The Challenge of Serving God
Acts 4:8-22

Introduction:
A. Our text opens with common folks doing uncommon things.
B. New converts to Christianity were excited about Jesus and were doing his work.
C. The greatest ability is availability.
D. Are we willing to make ourselves available to serve Jesus?
E. Let us note that:
   I. Confessing Jesus Completes Our Weaknesses. Vs. 13
      A. Their testimony was bold.
      B. Their faith was new.
      C. Their education was lacking.
      D. Their power was great. God
      E. Their guide was infallible. Holy Spirit.
   II. Confessing Jesus Confounds the Skeptic. Vs. 15-17
      A. They confessed that the healing was genuine. Vs. 13
      B. They were silenced by God’s healing power.
      C. They were fearful of losing their positions. Vs.17
      D. They conspired against Peter and John. Vs. 21
      E. They knew the truth and refused to accept it. Vs. 16
   III. Confessing Jesus Honors God.
      A. Peter and John were humble men whose message pierced the hearts of those who heard.
      B. Peter and John had no power, nor authority. They could call no army to their defense.
      C. They simply believed Jesus and went forward sharing the Gospel.
      D. They spoke with the authority of the Holy Spirit.
      E. Yet Their message changed lives.
   IV. Confessing Jesus Helps Others.
      A. Peter boldly said that it was Jesus who had healed the impotent man. Vs. 9
      B. Satan always flees in the face of truth.
      C. The constraining love of Jesus silenced their critical voices.
      D. Peter boldly spoke the power message of Hope.
      E. This message reveals the rejection in every unbelieving heart.

Conclusion:
A. Intimacy with Christ makes one brave.
B. Intimacy with Christ makes one pure in heart.
C. Intimacy with Christ makes one forgiven of sin.
D. What is your relationship with Jesus?
Paul is faced with the reality that the gospel is being preached by some to try and upset him, even while others do it out of love. His response is a powerful testament to his faith in God. To him, his pride is far less important than the cause of Jesus. He takes it a step further in the end of our passage, where his very life is forfeit if it will bring people to his Lord.

If he lives, he lives for God. If he dies for God, even better! To live is Christ - Jesus is his all-consuming purpose in life. Fulfillment is to please Jesus, failure is to be less than he could be for his risen Lord. This is an incredible idea and entirely contrary to the spirit of the world. His aim was not money, sexual love, fame, honor, education or even personal happiness. His aim was Jesus, all the time and completely. Whether he was able to preach boldly or people mocked his name, Jesus was exalted. The rest was, to Paul, all hair splitting. Because Jesus will ultimately show His total victory, no matter what else happens, Paul could not fail.

The gravity of this idea has inspired much great thought over the years, often centering on the familiar phrase 'to live is Christ.' In addition to these, there is a great old hymn that was written by Adelaide Pollard in 1907 called Have Thine Own Way Lord. One of the stanzas, presumably inspired by our text today, goes like this:

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit 'till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

How about you? Can you pray that earnestly today, or are you holding back something from the cause of Jesus? It is time to offer yourself up to Christ: Only and always.

Student Devotional  Heritage Baptist Institute

That Looks Good on You!

Learn: God deserves praise for everything from His creation to his work in our lives.

Action: I will praise God, my hope and shield and it will be beautiful on me.

I. The call to praise. Vs. 1-3
   a.) Like clothes that fit just right, praise fits the godly.
   b.) Like the sure clothes on a different body, praise is a grotesque joke on the ungodly.
   c.) We are to praise skillfully and with joy!

II. Praise Him for creation vs. 4-9
   a.) We see God in the world, manifest in terrible splendor.
   b.) We should praise Him for He is the Creator.
   c.) It is beautiful for the upright to see God's beauty in His strength.

III. Praise Him for His Sovereignty vs. 10-17
   a.) We can praise the Lord of history, who declares the end from the beginning
   b.) It is beautiful for the upright to recognize that God has an efficacious plan.

IV. Praise Him for His individual work vs. 18-22
   a.) From the world to the nations to me. God is God.
   b.) It is beautiful for the upright to know the transforming power of God.

Bro. Justin Gatlin
Youth Director Unity MBC Richwood, TX

IN THE STORM
Luke 8:22-25

This text reminds us of an interesting event on the life of our Savior. The disciples felt threatened by this storm, yet our Lord slept peacefully.

I. They had set out with Christ
   A. What a privilege it is to have Him with us.
   B. Jesus had instructed them to launch forth. We often have the often have the
idea that if we are obeying the Lord that we will not encounter any storms.
C. Is He with you along your journey?
D. He will travel with all that will trust Him.

II. His Presence is no Guarantee of Continued Calm.
A. We would like to think it so, but it is not.
B. Surely His presence with us stirs the enemy.
C. The storm did not indicate that they were disobedient.
D. Storms are just part of life.

III. The Storm Does Not Mean He has left us.
A. We should not assume that the storm means we are forsaken.
B. The elements may roar, but He is still near.
C. We must trust Him, even in the darkness.

IV. Do Not Fear if He seems Indifferent.
A. Do not think that He is unconcerned because He does not panic.
B. He is in control of the storm so He does not despair.
C. He is with us in the storm and He will not fail us.
D. We may marvel at His deliverance.

Storms will come and go, but His presence will never fail us.
We should not expect a journey without storms, but we should be assured of His presence as we make each step.

Pastor Ernest Moyers
________ Calvary MBC Livingston, TX._________

Stumbling

James 3:2 For we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech (never says the wrong things), he is a fully developed character and a perfect man, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature. (Amplified version)

Intro. Nothing is more embarrassing than to stumble.

A. In D.C. my wife and I were crossing a street in front of the White house.
   1. For some reason Carolyn did not see the curb.
   2. She fell down on all fours.
   3. Before I could react a young black man helped her up.
   4. Her knee was bleeding and she had skinned herself real good/bad
B. I have a pair of shoes that when I wear them I stumble a lot.
   1. Doesn’t have anything to do with my ability to walk.
   2. It’s the shoes fault!
C. Can you remember when you stumbled?
   1. There is nothing as humiliating or embarrassing as a pratt fall.
   2. The first thing we do is look around to see if anybody noticed.
   3. Some of my stumbling experiences make me shudder.
D. Generally when I am called upon to give a report before a large group of preachers I stumble.
   1. Not in the same way as when I trip on my shoes.
   2. But I stumble when I speak.
   3. My throat gets tight and dry.
   4. I find myself not able to make the words sound right.
   5. More squeaky
E. You know something?
   1. Normally the response from those onlookers is positive.
   2. They identify with my situation
   3. I have heard great speakers admit that they were nervous.
F. Based upon my own personal thoughts I will almost always pray for the person who is openly nervous.
   1. Because I understand.
   2. In seminary we teach young preachers that their best friends are other preachers.
   3. Because we have all been there.
I. What was James saying?
A. He is saying that nobody is perfect. V. 2
   1. We all make our mistakes and stumble.
   2. To stumble is normal.
B. He goes on to say that we often stumble in what we say.
   1. When it comes to the tongue.
   2. We blow it!
C. Have you ever said something that you wish you could take back?
D. Can you imagine the stress that the Hebrews were under. 2:10
   1. The Men were commanded to wear Phylacteries.
   2. Some on their forehead.
   3. And fringes on the bottom of their garments.
E. These were for the purpose to remind other that this man followed the Ten Commandments.
   1. To tell others that you obey all Commandments would bring stress.
   2. Those who observed the Hebrew teachings would readily know that that was impossible.
   3. Because the Ten Commandment are impossible to keep.
F. Paul spoke of this in Romans.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; KJV
   1. That means those with whom we have known have made the mistake.
   2. They too stumble.
K. Of course today the political correct was to by-pass this quaint is to simply say "we miss-spoke"
L. However, we must ask forgiveness and get up and try again.
   1. We can't allow a bad word or action to get us down.
   2. Sometimes when we stumble we also hit a cord of truth that God can use.
   3. Even if it is embarrassing.

II. Our Tongues Betray Us.
A. Our tongues will betray us.
B. If we can control our speech we can control our whole body.
C. The tongue separates us from the animal kingdom.
   1. Mankind is not a gibbering ape.
   2. Man is not a mocking bird.
D. Because of our ability to speak it separates us from all other creation.
E. How we use our speech will tell others about us.
1. When I was a teenager and trying to conform to my peers.
2. Like most young me I tried to expand my vocabulary by using swear words.
3. Since I worked side by side with Dad I sometimes slipped and used a foul word.
4. Dad often said, "You don't need to talk like that." "It will just show your ignorance."
G. It is true our tongues give us away.

Matthew 26: 71-73 And when he was one out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth, And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while, came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for they speech bewrayeth thee. KJV
H. Peter got caught, his Galilean accent gave him away.
I. Your speech will give you away.
J. It tells if you are educated or ignorant.
K. Notice how God used the words of that little girl.
Matthew 26:74-75 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." And he went out, and wept bitterly. KJV
L. Like Peter we too have a way of repentance.
M. When we are guilty wages of sin - death-, God is ready to forgive us.
N. I hope you are not like me
1. I walk around half the time with my foot in my mouth.
2. Because of something careless that I have said to or about others.
3. If I offend you please forgive me.

HOW MANY PEOPLE REALLY UNDERSTAND THE SPEAKER
Exodus 20:1-7

I. Speaker
A. I AM
B. THE LORD
C. Your God
D. Who brought you out of Egypt?

II. History
A. How did they get in bondage in Egypt?
1. Joseph
2. Drought - Famine in the Land
B. Genesis 46:1
1. Jacob sent by God
2. Went to Goshen - River Oaks of Egypt.

III. Bondage
A. More than just slavery
B. gods consuming our time

IV. God is jealous for us
A. How jealous are we for HIM
B. Where is His place in our list of gods?

Conclusion: Joshua 24:15b
As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

Missionary Joe Willtrout Banquo Mission
Jesus As King
Selected Scriptures

Introduction:
A. Whether or not sinful man chooses acknowledge it, Jesus Christ is the Creator and Sovereign King of the universe.
1. Psalm 47:2 - For the LORD most high is terrible;.. awesome.. He is a great King over all the earth.

2. And again the Bible says, Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and His redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no god. Isaiah 44:6

3. Jesus is KING!! ... He is completely sovereign over all! Besides Him there is no god!!

B. With this in mind, and in this time God has given us together let us consider Jesus As King in three aspects.

1. Jesus as the pre-incarnated King.

2. Jesus as the rejected King.

3. Jesus as the returning King

I. First, let us consider Jesus as the pre-incarnated King: [In other words, His position as King before He came to earth.]

   A. Jesus, God the Son, has always existed in perfect harmony with God the Father and God the Spirit.

      1. He is not “a god” ... He is not merely “godlike” ... He is God and the Creator of all things!!

      2. John 1:1-3 - In the beginning was the Word, [a unique name for Jesus Christ] and the Word [Jesus Christ] was with God, and the Word [Jesus Christ] was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. [The very first verse of the Bible says, “in the beginning God ... Eloheim ... God the Father, God the Son and God

C. If we would be what we should be in our service to Jesus Christ we must acknowledge the fact that He is King and surrender totally and completely to Him!

   We deceive ourselves when we suppose our Savior and King will settle for anything less than our unwavering loyalty and obedience. He demands it!! He deserves it!! He is worthy of it!!

II Let us consider Jesus as the rejected King:
Galatians 4:4-5

1. What an amazing truth! Jesus the eternal Son of God ... The mighty Creator and Sovereign Ruler of the universe took on a body of flesh and came into our midst for a specific purpose ... the King came to die for sinners!

Philippians 2:6-8

2. It boggles the mind to know that the King of Glory stepped down from His throne and came into this sin cursed world for no other purpose than to suffer and die on the cross to pay the sin debt for you and me!!

A. Though He came into this world under the most humble of circumstances ... though He forfeited the glories of heaven to walk among men ... He did not forfeit His deity ... He was and is God and King!

1. That infant born of a virgin, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger was King.

When the wise men who had traveled from afar arrived in Jerusalem they asked, ... Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship him. Matthew 2:2

2. As He grew up and worked as a carpenter in the obscure village of Nazareth He was King.

3. When He entered His public ministry, Nicodemus, a prominent ruler of the Jews knew there was something special about Jesus when he said, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him. John 3:2

4. On the occasion of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem just prior to His death on the cross the fickle people acknowledged Him as their King. John 12:12-14

5. During the mockery of a trial the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate asked, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus confirmed it by answering, Thou sayest. ["It is as you say."]

B. Though Jesus had proven His claim to be the Messiah and King of the Jews over and over they ultimately rejected Him!

1. John 1:10-11

2. Isaiah 53:3

3. Truly Jesus was despised and rejected of men ...

a. He was beaten and bruised by sinners ...

b. He was drenched in the spit of infidels ...

c. He was mocked and humiliated by unbelievers ...

C. It is a tragic to know that to their eternal doom multitudes today choose to despise and reject Jesus Christ.

1. There are but two things the sinner can do with Him ... he/she
can crown Him as Savior and King of their life or crucify Him.

IV. Let us consider Jesus as the returning King:

A. we are living in the days immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ!

1. One day soon He is coming back ... He will not be beaten and bruised ... He will not be spat upon ... He will not be mocked or humiliated.

2. He will return in all of His splendor and glory ... He will return as the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Revelation 1:7-8

3. In anticipation of the King’s return the Bible says, Watch therefore [That means to be vigilant ... be alert and prepared]: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Matthew 24:42

   a. Are you ready? Are you eagerly waiting and watching for the return of your King?

   b. May God grant us the wisdom to be always ready!

Conclusion: It has been truthfully said that, “What comes into our minds when we think about Jesus is the most important thing about us.”

I pray that Jesus is your Savior and King. I pray that He occupies the throne of your heart and that you are His loyal and obedient servant.

May we forever consider Him worthy of our utmost love and reverence.

Pastor Loyd Chittenden
Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church

A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ
2 Timothy 2:14

A. Introduction:

1. While the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome awaiting his execution the Holy Spirit inspired him to take up his pen and write his second epistle to Timothy.

   a. Even now in the shadow of the executioner’s axe Paul is found writing last minute instructions to Timothy.

   b. He urged him to lean on the Lord and to stand firm in his commitment to the Lord and the truth of His Word.

      • Take an uncompromising stand for the truth.
      • Guard, defend and proclaim it boldly at any cost and under all circumstances.

2. In the message text, 2 Timothy 2:1-4, Paul compares the life of a yielded man of God to that of a good soldier.

B. Plan of Development:

1. Believers may not think of themselves as soldiers, but in reality they are soldiers in the truest sense.

   a. Through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has chosen him/her to be a soldier in His mighty army.

   b. As Christ’s soldiers we have a battle to fight and a mission to accomplish.

      • The battle field is the world and the war we wage is against sin, Satan and his demonic host.
      • We stand for and defend the righteous standards of God, our
Commander in Chief, without compromise or surrender.

2. It is God’s will that we be *good* soldiers and He has not left us without marching orders that guarantee our success prevailing over His enemies. The message text reveals some things about what a good soldier of Christ is. Let us notice what they are.

I. First, notice the kind of soldiers we are expected to be:

A. Verse 3 - Thou therefore endure hardness as a *good* soldier of Jesus Christ.

1. There are different kinds of soldiers in the ranks of God’s army. Not all soldiers are good soldiers.

   a. There is the poorly motivated soldier – Do just enough to get by. Never happy, always complaining.


   [2] They are slothful in the performance of their duties and must be constantly prodded to get the job done.

   [3] Regretfully some of God’s soldiers fall into the “sad sack” category. As Paul put it in his first letter to the Corinthian church, they are “...saved; yet so as by fire...”  
   [1 Cor. 3:15]

   b. There are nominal soldiers – These are the rank and file soldiers. They are mediocre – go along and get along.

   c. Never volunteer... never get involved... satisfied with the status quo.

   d. Never show much enthusiasm in their service to the Lord.

   e. There are soldiers who are always going AWOL (absent without leave).

   [1] These are the soldiers who frequently lay out of church ... preoccupied more with worldly endeavors... They show up on Easter, Christmas, Fellowship where food is served and an occasional funeral.

   [2] An AWOL soldier leaves a gap in the ranks and someone else has to take up the slack by doing his/her work.

   f. There are outright deserters – This is the weak soldier who melts under pressure and flees in the heat of the battle... In short, this soldier is a coward. [most likely not saved.]

2. So what kind of soldier was Paul talking about when he referred to a good soldier? He was speaking of the elite soldiers – These are the, “Green Beret”, soldiers in God’s army.

   a. They stand apart from the others. Their behavior and conduct is exemplary.

   b. These are mission oriented soldiers who are on fire for the Lord.
and would rather die than surrender.

c. They set the example for others to follow... they are doers of the Word who progressively grow and mature spiritually.

d. This is the type of soldier Paul had in mind when he wrote about a, good soldier of Jesus Christ.

A. Application:

1. What kind of soldier is God pleased with and uses to accomplish His mission?  
   It is the good soldier that the Lord is pleased with, blesses and uses in a mighty way in His service.

2. Being a good soldier for Jesus Christ does not just happen. It takes training, discipline and constant vigilance. We may start out as raw recruits in God’s Army but we certainly should not remain in that state.

   The question we must ask ourselves is, “what kind of soldier am I ... am I a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

II. Notice that the text reveals the distinguishing qualities of a good soldier of Jesus Christ:

A. Verse 3a - Thou therefore endure hardness ... a good soldier is conditioned to endure all kinds of hardship.

1. It is not always easy, to be a good soldier. Soldiering is many times very difficult.
   a. Soldiers face all kinds of extremes in weather – heat, cold, rain snow and wind.

b. Fatigue – they spend long arduous hours without sleep... sometimes little food... loneliness, sorrow, tears and pain.. experience the terror and danger of battle.

   [1] Some are wounded and carry battle scars throughout life.

   [2] Some are taken prisoner and are tortured without mercy.

   [3] There are some who pay the ultimate cost and sacrifice their lives in the line of duty.

2. No less is true of Christian soldiers. Consider the ministry of the apostle Paul. If anyone ever endured hardship as a good soldier for Jesus Christ it was Paul!

   a. Beaten... stared death in the face... stoned...shipwrecked...cast into dungeons... suffered hunger, thirst cold and nakedness.

   b. Many of his countrymen hated him... he was constantly on the move with no place to call home on this earth. As if this was not enough he

   c. Experienced the pressures associated with his concern for the churches.

   d. Paul had set the example of being a good soldier for
Jesus Christ and was able to look back over his life and in spite of the hardships was able to say with all confidence... I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

B. Application:

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ never led us to believe that following Him as a good soldier would be easy.
   a. He said, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and come after Me. [Luke 9:23]
   b. Do you remember the man who came to Jesus and said, “Lord, I’ll follow you wherever you go!” And Jesus said unto Him, foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. [Luke 9:57, 58]

   Jesus was not trying to discourage him, but wanted him to know there are hardships associated with following Him.

2. We are not expected to bear the rigors of battle alone. Our Commander in Chief, Jesus Christ stands beside us!

3. There are no “Lone Rangers” in God’s army who are expected to fight the battle singlehandedly.

[1] Good soldiers rely on one another ... there is a special bond among them.

[2] A good soldier is willing to lay down his life in defense of his brethren.

1 John 3:16 - Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren [fellow soldiers].

III. A good soldier is one who is separated from the world and loyal to his Commander in Chief: Verse 4

A. The good soldier lives a separated life. Cannot be a good soldier and fraternize with the enemy.

   1. James 4:4
   2. Matthew 6:24
   3. 2 Corinthians 6:14

B. Why does the good soldier not become entangled in the affairs of this world? “... that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier.”

   Our Lord is pleased with nothing less than our undivided loyalty.

Conclusion:

To become a soldier of Christ you must repent and believe the gospel.

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10:9-10
SEEING THE UNSEEN

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see... By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible... And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Hebrews 11:1, 3,6, NIV

By faith Moses...regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward... He persevered because he saw Him who is invisible.

Hebrews 11:24, 26-27 NIV

IN GOD WE TRUST

By faith we will follow Him into the Promise Land.