

# **LifeWay Family Bible Series for Nov. 9: God will provide his followers a bold witness\_110303**

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## **God will provide his followers a bold witness**

Acts 4:1-31

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Well-meaning Christians sometimes confuse “boldness” with “brashness.” When we express our Christian convictions in an offensive, pushy or presumptuous way, we usually cause others to reject us. On the other hand, a bold witness for Christ given with sincerity and love often will be more readily received.

Yet still, even the most compassionate witness will occasionally be resented. The gospel truths we share, even when lubricated with God's love, will sometimes cause those already under conviction of sin to be defensive and hostile.

Throngs of people witnessed the healing of the lame man (Acts 3:9-10). Excited and challenged by the opportunity to preach Christ to people who

had seen a living example of God's power, Peter seized the moment and shared.

### **Negative and positive results of a bold witness**

The priests and Sadducees were among the bitterest enemies of Christ's followers. These particular priests may have been a part of the temple guard, and the captain of the temple priests, who also was present, was the high priest's right-hand man. His duty was to keep order in the temple precincts.

The Sadducees were the aristocrats, the party of the rich and members of the high priestly families. They were in charge of the temple and its services, were materialistic, didn't believe in life after death and denied angels or demons existed. They were political allies with the Romans and bitterly opposed Jesus.



The temple authorities were enraged because of Peter's preaching. Peter declared the resurrection of Jesus, which naturally infuriated the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection. They also may have feared the enthusiasm of the people might precipitate an uprising that would cause trouble with the Roman authorities, who insisted the "Roman peace" be kept in all the provinces. They refused to listen to the truth and were determined to keep others from hearing it.

They arrested Peter and John, but because it was evening and Jewish trials at night were illegal, the apostles were placed in the public prison until the next day. In spite of the official reaction, many people believed the gospel Peter had preached and the number of believers in Jerusalem increased to 5,000 (probably men, not counting women and children).

## **A bold witness delivered at court**

When Peter and John appeared the next morning before the Sanhedrin, they had no legal counsel. The Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews, had extensive power over their countrymen. They could not pass the death sentence, however, except in the case of a Gentile who dared to enter the inner courts of the temple. The high priest presided over the 71 members of this court, which was made up of priests, scribes—who were experts in the traditional law—and Pharisees, who were fanatical in insisting every jot and tittle of the law be kept. Elders, respected men in the community, also were members.

After the Sanhedrin had convened, they brought in Peter and John and demanded they tell them by what power or name they had healed the lame man. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, responded the healing was accomplished by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Then, with a holy boldness, he accused them of rejecting and crucifying Christ, whom God raised from the dead. He further told them there was no other way to be saved apart from faith in Christ.

The court was stunned by Peter's boldness. They could not deny the fact of the lame man's healing. After conferring among themselves, they realized they had no defense against what had happened. They lamely warned Peter and John not to preach any more in Christ's name. The apostles simply replied that they could not help but tell what they had seen and heard. With the multitude in Solomon's porch praising God because of what they had witnessed, the court felt they had no other recourse but to release them.

## **The thrilling result of a contagious boldness**

Peter and John's report to fellow believers ignited a holy fire of boldness throughout the church. The believers' faith was strengthened, for they had

seen the power of God at work through the apostles.

They raised their voices as one in prayer and praise to God. Quoting from Psalm 2 in their prayer, they declared the futility of man's rebellion and they remembered again how Jesus was tried, suffered and was glorified in his resurrection. Then they prayed for courage. They did not presume to believe they could face Satan's opposition in their own strength.

As they concluded their prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon them in great power, and they courageously spoke the truth of God's word with a new and holy boldness. A further result was that they were moved to take care of the material needs of their fellow believers. Always God's people must be sensitive, in the name of Christ, to the total needs of people.

### **Questions for discussion**

- ◆ How can Christians be bold and not brash in expressing their convictions?
- ◆ What role should the Holy Spirit play in witnessing?

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