

## **“They Had Been with Jesus”—Acts 4:13-22**

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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, [www.welovethegospel.com](http://www.welovethegospel.com).]*

Take a Bible and meet me in Acts 4...

If you are a guest with us, let me catch you up. Acts 3 provides an account of one of the miracles that occurred in the early church. This particular miracle took place in a very public place at the Jewish temple and involved a very well-known beggar. This beggar was born unable to walk and had lived for forty years with this disability. Day after day he was carried to a gate of the temple so that he could beg charity of those who passed by. Then came the day that Peter looked him in the eye and said, *“I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”* (3:6). And he did. More than that, this man was so restored that he was found leaping about in the temple courts. Everyone marveled at the sight of the man because they knew this man and his condition.

Peter seizes the opportunity to preach about Jesus to those at the temple that day. He tells them that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He tells them that they are guilty before Him. And He tells them that Jesus is responsible for healing this man. Many believe that day. And not everyone was happy about this. Chapter 4 begins by telling us that many of the Jewish leaders—including the priests and Sadducees—were *“greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead”* (4:2). As a result, Peter and John are arrested, spend the night behind bars, and then are brought before the Jewish ruling body of the day, known as the Sanhedrin, for questioning the next day.

This Jewish court—which was the same court that sentenced Jesus to death—now interrogates Peter and John about the miracle. Peter again capitalizes on the opportunity to preach Jesus to the rank Jewish authorities of the day, declaring what amounts to the same message he had delivered to the people in the temple. He tells them they are guilty of rejecting the *“stone”* that God appointed as the *“cornerstone”* of His new temple, His people. He tells them that Jesus is risen from the grave. And he calls them to repentance and faith, boldly declaring that *“there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (4:12).

So how will these religious leaders respond? That is what our text this morning is about. Let’s look at it together. As I read, I invite you to stand to your feet, if you are able, in recognition of the authority of God’s Word over our lives. Follow along as I read, beginning in verse 13 of Acts 4...

*“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. <sup>15</sup> But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, <sup>16</sup> saying, ‘What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.’ <sup>18</sup> So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, <sup>20</sup> for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ <sup>21</sup> And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened.*

<sup>22</sup> *For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.*” (Acts 4:13-22)

This is God’s Word. You may be seated...

There are two major ideas that I want us to learn from this passage, though we will only get to the first one this morning. They both relate to the Christian life. And we will tease them out via a series of sub-points drawn from the text. But the main point today is that...

### **Jesus Should Be the Only Explanation for the Christian Life (4:13-18)**

The first few verses we read narrate for us how the members of the Sanhedrin—that ruling court among the Jews—were rendered shocked (4:13) and speechless (4:14) during their encounter with Peter and John. This must have been a sight to behold. If we are to understand their response, however, we have to begin with the statement at the end of verse 13—*“And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”*

It’s been suggested that this phrase—“to be with Jesus”—could “be understood as a basic definition of discipleship.” Indeed, the New Testament states that Jesus appointed the Twelve to “*be with him*” (Mark 3:14).<sup>1</sup> And what they wanted the Jewish Sanhedrin to recognize is not just “*that they had been with Jesus*,” but also that Jesus remained with them. They were still His companions. God raised Him from the dead. And the Spirit of Christ now dwelled within them (Rom 8:9-10). There’s a reason they were reminded of Christ when they encountered Peter and John.

Have you ever noticed that people tend to become like those they spend the most time with. Paul reminded the Corinthians, for example, that “*bad company ruins good morals*” (1 Cor 15:33). The book of Proverbs supplies many wise words on this topic, including this succinct summary: “*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm*” (Prov 13:20). Peter and John had spent years sitting at the feet of Jesus, and it showed. It was obvious even to those who opposed them. What an honor it must have been to have people say, “I can tell you’ve been spending time with Jesus.” How many times have people said that about you?<sup>2</sup> Bruce Milne once said, “It is surely the church’s greatest hour when that association is noted in the lives of its members, as the only credible explanation of our conduct or spirit.”<sup>3</sup> We should strive for that. We should labor to live in such a way that Jesus is the only credible explanation.

These disciples did just that. And what I want you to see in our text this morning is that this recognition—“*that they had been with Jesus*”—explains what comes before and after. Jesus is the explanation for the Christian life. To begin with...

### *He Explains the Boldness of Our Manner (4:13)*

Peter and John had stared down the very people who weeks before had succeeded in having Jesus crucified and declared that God had raised Him from the dead. They looked them in the eyes and accused them of being the fools spoken of in Psalm 118, saying, “*This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone*” (Acts 4:11). They announced that “*there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (4:12). Their aim wasn’t to “get off the hook,” but to preach the Gospel faithfully.<sup>4</sup> And verse 13 tells us that the “*boldness of Peter and John*” was astonishing to these religious leaders.<sup>5</sup>

This word for “*boldness*” refers to “confident” and “frank” speech.<sup>6</sup> However, it “should not be confused with brash self-confidence,” for “their confidence is not in themselves but in God,” who has made them bold.<sup>7</sup> It’s the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in them, just as Jesus had promised (Mark 13:11). And in contexts of

opposition, as here in Acts 4, it can take on the shade of “courage” (cf. NIV).<sup>8</sup> In fact, Joe Rigney, in a book on Christian courage dedicates an entire chapter to this exact story in Acts 4. After examining the text, he concludes:

“So then, what is Christian boldness? It is courage and clarity about Jesus and sin in the face of powerful opposition. It is plain and open speech with no obfuscation or muttering. It is unhindered testimony to the truth, whether about Christ and his salvation or about what he came to save us from.”<sup>9</sup>

In other words, it’s the God-given courage to be clear about Jesus and sin, even to those who don’t want to hear it and may oppose us for it. And are these not the two things—Jesus and sin—that we are so tempted to be silent on in order to “maintain respectability”<sup>10</sup> and avoid stirring up the ire of a fallen world?<sup>11</sup> We saw last week that the Gospel is often offensive because it sounds foolish (with its talk of resurrection), declares guilt (with its call to repentance),<sup>12</sup> and appears exclusive (with its insistence that salvation is found in Christ alone). To boldly stand on such truths is going to look confusing to the world. It’s going to cost us something in the world. But, as John Piper put it,

“What makes a person bold for the truth is being utterly sure that he has seen God's truth. What makes a person clear and forthright is a good heart that has no desire to slip anything in under the fog of ambiguity. Or another way to say it is that boldness and clarity come from spending time with Jesus.... The more you have real dealings with him, the more confident you become in the truth...”<sup>13</sup>

This is what explains the boldness of Peter and John—“*they had been with Jesus.*” These Jewish leaders recognized Him in them. That’s the only explanation they could come up with, since, after all, Peter and John were so ordinary otherwise. This is not the kind of boldness they expected from “*uneducated, common men*” as the Sanhedrin perceived them to be (Acts 4:13). This is not a jab at the intelligence of the men, but at the lack of formal training. They lacked the resume of the priests, scribes, and Pharisees. They were never trained in any rabbinic school. They were laymen. Amateurs. Professionally unqualified.<sup>14</sup> Yet they were bold and compelling in their deft handling of God’s Word. Where had they seen that before? They knew the answer: Jesus. These men had clearly been with Jesus.

By describing these men as “*uneducated*” and “*common*,” this text reminds us that to be an effective witness does not require formal theological education. These Apostles likely had some education, given their professions and writing abilities, but they never went to the first-century equivalent of seminary.<sup>15</sup> “Their confidence came not from years of reading learned theological treatises in seminary but from time spent with Jesus,”<sup>16</sup> who Himself also amazed the people given the authority with which He spoke despite having no formal training (John 7:15; Matt 7:29). What does that tell us? The Christian life does not require any degree. It requires time with Jesus. It requires us to be a careful student of His Word. It requires you to be filled with the Spirit. But it doesn’t require formal training.

That’s true for pastoral ministry as well. Some of the greatest preachers and Christian authors lacked formal education, including men like Charles Spurgeon and A. W. Tozer. But they didn’t lack fellowship with Jesus and time in His Word. And they didn’t lack a deep dependence on the Spirit of God because they recognized that “people are not converted ultimately by intellectual arguments but rather as the Holy Spirit gives them new birth and opens up their eyes to who Jesus is.”<sup>17</sup>

I am one who has followed the educational road as far as it goes in my field—a bachelor’s degree, multiple master’s degrees, and even a PhD—which I mention not as a boast, but as a confession that there are people in every church I have pastored who, lacking all those letters behind their names, seem to possess an intimacy with Jesus and an effectiveness in evangelism that far exceeds my own. What does that tell you? It tells you that we need to leave behind the notion that scholarship is what makes a person bold, courageous, and effective for Jesus in public. That’s simply not the case. And this text reminds us of that.

But there's an error on the other end as well. Just as we should not demand such formal training, we should also not demean it. I'm pro-education, which comes as a surprise to no one. I even believe that some of our brightest minds should consider making a career of scholarship, for the glory of God and the good of His church. And I also would contend that many universities and seminaries are a great blessing to the local church, since so many of their graduates will go on to lead well among God's people, all around the world. Such men and women are a blessing to us, certainly more so than those who seem to "wear their theological ignorance like a badge of pride."<sup>18</sup> What a tragedy that people have used this text as a way to boast in their ignorance. Yes, these apostles lacked formal theological education, but let's not forget they spent three and a half years living with and learning from Jesus—that's got to be more credit hours of study than all my degrees combined!<sup>19</sup> They didn't boast in their ignorance. It's precisely their confident, clear, and coherent understanding that is so shocking to the men of this Jewish court.

So hopefully you see the point. Formal training does not guarantee godly character and effective ministry, and the Spirit can just as easily produce Christlikeness and fruitfulness in those who have never darkened the door of a Christian seminary. What is required is fellowship with Jesus. We can have that through the indwelling Spirit. We have that when we abide in His Word and prayer. And the more we do so, the more likely people will start to suspect that we too have been spending time with Jesus (4:13), the more likely we too will say "*we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*" (4:20).

One of the implications of this, that I hope you will see, is that no believer among us is disqualified then from living the Christian life effectively. Every believer can be used of God in meaningful ways, far beyond our native abilities. Every member of God's people has ministry to engage in within and through the local church. That includes every Christian in this place. "God can use the PhDs (think Paul) and the GEDs (think Peter), the doctors (like Luke) and the tax collectors (like Matthew)."<sup>20</sup> And He delights to do so. What a God!

He certainly used Peter and John in this story. And even their opponents, as Jesus said would happen, were left dumbfounded (Luke 21:15). But more importantly, they were forced to conclude that these men were Jesus people. "He had been their teacher, and the council recognized his teaching in them."<sup>21</sup> That's the only explanation for the boldness they encountered in them. But Jesus doesn't just explain their boldness...

#### *He Explains the Fruit of Our Ministry (4:14)*

Verse 14 reminds us that the healing at the temple was irrefutable. It says, "*but seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.*" Clearly, they wanted to say something in opposition, but they couldn't. "They were silenced by the silent man in front of them."<sup>22</sup> The incontrovertible evidence was quite literally "*standing*" before them. The miracle happened in public. It was undeniable. It happened to a man people knew. They knew the man. And behind closed doors, not before the people, these Jewish leaders will even acknowledge the miracle a "*sign*" (4:16), while refusing to acknowledge what it signified about Jesus.<sup>23</sup> The truth is, they were embarrassed. They were at their wit's end. They could supply no other explanation for the healing of this man than the one Peter declared, in verse 10: "*Let it be known to all of you and to 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.*" Jesus alone explains the healing. Peter gave Him all the glory.

And, friends, we should as well. I tell you often that we can achieve nothing of eternal significance apart from God's work in and through us. Whenever we are privileged to see lives changed, sinners brought to repentance and faith, or other miraculous works, it is God who deserves all the glory. And we should give Him His due. He is the ultimate explanation for the fruit of our ministry. It's not about what we achieve. It's about what He does through us. We want the watching world to see that Jesus is the only explanation, not us.

[Commercial] As an aside, it's also worth noting that it wasn't just the miraculous healing that these leaders didn't attempt to refute, but also Peter's claim of the resurrection! Remember, that was at the heart of Peter's preaching in the temple and witness before the Sanhedrin (3:15; 4:10). It remains the heart of Christian preaching and witness today. Christ is risen! And this claim, according to verse 2, "*greatly annoyed*" these Jewish authorities. And yet these men, so instrumental in the execution of Jesus, have no rebuttal to the claim. Isn't that curious? F. F. Bruce wrote,

"It is particularly striking that neither here on this or on any subsequent occasion (so far as our information goes) did the Sanhedrin take any serious action to disprove the apostles' central affirmation—the resurrection of Jesus. Had it seemed possible to refute them on this point, how readily would the Sanhedrin have seized the opportunity! Had they succeeded how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed! It is plain that the apostles meant a physical resurrection when they said that Jesus has risen; it is equally plain that the rulers understood them in this sense. The body of Jesus had vanished so completely that all the authority they had at their command could not produce it."<sup>24</sup>

Bruce Milne makes a similar point:

"The plain fact of history is that when one reflects on this supreme court in Jerusalem, and recognizes their entire command of that Jerusalem society, all of its people and all of their movements, and that the period of their command encompassed, most critically, the immediate days and weeks around and following the date of the alleged resurrection of Jesus in the very location where it was claimed to have occurred, their demonstrable failure to successfully refute the apostolic claim is arguably a piece of evidence in support of the resurrection of hugely impressive weight. It surely outweighs any and every so-called 'disproof' offered by any modern sceptic, formulated two thousand years later, and on the other side of the world in most cases, quite irrespective of the sceptic's intellectual or scholarly credentials. At this point faith appears to score what looks remarkably like a winning goal! 'It is true! The Lord has risen' (Luke 24:34)."<sup>25</sup>

[End of commercial]

So we have seen so far that Jesus was the explanation for Christian boldness and the Christian fruitfulness. Let's add one more way that Jesus is the best explanation for the Christian experience, namely...

#### *He Explains the Opposition to Our Ministry (4:15-18)*

I'm reminded of a sermon I once heard in which the pastor used an interesting expression: "Dull axes swing hard." If you've ever swung an axe to chop some wood or used a knife to cut something, you know that the sharper the blade, the less force is required to cut something through. So if the blade is dull, it requires, as my mom used to say, a little more "elbow grease." In other words, "dull axes swing hard." The point the pastor was making, however, was one about persecution. He argued, I think rightly, that people resort to persecution when they lack the evidence, the case, or the merits in the disagreement. Persecution is often an admission that you're insecure on the issue. You persecute because you're losing. Your blade is dull, but you don't want anyone to notice. And dull axes swing hard.<sup>26</sup> Do you see?

Even though the Sanhedrin "*had nothing to say in opposition*," according to verse 14, the following verses make it clear that they have every intention of opposing them. Their axe is dull, so they are going to have to swing hard (and harder still in the pages ahead). Look again at verses 15 and following:

*"But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, <sup>16</sup> saying, 'What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident*

*to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name. ' <sup>18</sup> So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ” (Acts 4:15-18)*

These verses describe the private deliberations of the Sanhedrin, after they dismissed Peter, John, and the man who had been healed. Now some of you may be wondering how we even know what transpired in that closed-door meeting of the Sanhedrin. That's a really good question. Verses 15 to 17 would seem like an insider perspective. And it's not the sort of information that they would want to leak. Not surprisingly, "liberal critics have enjoyed themselves in asking how Luke could have known what went on in the Sanhedrin's confidential discussion."<sup>27</sup> They think it an editorial oversight.

But there is another explanation. A far more likely explanation, in fact. What is it? That someone present, within the Sanhedrin itself or closely adjacent in that day, may have eventually come to faith in Jesus, and their testimony is what Luke here preserves in Acts. Scholars have suggested a number of likely candidates through the years. Maybe it was Nicodemus. Maybe Joseph of Arimathea. Maybe Paul was present or, if not him, his mentor Gamaliel, who Paul could have heard it from. Maybe some other individual whose name has been lost to history. But the fact that we know of their deliberations suggests the strong likelihood that someone in the room (maybe even several someones) eventually came to faith in Jesus.

This is instructive for us. God is always doing more than meets the eye, more than we can tell in the moment. When Peter and John eventually bring news of what had happened to the other believers in Jerusalem, it was probably tempting for some of them to think that the witness of the apostles was not very effective among the Jewish leaders. But that's not the case. God's Word does not return void. Our Spirit-empowered witness does more than we can know. So even if it seems like it fell on deaf ears, you never know whether those seeds planted will grow into faith in due season. Whether we get to see that or not, we should trust that God is always at work. And trust Him with the results.

Now, concerning the deliberations of the Sanhedrin, the first thing I want you to notice is the jarring contrast between what they say in verse 16 and what they say in verse 17. In verse 16, they acknowledge that a powerful miracle has occurred, that they know it, and everyone in Jerusalem seems to know it. Then, in verse 17, they concoct a plan to threaten the Apostles so that they will keep quiet about Jesus and His role in the miracle. That thought progression seems off, doesn't it? Verse 16 conveys reasons that they should seriously consider the truth of Peter and John's claims about Jesus. But verse 17 essentially says, in light of those good arguments, let's try to shut them up. It seems strange at first glance. One author likened it to someone says, "Oh look, there's smoke billowing up the stairway from the basement; quick, let's close the door and have dinner." Or: "Look, people with cancer are being healed by this new drug; quick let's ban it from the world."<sup>28</sup> It's irrational. And so too was the Sanhedrin's response.

That, brothers and sisters, is "the behavior of a people who are not interested in the truth, but only in the benefit they get from the falsehood."<sup>29</sup> They knew that they had opposed Jesus. Any acknowledgement of Jesus' life and ongoing ministry through His followers would undermine their authority and jeopardize their power and influence. And this is a reminder that often people are more interested in the things of this world and preserving their grip on them than they are with the truth. "When people are getting some benefit from a wrong, they [often] turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to the mounting evidence that they should change."<sup>30</sup> It's unfortunate, but true. They should have asked, "What must we do to be saved?", but instead they ask, "What must we do to preserve our way of life?" As R. C. Sproul explains, "We see here the wickedness in the hearts of fallen people who, when they know that the manifest power of God has been given right before their very eyes, form a conspiracy to squelch it."<sup>31</sup>

But again, we must notice, that their issue is not so much with the evidence, but for what the evidence says about Jesus. Their issue is with Jesus. How do we know? Because of the gag order in verses 17 and 18. What does it relate to? Talking about Jesus. It's the Healer, not the healing that they are trying to bury (again as it

were). “[They] *charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*” This is a reminder of a lesson we learned in the previous chapter. When people hear the Gospel—the good news of that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification—they will either believe or belie our message. They will either surrender to Jesus or seek to silence His people. The intimidation tactics of the Sanhedrin tell us exactly which course they chose. They chose “a middle course between conviction and acquittal.”<sup>32</sup> They say, in effect, keep the name of Jesus out of your mouth or else! They opposed them because of Jesus.

And this will be no different in our lives. We are reminded that sometimes people will reject our witness, not because we have made a bad argument or not clearly stated the facts, but simply because they love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. They are rejecting Jesus, and us only by extension. He explains the opposition. And seeing this helps stabilize us in the storm. Consider Paul’s charge to the Philippians,

*“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,<sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,<sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.”* (Philippians 1:27-30)

He says, the opposition these Christians face is “*a clear sign to [their opponents] of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God*” (1:28). In other words, “dull axes swing hard,” but you’re on the right side of the equation, despite what the world might think. And, remarkably, he says that is “*granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake*” (1:29). Concerning this, Rigney writes,

“The source of Christian fearlessness lies in the recognition that God has given us two things: he has granted us to believe in Jesus and to suffer for Jesus. Both the faith that unites us to Christ and the suffering that comes from that union are gifts from God. Knowing that both are gifts steels us in the face of our enemies. Opposition to the church does not arise haphazardly; it is not random or arbitrary... Therefore, when Christians encounter such opposition in anything, we do not fear. Such fearlessness fits reality and is worthy of the gospel.”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, as we’ve seen opposition to our witness is best explained by our union with Christ. So when we face it, we can rejoice because it reminds us that we are His, and He is ours. And perhaps that’s why Paul, in that same epistle, can speak of “*the fellowship of sharing in [Christ’s] sufferings*” (Phil 3:10; NIV<sup>84</sup>). We’ll have more to say about that next week.

But in a way we are meant to contemplate that reality when we partake in the Lord’s Supper. This meal reminds us of what Jesus suffered for our sakes. Each element a tangible pointer to His work. The bread signifying His broken body which hung on the cross in our place. The wine, His blood poured out for our atonement. Had he not suffered in our place—dying the death that we deserved—we would have no hope of salvation. Our sin separates us from a holy God. We can do nothing to remove it. No good deeds can undo our rebellion. Even our best efforts amount to filthy rages. God would be completely just in separating us from Him for all eternity. We have earned that.

Yet God in His mercy sent to us a Savior. Jesus lived the life we should have lived, and died the death we deserved to die. This work—His work—is where forgiveness is found. Anyone who would confess their sin and need, turn from their sin and shame, and trust in the person and work of Jesus, God’s Son, will receive full pardon, everlasting life, salvation to the uttermost. He freely offers that to us, the underserving, and we can receive it by grace, and through faith. What a Savior Jesus is for us. The only Savior. And when we eat the

bread and drink the wine, we are reminded of the price He paid for our salvation. We are reminded of His suffering and its significance for our lives.

But we are also reminded of our union with Him through faith. We have become coheirs with Christ, brothers and sisters in the family of God. And our union with Him means that we will be raised like Him, when He returns. It means we are loved like Him, in Him. Delivered like Him, in Him. But it also means we will suffer like Him, in Him. There's a fellowship in sharing in His suffering. That's part of our share too. But it pales in comparison to what He has secured for us. And that is why, As Paul told the Corinthians,

*“[W]e do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* (2 Cor 4:16-18)

My hope is that the sharing of this meal together will be an exercise in the very things that Paul describes in these verses.

Let's pray together...

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<sup>1</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 244.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Acts* (SAEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Milne, *The Acts of the Apostles: Witnesses to Him...to the Ends of the Earth* (FBC; Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Ajith Fernando, *Acts* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 155.

<sup>5</sup> This confirms that “it was not only Peter who spoke; evidently John contributed to the explanation of the origins of the healing miracle and of the significance of Jesus.” Schnabel, 242. Joe Rigney observes: “The fourth chapter of Acts provides an unusually clear picture of Christian boldness. The Greek noun for boldness (*parrēsia*) appears three times in this one chapter (and only twice more in the rest of Acts) and here sets the context for Luke's use of the verb meaning *speak boldly* (*parrēsiazomai*) seven times in the coming chapters. He apparent intends for us to see the events of this chapter as particularly poignant examples of Christian boldness.” Joe Rigney, *Courage: How the Gospel Creates Christian Fortitude* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2023), 73.

<sup>6</sup> David E. Garland, *Acts* (TTCS; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Brian J. Vickers, “Acts” in *John-Acts* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 375.

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel writes, “Since candid speech which avoids evasions and falsehoods exposes a person to danger, *παρρησία* also has the nuance of ‘hardiness, courage, audacity, confidence.’... In Acts, ‘boldness’ (*παρρησία*) describes ‘the openness of the mission proclamation’ in the sense of ‘fearlessness, candor, and joyous confidence over against (especially Jewish) critics and adversaries.” Schnabel, 243; relying on, in the first instance, C. Spicq, “*παρρησία*,” *TLNT* 3:57, and, in the second, H. Balz, “*παρρησία*,” *EDNT* 3:46.

<sup>9</sup> Rigney, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Fernando, 160.

<sup>11</sup> Sometimes we can excuse ourselves from such bold witness because we have deemed the boldness of others to be foolhardy in one way or another. However, you can always find a poor example of obedience if you are trying to excuse your disobedience. Fernando's point is well taken: “Enthusiastic Christians are sometimes criticized for the foolhardy way in which they present their witness and sometimes turn people away from the gospel. Yet many of those who level these criticisms do no witnessing themselves. I have seen many people converted through witnesses with a lot of boldness and not much wisdom. An effective witness will not emerge from one who has never ventured to speak up for Christ.” *Ibid*.



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<sup>12</sup> “When we call people to repent of their sins and idolatries, we cannot avoid the one that we know will make them angry. God sent Jesus to bless us by turning every one of us from our wickedness (Acts 3:26). *Our* wickedness. The particular wickedness that belongs to us. You can’t preach the gospel to a white supremacist and not call him away from his racial pride and hatred. You can’t preach the gospel to a partying frat guy and not call him away from his drunkenness and debauchery. You can’t preach the gospel to a practicing homosexual and not call him away from practicing homosexuality. You can’t preach the gospel to contemporary egalitarian progressives and not call them away from their commitment to a false view of human nature and marriage and men and women and sex. Such preaching may end the relationship. People may say, ‘Away with such a bigot.’ But faithfulness to Jesus means that we don’t have the right to adjust the truth to suit their sin.” Rigney, 85-86.

<sup>13</sup> John Piper, “Abortion: Shall We Listen to Men or God?”, accessed online at: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/abortion-shall-we-listen-to-men-or-god>.

<sup>14</sup> Fernando, 153.

<sup>15</sup> Iain Duguid notes, “We have to be a little careful about the description of the disciples as uneducated and untrained men (4:13). People sometimes imagine that this statement means that the apostles had never received any kind of formal education. That is extremely unlikely. Peter and Andrew had been fishermen, as had John, running their own small family businesses. Matthew was a tax collector, and he presumably would have been well versed in financial matters. Had the apostles been totally uneducated, they would not have been able to write much of the New Testament.” Iain M. Duguid, *Turning the World Upside Down: Lessons for the Church from Acts 1-8* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025), 85.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Fernando, 162.

<sup>20</sup> Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Acts* (CCE; Nashville: Holman Reference, 2017), 63.

<sup>21</sup> Brian J. Vickers, “Acts” in *John-Acts* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 375.

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Schreiner, *Acts* (CSC; Holman Reference: 2021), 178.

<sup>23</sup> “They acknowledge the reality of the sign but not the power behind the sign. Signs even with preaching are not necessarily effective. The Spirit of God must work in their hearts.” Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. ed. (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 96. Cf. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 98.

<sup>25</sup> Milne, 111. “As we will note again and again in these chapters there is a sheer, bedrock conviction throbbing through these ‘men and women of the resurrection,’ which defies explanation other than on the basis of the reason they themselves consistently gave for it—that it had really happened.... But such has continued to be the case over all the centuries since, as the various persecutors of Jesus and His church have learned to their cost. This, the presence of the living Christ, is the only finally satisfactory explanation for the preservation of the Christian faith through the last two thousand, turbulent years, and it is the reason why Christianity is destined finally to conquer the world. It is not because Christians are wonderful people; in fact they are routinely demonstrated to be deeply ordinary and flawed. But they are not alone, the Risen and Reigning Lord is among them. That is the faith, and that is its certain Victory!” Ibid., 112, 114.

<sup>26</sup> That pastor was Richard D. Phillips, and the sermon can be accessed here: <https://sermons.spcgreenville.org/sermons/10815915100/>.

<sup>27</sup> Stott, 98.

<sup>28</sup> Piper, “Abortion: Shall We Listen to Men or God?”

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Sproul, 100.

<sup>32</sup> Schnabel, 245.

<sup>33</sup> Rigney, 12.