

Thank you - Testimony - Sharing

Thank you *so much* for the outpouring of love & concern

Our family is still **REELING** - **like others** in the congregation

Our family is **REJOICING** over **the birth** of Breezy & Hank's son

Our family is **TRUSTING** God with the **imminent surgery** for Dani

Let's start in **1Pet 3 Ch 3** this morning

I'm **going to read** our opening **Text** out of a Translation

I haven't **talked** much about - The **NET Bible**

Which is a **Very Accurate** & **Very Balanced** Translation

1 Peter 3:13–15 (NET)

13 For who is going to harm you if you are devoted to what is good?

14 But in fact, if you happen to suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. But do not be terrified of them or be shaken.

15 But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. [REPEAT]

Guys - **When** things get **TUFF**

When we're between a **ROCK & A HARD PLACE**

When we experience **SUFFERING**

As Christians - There are TWO things we MUST Do - (V.15)

#1) We must **set Christ apart as Lord in our hearts** (sanctify)

#2) We must **always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope that we possess**

& **THAT** is exactly what **our text** in ACTS is about today

Always **being Ready** - to give **an answer** - to anyone **who asks** - about **the HOPE** of Jesus - that we **have in us**

Let's Pray

In our **last message**

We laid out **the OUTLINE** of **Acts Ch 3 & 4**

MIRACLE → SERMON → PERSECUTION → RESPONSE

in our **Last Msg** ("Rise Up & Walk")

We saw a **Beggar healed** by God at the Beautiful Gate

& as he went ***"Walking & Leaping & Praising God"*** into the Temple

God **USED** his **TRANSFORMED LIFE**

As a **PLATFORM** for Peter - to **PROCLAIM** the Gospel (Like Ch 2)

Peter was **READY** to give an Answer - to **anyone who asked** about **the HOPE** that He Possessed

& so - as the **people gathered** around

Peter launches into his **2nd** Spirit-Filled **Sermon** of Acts

& he tells the people

That it was in the **Name of JESUS,**

*the **AUTHOR of Life,***

*the same **JESUS They had Delivered Up & Crucified***

It was **by FAITH** in **HIS Name** that this man was healed

& then he ended **PART ONE** of his sermon with an **Altar Call**

that we saw in **Acts 3:19–20 (ESV)**

19 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,

20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, . . .

& the people **DID repent** & they **DID turn** to God -

& **Times of Refreshing WERE coming**

& **we'll see** in a minute - **the Church** at this point

would **GROW** to **5,000 Men** & their families

But **it was** right at **this point** in the Sermon

The Tone of Peter's Msg kind of **Changes**

& then we see - a Very **ABRUPT END** to his Sermon

& the **MIRACLE** → that led to the **SERMON** →

is about to lead to **PERSECUTION** → & then the **RESPONSE**

We pick up Peter's Sermon in Acts 3:20–23 (esv)

20 (Repent therefore) that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send (meaning send again) the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

21 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.

22 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.

23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet (Jesus) shall be destroyed from the people.'

Peter's quote is from 2 sections of the Law - (Deut 18 & Lev 23)

that speak of the Consequences of ignoring:

The **Anointed One** from God - **AND of**

Ignoring **God's Sacrifice** for the **Atonement** of Sin

So - **we** can read these Vs's - & **NOT** think too much of it

But to a **JEW** - this is a **VERY** Serious **Accusation** !!

Peter is telling the **Jews** - **IN** the Temple Courts of the **Jews**
that they **MISSED** the **Jewish** Messiah (*pretty big deal*)

& Peter **continues** Using the **Old Testament** - to Point to Jesus

Acts 4:24-26 (esv)

24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days (the days of Jesus).

25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring (or descendants) shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' (a prophecy of Christ)

26 God, having raised up his servant (Jesus), sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Again - Peter's **using the OT** to **explain**

to the Jews that had just Crucified Jesus

That **THIS** Jesus - **WAS** the **Messiah** of the **Jewish Law** & **Prophets**

& **Then** - **AS** Peter was speaking - **ABRUPTLY** we read

Acts 4:1 (esv)

1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,

(the GK is “came suddenly” upon them)

Suddenly - an Unholy Alliance Converged on them

The **Priests** (Levite Priests doing their Temple duty)

The **Captain of the Temple** (Temple Police)

And The **Sadducees**

The **Sadducees** really became
the chief **trouble makers** for the NT church

They were the **WORST** of all Religious Trouble-Makers

Because their **Primary Concerns** were

#1) **POLITICAL** Control

#2) Remain in **POWER**

They were a **small band** of

Elite, Wealthy, Politically Connected - Control Freaks

They gained **Political Power** during the **Maccabean** period

(during the years **between** Old & New Testaments)

& they **ended up** being the **Primary Persecutors** of the church

Not so much for **“Spiritual Reasons”**

but much more **for “Political Reasons”**

& so this **Unholy ALLIANCE** - led by the Sadducees
suddenly comes up on Peter as he’s preaching

Acts 4:2 (esv)

2 (they were) **greatly annoyed** because they (Peter & John) **were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**

Maybe **you've** had that happen to you

where someone has gotten "**Greatly Annoyed**"
because you were telling someone about **JESUS** . . .

& **not only** were they **telling** the people about **JESUS**
they were **PROCLAIMING** in Jesus
the RESURRECTION from the Dead !!

& the Sadducees **especially HATED**
the truth of the **Resurrection** - Because they didn't believe in it

Acts 4:3-4 (esv)

3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

These are **TWO GREAT VS'S** Back to Back

They **arrested** the apostles
which formally **begins the Persecution** of the church

AND - at the **same moment** we Read
the church has **now grown to 5,000 Men** - & their Families !

Do you think it's a **Coincidence** - that these Two Facts
are put **side-by-side** in the Scripture ?

It's important we See Clearly - that **ALL thru ACTS**
Persecution - & Spiritual Growth - GO TOGETHER !!

& for us - **Difficulty** (& maybe Persecution)
& **Spiritual Growth** - **WILL GO TOGETHER**

If we will allow God to do His work in our lives
during our **MOST** Difficult times

He will **Refine us** during **those** times, like **NO other**

So - **the Apostles** had faced the **SADDUCEES** (& co-horts)
in the Temple Courts

& Now - **the next day** - they face **ANOTHER** Unholy Alliance

Acts 4:5-6 (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.

It's hard to describe the **intense DRAMA** of this situation

This is the same **ELITE**, **Politically Motivated** council
that had seen to it - that **Jesus** was **Crucified**

& they are **now arrayed** in the **same manner** against his followers

They were purely **POLITICALLY** & **MATERIALLY** Motivated
They **only** cared about their **POSITION**, **POWER**, & **MONEY**

& they had proven - they were willing to KILL to maintain it

Peter & John were facing
the same type of MOCK Trial - their Lord had faced

But Jesus had already told them - in Jn 15:20-21

20 . . . 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . .

21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

The **SAME MEN** - wanted to **DO** the **SAME THING** to **Peter & John**
that they **did** to **Jesus** . . .

& believe me - **EVERYONE** was **remembering**
the **Trial of Jesus** that **occurred** in this same place

The **Sadducees** *couldn't believe*
they were having to **deal** with this again

& **Peter & John** were *wondering*
if they were going to face the **same fate**

& so -we continue - Acts 4:7 (esv)

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

They were **setting a similar trap** as the one they **set for Jesus**
probably **hoping** for the **same** end **result**

& Peter & John **HAD to have been concerned** about
facing the same end result

But we read in Acts 4:8-10 (esv)

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.

Now - we gotta **FEEL** this - - Peter & John are talking to the **same group** that Jesus Crucified

& **knowing** they could **end up** with a **similar fate**

STILL - they were **READY** to Give an **ANSWER** for **the Hope** that was **IN THEM**

Peter - **FILLED with the Holy Spirit** . . .

This **GK word** for **FILLED** is the word used for the **EMPOWERING** of the Holy Spirit - for a certain moment

& So - Filled with the Spirit - Peter **Spoke the TRUTH**

Starting again in V.10 - - Acts 4:10-12 (esv)

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.”

Talk about being READY to give an Answer

Guys - **Those THREE VS'S** are possibly the Most **DIRECT - STRAIGHT-FORWARD** Responses

that **WE could ever give** - as **AN ANSWER**
for the **HOPE** that is in **us**

Let me show you how you can use **THESE 3 Vs's
to be **Ready** to give an Answer - to **someone** questioning you !**

“Let me tell you like it is, it’s because of Jesus Christ that I’m standing here today.

Our sin crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead. He has been rejected by the world, but He is actually the cornerstone of all life.

And there is salvation in no other Name. ONLY by Faith in Jesus can we be saved”

. . . Oh , no, I couldn’t say that - that might offend someone . . .

It’s **OK** - if it **Offends** them

We’ve **got to be ready** to **GIVE AN ANSWER** - - to tell it like it is

Our **CULTURE** (& the god of this world) - **want us** to think
"It's NOT nice" to tell someone

how they can **avoid HELL**
& spend Eternity in **HEAVEN** - in everlasting **JOY & PEACE**

. . . Oh, yeah, I can't do that - I might offend them . . .

I promise you - **HELL** will offend them more

We've got to be **READY** to give an **ANSWER** . . .

To tell people - *"It's because of Jesus that I'm whole today, & there is NO OTHER way for us to be Forgiven - & to be SAVED"*

There is Salvation in NO OTHER name under heaven

Now - I want you to **watch closely**
what really ROCKED this "Mock Trial"

Acts 4:13 (esv)

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated (uneducated in Jewish law), common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Peter & John were **BOLD**

They were **READY** to give an **ANSWER** for the **HOPE** in them

Their enemies **SAW their Boldness**

They **Perceived** they were **NOT** Religiously **Educated** men

But then they **Recognized** - they had **BEEN with Jesus**

Can people say that about **you & me** ??

Guys - Our **Religious Knowledge** only turns people **off**

But if they **Recognize** - the Difference in us
is that We've BEEN with Jesus !!

Then - They will be **Astonished**

They **COULDN'T CARE LESS**
how much **Religious knowledge** we have

But when they see **the Transformation** of our lives
from us Just **BEING** with Jesus

it will CHANGE how they respond

& **THAT** is exactly what we **see** happen here

Acts 4:14 (esv)

***14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them,
they had nothing to say in opposition.***

Guys - **Don't argue** with those who oppose you

Don't get **caught up** in Useless
Theological and **Philosophical** Debates

Let people **SEE** the **REAL LIFE** Transformation
of **Jesus Christ** in you

& then - **be READY** to give them an answer
for **how** Jesus Christ has healed **YOU** -- ***Amen ?***

& So - this **Unholy Council** - was **Miffed** a bit
& so they **Commanded** the Apostles to **Leave**

Acts 4:15-16 (esv)

15 But when they had commanded them (Peter & John, & prob the healed man) 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.

Guys - **Those** who **Oppose** your life
must be able to look at the **Tangible Evidence**

& say ***“Well, they’re life has certainly been Changed, we can’t deny that”***

we need a **Transformed Life** from *being with Jesus*
we need to be **FILLED** with **the Holy Spirit** to *be His Witnesses*
Then we need to be **ready to give an answer**
for the **HOPE** that lies within us

That’s **exactly** what **Peter & John** did
& that’s **exactly** what **we** need to do

& so - **since** the **Religious Council**
found themselves in a **tuff situation**

they **gonna try** to get **out** of the entire **MESS**
by just **giving** the Apostles a **WARNING**

But **even** in **the Face** of the **WARNING**
Peter & John were ***“Ready to give an answer”***

Picking up the conversation in Acts 4:17-20 (esv)

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.”

They **TRY** to just **WARN** them

“do not speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus”

& they must have thought

Peter & John **would be happy** to just go away **quietly**

But **Peter & John** were not interested in their **OWN Well-Being**

They we're there **On Behalf** of Jesus Christ

& they were **Representing the Gospel Message**

& so they **responded** according to their **FAITH** in God

& they **responded** out of their **COMMITMENT** to God

& in a **Respectful way** - they said:

“¹⁹ 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.”

Look closely for the **SECRET** to being **READY** to Give an **ANSWER**

Here it is . . .

***I can't help but talk about what has happened in my life,
what Jesus has done for me . . . I HAVE TO talk about that***

Again - the answer is **NOT** having **INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE**

The Answer is having such a **REAL RELATIONSHIP**
with Jesus - that we just **CAN'T HELP** but talk about it

Being **READY** to Give An **ANSWER** for the **HOPE** of Christ in You -
DOES NOT come from **preparing for a theological debate**

Being **READY** to give an answer - comes from
a **REAL RELATIONSHIP** with Jesus
that you **just can't help** talking about

& then - Being **FILLED** with the **Holy Spirit** (& God's Word)
So that you can **SPEAK** when you have the **opportunity**

& this "**Combination**" of "**Life Transformation**"
& **being Filled** with the Holy Spirit

Left this Religious Council - with their **Hands Tied**

Acts 4:21-22 (esv)

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.

Be FOCUSED on **being Transformed** by Jesus in your OWN Life

Be FILLED with the **Power of the Holy Spirit**

Be READY to give **an ANSWER** for the Hope that you have

& God will **USE YOU** to **Proclaim** the **Good News** of **Eternal Life** - in
Jesus Christ

& **THEN** - **PRAY** for **BOLDNESS** to **SPEAK OUT** !!
Which is **EXACTLY** what the Apostles did

As we read this last stretch today - **NOTICE** Two things;

1) The Believers **did NOT pray** - God would **STOP** the Persecution
Or that God would **JUDGE** their Persecutors

2) They **DID Pray** - for **ONE THING** - They Prayed for **BOLDNESS** !!

Acts 4:23–29 (ESV)

23 *When they were released, they went to their friends (fellow believers) 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 [Nations] rage, and the peoples plot in vain?*

26 *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—*

27 *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,*

28 *to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (God’s Sovereignty)*

29 *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants (notice closely their request) to **continue to speak your word with all boldness,***

No Prayer for **Protection**

No Prayer for **Justice**

ONLY a Prayer for **Boldness**

ALONG with just **One More thing** . . .

Vs's 29 & 30 go together

(again) Acts 4:29-20 (esv)

***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.***

This is **SUCH** an Incredible Prayer

in **RESPONSE** to the 1st Wave of **Persecution** - the believers prayed;

- # 1) For **BOLDNESS** to continue to speak God's Word
- # 2) For God to keep doing the **MIRACLES** in their midst

So that they could **KEEP** giving an Answer
to **ALL** who asked - - of the **HOPE** in them

AMEN !!

& then - **Finally** - We see God's **EXCLAMATION POINT**
Put on this **ENTIRE EVENT**

Acts 4:31 (esv)

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.

God **ANSWERED** their prayers - With **an Exclamation Point**

& they were **ALL Filled** with the **HOLY SPIRIT**

& they **ALL Continued** to Speak the Word of God - With **BOLDNESS**

Man - We **WANT** to BE like THAT !!!

We've got to **Make Sure** - there is **TRANSFORMATION** in our Lives
*From **BEING** with Jesus*

We've got to **Make Sure** - we are Continually **FILLED**
with the **Holy Spirit**

We've got to **Make Sure** - we are always be **READY**
To Give an answer for **the Hope** we have in Jesus

& then - We've got to - **PRAY for BOLDNESS**
to **Speak Up** - when we're given a **CHANCE**

Amen ??

Let's Pray