

FEAR < LESS
Acts 4:5-22

It's not that followers of Jesus never experience FEAR; it's just that we lean on our Lord during difficult times. And as we seek His face & favor, we **fear...less.**

We all experience fear. Some of us are quick to share it and others act like we're fearless, but the truth is, Christians are not exempt from tough times. In fact, remember what Jesus promised to His own apostles.

John 16:33 (NET) *I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage—I have conquered the world.*

* get the CDs of the last 5 week teachings or online @ FellowshipOfMadison.com

The Trial of Peter & John

Acts 4:5–6 (NET) ⁵ On the next day, their rulers, elders, and experts in the law came together in Jerusalem.⁶ **Annas** the high priest was there, and **Caiaphas**, John, Alexander, and others who were members of the high priest's family.

Annas & Caiaphas: both mentioned in Luke's Gospel as high priests during the life of Jesus (Luke 3:2). **Annas** was the official high priest from A.D. 6 to 15¹ after which his son-in-law, **Caiaphas**, took over. Caiaphas ruled as high priest for 19 years. Annas still had a HUGE influence and was the patriarch of the high priestly family. The Gospel of John tells us that Annas - although no longer the official high priest - was the first leader Jesus was brought to. After Annas questioned Jesus and sent him to his son-in-law, the official high priest, Caiaphas (Jn. 18:13, 24). So Peter & John are standing before the very same men who led the parade to condemn Jesus just weeks earlier!

After Caiaphas' reign of 19 years, Annas had five sons who followed him and Caiaphas as high priest.² So when Luke writes that John, Alexander, and others in the family were there, this doesn't look good for Peter & John!

Acts 4:7–8a (NET) ⁷ After making Peter and John stand in their midst, they began to inquire, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸ Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, replied,

For the first time since Pentecost we see this language, "filled with the Holy Spirit" (cf. Acts 2:4). The Presence and power of the Holy Spirit now made them fearless to speak the truth about Jesus before the very men who had killed Him.

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1–14:28*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2013), 1141.

² Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).

Confronting the ones who killed their King

Acts 4:8b-12 (NET) “Rulers of the people and elders,⁹ if we are being examined today for a good deed done to a sick man—by what means this man was healed—¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that **by the name of Jesus Christ [Messiah] the Nazarene whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man stands before you healthy.** ¹¹ This **Jesus** is *the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, that has become the cornerstone.*¹² And there is **salvation in no one else**, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among people **by which we must be saved.**”

By the name of Jesus Christ means by His authority and His power - this man was healed.

Jesus...has become the cornerstone of God’s spiritual household. Jesus used this same language of himself in the temple, as we studied Luke 19-20 in a message entitled **Cornerstone** (you can still hear that one online - FellowshipOfMadison.com).

Salvation is found **in no one else**, by **no other name!** That’s pretty exclusive, huh? There is **NO OTHER WAY** to **SALVATION** except by Jesus. If Peter & John are **RIGHT**, all those who point to another way are **WRONG**.

Do you really believe people go to hell because they don’t hear about Jesus?

What about the innocent person in Africa who’s never heard the Gospel?

Innocent people in Africa who have never heard the Gospel **WILL** go to heaven. The only problem is, there is **NO INNOCENT PERSON** in Africa! There are guilty people all over Africa & America and everywhere else! We have all sinned against the **ONLY TRUE GOD**. People don’t go to hell because they’ve never heard the gospel; they go to hell because they have sinned against our **HOLY GOD**. Sin is the **CANCER**. The gospel of Jesus is the **CURE**. The **CURE** doesn’t kill them; the **CANCER** does. And **THAT’S** why we need to take the **CURE**...the gospel of Jesus, to **SINFUL** people all over the planet!

That’s the message Peter and John are boldly proclaiming to the very same men who had Jesus killed! Regardless of their knowledge of Scripture, many prayers to God, or their good outweighing their bad...

there is **salvation in no one else**, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among people **by which we must be saved.**”

Jesus had previously told the apostles:

Matthew 10:28 (NET) *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Like them, we are to be more concerned about what the Creator thinks that what the creation thinks. This could cost the apostles their lives. Before His resurrection, they were hiding from the high priest and his family, but now they stand, **FEARLESS**. And high priest and family noticed the difference!

Acts 4:13 (NET) ¹³ When they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and discovered that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized **these men had been with Jesus.**

Despite their circumstances, they had **courage**. Despite their lack of formal training, they had **character**. **WHY? *These men had been with Jesus.*** **THAT** was the difference!

Peter & John found their fullness in Jesus. HE was their hope! HE was their salvation & strength! The reason the woke up every day had changed. Empowered by the Spirit these men now stood & spoke - **FEARLESS**. They experienced & practiced what WE need to experience & practice.

BIG TRUTH: Fullness in Jesus means we fear less who sees us.

No longer do we cower to those who make fun of us. No longer do we stay silent about the only way to salvation - through Jesus alone. No longer will we wait for other Christians to share the truth. We've all had someone we love pass away unexpectedly only to think, why didn't I share Jesus with them?

- **Afraid?** We didn't know what to say or how to say it.
- **Ashamed?** We are more fearful of people than the Creator. Don't be surprised when Jesus says He's ashamed of you too (see Luke 9:26).

It's not that followers of Jesus empowered by the Spirit to take the Gospel to the planet never experience FEAR; it's just that they lean on their Lord during difficult times. They seek His face & favor; because they know that... **Fullness in Jesus means we fear less who sees us.**

☀ **Leonard Ravenhill** "*The man who is intimate with God will never be intimidated by men.*"

And that was certainly true of Peter & John.

High Priest & Family Respond

Acts 4:13-20 (NET) ¹⁴ And because they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say against this.¹⁵ But when they had ordered them to go outside the council, they began to confer with one another, ¹⁶ saying, "What should we do with these men? For it is plain to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable miraculous sign has come about through them, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But to keep this matter from spreading any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." ¹⁸ And they called them in and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Whether it is right before God to obey you rather than God, you decide, ²⁰ for it is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard."

Peter & John were *ordered...not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus* How would YOU respond to that warning? We learn a great lesson here: It is RIGHT to disobey authority when the early authority demands we disobey our Eternal Authority. They can't help but tell about the ONE who they loved so much. Peter & John couldn't say silent about all they had seen Jesus do and say!

It's Hard to Deny a Transformed Life!

Acts 4:21-22 (NET) ²¹ After threatening them further, they released them, for they could not find how to punish them on account of **the people**, because they **were all praising God for what had happened.** ²² For the man, on whom this miraculous sign of healing had been performed, was over forty years old.

And as we will see next week, the first followers of Jesus continued to stand even when things became more difficult. May we too discover that **fullness in Jesus means we fear less who sees us.**

Are you experiencing FEAR?

- Do you find your FULLNESS in Jesus or is it placed in your health, beauty, possessions, reputation, relationships, abilities, or trophies?
- Are you afraid of what someone thinks more than what God thinks?
- Are you taking opportunities to share your faith, even if it could cost you?
- Will you lay your fears at His feet?

Fullness in Jesus means we fear less who sees us.