

## Acts 4:23–31

### *A Prayer for Boldness*

If I, like Peter and John, had had a close and potentially disastrous brush with the authorities, my prayer would be for divine protection rather than boldness! Yet, the only thing the community asked of God is the power “to speak thy word with all boldness” (4:29). It is God’s business to heal and to work signs and wonders in the name of Jesus (4:30). It is the community’s business to speak the word with boldness in the midst of the mighty acts of God. The trembling and shaking of the place signify that the apostles’ prayer has been answered, and once again they are given a bold tongue to utter the word of God. Boldness is a highly favored Lukan virtue (2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 28). Was Theophilus facing trials and tribulations that required boldness? We suspect this was the case; for there are too many instances in Luke-Acts where disciples are called upon not to shrink in the face of persecution. Luke’s typical accents are found later in the risen Lord’s message to Paul: Do not be afraid; do not be silent; I am with you; no one will harm you; I have many of my own people here (18:9–10).

What do Christians do when persecution threatens to undo the community? They turn to God, the same God who created the world and all of its inhabitants, the God who holds all things within his power. Even persecution, even persecution by powerful people, does not take us out of God’s hand. The same power which brought the world into being, which enables the community to worship will also be with the community in its times of persecution.

Throughout this section we have seen a relationship between *divine deeds* and *human words*. Here is a God who comes to us not simply with words but also with mighty acts of healing. But the mighty acts of healing must be interpreted and proclaimed, witnessed and defended through words. There is also an interplay of *witness* and *worship*. The community moved from its time of prayer to a time of confrontation with the misery of the world in the form of a crippled man. Then, after arousing the ire of the authorities and testifying to the world and its rulers concerning the power of Christ, the community once again withdraws for prayer, seeking to be given in worship the power it needs to witness boldly to what is happening in the world. In this rhythm of action

and speech, witness and worship, the church discovers the source of its life 🗨️.