

235 “Don’t bother us with Jesus!”

In Acts Chapter 3 we read of a wonderful miracle of healing wrought by Peter and John “through faith in his, (that is, Jesus’), name” (v 16). In response to Peter’s words, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (v 6b), the man “lame from his mother’s womb” (v 2), begging each day at the gate of the temple, “leaping up stood, and walked walking and leaping, and praising God” (v 7)! The crowd gathered and Peter “let them have it” (vv 9-26) before the authorities arrived and had Peter and John arrested (4.1-3).

Until this point and onwards from it, one great Christian quality shines through: boldness. We read how the authorities, full of indignant self-importance, “saw the boldness of Peter and John” (4.13). We read of the prayer of the Christians who were gathered after Peter and John were released – “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (4.29). And we read that “when they had prayed, the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (4.31).

The Christians of this first generation were bold because they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Who He claimed to be, the Messiah, the Son of God Himself. He had convinced them from the Scriptures, and by His life, His character, His teaching, His miraculous powers, culminating in the incontrovertible fact of His resurrection from the dead after His gruesome death on behalf of all who will believe in Him (eg., John 3.14-18, 36). Because of their total certainty of these truths, nothing and nobody could shut them up – not even martyrdom.

But there is a vital second strand to their boldness – the need for the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Their words and deeds were no mere human response to a set of facts, valid though that response would have been to an extent. Their boldness was Spirit-inspired and Spirit-maintained. The Lord told them to wait in Jerusalem until “the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1.1-8). This duly happened as promised, followed by Peter’s extraordinary sermon and its extraordinary results (Chapter 2).

We see from these early examples in Acts and from those that followed later a vital set of links. These links consist of our settled *faith* in Christ, joined to our knowledge of the *reasons* for that settled faith in Christ, and joined again to our daily dependence upon the in-filling and practical guidance of *the Holy Spirit*. As these three links are joined together they form an unassailable chain, meaning that, thus equipped, no Christian has any reason to shy away from a “holy boldness” over our speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ as “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14.6). For that is Who He is! – and the reasons underlying our knowing Who He is are far, far more credible than any reasons which the Christ-refusers can come up with.

We are living in times not dissimilar to that day when Peter and John confronted the lame man at the temple gate (and if we understood better in our generation the

sheer power that resides in the name of Jesus Christ, who is to say there would not still be equally wonderful healings today?). In Christ we are given everything that is precious, and it is our desire and obligation to make Him known (eg., Matthew 28.18-20). But in so doing, the various authorities of today, notably in politics, education and the media, become as angry as did those Sadducees. Too many of our leaders cling to the absurd Faith of Secularism (“Just keep any God-talk to yourself, we’re above all that stuff now”), and behave as if Jesus Christ never existed. After several decades of such God-rejecting folly it is no wonder that this country is now so troubled. Among the numerous indications of divine displeasure around us we can sense the Lord’s attitude towards us now is a simple, “Thy will be done”. May the Lord indeed have mercy, even if only for the sake of His faithful praying remnant.

But as we finish this time we note with deep praise a further precious aspect of Christian boldness – the boldness that is ours which allows us sinners, trusting in Christ and redeemed by His shed blood, to approach the living God Himself (see for example the wonderful Chapter 3 of Ephesians / Romans 5.1-2 / Romans 8.1). And from Hebrews 10.19-23 we read - “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering”.

True. True then, true now! Boldness then, boldness now!

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