

## **“What to Expect When We Share Our Faith”—Acts 4:1-12**

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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...

There was an article published in *The Spectator* a little over a decade ago by John L. Allen, titled, “The War on Christians.” While the article is a little dated, I don’t suspect the statistics it describes would be any better today. Allen writes the following:

“Consider three points about the landscape of anti-Christian persecution today, as shocking as they are generally unknown. According to the International Society for Human Rights, a secular observatory based in Frankfurt, Germany, 80 percent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world today are directed at Christians. Statistically speaking, that makes Christians by far the most persecuted religious body on the planet.

According to the Pew Forum, between 2006 and 2010 Christians faced some form of discrimination, either *de jure* or *de facto*, in a staggering total of 139 nations, which is almost three-quarters of all the countries on earth. According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, an average of 100,000 Christians have been killed in what the centre calls a ‘situation of witness’ each year for the past decade. That works out to 11 Christians killed somewhere in the world every hour, seven days a week and 365 days a year, for reasons related to their faith.”<sup>1</sup>

I share that with you to give you some perspective. The situation in America is kind of an anomaly in the history the Church. For the most part, we have been insulated from severe forms of persecution. That’s not to say we go without any form of persecution, but, generally speaking, our lives are not usually on the line for speaking about Jesus. If anything, our relationships are.

These statistics should not make us feel guilty, but they should leave us feeling thankful for the opportunity we have, mindful of our suffering brothers and sisters around the globe, and aware that things are going to get worse for us in the West. We should be ready for that. We should count the cost. And texts like the one we will consider this week and next help us to do that.

We are resuming the account of a miracle that took place at the Jewish temple. Peter and John, two Apostles of Jesus, had been used by the Lord to bring healing to a lame beggar. Everyone knew of this beggar, so naturally they wanted to know how it was that he was leaping about the temple courts. They wrongly assumed it was because Peter and John possessed some sort of personal power or extreme piety, so Peter sets the record straight. He takes their eyes off of him and fixed them instead on Jesus. He helps them to see both their guilt and the glory of Christ’s saving work. He tells them that Jesus—the one they killed—was raised from the dead. He calls them to faith (3:16) and repentance (3:19). He assures them that all who respond in this way will be met with forgiveness of sins (3:19), relief from the burden of guilt (3:20), and hope for the future (3:20-21). In short, he preaches the Gospel to them. He tells them the good news that Jesus died in our place so that the undeserving could be made right with God through repentance and faith. It was a picture of Christian evangelism.

As we pick things up in chapter 4, we are going to see how people respond to Peter's preaching. And it's something of a mixed bag. Let me show you what I mean. If you are able, let me invite you to stand to your feet in recognition of the authority of God's Word in our lives. I'll begin reading in verse 1. Follow along as I do...

*"And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup> greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup> And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup> But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*

*<sup>5</sup> On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup> with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'"* (Acts 4:1-12)

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

There are two major ideas I would like to trace in these verses. The first relates to what we should expect when we share the truth about Jesus with the people around us, and the second relates to why people often find that truth so offensive. We'll only get to the first of these matters today, which, again, relates to:

### **The Outcome of Gospel Proclamation**

In some ways the experience of Peter and John in this text is paradigmatic of the Christian experience in evangelism. Even if our subsequent experiences differ in the matter of details and degree, there is still some ways that they will be reminiscent of Peter and John's experience when they shared their faith. This text suggests at least three points of contact, which can calibrate our own expectations. First of all, when we share our faith—share the Gospel—we should...

#### *Expect Different Results*

The opening paragraph reminds us that people respond differently to the Gospel. Verse 2 tells us that there were some who were "*greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*" Verse 1 tells us who these annoyed people were. First, they included "*the priests,*" those Levites who were on duty tending to the temple rituals, sacrifices, and other matters like the temple tax.<sup>2</sup> One of these priests was "*the captain of the temple,*" whose authority was only exceeded by the high priest himself and who, among other things, was tasked with maintaining law and order in and around this sacred precinct as the chief of the temple police.<sup>3</sup>

We are also told that "*the Sadducees*" were among those irritated by the preaching of Peter and John. Concerning the Sadducees, Kent Hughes writes,

"Little good can be said about this bunch. The Pharisees opposed Jesus for religious reasons (misguided conviction). The Sadducees' opposition, however, came largely from political motivations. This is why the Sadducees were not as involved in early persecutions against Christ. But as they saw the incipient

threat to their political structure, they became implacable enemies. In the book of Acts persecution was largely Sadducean.”<sup>4</sup>

He's not wrong. They were not a large group, but they “had a political hold on the priesthood.”<sup>5</sup> This was in large part because they had ingratiated themselves to the Romans, which helped secure their power and influence. Josephus, a Jewish historian, described them as “more heartless than any other Jews.”<sup>6</sup> We see some evidence of that during the ministry of Jesus, and we are going to see even more during His continued ministry through the early Church in Acts.

For now we simply note that these religious leaders were so troubled by what Peter and John were preaching that they had them “*arrested*,” according to verse 3, “*and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening*.”<sup>7</sup> They were not happy with Peter and John. And some are not going to be happy with you and me when we share the Gospel with them. Some will oppose us, as they did them. Some will reject us. Some will seek to marginalize us. It was true for Jesus. It was true for His Apostles. And it will be true for all those who follow Him.

But not everyone rejected them. According to verse 4, “*many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of men came to about five thousand*.” Remember, in Acts 2:41, following Peter’s preaching at Pentecost, the number of believers had swelled to about three thousand. Now that number was around five thousand. And notice the text says that refers to the “*men*,” which has made some wonder if this figure could have been twice as large when women and children were included. It may just be a generic use of the word to refer to people, but I’m not so sure that it is. In either case it shows that the Church is growing.<sup>8</sup>

And here we see a pattern that we are going to see repeated throughout Acts: “persecution cannot stop the kingdom but often goes hand in hand with its growth.”<sup>9</sup> The same is true today. You can imprison the messenger, but you cannot imprison the message. God’s Word is not going to return void. It’s going to accomplish what the Lord intends to accomplish. Sometimes that’s the hardening of a heart (cf. Isa 6:9-10), and sometimes generation of faith. We don’t control that. But Jesus has told us to expect both outcomes (Matt 13:1-23).

So when we share the Gospel with others, we haven’t necessarily done anything wrong when it’s rejected, and we can have confidence that it won’t always be rejected. We should expect different results. The reception that Peter and John experienced is typical. Some will believe. Some will not. Some will embrace us. Some will oppose us. And this leads us to the next things we should expect when we are faithful to share the Gospel with others...

### *Expect Difficult Resistance*

Jesus said,

*“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you...”* (John 15:18-20)

Paul will tell Timothy, “*all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Tim 3:12). Suffering for Christ is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sometime before he was killed by the Nazis, called “the badge of the true Christian.”<sup>10</sup> The servant is not greater than the Master. After Acts 3, there are only three chapters in the entire book that don’t describe some form of persecution. It’s the norm, not the exception. And when we bear witness to Jesus, there’s no witness protection program.<sup>11</sup> Some will oppose us. Sometimes fiercely. This is no less true today than it was in the days of the early Church.

Again, the persecution we face in our setting may not be to the point of shedding blood (cf. Heb 12:4). But there's still a price to pay for faithfulness to Jesus in our society. People will make fun of you. Exclude you. Avoid you. Forsake you. Maybe worse. If we know none of this, we should consider if we are being faithful in our walk and witness. Tony Merida doesn't really pull his punches when he writes,

"If we cannot cite evidence of at least mild forms of persecution at work in our own lives, it is possible that we have a nimble faith—or perhaps a closet faith—that evades opposition. I heard a preacher once say that everywhere Paul went there were riots, and everywhere American Christians go there are conferences! While I do not think we should seek persecution or opposition, his point raises this question: Are we bold like Peter and John when it comes to telling others about Jesus?"<sup>12</sup>

If you're anything like me, you'll have to admit that most of the time you are not. That's a problem. So we need to try to learn what we can from the example of Peter and John here. In their case the opposition they encountered looked eerily similar to what Jesus Himself faced. They are arrested and brought before the same Sanhedrin for questioning (cf. Mark 13:9).<sup>13</sup>

The Sanhedrin was the ruling council among the Jews. It was presided over by the high priest and consisted of an additional seventy members drawn from "the highest levels of political, social, academic, religious, and ecclesiastical life within the Jewish state at this point in time."<sup>14</sup> There would have been priests and scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, scholars and influential lay leaders.<sup>15</sup> They had jurisdiction over noncapital offenses. And among them were those mentioned in verses 5 and 6.

"*Annas*" was the high priest between 6 and 14 A.D., until he was deposed by the Romans. He apparently retained the title even though he was no longer the acting "*high priest*" (cf. Luke 3:2). Nevertheless, Annas had "a dynastic, longstanding hold on the priesthood."<sup>16</sup> Five of his sons would serve as high priest in Israel,<sup>17</sup> and the current high priest, "*Caiaphas*" (also mentioned in verse 6), was his son-in-law.<sup>18</sup> Both of these men, you might recall, figured prominently in the events leading up to the execution of Jesus. The "*John*" mentioned in verse 6, may refer to the son of Annas, usually called "Jonathan," who would succeed Caiaphas as high priest, and may have served as "*the captain of the temple guard*" mentioned in verse 1. Nothing is known of "*Alexander*," though he must have been someone of note and some renown.

So this is a lot of "firepower" aimed at Peter and John.<sup>19</sup> We are told that Peter and John were made to stand "*in the midst*" (literally "in the middle") of this gathering (4:7), since these authorities generally sat in a semi-circle when they convened. And—don't miss this—they "were arraigned before the same court that tried and condemned Jesus."<sup>20</sup> They were standing at the same the same spot perhaps. What do you think they were thinking? John Stott helps us imagine:

"...memories of the trial of Jesus must have flooded the apostles' minds. Was history to repeat itself? They could hardly expect justice from that court, which had listened to false witnesses and unjustly condemned their Lord. Were they to suffer the same fate? Would they too be handed over to the Romans and crucified? They must have asked themselves such questions."<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the question these Jewish leaders ask them is recorded in verse 7, "*By what power or by what name did you do this?*"<sup>22</sup> This kind of question was asked of Jesus too (Luke 20:1-2; Mark 11:28). But notice, they are not questioning if the miracle had happened. They can't deny that. Indeed, the man was standing before them as well (Acts 4:14). And the Jewish leaders know what Peter and John were claiming in Solomon's Portico the previous day. Now they want to see if they will blink after an evening behind bars and a summons before the high court. And as readers, we are kind of wondering that too, especially since we can remember how Peter responded the last time he was publicly confronted about his relationship to Jesus (Luke 22:54-62). He denied Jesus three times then. But, as we saw last week, this is a different Peter. This time we read,

*“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’” (Acts 4:8-12)*

Can we all agree this is a bold reply? Where did that come from? Peter doesn’t miss a beat. He preaches a new sermon with the same point as the last one in the previous chapter—the risen Christ deserves all the glory, and you deserve all the guilt. I can assure you, the Sanhedrin was not used to people talking to them like this. How do we explain this response? Well, that’s our third point. When we share the Gospel in this world, we should...

### *Expect Divine Resources*

Notice the text doesn’t simply say, in verse 8, that Peter said this to them. It says, Peter “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” said this to them. This is the second time we have seen this language in Acts (cf. 2:4), and we will see it again on six more occasions (4:31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9).

What does it mean to be “*filled with the Holy Spirit*”? Well, in some contexts, it could refer to what happens when a person is converted. The Holy Spirit indwells the person, and in that sense, they are “*filled with the Holy Spirit*.” Paul speaks of this in Romans 8, when he says to believers, “*the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him*” (Rom 8:9). Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He “*is the guarantee [or down payment] of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it*” (Eph 1:14).

Nevertheless, Paul can also command believers—those indwelt by the Holy Spirit—to “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph 5:18), which would seem to imply “that there is to be an ongoing and continual filling” that, given the language in Acts, is “made all the more necessary in opportunities for proclaiming the Gospel.”<sup>23</sup> That’s closer to the sense here in Acts 4. “To be filled with the Spirit is to come under progressively more intense and intimate influence of the Spirit.”<sup>24</sup> It can happen “in a spiritual emergency,” writes Sam Storms. In which case, it is “an immediate and special endowment of power to fulfill some especially important and urgent task.”<sup>25</sup> That seems to be the way the language is used in this context. The Spirit of God empowers Peter to bear witness before the Sanhedrin under duress. It’s a special “anointing,” you might say.<sup>26</sup> And this is one of the reasons that Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as our “*Helper*” (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). He helps us in our time of need.

How does He help us? In our text this morning, three ways stand out. First, the Spirit provides needed courage. Do we not see that in Peter? “After all,” writes Derek Thomas,

“...this is Peter, a man given to staggering self-doubt and failure. Just a few months before, immediately following Jesus’ arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter was reduced to a cowering, frightened individual when a young girl recognized him as one of Jesus’ disciples (Matt. 26:69–75). What a change had taken place since then. Peter witnessed powerfully on the day of Pentecost, and now he manages to get himself arrested. His boldness amid the ordeal was the Spirit’s work, just as the growth of the church that accompanied it had been.”<sup>27</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I do not deny that “boldly declaring the truth before people who are hostile to the gospel is an intimidating task, beyond our native competence. But God does not only task the church with this work, but He equips the church to do this work.”<sup>28</sup> He equips us by the Spirit. Like Martin Luther said in the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,”

“That Word above all earthly powers  
no thanks to them abideth;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours  
through Him who with us sideth.”<sup>29</sup>

Do you see? And the second half of that hymn’s verse reminds of the second provision of the Spirit, I’d like to highlight for you, and that’s perspective....

“Let goods and kindred go,  
this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill:  
God’s truth abideth still;  
His kingdom is forever!”

What Peter says before the Sanhedrin, demonstrates that he has perspective. Why does he not fear these men—the men who weeks before had sentenced Jesus to death after similar questioning? Because Peter knew, as he says in verse 10, God raised Him from the dead! What could these men do to Peter? They could kill him too, but Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)! He doesn’t fear them. He fears the Lord. They could do their worst to Peter, but the Lord had promised His best. He said things like,

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you  
falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted  
the prophets who were before you.”* (Matthew 5:10-12)<sup>30</sup>

That kind of perspective breeds boldness. And that kind of perspective is a gift of the Spirit. Peter was a man prone to fear. But filled with the Spirit, he found the courage and perspective he needed for the moment. And that’s not all he found...

Third, the Spirit supplied him with words. These religious leaders question Peter, and Peter turns the tables on them. The accused becomes the accuser. “[T]he judgment seat of the Sanhedrin is transformed into the judgment seat of God!”<sup>31</sup> They speak vaguely of “*this*” thing that has been done (3:7), and Peter sharpens the point by reminding those gathered that “*this*” thing they speak of was in fact “*a good deed done to a crippled man*,” which is to say that it should be the basis of celebration, not condemnation.<sup>32</sup> In this way, “Peter respectfully but firmly unmasks the injustice of these proceedings.”<sup>33</sup> He had seen Jesus respond in similar way when He too was questioned about another good deed done for a different crippled man (Luke 6:9). And once again, Peter gives glory to Jesus for the miracle and points out the guilt of these people, as he had done in the previous chapter, this time leveraging a particular passage of Scripture from the Psalms (which we will come to next week). In short, Peter does the thing that got him arrested in the first place. “He preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, clearly and unapologetically.”<sup>34</sup> Peter would later tell Christians in Asia Minor,

*“Have no fear of [those who harm you], nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”* (1 Peter 3:14-16)

Here in Acts 4, Peter puts on a clinic for what that looks like in action. The particulars of his argument, we’ll look at next week. For now, I simply want to observe that Peter’s words before his accusers were a gift of the Spirit and a fulfillment of Christ’s promise to us. Listen to what Jesus once said to the Twelve, including Peter and John:

*“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, <sup>18</sup> and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. <sup>20</sup> For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”* (Matthew 10:16-20; cf. Luke 12:11-12; 21:10-18)

I wonder if Peter remembered these words when he sat in his cell the night before. I bet he did. In any case, Peter had what He needed for the moment because he was *“filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 4:8). The Spirit supplied the courage that Peter needed. The perspective that Peter needed. And He even provided the words that Peter needed.

And if you’re sitting there thinking, “Pastor, I want that,” I’m with you! And it’s available to us! The good news is that we are going to have more to say about the Spirit’s work in us and help for us as we continue in our study of Acts. For now, let me leave you with a couple instructions. If you desire to experience this kind of Spirit-filled help, then I would tell you two things—Show up and speak up! Let me explain...

That passage I mentioned earlier—the one where Paul commands us to *“be filled with the Spirit”*—let me read it to you in context:

*“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”* (Ephesians 5:15-21)

In verse 18, Paul gives two commands: *“do not get drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit...”* The contrast would suggest that Paul is concerned with what is influencing us. He doesn’t want believers under the influence of intoxication, but under the influence of the Spirit of God. That’s what we are talking about. We want to be filled with the Spirit, under His influence, empowered by Him in our time of need. But how? Well, Paul gives us an indication of how in this passage. You see that command—*“be filled with the Spirit”*—is modified by a series of participles which spell out how we should pursue obedience to that command:

#### Be filled with the Spirit

- [by] addressing each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs [i.e., corporate encouragement]
- [by] singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart [i.e., corporate worship]
- [by] giving thanks always and for everything to God [i.e., corporate prayer]
- [by] submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ [i.e., corporate service]

Now, notice I said all of these actions are “corporate” actions. Why? Because the command is plural in Greek, and so are all those modifying participles and pronouns. So where does Paul intend for us to apply these instructions? The church gathered! That’s why Sunday matters. You need this service more than you realize. Not because we ourselves are something special—least of all me—but because when we gather, we do the very things that Paul seems to indicate will enable us to be *“filled with the Spirit”*! So if we want to see the Spirit working powerfully in our moments of need, as Peter and John did in theirs, then the best way for us to prepare, is by showing up! Engaging with your brothers and sisters in the local church. Prioritizing this service in your week. What we do together on Sunday morning is more important than you realize. And it readies your heart for a Spirit-filled life.

Don’t believe me? Look at the end of Acts 4. After this first wave of persecution, where do Peter and John turn? To the local church (4:23ff). And what do they do? They encourage one another with a psalm—Psalm 2—in

verses 25 and 26 (i.e., corporate encouragement). They “*lifted their voices together to God*” (4:24) and “*prayed*” (4:31) (i.e., corporate worship and prayer). They’re doing the same sorts of things Paul spoke of. And what is the result? Verse 31 tells us “*they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*” There it is! Filled with the Spirit! If that’s what we want, then we need to prioritize the same things. Which is to say we need to show up!

But in addition to showing up, we also need to speak up! Why was Peter filled with the Spirit in our passage? So that he could bear bold witness to Jesus! And why were they filled with the Spirit at the end of chapter 4? So they could continue “*to speak the word of God with boldness*” (4:31). And you and I will not experience the power of God’s Spirit working through us, if we refuse to open our mouths and bear witness to those around us, if we refuse to make disciples. Francis Chan once wrote,

“When people say that they don't feel 'Close to Jesus,' I ask them if they are making disciples. After all, his promise to be with us is directly tied to his command to make disciples. While every Christian wants to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, we often forget that the Spirit's power is given for the purpose of being his witnesses. Experiencing God, which is the longing of every true believer, happens when we are being his witnesses and making disciples.”

Do you see? If you want to see the Spirit working mightily in your life, then you got to speak up! You got to bear witness to Jesus. And when you do, like Peter and John, you should expect different result—some will receive the truth, and some will revile it. You should expect difficult resistance—if they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute you. And you should expect divine resources—being filled with the Spirit, for God has promised to be with you, to give you courage, perspective, and even the words to speak in your time of need. So speak up. Show and speak up. And if we do, we just may see, by God’s grace, a mighty movement of God spring up in this place. I sure hope so! Don’t you?

Now, there’s more to see in this text, but not today. Next time we gather, I want to show you from these verses three reasons the message of the Gospel is often offensive to the world. To be continued...

Let’s pray...

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<sup>1</sup> John L. Allen, “The War on Christians,” *The Spectator*, 5 October 2013. See also his book *The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution* (Colorado Springs: Image, 2013). Cited in Dean Pinter, *Acts* (SGBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 115-116.

<sup>2</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Expanded Digital Edition (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 233; cf. Acts 6:7; 14:13.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *A.J.* 20.6.2. Bruce Milne notes, “An over-the-shoulder glance at Rome stoked his concern (cf. John 11:47-48). Bruce Milne, *The Acts of the Apostles: Witness to Him...to the Ends of the Earth* (FBC; Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 106. This temple police force would have “consisted of 200 priests and Levites.” Schnabel, 233.

<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire* (PW; Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1996), 60-61. He continues, “These men had gained special ascendancy during the intertestamental Maccabean period. During subsequent political regimes, they created a priestly nobility. They were the educated, wealthy elite. But they were also unprincipled collaborationists, political sycophants who would sell their mothers to stay in power. Though a minority, they controlled Jewish political and religious life. They were evil control freaks, and they did not want anyone rocking their boat.” Hughes, 61.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Vickers, “Acts” in *John-Acts* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 374.



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<sup>6</sup> David E. Garland, *Acts* (TTCs; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 44.

<sup>7</sup> “In the summer (of AD 30), sunset was between 7:00 and 8:00 pm. As Peter and John were in the temple since the ninth hour, i.e., since 3 p.m. (3:1), the incident of the healing of the lame man and the teaching in Solomon’s Portico are pictured to have lasted three or four hours.” Schnabel, 234.

<sup>8</sup> Some also wonder if this if five thousand men in addition to the three thousand people mentioned earlier or a summary of the aggregate number of believing men in Jerusalem at this time, including those mentioned in Acts 2.

<sup>9</sup> Vickers, 374.

<sup>10</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 100-101.

<sup>11</sup> Garland, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Acts* (CCE; Nashville: Holman Reference, 2017), 57-58.

<sup>13</sup> The word for Sanhedrin (συνέδριον) is not used until Acts 4:15. It is possible that the healed beggar was also arrested since he too appears before the Sanhedrin (4:14). Peter will be imprisoned at least two other times in Jerusalem (5:17-42; 12:3-19). Schnabel remarks that “they are presumably taken to the prison of the Sanhedrin, probably located near the Xystos below the western wall of the Temple Mount.” Schnabel, 234.

<sup>14</sup> Milne, 107.

<sup>15</sup> See John D. Harvey and David Gentino, *Acts: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching* (KC; Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2023), 130-131.

<sup>16</sup> Vickers, 374. For more on Annas and Caiaphas, see Schnabel, 236.

<sup>17</sup> Garland, 441 Schnabel 236; cf. Milne, 108.

<sup>18</sup> “Annas remained through all this period the real power behind the throne, even being capable, as here, of being actually identified as the high priest. Luke elsewhere refers to ‘the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas’ which gets it about right (Luke 3:2; John 11:47-48; 18:12-27).” Milne, 108.

<sup>19</sup> Merida, 59.

<sup>20</sup> Peterson, 189.

<sup>21</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>22</sup> “In the Greek text the *you* is at the end of the question, giving a sense, ‘What power or authority gave this right to you, insignificant nobodies?’” Milne, 108.

<sup>23</sup> Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 96.

<sup>24</sup> Sam Storms, “10 Things You Should Know about Being Filled with the Holy Spirit,” accessed online at: <https://www.samstorms.org/all-articles/post/article-10-things-you-should-know-about-being-filled-with-the-holy-spirit>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Similarly, Guy Prentiss Waters writes, “The filling of the Spirit is the Spirit’s particular and further enabling of Peter to obey Jesus’ command to bear witness to him.” Guy Prentiss Waters, *A Study Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP, 2015), 120.

<sup>26</sup> Ajith Fernando, *Acts* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 152.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas, 97.

<sup>28</sup> Hughes, 126-127.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>30</sup> In the New Testament suffering for the faith is repeatedly presented as a blessing (Rom. 5:3-5; Phil. 1:29-30; James 1:2-4).

<sup>31</sup> Milne, 108.

<sup>32</sup> “As Chrysostom says, these leaders not only run to do murder but also make a crime of doing good deeds. Rhetorically and ironically Peter transitions to his answer by referring to the deed as an act of ‘kindness’ (*euergesia*, a ‘good deed’). The Greek term refers to an act by a civic-minded person for the common good.” Patrick Schreiner, *Acts* (CSC; Holman Reference, 2021), 174.

<sup>33</sup> Waters, 120.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas, 97.