

HOLY BOLDNESS**Acts 4:1-31**

Intro: If you've ever seen the movie HACKSAW RIDGE, you're familiar with the story of Desmond Doss, a devout Seventh-Day Adventist. At the outbreak of World War Two he was working in a shipyard in Newport News, Virginia. Because ship builders were essential wartime workers in the same way that farmers were, he was offered a deferment when his number came up in the draft. However, Desmond was a patriotic young man and he refused the deferment and went into the Army. The only problem was he refused to carry a weapon. Seventh-Day Adventists have a very sincerely and Biblically based conviction against violence. I don't know how accurate the movie is, but it shows Doss in basic training going through all of the same things that other trainees experienced, except he refused to even touch a weapon of any kind. As a result he'd ridicule and persecution because of it. But he persisted and in the end he finally got his wish to be trained as a medic. In the bloody battle for Okinawa in the Spring of 1945 Doss ended up saving between 50 and 100 men who had been trapped on the top of an escarpment which the soldiers had dubbed Hacksaw Ridge. He lowered each wounded soldier down the face of a cliff until he could find no more to rescue. For that brave and bold action Desmond received the Congressional Medal of Honor, one of only three conscientious objectors to ever attain the status. By the way, in the action where Doss saved so many others, he himself was wounded so gravely that it affected him for the rest of his life.

Desmond Doss's bravery was because of a **holy boldness**. He had a firm belief in his church's Biblical teaching on non-violence, and he stood by it. In the end, in a fearsome battle, he stepped forward and when no one else would, he saved men who would have otherwise been killed or at least taken into captivity.

Today we resume our study of the Book of Acts which was interrupted back in February by our Lenten and Easter study. As we do that we are picking up at Acts chapter 4. When we left off at the end of chapter 3, we had been discussing a healing by Peter and John found at the very beginning of that chapter. As they entered the Temple they were accosted by a crippled beggar. It tells us in chapter 3 that he was crippled from birth and our text today, as you will hear in the course of this talk, the man was over 40 years old. He wanted just a few coins, but their response to him was, *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!* Acts 3:6 and he was healed.

This raised not a little excitement, and now, as we begin chapter 4, it has come to the attention of certain religious leaders who thought that they had solved the Jesus of Nazareth problem. But, of course, they hadn't. And now, they were blown away by the holy boldness of Peter and John and the other Christ Followers. So we're going to look at that today as we look at the first 31 verses of chapter 4. I will the passage in sections as I unpack the good news we find here.

Let's begin with the first four verses. **(Read Acts 4:1-4)**

One of the first things we see here, and I love it, is that . . .

Holy boldness is annoying

- And it's a real good thing!
- Here are these Galileans and they're preaching AGAIN! Perhaps you remember in chapter 3, after Peter and John had healed the man, the text tells that the crowds surged forward. They knew of this man who had been crippled for 40 years and for many of those years they had seen him there at the Temple gate. You might recall that it tells us there in chapter 3 that the crowds ran to them, and since he was not one to miss an opportunity, when Peter saw this, he began preaching.
- What really bugged the religious leaders was that the apostles were preaching about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This especially ticked the Sadducees off because they didn't believe in the resurrection. What they believed in was making sure that everything was both hunky and dory with the Roman Empire and the government that had been established in Rome in Palestine. In short they didn't want to rock the boat. And now these people were messing things up with this teaching about a risen rabbi. Notice, they didn't deny the resurrection, they just didn't like it. By the way, the Sadducees are the only religious leaders mentioned here; the Pharisees are not, and for the record, the Pharisees believed and taught the resurrection while the Sadducees did not believe in life after death, and that's why, and it's a good way to remember the difference, they're sad, you see..

- These religious leaders wanted the Christ Followers to stop their preaching because they were worried that people might believe the stuff that these simple men were teaching. The problem was – it was already too late as more and more people were converted. So Peter and John were arrested. Too late again, because it was an arrest that resulted in mass conversion. There had been 3,000 converted on the day of Pentecost and by now the number is 5,000. So however long it was between the day of Pentecost and what is recorded here in our text, 2,000 more people had come to faith in Christ. The church was flourishing.
- Here's a good point to remember: opposition does not slow the church. I am very frustrated when I hear people saying that the church is dying as we lose more and more of our “freedoms”. The truth is we are more worried about losing our comfortable status and the church in Iran and China could teach us a few things about how the church grows when it’s not legal. The Church of Jesus will never die. Enough of my rant, now, listen to **(Acts 4:5-12)**
- Notice here that...

Holy boldness is truthful

- You can be bold with a message and be spouting lies – just spend a few minutes on line and you’ll know what I mean. But you already know that, I hope.
- The message of Jesus and his death and resurrection is the truth! The religious leaders asked a question that they already knew the answer to. They ask “By what power or by what name do you do this?” And Peter responds, “Well since you asked, we are preaching in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified. Yes, the same bunch of you who killed Jesus need to know that we are now preaching in the name of the risen Lord.”
- Actually Peter and John didn't even respond to the insulting question – as I just said, the Sadducees already knew the answer. Instead Peter preached, even quoting Psalm 118:22 *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*. He tells them, that Jesus was the stone rejected by men, but the end he is that cornerstone because tombstone was rolled away. Then he says something very powerful: JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY! David Guzik says this, “*Peter didn't merely proclaim Jesus as A way of salvation, but as the ONLY way of salvation. The idea that there is no salvation in any other, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved is hard to accept for many, but it is plainly stated.*” Remember, holy boldness is truthful and the world doesn’t want to hear the truth. They'd like to think that any religion is a way to God. But it doesn't work that way. You can't get to Columbus by going to Cleveland. The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. That's the truth.
- Now look at **(Act 4:13-22)**
- The religious leaders looked down their nose at these men and questioned their credentials, but here's what we know . . .

Holy boldness is credentials enough

- The text says the religious leaders noticed that Peter and John were “*uneducated, common men*”. And “*they were astonished*”. Their noses were so high in the air that they couldn't see just how intelligent and spiritually astute these men were. The word that is translated in our text as “uneducated” is *ἰδιώτης* (*idiótés*) in the Greek, which as you can hear is the word from which we derive the word “idiot”. We know the connotation that has in our society, and while the word wasn’t that harsh in ancient Greek, it is true these religious leaders saw these uneducated common men as being too simple to string two thoughts together. But they were so very wrong.
- And they knew it. Because . . . *they recognized that they had been with Jesus*. Acts 4:13c. My sister Beth, who was here last week with some of her family, will often say: "That was so much like Daddy!" after I say or do something. And when that happens I feel a thrill because to be recognized as a son of Irvin is a great honor. But think of the greater honor it is to be seen as someone who has been with Jesus. We need to live so closely to Jesus that others can only explain our actions and our lives by the fact that we have been with him.
- Something else that the religious leaders noticed – in fact, they could not miss, was how these uneducated fishermen knew the Scriptures. Here in this account Peter has referred to Psalm 118, and a bit later he

refers to Psalm 2. The apostles knew the Bible – they weren't preachers or Bible College or Seminary educated, but they knew God's word – we need to know the Bible too – no excuses.

- In the end, for the apostles needed for credentials were that they had been with Jesus and they knew his word and being with Jesus and having his word hidden in your heart makes you bold.
- The truth is, these religious leaders were frightened by Peter and John and they saw the response of the people and knew that they had to handle it carefully. So they gave them a little slap on the wrist and wagged their finger at them and told them, "Don't you ever preach anymore!" But Peter and John answered them with holy boldness, "*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.*" Acts 4:19b. This caught the snooty leaders up short and so they wagged their fingers a little more threateningly and sent them away.
- Let's finish this out by looking (**Acts 4:23-31**)
- Here's a nonnegotiable . . .

Holy boldness is prepped with prayer

- Ministry was going to be interesting now for the Jesus Followers. The Sadducees and priests were on record as having warned them against preaching about the Resurrection of Jesus anymore. In the end, Peter and John were released to a prayer meeting.
- The thing that I really love about this account, is that in the midst of that prayer we find a request for EVEN MORE BOLDNESS! This word "boldness" used throughout this passage and certainly here in verse 29, comes from a Greek word that implies "telling it all". Boldness is broadcasting the Good News
- When you're tired or frightened or discouraged, **you need to pray**. When you're warned away or told not to talk about Jesus anymore, you need to pray and pray for more boldness.
- These Christ Followers didn't ask for protection or go into hiding. Instead, they asked for boldness. Guzik says They prayed for more boldness, more power, and for more trouble. They did not back down. They prayed for God to stretch out his hand to heal and for signs and wonders to be performed through the name of his son Jesus (Acts 4:30). They had no intention of being quiet about Jesus. They had been with him and they couldn't help but tell of the good news of the Resurrection of Jesus and salvation which is possible for all who believe – even snooty Sadducees.
- Now, notice one thing more: when the Christ Followers prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit AGAIN! And then they continued to speak the word with boldness. One commentator pointed out that, in a way, it was a second Pentecost. Another points out that we need to be constantly receiving refills of the Holy Spirit and it's not because he abandons us, it's because we need to make sure that we are refilled for the ministry we are called to. That's what holy boldness requires.
- Let's be bold Church – there are people all around us who need Jesus and since he is the ONLY way, we need to tell them. Amen.