

7/10/22 - Acts 4:1-22 - "The Fruit of God's Power"

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Date: 10 July 2022

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to consider a couple scenarios, intense scenarios around the world, which is a common daily occurrence, and then pray for our time getting in there.

But in order to frame our minds in the very nearness of the situation here, I want us to consider a couple different people. A woman in India watches as her sister is dragged off by Hindu nationalists. She doesn't know if her sister is alive or dead. A man in a North Korean prison is shaken awake after being beaten unconscious until being shaken awake for the beatings to continue again and again.

A woman in Nigeria runs for her life. She has escaped from Boko Haram who kidnapped her. She is pregnant, and when she returns home, her community will likely reject her and her baby.

A group of children are laughing and talking as they come down to their church's sanctuary after eating together, and instantly, many of them are killed by a bomb blast on this Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka.

[1 : 30] All of these people, real people, in real parts of the country receiving opposition for their faith. They have different names, different cultures, different hometowns, different regions, and different stories as we're talking about international students, but they all share the same faith in Jesus Christ.

And this persecution can take many shapes, many forms, but normally occurs under authoritarian governments that see the power of God as a threat.

by way of threats, imprisonment, violence, and often death, Christians are targeted for their faith and living out the fruit of the gospel, of their salvation.

Even witnessing the fruit of the gospel spreading from one Christian to the other through that proclamation. And today's message shares identical opposition faced by bold Christians.

Right? So as we continue in this series, let us be attentive to what God desires to speak to us today in challenge or encouragement of how he desires to speak to each one of us individually as well.

[2 : 51] And let us not make a mistake that there is nothing uncertain concerning the effectiveness of the power of God's word. But it's actually the opposite.

If there's anything uncertain, it's us to uphold its effectiveness and to trust in its effectiveness even in the face of opposition.

It's not a problem with the word, it's a problem with us. So let's begin this passage and see this unfold as we come to the Lord in prayer one last time before we dive in.

Let's pray. Father, humble us by the power of your word. Help us to be challenged and encouraged to be pruned and to be grown.

let this season of preaching in this church, Steel Valley Church, be one that produces fruit as a result of every converted soul who calls this church home.

[4 : 04] And Father, we give to you anybody who may be distant from you at this time tuning in on the live stream or in our midst and we pray that you just capture their hearts by the gospel today.

and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So I'm going to break this up into three different sections. The first section is the world's attempt to silence the church.

We see that simply in four verses. It's sort of the scene setting up in this narrative as they were speaking to the people, as they were just coming out of this sermon.

You can imagine that Peter and John are sort of in their conclusion remarks of their sermon in the temple to this great amount of people. I mean, this verse mentions 5,000 people.

That's quite a church plant, isn't it? And we see that in this message was spoken a truth that cut with the grain, cut the grain of the culture that did not agree with that of the worldly constructs within the temple of which in the name of God was dedicated to God, but by action they were actually not

worshiping God.

[5 : 19] They were worshiping themselves in the name of religion. And so what we see here is that the power of God was made manifest to these people inside the temple and bringing that sermon illustration.

Can you remember that sermon illustration from last week of that crippled man, the congenitally crippled man from birth? On the way to proclaim the temple they bring a sermon illustration of God's plan of restoration within our hearts.

Just as the physically disabled man was healed, God is on a mission to heal us spiritually. And he said, look at this man. And they're continuing to look at this man in this passage.

This verse as they were speaking makes a contextual bridge between what was going on previously and what is going on now. We see two observations these religious leaders, these highly respected, elite men with the cool robes and hat, they were very annoyed at the message.

They were annoyed at who was teaching the message, completely annoyed. And that might be considered the fruit of unbelief. They were annoyed. And then you look over to this crowd and you see, can you imagine 5,000 heads within that temple, within Solomon's portico.

[6 : 51] I mean, that's a lot of people. And as the sun is setting down on this day, they're seeing this massive conversion, praising God because of Peter's sermon and the power of God working through him, the fruit of 5,000 believers.

This was powerful, church. There is power in the proclaimed word of God, isn't there? And Peter gave something that no priest of any educational level, regardless of the Torah being memorized, they preached something that is so different and empowered by the Holy Spirit that connected the notes of the Old Testament into the melody of the gospel at this time period.

The hearers of this word came to 5,000 as they hear the melody, that pleasant melody of the gospel of which Jesus Christ is the refrain.

And they came to faith. This message that caused 5,000 to believe caused a few within this crowd to be annoyed. Some people were quite annoyed. We meet the priest, the temple captain, the Sadducees.

They're disdained about this. They come upon as a wet blanket upon everything that's going on and go to the source, Peter and John.

[8 : 17] They did not agree with the teachers nor their proclamation. A wet blanket they were. But guess what? These teachers are in for it because you cannot deny the fruit of God's word.

You cannot deny the power of God. You can argue about the message and what is being taught all you want. But the fruit of that message is sovereign and it will take root whether you agree with it or not.

Have you ever thought about how confirming it is when the world comes against the message that the church proclaims? Think about this. How confirming it is.

Some people look for shooting stars and God send me a shooting star to confirm if I should buy this car or that car. or these other insignificant things in this life.

But have you ever thought in the robust faith of the church that when the world comes against the message we proclaim it serves as confirmation that we are actually quite on track with what Jesus intended for his church.

[9 : 32] That if we see anything developing in Acts we see that with the people that it would matter most to that it should matter most to the religious elite it did not persuade them.

In other words it's not a popularity context it's not political to get to the top. The gospel has come has come for those who realize of their need realize of their brokenness not the guys who have this beautiful gate and have this robe and the hat and all these things that symbolically represent that they have it all together spiritually blind spiritually disabled they truly are.

Right? In fact when we take it a step further the world's rejection of our message as a New Testament church actually validates that we are on course.

And the opposite is sadly true as well for many around the world and especially within this country and especially in Youngstown is that when the world is accepting of our message it actually validates that you may be off course.

The church comes with opposition. Jesus promised it Luke 21 12 he promised there would be tension that the church would face.

[10:51] He said but before all this meaning the end of time they will lay their hands on you and persecute you delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake.

What we see in this short scene of verses is setting up what Jesus promised himself. You see we are without excuse to do the same in an unbelieving world.

We are commissioned. It's not an option. It's not a call on gifting or not. We are all called and without excuse to teach and proclaim the gospel.

we are to participate in its proclamation. However that may translate into your life.

Our participation in the proclamation is a fruit of our salvation. It is a right to every Christian on earth just as the conversion of others are a fruit of the message that we bear.

[12:03] You see the fruit of in the Christian life can always be reverse engineered because you may say well I don't have that gift I'm an introvert and I have all these excuses I've always been that sort of I never danced at school dances and this and that and actually people I turn people away it's better that I don't speak and I just pray right?

All these things but if we reverse engineer the Christian life it is reverse engineered to the core of God's power working in his church and it starts within our hearts and spreads to our neighbors to our co-workers to our families the church must always be attentive to the fruit of proclamation it's important to know that the fruit of our salvation is participating in that proclamation and so secondly this passage sort of takes us naturally the sun is setting in this temple you can imagine quite an uproar this party probably lasted into the night of 5,000 people praising God and it takes us into the next day and so we see the world's examination of this message it's almost like they put the message on trial right?

It takes us to the next day so verse 5 and 6 on the next day all the religious authority they kind of call the Sanhedrin together the whole priestly family they sat down and inquired of them by what power or by what name did you do this?

Who are you working for? Right? In all our crime movies and shows bound up with that spotlight on their face with that weird fan going in the background who are you working for?

They say by what power or by what name do you do this? You see the Sanhedrin had an allegiance to God by word but denied them with their actions their hearts were far from it this was a group of people that was prescribed in Numbers 11 the Sanhedrin an executive committee to examine affairs like this by what power in other words revealing who is it that you work for?

[14:21] What's the aim that that you are trying to accomplish? well the healed man robustly proclaims like this God my boss is a restorer he has come to restore that which is broken and by what name do you do this?

Who receives the credit? The same God who is restoring all things this council could not could simply not deny the fact that a supernatural work had been done they could not deny what just took place belief or unbelief you can't not deny the fruit of the gospel and we see Peter filled with the Holy Spirit not to say that he was empty of the Holy Spirit and this is a weird little you know other filling he was overwhelmed in God's power to speak equipped just as any preacher would be equipped to do and said to them rulers of the people and elders if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man by what means this man has been healed let it be known to you and all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead by him this man is standing before you well man I love this it's as if the Sanhedrin were expecting to broadcast their power we're going to sit you down in front of all of us 70 high priestly family though educated ones who got it all together and we see the apostle Peter's boldness is almost translated in a subtle snark irony in that he uses this counsel and this questioning and interrogation time to proclaim the gospel isn't that absolutely amazing if you're interrogating us concerning the fruit of a good deed done to a crippled man and you want to know who the doctor is to call on this Jesus Jesus of Nazareth yeah that little little region north right that something good can come out of Nazareth and it did and it has been made manifest to the world and dwelt among us in the world and you rejected the Jesus of Nazareth you rejected him let it be known to you notice how he he does he takes this proclamation let it be known to you here and it's like he he turns around I would imagine to the people outside of this hearing to all the people in

Israel the name of Jesus whom you killed whom God raised by him this man is healed salvation is in Jesus Jesus Jesus what a beautiful and powerful name is the name of Jesus Peter gets into

quoting Psalm 118 about the builder and the rock but even his pronouncement here connects to a little bit earlier in Psalm 118 verse 10 where it says all nations surrounded me in the name of the Lord I cut them off they surrounded me surrounded me on every side in the name of the Lord I cut them off they surrounded me like bees they went out like a fire among thorns in the name of the Lord I cut them off I was pushed hard so that I was falling but the Lord helped me and this is they have no idea the power of God in this situation it transcends all earthly natural order the power of God has come upon this unqualified individual to preach with boldness and actually stand up to the Sanhedrin and proclaim the gospel this is a power contest right in your strength you put the son of man to death you religious leaders actually

I won't even give you credit for that right because he volunteered for that we'll be honest he gave his life as a ransom he didn't kill anyone and in his strength let's make it be known that he was raised up and when he was raised up guess who else he raised this crippled man up in the same power in his strength death couldn't even hold and in your power you laid this crippled man at the temple gate entered in enjoyed your hour of prayer and your sacrifices but in God's power he raised him up this is a power contest this Sanhedrin is facing the power of God the world is facing the power of God Peter says out of Psalm 118 this Jesus is the stone that you that was rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone and there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved meet

[20 : 21] Jesus the one and only stone that was called to be the cornerstone of the church it's not as if all history God looked out to see who would be able to fit this role Jesus was God's only begotten son he was the only stone of which the entire church was made to be founded upon the cornerstone of which the building project of the church is set upon he had one purpose to save and was rejected in the building project by man a project of restoration of God's kingdom a project to call sin to repentance to come to cross to receive forgiveness of sin you see this is this is a gospel reality for us today church you can't miss the gospel in this because to reject

Jesus Christ is to reject any hope of salvation you can get along just fine just like the unbelievers next door to you and have a nice house and a nice pool and a nice family and everything like that but there will come a time where your breath will be very shallow and you will be reaching your eternal state and for the unbeliever it said that this eternal state will be eternal judgment it is not going to be a party as your unbelieving friends claim that it will be there's no party the same will persuade those to continue down this path in order to take as many people with them but what we have here is an exclusive truth here an exclusive truth with an exclusive promise that by Christ alone that if our faith is rooted in that message by our faith we are saved there is no other stone meant for that project there is no other cross that any of us any man created in all eternity that can bear and suffer and atone for that sin this is the good news that we have in Jesus

Christ and this good news has an expiration date and if you are not in Christ today if maybe you have been wavering in your faith for a while now this is your time to be without excuse and to turn to Jesus Christ by your faith he has suffered the wrath that you deserve on the cross he has received the penalty that we all deserve and we got to hand it I mean we have interrogated that message have we not everything in this life that is counter to the church interrogates that message of gender of sexuality of pro-life or pro-death we'll say all of these problems in the world are theological problems that are solved in the cross and so come and rest upon that cornerstone this cornerstone is fixed it's not going anywhere regardless of the world's interrogation they could take our life from us and everything that we own but the cornerstone remains why would we ever dabble in the unrighteousness that we were saved from in our sanctification period often sin can lure its enticing head into our marriages it can lure its enticing head to our jobs and financial affairs especially our tax season deductions why would we ever dabble in unrighteousness that we've been saved from why would we ever want to go back to the other side and dabble with sin and the pleasures of sin I gotta ask any person who is in Christ in our church today to repent of making a mockery of the cross and dabbling in that sin may the church stand so firmly upon the cornerstone bearing fruit of the gospel during the interrogation of the world and may we be found guilty of being Christ followers and so the last section as it's playing out is this undeniable fruit of that gospel and this will carry us to the end of the passage verse 13 now when they saw the boldness of Peter I mean you could imagine they'd be pretty taken taken back by this and perceived that they were uneducated they were common men they were just like us with dirt underneath our nails right they were astonished they recognized that they had been with Jesus church the fruit was undeniable in this church similar

to the unexpected moment of

Jesus opening the scrolls who is this guy right these fishermen exude boldness that is given not by education not by classes concerning the Torah but by anointing by presence with Jesus by being disciples of Jesus they recognized that they had been with Jesus isn't this marveling these men were clothed in the aroma that was smelled by the unbelieving world they were identified as Jesus followers to be proximity at one point with Jesus the fruit was undeniable and guess what they they look at these men then they look beside imagine this scene looking beside them seeing the man who was healed standing before them standing before them they had nothing to say in opposition the fruit is undeniable the fruit of God's work through the church binds any accusatory tongue of the world imagine the awkward moment of just wondering where they're going to be going after this hearing with this lame man like

[27 : 33] I signed up for this this is quite tense and challenging I just want to go tell my family we see this private meeting on the docket of this meeting what shall we do with these men we can't deny it because the fruit is undeniable maybe this council had that agenda wrong though maybe they should have revised the docket to actually say what shall we do with Jesus we cannot deny his power now that's a question worth pondering to an unbelieving world isn't it the pridefulness of man runs deep it corrupts our hearts with control and power and so it is same the same for the world so the scene started sort of coming down to resolution but in order that it may spread no further among the people let let us charge them to speak no more in the name of

Jesus so they called them back in and charged them not to speak in the name or teach teach at all in the name of Jesus and the attempted silence of the church was in its very proclamation notice that this is important church because it is not by the miracles that they are indicted but it's proclamation of the message miracles are beneficial to the world yeah go on do all that but when it comes to the message of an exclusive truth of Jesus Christ alone by faith alone the glory of God alone right that's where it starts rubbing the world the wrong way how are you going to tell me how I get to live my life and indeed in the book of Judges everyone did what was right in their own eyes and so the problem continues through the centuries and so we have a broadcast of this indictment these charges and we see something important when the church is devoted to the word of God and the work of God the world just cannot deny the fruit that it bears the fruit proclaims the glory of the message and the work of the church and this scenario made me think of the reality that Jesus promised to the church the truth is a situation like this often if I could go around an inventory you guys and have a little conversation an intense meeting like this with the Sanhedrin would probably freak a lot of people out especially if you're introverted who don't like to step on a lot of toes but then there's the other side where it's like oh yeah I'll wear my steel toed boots and I'll show that Sanhedrin what to think about this message right but I think more so this would freak a lot of Christians out it's a moment when your faith is on trial but do you believe really what you're saying when the world is questioning you and you have to make a choice to trust in its effectiveness and regardless of the consequence or to buckle under the pressure when faith is on trial because we all saw what they did to

Jesus and being in our century today we all see what they did to the disciples and to the martyrs throughout the centuries we see what they do to these men and women in other countries coming against the name of Jesus Christ but Peter and John respond whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God you must judge that's your problem for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard the fruit of that which we have seen the fruit of which we have heard they were with Jesus and in so doing are called apostles and upon the prophets and apostles the church of Christ is built look at the fruit you see when faith is on trial the church points to the fruit Jesus

Christ really died Jesus Christ really rose Jesus suffered for all conquered the grave and is right in front of all of us in word and proclamation believe in this and the verse ends and we'll wrap up our time they continued to further threaten them they let them go finding no way to punish them because of the people because of the people in verse 21 they couldn't punish them because this assembly would turn into a riot the fruit of the gospel caused the authorities to be unable to punish them you see look at the fruit it is undeniable and especially because they were praising God for what had happened for the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old their unbelief runs a great history of dropping this man off at the temple gate for more than 40 years and they still would not believe if you could imagine

[33 : 17] Martin Luther this made me think of Martin Luther as he stood at the castle church in Wittenberg when he was charged to recant and he said I cannot and will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right or safe here I stand in the observable threats rejection hostility that we face in the world the church has done nothing but speak of what they have seen and heard and this has nothing to do with subjectivism of what we specifically have seen and heard but we rest on an apostolic witness as bound within the word of God that says Jesus Christ really died really rose and he is coming again amen and this is the truth that stretches far beyond our subjectivism of seeing things in our lives whether they're spiritual realities we come back to the book in all things this is an apostolic conviction that's embedded in scripture as first

John one says that which was from the beginning which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we have looked upon which we have touched with our hands concerning the word of life the life was made manifest and we have seen it we testify to it we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the father and was made manifest to us that which we have seen and heard and proclaim also to you so that you may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ it's not a message of subjectivity it's a message of apostolic truth this is which we stand upon here we stand within the word of God preserved for us is an apostolic message that transcends all time all places and applies from generation to generation to generation the church's submission to worldly authority ends when they demand conformity to man's word and reject

God's word that's an important topic for our day today the church's submission to worldly authority ends when they demand conformity to man's word and reject God's word here we stand the world is essentially fighting a losing battle we know how it ends and the church will simply not conform to the world to do so would condemn the God who calls the church to non conformity the church is called to fear God not man there is no man that could ever instill as much fear as our Lord and Savior the creator of the heavens and the earth that we melt in his majesty that is worthy of our fear not a dictator not political figures not threats not rejection not hostility and we reverently obey the great commission in constant disregard of any threat from the watching world but

I gotta take this a step further because we're talking about effectiveness in the word and we're talking about fruit and this passage begs for us to spend our attention as well to observe fruit so I want us to think of the fruits the message of the word of God being that Jesus Christ came he came to rebuild restore the kingdom and restore corruption in the world to call the world to conviction and repentance and to turn to faith in him that's that's the message and then we got the work based on the message and the work that no one can stop the Lord in in its origin no one could stop him from doing what he did the cross is done it is finished we are given a chance of grace in this stretch of time period praise God and so no one can stop the Lord and so in its origin or its effect in our lives as flowing out from our salvation in sanctification no one can stop the Lord

God is sovereign in our lives so when the message and work is developed a people of God around the word of God and the church is established to live in complete and total rejection of worldly standards everything of which that the world values is flawed if it is not built upon God's word so how does our fruit testify to that message to that work as being a people of God does it testify to belief or does it actually testify to unbelief in our lives in other words to put it simply what indictments Sanhedrin we're here what indictment would they charge against us from this past week of being followers of Christ want to be real there might not be anything that would indict us and that's a sad reality the church should function in opposition of the world the family should function in opposition of the world our marriages should function in opposition of the world in the church that there's a day

[39 : 16] Sundays the Lord's day that we dedicate specifically this is a glorious day for the church to come together to assemble like no other day to gather under the Lord's name and to do the Lord's work this is a day that God has marked out for us to observe and not only that within our midst there's charity unexplainable love within our midst right and so you might ask well I wonder how I'm doing that's what the pastors are for to be growing to be maturing to be guiding leading feeding and guarding you ask your pastors the church ought to have fruit of devotion selflessness and love the family should function in opposition of the world like when stay-at-home moms are asked what they do for a living you shouldn't be stammering around that answer stay-at-home mom oh you know the world will say you don't do anything like well yeah

I do exactly as God has commanded me to care for my family to raise my children in a Christian home to instruct them this is what God values yeah we can't afford that that nice house that everyone else has that would beg for a two-family two-household income but I'm being devoted to God when the neighbors testify to the fruit in your lives and your family do they think that you're just a crazy set of Italians yelling at each other all day here and breaking bottles and things being thrown in the shed and just doors slamming right how would the fruit of the world or how would the world view the fruits are you living in opposition of the world well this might be a good question to ask your family how you're doing and in the marriage functioning in opposition of the world I gotta hand to you the world is sexualized and it's getting worse and worse and worse and to the point of acceptance and in the church every marriage within our midst today needs to be porn free there is no room in a

Christian marriage for porn there is no room in a Christian's life for porn men and women that marriage should be abounding in sacrificial love reflecting the great authority and submission that God calls a great complementarian design that God has created from creation and even for singles stealing a quote out of Nancy Wilson's book single and satisfied a single woman can be just as fruitful as the mother of a loving family even if her fruit doesn't look the same ask your friends how you're doing ask your spouse how you're doing are you improving or are you just kind of getting by day by day church there is nothing uncertain concerning the effectiveness of the word of God that is plain and clear but rather uncertainty concerns our lives exuding that the problem is us the problem is not here and so we the better the sooner we realize that in our lives the sooner the world can throw their accusations and the church may stand out and proclaim the gospel here we stand united in message and work set apart as the people of God and we can do no other may God help us in this let's pray continue to follow on this for now ive