no answer. Therefore, they are fearful, and rightfully so! We read in the Psalms that God set the wicked, the arrogant, in slippery places; He will make them fall to ruin [see PSALM 73:18].

Peter and John fixed their eyes on the Living Master. Thus, filled with the Spirit, they were courageous in the face of every threat. “You wish to know how this lame man was healed? It was by the Name of Him whom you crucified that he now stands before you whole. You crucified this Jesus, but He is now risen from the dead.” What a powerful testimony is given when Peter said, “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” [ACTS 4:11, 12].

Here is the glorious summary. “When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” [ACTS 4:13]. When courage fails, it is likely because I relied on my own power, for when I rely on the power of the Master, my words fall like a hammer on the obdurate heart. When I am cowed into silence, it is because I have not had time with Jesus. Courage is the natural expression of the one who has spent time in the presence of the Master.

Do you have that courage? Do you know the Master? Have you received His gift of life? The Word of God tells us, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” The passage continues with this clear promise, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].

I pray God will give courage to His people. As the days grow dark, we shall surely shine as lights in the darkness. We shall assuredly turn many to righteousness. Let us stand with Him, and let us boldly advance His cause. Amen.