

## Sermon

Dan Neary

# Speak Boldly

I have something with me this morning that I would like to show you.

I've had this in my closet for about a year and a half.

It was a Christmas gift from my nephew Jacob. It is labeled as the ***Infra Red Duck Hunter Target Set***.

It comes complete with two targets and batteries.

It really is a great gift, for all sorts of reasons:

1. Careful selection
2. Paid the price
3. Ready for action

But here it is, some 18 months after it was given to me, still unused. I enjoyed receiving it. I enjoy having it. But I have yet to enjoy the gift the way it was intended. I'm not sure why I haven't enjoyed it:

1. Silly
2. I like having it more than using it
3. Not a priority

I have the gift. It was paid for, and entirely (even legally) transferred into my possession. But have yet to put it into use.

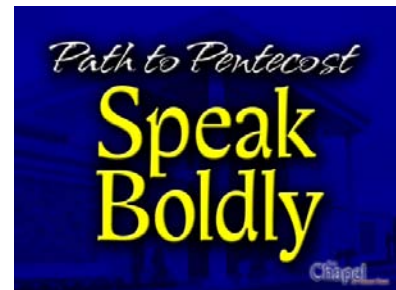
Based on feedback (nothing particularly negative or apprehensive really), I understand that folk are wondering just what I'm up to with this series.

Am I trying to make this more of a ***Pentecostal church?***

- Style
- Demonstrations
- Less formal
- More spontaneous

I'm far more concerned that we are ***Pentecostal people.***

I'm convinced that God isn't all that interested in filling institutions with His Spirit... but I know that He wants to fill people with His Spirit.



This is the message of the Book of Acts that was first spoken by Jesus in the Gospels. God's plan for people is that we would be filled with His Spirit.

God calls us to Himself for eternity; Heaven will be our eternal home when we are fully in the presence of God. But while we remain in this life, God's presence is an inside-out job.

When we believe in Jesus we are given the Holy Spirit. This gift of God is ours.

I wonder if we deal with God's gift like I've treated Jacob's gift.

- Neatly wrapped in a package
- Possessed, but unused
- Maybe feeling silly to use it
- Liking the idea of it, but not prioritizing the use of it

Let's look, again, at the episode in Acts 4. We had Glenn read beginning with verse 23. The context of the story is that Peter and John had just been released from jail after an appearance before a *kangaroo court*. By the power of the Holy Spirit these men were speaking powerful words, in Jesus name, and thousands were coming to faith in Christ. The powerful words were accompanied by demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power through miraculous healings.

When they "went back to their own people" they acknowledged that opposition to God was nothing new, quoting Psalm 2. While it appears that they quoted the first few verses, I'm confident that they had the last verse in mind as well:

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The opposition that they were experiencing, prophesied in Psalm 2 and demonstrated throughout the Old Testament was keenly experienced by Jesus.

Jesus was betrayed, not merely by the man Judas, but by all His people. He suffered, that day, alone. His suffering was according to the "power and will" of the Father, and was the precursor of the opposition and suffering His followers would experience.

Now, Lord, consider their threats...



#### ACTS 4:23-26

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. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 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? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one."

#### ACTS 4:27-30

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. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

God's best miracles grow from the seedbed of opposition. When mere mortals use their power in order to demonstrate the weakness of God's people, God's power is all the more evident. Whether that tyranny comes from:

- Egyptian Pharaoh
- Persian King
- Roman Caesar
- Jewish Pharisees

Now, Lord, consider their threats...

Their request had two parts:

1. enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness<sup>1</sup>
2. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

These were prayer requests that they could bring to God with great faith, because they were already experiencing both.

When the Holy Spirit came, on the Day of Pentecost as it is recorded in Acts 2, the followers of Jesus were transformed. They spoke with supernatural power that resulted in people turning to faith in Jesus by the thousands. They experienced "great boldness."

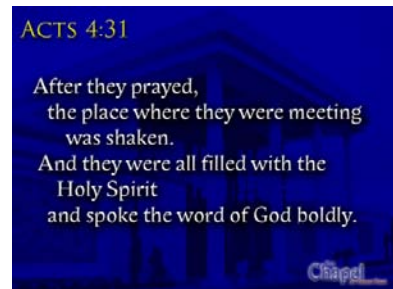
Along with Spirit-empowered speech came "signs and wonders." Jesus had promised that His followers would perform many more miracles than He did while here on earth; His promise is being fulfilled and started dramatically in these first chapters of the Book of Acts.

Here in Chapter 4, those who had jailed Peter and John were essentially forced to drop the charges because the powerful testimony of healing could not be denied.

The two-part prayer was pretty simple... and answered promptly and powerfully.

<sup>31</sup>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.<sup>3</sup>

Once again, the place was shaken. Once again they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Once again they spoke the word of God boldly.



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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ac 4:29.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ac 4:30.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ac 4:31.

Who are **they**?

- Peter and John and the other disciples
- Their own people, many who were there in that Upper Room
- New people who were being added to their numbers

Some were likely “filled” for the first time... others were “filled” again.

So what about us today?

If you believe in Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit is yours. Are we enjoying the gift? Are we putting the gift to the intended use?

If you have yet to believe... know that the Holy Spirit is real. You are not here today by accident. And the sense of pulling that you feel is something significant, something genuinely spiritual. Make today your day and believe that Jesus is our savior.



I want to invite you to join me in unpackaging the gift. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- Speaking boldly
- Performing signs and wonders
- Speaking in tongues

A pastor friend of ours was telling us about a guy who has been coming to his church recently. He has some church background in his history, but doesn't have all the *lingo* down. His life was a wreck, marriage was almost over... but thought they'd give church one last chance. Since giving God a chance, things have really begun to turn around.

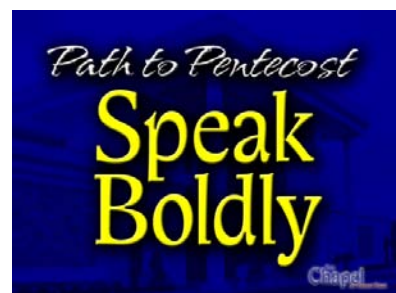


This week he apparently called, wanting to talk with the pastor, because he evidently “filled himself with the Holy Spirit” and wanted to know what to do next.

Now I don't suppose we “fill ourselves” with the Holy Spirit... but we do have a part in taking steps of faith. “Taking off the twist ties” and putting the gift, that is already ours, to use.

In this matter of speaking boldly... does anyone know a believer who does not want to speak about Jesus? Is there a believer who doesn't want to share their faith?

Then what stops us? I think we forget to pray the way they did in Acts. I think we forget to really rely on the Holy Spirit to arrange and empower our speech.



We get tied up:

- Waiting for the right education
- Looking for the perfect opportunity
- Wishing that we had some sort of eloquence of speech
- Worried that we'll fail

The message of Scripture today is that this is the Spirit's work. All we need to do is take steps, making ourselves available, allow the Spirit to use us.