

5/5/24 Christ Fellowship

## Weapons of War – Acts 4

The XM25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement (CDTE) System, is an airburst grenade launcher with programmable ammunition. It fires 25 mm grenades that are set to explode in mid-air at or near the target. A laser rangefinder in the weapon is used to determine the distance to the target. The grenade tracks the distance it has traveled by the number of spiral rotations after it is fired, then detonates at the proper distance to produce an airburst effect. (XM25 CDTE - Wikipedia) In other words, if the enemy is set up behind cover, you just set the range and the grenade goes off over their heads and kills the bad guys.

It sounds like a perfect weapon and would be except it had some drawbacks. It is extremely heavy. You can't carry it and a regular rifle. It has a low round count and it's big and bulky and not always reliable. Not what you need on a battlefield. Warfare is all about trade-offs. You want a big gun but it can't be too big. You want something easy to use but it has to be reliable. You want it to be able to do multiple things but it can't be too intricate or it is easily broken.

This life is all about trade-offs as well. If you want money, you have to work for it. If you want people to be nice to you, you have to be nice to them. If you love rules and hate dogs, you probably shouldn't be coming to Christ Fellowship. That's just how this life is. And that's also how spiritual warfare is as well. It is a trade-off. If you want to defeat the devil, you have to put on the full armor. If you want to have peace, you have to be obedient. And we are going to see today that if you want to defeat the enemy, you have to use the right weapon. And to use the right weapon in the right way, you have to be ready to pay the price.

Let's look at **Acts chapter 4** to see what weapons we have as Christians to defeat our enemy Satan. Peter and John were on their way to church one day and saw a man who was lame begging for money. Evidently, he was there pretty much every day and had been for years but this day Peter and John were led by God to help this man. As you are turning to **Acts chapter 4**, let me read to you what happened in **chapter 3** really quick.

*When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.*

6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Now what a great story that is! And in a sane world, that would have been the end of the story. The man would have joined the first church there in Jerusalem and could give his testimony about how God's power had healed him and everybody would give God glory. But that is not the end of the story. That just sets the story up. Let's read what happened after that in **chapter 4**. We will begin reading in **verse 1** and go through **verse 22**.

*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. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. 5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: 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. 11 Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." 13 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. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. 15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. 16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name." 18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of*

*Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." 21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.*

Has there ever been a situation in your life when you thought, "Oh, this will obviously be a good idea" and then as soon as you start doing it, you begin to realize, um, maybe this wasn't so smart? Story of my life. And most of the time, the things I was doing turned out to be really bad ideas.

Well, think about who is doing most of the talking here. Peter was never known for being subtle or for doing things halfway, right? Ol' Mr. Ear Slicer here. Do you wonder if part way through Peter's monologue, he realized who he was talking to and got a little scared of how this was going to end?

So, evidently after Peter and John healed the man, a crowd gathered and Peter was quick to give the glory to Jesus for being able to do it. And I'm sure that as soon as the religious folks heard that name, their ears perked up because...it was most of this same group that had just killed Jesus a few months before. It was the priests and the captain of the guard and the Sadducees, you know, the religious folk. And it says in **verse 2** that they were greatly disturbed.

Did Peter not learn anything from the trial of Jesus? These are not the people that a good Jew wants to make greatly disturbed. Now, I will say this. At this point, Peter is a changed man in a lot of ways. This is after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came on all those in the room that were Jesus followers. And this is after Jesus was resurrected and had shown Himself to Peter and the others and so Pete had a different perspective on things than he used to. But he wasn't stupid. And he wasn't immortal. And he was still Peter and he still acted like Peter in some ways. And so, I wonder if maybe he started talking and he began to wonder if maybe he should just soft-pedal this a little bit, you know?

Like I said, this life is all about trade-offs. In the 1500's, **Hugh Lattimer** once preached before **King Henry VIII**. Henry was greatly displeased by the boldness in the sermon and ordered Lattimer to preach again on the following Sunday and apologize for the offence he had given. The next Sunday, after reading his text, he thus began his sermon: "*Hugh Lattimer, dost thou know before whom thou are this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life, if thou offendest. Therefore, take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease. But then consider*

*well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence thou comest--upon Whose message thou are sent? Even by the great and mighty God, Who is all-present and Who beholdeth all thy ways and Who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully."* He then preached the same sermon he had preached the preceding Sunday--and with considerably more energy. (M. Cocoris, *Evangelism, A Biblical Approach*, Moody, 1984, p. 126.) Oh, by the way, Hugh Lattimer was burned at the stake in 1555 for displeasing the king, the queen and the religious folks.

See, this life is a trade-off. And in this life, you will be attacked. You will be attacked by the enemy if you speak boldly but, honestly, you will also be attacked if you stay quiet. And what Hugh Lattimer knew and what Peter and John knew is that the greatest weapon of war that we have in this battle is the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus.

Jesus Himself said in **John 16** that in this life we will have trouble. In **Matthew 10**, He said people will hate us because of Him. **Revelation 2** says we will have tribulation and will be tested. So, we know that we will have warfare with this world. We will fight a spiritual battle. Like I said last week, Satan will tempt us to sin and he will also cause bad things to happen to us but we also know that we will also be attacked by this world. And this world hates us as believers as well and we should expect to make them greatly disturbed.

That's what the Gospel always does. That Greek word for disturbed means to suffer great pain and the Gospel will cause pain to people because it convicts them of their sinful lifestyle. That's not the goal. That's not why we do it, of course. But that is always a consequence of telling someone the Gospel. It will show them how their lifestyle choices are wrong and they may not enjoy that if they have lived that lifestyle for years or decades or their whole life.

I remember going door to door in Runaway Bay and inviting people to church when we were over there. I knocked on a door and a man opened it and was nice enough to me until I mentioned I was from the church and then he started screaming at me to get off his property. And all I did was mention church. I didn't even get to the Gospel. He was greatly disturbed.

I said before that using the weapon of the Gospel will mean some trade-offs. It's not magic. Not everybody will accept it. We all know that. And so the first thing you have to trade for the Gospel is your comfort. It may very well make you uncomfortable. It did for Peter and John. They had to spend the night in jail for preaching and talking about Jesus. I'd call that uncomfortable.

You may have to trade off a relationship when you speak the Gospel. I know several of you that have told relatives or friends about the Lord and that put a barrier between you and them. That's not uncommon. It's also not uncommon for a boss to tell an employee not to evangelize or proselytize. And if you do, you could get fired from your job. That's a real trade-off there.

But let me tell you why you should. First of all, it's a command. In **Matthew 28**, Jesus gives the command to go and make disciples. You can't make a disciple without first sharing the Gospel with them. So, that should be enough reason to tell somebody the Gospel. But I'll give you one more. And of course I'm gonna make it about fishing.

You know Jesus said He would make the disciples fishers of men and sharing the Gospel is a lot like fishing. I went out on my old pontoon boat the other day. Got up super early. Got out on the lake just before sunup. Perfect weather. The dogs are going crazy. They love it. And I went to casting. It's so funny because every time I cast, Bam barks and runs in the direction I cast. She's a freak about it. But I'm casting, casting, casting. Nothing. Move the boat. Cast, cast, cast. Nothing. Move somewhere else. I cast over by some rocks with my favorite topwater lure. The water is dead calm. There's no sound except the lure popping across the water. Pop...pop...pop. Boom! He's a world record! He's huge! I fought him for four hours. I lost ten pounds reeling him in. Fought like a marlin. It was great! Ok, maybe he wasn't that big. Ok, maybe he wasn't quite even a keeper but it was still so much fun!

Do you know what? When you lead somebody to Jesus by sharing the Good News with them, there is no better feeling in the world! Phooey on fishing. That can't compare to showing somebody how they can go from eternity in Hell to eternity in Heaven. And there will be a lot of casting and a lot of not catching just like when I fish. But when you do land one, it's the greatest feeling in the world.

Oh, but I hear ya. *"Todd, I wouldn't know what to say."* Well, I want to show you a secret that is found right here in this passage. Get your Bibles back out and turn again to **Acts 4** and look at **verse 8**. This is the secret to knowing what to say. Again, you have to remember who is speaking here. Peter, who is no paid professional speaker. Mr. "Hey Jesus, let's put up some tents for you and Moses and Elijah!" That's the guy who just healed a man and when he explained how it was done, thousands of people accepted Jesus. Then we see the same people that killed Jesus just put him and John in jail and when he gets out, this is what is said about him. Verse 8 says, *"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them..."*

Stop right there. That's the secret. That is how you use the weapon of the Gospel to make unbelievers into believers and make enemies into family. Be filled with the Spirit of God. Now, what does that mean? Was Peter speaking in tongues? Was he sacrificing chickens and handling snakes? No. Don't overthink this now. He was filled with the Spirit just like Paul described in **Ephesians 5** where Paul is telling us to live being filled with the Spirit. *"So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. . . . Don't act thoughtlessly but understand what the Lord wants you to do."*

This isn't rocket surgery! 😊 Just understand what the Lord wants you to do. And how do you do that? By being with Him. Have no unconfessed sin in your life and focus on God allowing Him to control what you do and what you say. We are filled with the Spirit when we yield our will to God's will in prayer and obedience to His word. It's not complicated but it's not always easy because this world wants to pull you away from God. TV, internet, phone, movies, music. It all wants you to be filled with it. Get out of that and into God and His Holy Spirit will fill you up so that, like Peter, you will know what to say.

I have to admit that I missed it last week. I really did. I had the perfect opportunity to tell somebody the Gospel and I just missed it. I was talking to a guy the other day about plumbing. And my mind was on plumbing. I wasn't doing anything wrong. I didn't necessarily have any unconfessed sin in my life. I just wasn't really filled with the Spirit. I was thinking about plumbing so when the conversation changed a little bit, I wasn't ready. So he walked off and I walked off and when I realized the missed opportunity, it was too late.

Part of putting on the full armor of God every day means to put on the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness but then it says to have your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. My feet weren't ready. I had most of the armor on. But my feet weren't ready. I couldn't fully stand behind God because I didn't have all the armor on.

We are called to *Semper Stantes*, always stand, and we have to have the FULL armor on to do that. Yes, there will be tradeoffs. Yes, it will be difficult and we may lose our comfort, our friends, our job or even our lives. But how else are people going to know if we don't tell them? **Romans 10** says, *"How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"* How else will they know the way to Heaven if you don't tell them? That's your job as a believer.

Maybe today you are here and you are not sure of your salvation. Being filled with the Spirit doesn't make sense to you and you aren't absolutely sure that if you died today that you would go to Heaven. Let me tell you the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus.

God the Father said that where there is sin, something had to die. That is just His rule. And for years people killed animals to make sacrifices that God said would cover over our sins. But then Jesus left all the glories of Heaven and offered His life for a perfect sacrifice that would not just cover over our sin but wash it away, forgiven and forgotten. He was crucified and died but three days later He rose again back to life and lives today and wants to have a relationship with you. And all you have to do is believe it.

Now, that belief will manifest itself in a new life, a new creation, a creation not enslaved to sin anymore like we used to be. We aren't perfect but we are forgiven and we live that way. And we want you to have the peace and joy that we have in this life as well as the assurance of eternal life with Him when we die. Accept Him to be Lord and Savior today. Do it right now as the music plays.