



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Courage Under Challenge

Speaker: Shauna Rushing - Pastor of Small Groups & Communities

Scriptures: Acts 4:23-31, 5:27-42

Acts 4:23-31 -

The Believers Pray

23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

26 The kings of the earth rise up

and the rulers band together

against the Lord

and against his anointed one.[b] [c]

27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 5:27-42

²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

³³ When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴ But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷ After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Sermon Summary:

What happens when faith meets opposition? In Acts 4–5, the early church faced pressure, threats, and persecution for boldly proclaiming Jesus. Yet instead of retreating in fear, they prayed for courage, stood firm in truth, and continued to witness with boldness.

Sermon Questions:

1. Read the two Scripture passages. What stands out to you about how the apostles and believers' responded to intense opposition?

2. When you face opposition in your life, how do you tend to respond?

3. The apostles and community of Christ needed three essentials to be bold in their faith: Prayer, the Spirit of God & the support of community. In what ways have you found these to be essential in your spiritual journey?

4. Pastor Shauna shared three ways our faith can be inspired by the courage of the early church:
 - They went public with their faith
 - They expected opposition and did not shrink back from it
 - They were willing to disobey people in power to be obedient to God

Which of these challenges you the most and why?

5. In what area of your life do you need boldness and courage?