

WEEK 3 || *ACTS 3:1-4:31*

COURAGEOUS CHURCH

It was his first week in his new job. He was keen for people to know he was a Christian, but nervous about it too. Then the moment came... a colleague was complaining loudly about "Bible Bashers." Gathering all his courage, he managed to squeak out a vague response. All eyes turned in his direction...

In your experience, what happens next? If you follow Jesus, have you ever lacked courage when it comes to talking about your faith in him?



JESUS CONTINUES HIS WORK

Back at the start of Acts, the author hinted that while his first book (Luke's Gospel) was all about what Jesus *began* to do and teach, this book was going to be all about what the resurrected Jesus *continued* to do and teach, through his Apostles and by the power of His Spirit. That becomes crystal clear in this passage!

1. Look back to the end of Peter's first speech in **Acts 2:21** where he quotes from the Old Testament prophet Joel. In the days after 'the sun is darkened' (Luke 23:44-45), what will people need to do to be saved?

2. Read the account of Peter and John's temple miracle in **Acts 3:1-10**. What name are they acting in?

3. Peter's speech to the men of Israel has one main point. They didn't crucify who they thought! Read his words from **Acts 3:11-26**. What (or who!) has brought healing to the man? (v16-17)

The Name of Jesus

In the ancient world, and in some ways still today, the 'name' of the person who is authorising your words and actions is supremely important. If the General Manager has authorised your project at work, you can act confidently with all his or her implied authority. People will give you the same co-operation they give the boss! The authority and power doesn't come from you, but the one who's name you're acting in.

4. Having demonstrated the authority of the '**name of Jesus**' in healing the man, and telling the men of Israel that this name brings healing and salvation what does Peter call on them to do from Acts 4:37-41?

GROWING OPPOSITION

5. Read about the growing opposition to Peter and John in Acts 4:1-22. Note that this is exactly the same High Priest and Sanhedrin Council that recently sentenced Jesus to death! Make a note of every reference to 'the name of Jesus.'

6. Peter and John find themselves in prison. But meanwhile, what's happening to the church?

7. What question are Peter and John asked to answer (v7), and what do they say in reply? (v10, 12, 18-20)

8. Last time he was facing the High Priest and Sanhedrin, Peter denied Jesus and ran away. (Luke 22:54f). What's different now, and why? (v8, v18-20)



"But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about 5,000."

Acts 4:4

Look ahead. The Apostles have a second run-in with the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:17-41. Why are the Sanhedrin so furious in v28? What final orders do they give in verse 40?

9. Read the account of Peter and John's welcome home party on their release in Acts 4:23-31.
 - a. What's their understanding of what's happening? (compare with Psalm 2)

 - b. What's their prayer in the face of opposition?? (v29-30)

 - c. How is this prayer answered at the end of verse 31?

Notice how the Holy Spirit is empowering them to speak boldly about Jesus!

GOSPEL VISION

10. What are we praying for? What would happen if we prayed for 'gospel boldness' and we were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak like this? Imagine a few scenes from your own life this week. How would it play out?

If we're a church on gospel mission, we'll need Spirit-empowered courage to carry out that mission. We can take courage from the thought that King Jesus has already won, and it's his mission that we're on. But sometimes just knowing that isn't enough. We need to pray for the Spirit to give us the boldness we know we should have.

Remember, our vision statement commits us in these words:

We will focus on prayer for our mission, demonstrating our dependence on God's grace, mercy and provision.

Let's pray that the Spirit will give us boldness in our mission.