

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

THE CHURCH ON MISSION

THE SPIRIT WHO EMPOWERS

Spirit Empowered Ministry in Jesus' Name

The book of Acts is filled with examples of ‘**holy boldness.**’ We are going to look back to the day when Peter and John were hauled before the ruling body of their nation, the same men who had worked their evil deeds to have Jesus crucified. They should have been intimidated; but, they were not! In fact, even the rulers marveled at their boldness. What had happened to those once cowardly fishermen? The answer is plain: They became different men because of God’s Holy Spirit. They were filled with holy boldness. As we consider how they were transformed to proclaim the name of Jesus, let us pray that we too will be transformed with that same **holy boldness!**

Keep in mind that the story of the book of Acts reveals a gradual transition from a focus on the Israelites to the Gentiles. Gentile is a word used by Jewish people to refer to foreigners, or any other people who were not a part of the Jewish race. By the end of Acts, the church of Jesus becomes one body made up of both Jews and Gentiles. It took several years before many of the Jewish believers really understood Jesus came for all the world not just Jews and this understanding did not come without its conflicts.

God’s people do good deeds and give glory to Jesus.

Read Acts 3:1-10 (ESV) ¹ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Keep in mind that when Peter and John entered the temple area they were drawing near to the same men who unlawfully had Jesus sentenced to death. They went there for the purpose of evening prayer. It would have been a crowded time of the day at the temple. The temple building would stand in Jerusalem for another 40 years even though the veil leading to the Holy of Holies had been torn in two at the moment of Jesus’ death symbolizing how Jesus’ perfect sacrifice provided access to all those who come boldly to the throne of God’s

marvelous grace. The ninth hour was the time when the evening sacrifice was offered. After Jesus' perfect sacrifice, these earthly sacrifices at the temple now had no value but the people were yet to understand the significance of Jesus' sacrifice and the gift of Holy Spirit's power. It was part of Peter and John's mission to reveal the Truth to all who would listen.

The Beautiful Gate was not a city gate but an entrance to the temple itself. Since it was a favorite entrance, it was good business for beggars to position themselves at the gate to beg since giving money to beggars was considered praise worthy in the Jewish religion.

Not even really looking at Peter and John, the lame beggar asked for money. Most likely, he was accustomed to being ignored. Peter and John had been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit and they saw the man through Holy Spirit eyes as being a prime opportunity to proclaim the name of Jesus. There are those all around us who are in need. People need the Lord~ empty people filled with care – headed who knows where... Are we bold enough to reach out to those in need of Jesus?

Peter and John **both** looked at the man. Christians do best what we do together. *Matthew 18:20 (ESV)*²⁰ *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*” It was no “quick look.” The look was intense – they fastened their gaze on him. I doubt that the fishermen went to the temple with the thought of healing someone. But, suddenly through the power of the Holy Spirit, they were caught up in a work for the Lord! *Colossians 3:23 (ESV)*²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.* They were about to do something similar to what Jesus had done and they knew what the repercussions could be – especially at the temple of all places. But, they were not there to please others. They had no silver or gold but they had Jesus. And, no one should be surprised by what God can do. Miracles were never performed either by Jesus or His apostles simply to amaze the people. These miracles were used to reveal the power and grace of God to needy men and women.

The healing opened a tremendous opportunity. *Acts 3:11 (ESV)*¹¹ *While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.*

The remainder of *Acts 3* reveals that Peter made the most of this God-given opportunity. He launched into a sermon right there on Solomon's porch. I think it is significant that Peter preached there. It was a place that Jesus had frequented. Women and Gentiles did not have access to the inner temple but they could be on this porch. The Holy Spirit healing miracle led to an opportunity for a bold message out in the open for all to hear.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that when you are being led by the Spirit and Power of the Lord that you will not face opposition. Peter is only into his second sermon on behalf of the name of Jesus and he and John are arrested on the spot! But don't forget the glory of what happened! *Acts 4:4 (ESV)*⁴ *But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.* Wiersbe and Ironside both believe that the 5,000 is a reference to 2,000 more being added to the 3,000 who came under conviction at

Pentecost. However, the mentioned number only counted men. Most likely women and children also responded to the message.

Read Acts 4:5-12 (ESV) ⁵ *On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² 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.”*

Notice that Peter and John were brought before some of the same higher-ups who were personally responsible for the execution of Jesus not that long ago. Most likely these so-called leaders believed that their mere appearance would put fear and trembling into Peter and John. But, once again we see boldness exhibited in the men through the power of the Holy Spirit. And, they were not ashamed to be associated with the name of Jesus. And they were bold enough to even quote the religious leaders’ own scripture to them proclaiming that it was fulfilled in Jesus. **Psalm 118:22 (ESV)** ²² *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.* Jesus is the cornerstone spoken of by their prophet David and the fishermen were not ashamed to tell it! When Jesus walked the earth, He was a Healer and the fishermen boldly told the very men who sought His death that they were healing in the name of Jesus. They did not ‘soft pedal’ the name of Jesus like many today are sometimes tempted to do in certain settings.

God’s people reserve ultimate allegiance for Jesus.

Read Acts 4:13-22 (ESV) ¹³ *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. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶ saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.*

Ha! Ha! Ha! They were in a dilemma; no matter which way they turned, they were "trapped." They could not deny the miracle, because the lame man was now walking! He was not a faker who had just rolled into town. Everyone knew him! There was no way to explain how uneducated common men could cause such a mighty deed. It seems what galled them the most was that the two men had been with Jesus. Being with Jesus, is not something that will endear us to the world but it endears us to Him and Jesus is who matters!

Wiersbe reminds us that it is important to note that, of itself, the miracle was not proof of the resurrection of Christ or even of the truth of Peter's message. Jesus said in **Matthew 24:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.* If a 'miracle' in our day does not line up with the truth of God's Word, it is not a miracle, it will be Satan's lie! Miracles are not a substitute for the Word of God. Recall the words of Jesus in **Luke 16:31 (ESV)** ³¹ *He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'*

God's people pray and preach with boldness.

Read Acts 4:23-31 (ESV) ²³ *When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.* ²⁴ *And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,"* ²⁵ *who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?..."* ²⁹ *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,* ³⁰ *while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* ³¹ *And 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.*

The friends of the fishermen quoted scripture in their prayer: **Exodus 20:11 (ESV)** ¹¹ *...the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them...* and they included some of the words of David from **Psalms 2**. Do you know enough of scripture to actually quote it to the Lord in prayer? They were excited for the success of Peter and John but they did not want that success to stop there. *grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.* How often do we pray for boldness to proclaim the name of Jesus? Maybe if we were to pray more about this topic, we would find ourselves witnessing more.

Never make the mistake of thinking that the name of Jesus Christ has lost its power. Many of God's people have lost their power because they have stopped praying and begun living like the Devil. It has been said that, "Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God." R.A. Torrey, the noted evangelist, said, "Pray for great things, expect great things, work for great things, but above all—pray." The early church prayed, and God answered in mighty power. Let's be like early church – let's pray for the Spirit's Power to fall fresh on us for the purpose of speaking with **holy boldness**.