

Book of Acts Series - Part 8 | Talking to God, to Men

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of boldness and prayer in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ as modeled by the early church.

Duration: 18:49

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, John 3:16, Acts 8:4, Colossians 4:2

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing and sharing the message of Jesus, which is the good news of salvation. He highlights that it is not necessary to have extensive knowledge of scripture, but rather to understand and proclaim that Christ died for our sins and rose again. The speaker emphasizes that everyone is called to speak this message, not just professional clergy, and that the early church practiced this by encouraging everyone to preach. He also emphasizes the need for clarity in speaking the message and the reliance on the Holy Spirit to guide and provide the words when sharing the gospel. Additionally, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer in opening doors for the message of the gospel to be proclaimed.

Transcript

The disciples faced their first persecution, and now they come back to a prayer meeting, and they pray that God would grant them boldness so that they can keep speaking in the name of the Lord. And the reason is that the religious leaders have said no more talking in that name. They don't care if you say Jehovah, don't care if you say God, don't care if you say creator.

They didn't care about those things. Moses, 10 commandments, you can say all of that you want. Don't say the name of Jesus.

That's where the pressure was, and still is today. After they prayed, look what happened. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, notice, and spoke the word of God, what? Boldly.

Now, let's go to one other place in the book of Acts. And here's where the setting is of this. Stephen is martyred.

He's the first martyr of the Christian church. And all kinds of persecution now breaks out against the church in Jerusalem. Stephen was martyred in Jerusalem.

And this verse is lost to most of us and to Christendom, but it tells us the secret power of the early church. Look what happened after the persecution broke out. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Now, what precedes that is this amazing thing. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem. They didn't move.

But all the believers were scattered. And many commentators think Jesus had gone to all the world and preached the gospel, and they didn't. They were staying in Jerusalem where it was comfortable.

So now all hell breaks loose, as it were, against the early church. All the believers just flying everywhere, trying to get away from this life and death situation, except the apostles. For some reason, they stayed there in Jerusalem.

But notice, every place the believers went, notice, those who had been scattered, in other words, they not just went out running. In a way, they were being scattered like seed. Everywhere they were scattered, they preached the word of God wherever they went.

Who preached the word? The believers preached the word. Not Peter, not Billy Graham, not James and John. All the believers, everywhere they were scattered, they preached the word of God.

They spoke the word of Jesus. They said, he's the one. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Remember, no New Testament verses to quote. New Testament books were long in the future to be written. This is early church history.

And now, everywhere they went, they preached. When we hear the word preach, we think of pastor somebody and reverend somebody and evangelist somebody. That was not the way it was in the beginning.

Everywhere they went, they preached. This was the secret to how the church multiplied. Sheep begot sheep.

Sheep gave birth to sheep. How did they do it? They preached the word. What word? The word of the gospel, the word of Jesus, who he was.

They had no Bible to point anyone to. They just said, no, Jesus came into my life. He changed me.

He died for the sins of the world. He'll forgive you. He'll give you the gift of eternal life.

When you die, you won't die. You'll live forever. Your body will die.

That's what the word they preached. That's why, finally, in Colossians, Paul says this to the church. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

That word in the Greek means being absolutely alert and on guard. What's the devil doing? How the Holy Spirit leading? Who's trying to put me to sleep while I'm praying? Be watchful and thankful when you pray. Devote yourselves to it.

Give yourselves to prayer. He's writing this to the church. And pray for us, too, Paul and his team, that God may open a door for our message.

How do doors open? People pray, and in answer to prayer, God opens doors for what? For the gospel to go out. You can't run into people and force the gospel down their throat. You have to be alert, prayerful, and you have to have doors open with an individual or a family or a group.

Pray that doors for our message might be opened, that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. He was in jail. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.

End of story. End of verses. So how did the early church think? We gotta get the message out.

The message has power. What's the message? The good news about Jesus. How do we have to speak that message? Who's to speak it? Let's do the Ws.

What's the message? Jesus, the good news. We all know it. If you're here today, you gotta know that message.

You don't have to know 100 verses. You don't have to memorize Psalm 119. All you have to know is Christ died for my sins.

There's power in telling somebody that. And he died and he rose again and he's alive. There's power in that message of the gospel.

Who's to speak it? Everyone's to speak it. No professional clergy. There are pastors, there are evangelists, there are shepherds, there are people with special leadership gifts, but the early church was everybody speaks.

Everybody preaches. Every place you go, on your job, everywhere. Now, what do you need to do that? You need two things.

You need to speak it clearly. And you notice what happened when the spirit came? They spoke it boldly. You need to speak it clearly.

Not join the church. Not live a good life. Not, you gotta, you know, I want you to believe in God.

No, you gotta put your faith in Jesus. You gotta say that name. How many are with me? Put your hands together.

You gotta say that name, Jesus. Jesus. Their message was Jesus.

What the choir was singing, Jesus. Everyone say Jesus. Jesus.

You tell people about Jesus, you can say God, you can say Lord, you can say Christ, you can say creator, you can say that, but that's not where the rub comes. The rub comes when you say Jesus. Muslims believe in God.

Everybody believes, as a religion, believes in a God. But what God are we talking about? The Lord, the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. We need to say it clearly, and we need to say it boldly.

And we need open doors to say it. So that's how they pray. God, putting all those verses together, God, give us open doors.

Danica, you gotta share Jesus. Deacons, you gotta share Jesus. Everybody, you go back to Cleveland, Tennessee, you gotta share Jesus.

And not just in church. People in church already heard about Jesus. The people you meet tomorrow, you gotta pray, God, give me an open door.

Let something happen, let me be sensitive to it so that I can say, oh, I'm glad you said that. I wanna tell you about my life and how Jesus changed my life. Some might get up in arms and get upset.

That's okay, just be calm. The minute anyone gets abusive, listen to me. The minute anybody gets abusive and says something bad, stop talking to them.

Turn to somebody else. You never argue with anyone about Jesus. You'll see that in the New Testament.

The minute Paul, Paul went to the Jews in certain cities and he told them about Jesus and they mocked him and they started speaking abusively, the minute they did that, he never argued with anyone. He said, what, oh, you don't want eternal life? I told you, you can have eternal, you're not up for that? Okay, fine, I'm gonna turn to someone else. But remember, I told you.

That's what he did, never fought with anybody. You never argue anybody into the kingdom. You plant the seed, God has to water it, something supernatural has to happen.

But what do we need? We need three things. We need open doors. I'm talking about manana.

I'm talking about tomorrow. We need open doors on the phone, through the email, on the job. We need open doors to talk about Jesus.

If you and I don't talk about Jesus, would you please explain to me who's gonna tell them about Jesus? Angels won't. Oh no, God can do anything. No, but he's not doing it except through us.

He said, you go into the world. I'm not using angels for this job. You're gonna speak for me.

I'm gonna work together with my body. I'm gonna direct them. I'm the intelligence, they're my body, they're the extension of my mind.

So we pray for open doors that we might speak and then we need to say it clearly and God will help you. And a word just comes to me now, I wanna add that. We need to speak it clearly and we need to speak it boldly.

There's great intimidation today in our culture. On TV, you can say any four letter word, but do not say Jesus. They'll wink at you no matter how you curse or whatever perverted thing you're into, they'll go, that's very cool.

You just say Jesus, woof. How many know what I'm talking about? Lift up your hand. But that's the way it is.

It is what it is. What, are we gonna cry about it? The test is, are we gonna be bold and back down or back down? Are we gonna be bold and say it or are we gonna back down and go, well, I believe in God and

there's a creator up there somewhere. No, no, no, no, no.

I believe in Jesus. Jesus died for my sins. That's where the Holy Spirit will help you.

When you lift up Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes, shh, because he was sent to glorify Jesus. Don't tell them about the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Don't tell them about the First Baptist, Cleveland, Tennessee, my goodness.

That has no saving power, nor Brooklyn Tabernacle, nor the Assemblies of God, nor any name. Don't even mention those names. That won't save anybody.

Talk about Jesus. Say it boldly, say it clearly. Well, Pastor Semble, how do I do it? And here's the most wonderful promise.

John 10, Jesus said, now, you're gonna be followers of me. It's gonna get tough. It's gonna get hard.

They're gonna haul you in front of judges and he foretold their persecution. But he said, now, look, when you talk to these people, don't give any thought what you're gonna say because when you open your mouth, the Spirit of your Father will speak through you. It won't even be you speaking.

Some of you are nervous because you struggled in school. You don't feel your verbal. It's not about you.

You just tell God tonight that you wanna be bold, you wanna open doors, you're gonna speak it as clearly as you can, but you're not sure what to say. When you open your mouth and start talking, the words will come then. You don't even have to have a preamble.

You don't have to have anything memorized in your mind. I know most people don't believe that, but it is in the Bible. And I'm wondering how many preachers really believe in that, that none of the New Testament preachers knew they would preach on the day they preach.

Not one of them had notes. Not one had notes. Jesus never went to notes.

He just opened, it came out of his life. Jesus is gonna help you to say what you need to say. And people are gonna receive that word.

And that's the most precious thing, most important thing right now in this city. Oh my goodness. I was born and raised in Brooklyn.

This city needs Jesus. People need Jesus. They need Jesus.

Say God, say Lord, say all those words, but remember, that's not where the power is. The power is in the name of Jesus. That's where the persecution is too.

It's a double rub. The power's in the name of Jesus. The persecution is in the name of Jesus.

Now, that's why the Lord hasn't called us to heaven yet. That's why Jesus has not returned. No one knows the moment, the hour, the second that he's gonna come.

Why hasn't he come back? Hmm, students of prophecy, they, you know, 1,000 years is like a day, and a day is like 1,000 years. So in one way, the Lord's been gone two days. He's been gone two days.

Another way, he's been gone 2,000 years. So why hasn't he come back? One of the strongest arguments is he wants more people to come into the kingdom. He's not slow concerning his promises.

Remember we read that, Peter? Not slow. No. He's merciful, and he wants everyone to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But the only advertisements he has, the only spokespeople that he has for himself here on earth, you gotta understand this, is you and I. How many wanna be bolder and more clear and pray for open doors that you can tell someone, I'm talking about this week, don't have some indefinite future, like yes, Lord, use me down the road. I'm talking about this week. I'm talking about as early as tomorrow.

How many want an open door to talk to someone about you? Lift your hand high. I wanna tell, I myself, Jim Cimbala, I wanna tell someone about Jesus tomorrow. I wanna share about Jesus.

I had a chance to share with somebody today of a different faith about Jesus. It's the right thing to do. But we need boldness, don't we? Because we're shy, we don't wanna be rejected, we don't wanna be mocked.

We know there's an anti-Christian culture that we're a part of. We know the media mocks Christianity. Everyone's mocking Christianity and the Christians have done some really bizarre things and hurt people.

And that's why some people are against Christianity. But we're not interested in Christianity. We want Jesus to come through.

We want Jesus to be spoken. And that's something, you know, we have altar calls, who wants to get saved and all of that. And so I wanna make another kind of invitation.

Who wants to put their life on the line tonight and say, God, I wanna be New Testament Christian. I wanna pray that you will open a door for me. Not just for the Apostle Paul 2,000 years ago.

I want an open door with someone. My banker, the guy in the pharmacy, the person I work with, my next door neighbor, my cousin, my wayward granddaughter. I want an open door that I can speak to them about Jesus.

The Bible teaches us that while prayer is so important, nobody can get saved by prayer alone. They have to hear the message and believe. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So think of your relatives. Think of your friends right now. It's our job to sow that seed and open our mouths.

We're not gonna be shy. We're not gonna be fearful. And you know what? We don't care who laughs at us.

How many are with me? Say amen. So they laugh at us. So they laugh at us.

So big deal. They laugh at us. They mock us.

Oh, you holy roller or you whatever. What are you, crazy, you believe in that? Hey, yo, I told you about Jesus. I wanna tell you what Jesus has done in my life.

I told you. Now it's between you and God. I'm gonna go to the next person.

And we keep looking for open doors and keep sowing seed. Imagine if half of us in this building, in the month of July, just one half of us, we just want one, one person to the Lord. Just half.

Not take the city for God, not take your block for God. No, no, don't pray for that. Why don't we just start? One soul, Lord.

Give me one soul before July is over. Just think if half of the people in our church or the church in Cleveland, Tennessee or any Christian church, just think in Detroit or any place, just half the congregation in a month or two, in the summer, brought one person. Do you know by the end of the year, we'd have to get another building? Am I right? And how much money would it cost? Zero.

Early church had no money. They duplicated, replicated the faith this way. Just every place they were scattered, they preached the word.

If you squeezed them, Jesus came out. On their job, wherever they're going, just Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. So here's what you have to believe.

You have to believe God can use you the way you are. We fight this American culture that, no, I sit and learn. You preach.

You're the guys up there that do that. Pastor Delina speaks, Pastor JC, others speak. No, I just sit.

No, that's totally unbiblical. We all gotta open our mouth and speak for Jesus. How many are up for it? Say aloud, amen.

Amen. Let's stand together. Every eye closed.

Lord, open the door. Give us boldness and give us words to say clearly. Listen again.

Open the door. Give us boldness and give us words to say with clarity. The words of the gospel.

As a church, individually, the whole thing, we pray for open doors with groups, with individuals, with homeless people, with wealthy people, with black people, white people, every kind of people. We pray for open doors that only you can open. Opportunities, open hearts, people in need.

Make us sensitive to those open doors. Number two, we pray that we will be bold to speak the name of Jesus and the gospel of Christ. That we will not be afraid or intimidated to say the name that's above every other name.

Because in your word, you said, if you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. We're not gonna be ashamed of you. Lastly, we pray that we will not be afraid to trust you.

We don't have to rehearse what we're gonna say, but we stand on your literal promise that when we open our mouths and begin to speak, the Holy Spirit of God is gonna give us words to say, even as we're speaking. Help the people who have believed the lies of the enemy, that they're not prepared and they don't know enough to witness for Christ. Let those lies be shattered tonight in the name of Christ.

But you promised that when we open our mouth, you would give us words and it would be not us speaking, you said, but it would be the spirit of our Father speaking. We believe it, we receive it, that settles it. Let's put our hands together and praise God.

We praise you, Lord.

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