

# SILENCE THE PREACHERS

Acts 4:13-17 NIV

Pastor Paul Ciniraj of India wrote these words:

“I’m a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the power of the Holy Spirit. The dye has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I’m a disciple of Jesus. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I’m finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don’t have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won’t give up, shut up, let up, until I have

stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ. I have a great hope of His coming back. So I preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problems recognizing me; for my banner is clear!!!”

This sounds like something that Peter or John could have written. When examined by the Sanhedrin concerning the man that was healed, they didn’t shut up, let up, or back up; but preached up for the glory of Christ.

**It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. (Acts 4:10)**

“My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure...” because, **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)**

The rulers, elders and teachers of the law, along with the high priest and his family members had quite a dilemma. A bona fide, verifiable miracle had taken place. The credit had been given to a person that had been crucified with their approval, but, according to Peter and John, had been raised from the dead. And this news was spreading.

Luke writes that:

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.<sup>14</sup> But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.<sup>15</sup> So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.<sup>16</sup> “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it.<sup>17</sup> But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name.” (Acts 4:13-17)

Luke does not record that John said anything, but confidence is credited to both Peter and John. Confidence – the opposite of hesitancy – poise and coolness in spite of spending the night in jail; then being called to account by the ruling council.

One by one, the examiners realized that their assumption about these two men had flaws. Where did they learn to speak like this? They were unschooled; uneducated; without technical training by any of the rabbis they knew.

The examiners were amazed; surprised that these men were able to speak their convictions with such boldness. And one after another, they began to realize that Peter and John had been with Jesus. Maybe there was something to this guy after all.

Let's spend a moment with this unschooled, ordinary classification. These men had attended the school of Jesus for more than three years. Just for example sake, let's say that they spent twelve hours a day listening to or observing instruction in some way, allowing the rest of the time for sleeping, eating, and a shower. That's twelve hours a day x 365 – no summer vacation; no spring break, no time off for Thanksgiving or Christmas x 3. How many hours of education is that? If my math is correct, that is 5,840 hours of instruction, including pop quizzes.

During my apprentice training for carpentry, the class ran during regular school year, four hours a night, two nights a week, for four years. Again, if my math is correct, that is approximately 1,200 hours of instruction.

I also have a four year college degree along with another five years that includes home study courses and some computer programming classes. For the four year college degree, let's double the apprentice training hours. That would be 1200 + 2400 = 3,600. And for the other years let's add another 1200. Total: 4800 hours over a 13 year period. The point being:

The disciples had more semester hours of training under the greatest teacher of all time than the average graduate. They may have been technically unschooled, but they were not uneducated.

There may have been something else besides confidence that amazed these examiners.

The miracle was obvious and undeniable. Peter and John claimed no credit at all. There was nothing in this for them - but a night in jail

Their motive for healing the man was not for any personal benefit: political, social or monetary. They acted out of compassion for someone in need: just the opposite attitude of some of these examiners.

Remember why they were arrested?

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup> They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. (Acts 4:1-2)

Peter and John were stepping on some pretty important toes. You can't teach in the temple. That's the priest's job. And you certainly can't teach resurrection of the dead as long as the Sadducees were around.

But, Peter and John were not in the temple to take over the priest's job of teaching. They were on their way to the temple to worship when they stopped to show kindness to a cripple beggar. The man was healed; no strings attached.

Matthew 16 records that Jesus warned the disciples to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. This may have been one of the pop quizzes.

Matthew 16 begins with the Pharisees and the Sadducees testing Jesus asking for a

sign. Following this encounter, Jesus and the disciples left that area in a boat. While headed for the opposite shore, the disciples realized that they forgot supplies.

“Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

<sup>7</sup> They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn't bring any bread.”

<sup>8</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? <sup>9</sup> Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>10</sup> Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>11</sup> How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” <sup>12</sup> Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:6-12)

Beware of the ‘what's in it for me’ attitude.

Matthew 23 records seven woes against the teachers of the law and Pharisees. Summing these up, Jesus asks them a question:

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? <sup>34</sup> Therefore I am sending you prophets and

wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.<sup>35</sup> And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.<sup>36</sup> I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:33-36)

As we continue through Luke's record of the early church, we will see that the religious establishment tried to silence the prophets, wise men, and teachers sent to them, just as they tried to silence Peter and John after this miracle.

What would happen if the teachers and preachers became silent? What would happen if God's messengers were prevented from expressing His will?

The following story tells how one young man's direction in life changed, because the preacher wasn't silent.

"A seminary professor was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. One morning they were eating breakfast in a little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, "I hope he doesn't come over here."

But sure enough, the man came over to their table. "Where are you folks from?" he asked in a friendly voice.

"Oklahoma," they answered.

"Great to have you here in Tennessee," the stranger said. "What do you do for a living?"

"I teach at a seminary," he replied.

"Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I've got a really good story for you." And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down. The professor groaned and thought to himself, "Great. Just what I need -- another preacher story!"

"The man started, "See that mountain over there?" He pointed out the restaurant window. "Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up because every place he went, he was always asked the same question: 'Hey, boy, who's your daddy?' Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question: 'Who's your daddy?' He would hide at recess and lunch time from other students. He would avoid going into stores because that question hurt him so bad.

"When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, 'Who's your daddy?' But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast, he got caught and had

to walk out with the crowd. Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, 'Son, who's your daddy?'

The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, 'Who's your daddy?' The new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to the scared little boy: 'Wait a minute! I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.' With that, he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, 'Boy, you've got a great inheritance -- go and claim it.

'With that, the boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your daddy?' he'd just tell them, 'I'm a child of God.' The distinguished gentleman got up from the table and said, "Isn't that a great story?"

The professor responded that it really was a great story. As the man turned to leave, he said, "You know, if that new preacher hadn't told me that I was one of God's children, I probably would never have amounted to anything!" And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over and asked, "Do you know that man who was just sitting at our table?"

The waitress grinned and said, "Of course. Everybody here knows him. That's Ben Hooper. He's the former governor of Tennessee!"

Don't silence the preachers. Like Peter and John, you don't need a formal education to be an ambassador for Jesus. If you have been with Jesus, you have been taught by the very best. You can speak with confidence.

Who knows? With a few words on behalf of Jesus, you may change the course of a life that was headed for destruction.