

“We Cannot but Speak”—Acts 4:13-22; 1 Peter 3:13-17

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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.]

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

If you have hung around for a while, you know there are several Christian figures from the past whose stories God has used to challenge me in Christian faithfulness. One such inspiring story is that of Corrie ten Boom. I'm hoping in the Fall to actually visit her house in Holland, which I'm pretty excited about.

If you know her story, you probably know that her father, Caspar ten Boom was arrested by the Nazis for harboring Jews in his home. On February 28, 1944, the police raided his home. They did this because someone in the community had snitched on their family in exchange for some money. During his interrogation, they asked: "Tell me, what does it say in [your Bible] about obeying the government?" Caspar replied, "Fear God and honor the Queen." Eventually the chief of the Gestapo got involved, and he actually had sympathy for Caspar, saying, "That old man! Did he have to be arrested?" He then whispered to Caspar, "You, old man! I'd like to send you home, old fellow. I'll take your word that you won't cause any more trouble." To this ten Boom replied, "If I go home today, tomorrow I will open my door again to any man in need who knocks." This angered the chief, who then threw ten Boom into prison. He would not last a month in prison. He died on the hospital floor on March 10, 1944, at the age of 84.¹

This story reminds us that sometimes doing the right thing is very costly. It reminds us that following Jesus as Lord may put us in conflict with the powers of the world. But it also reminds us of how it should be for us in similar circumstances, we cannot but submit to Jesus, our Lord, come what may. That's really what our text this morning is about. This is a passage that we have already spent a week examining. What remains for us to consider are a few verses at the end. They are inspiring verses. They're bold verses. And they are verses that require us to see them within the context of not only this passage, but the larger canon of Scripture as well. In particular, since the story involves Peter, I want to relate what we see in our passage to some instructions that Peter will later give in the New Testament. For what it's worth, this is an instance where Peter really practiced what he preached. You'll see what I mean as we progress.

As a reminder, our text this morning takes place on the heels of a miracle involving Peter and John, which resulted in the healing of a man who was born without the ability to walk. The miracle was very public. It created quite a stir. And it gave these apostles an opportunity to tell those gathered at the temple that Jesus had been raised from the dead, was responsible for the healing, and was the only one in whom salvation could be found. The Jewish officials don't like what Peter and John are saying, so they have them arrested. After spending a night in jail, they are brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin and questioned. Peter and John don't back down. They bear witness to Jesus and His resurrection before the high court. And when we pick things up in the story, we are seeing how the Jewish authorities responded.

So let's do the most important thing first, and that is read the text. If you are able, let me invite you to stand to your feet in recognition of the authority of God's Word. Follow along as I read, beginning in verse 13...

"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. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.’ ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ ²¹ 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. ²² 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...

Now then, last week we considered verses 13 to 18, which, I argued, remind us that...

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

In particular, we saw how...

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

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

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

Our relationship with Jesus explains why all of these things—our character, the outcome of our ways, and the response to our witness.

In the case of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the response to Peter and John was not great. They didn’t like that these men were giving glory to Jesus, who they claimed God had raised from the dead, since they considered Jesus a nuisance that they had already disposed of. So what do these Jewish authorities do? They persecute. Already they had put Peter and John in jail and dragged them before the court. Now, we are told, they “*charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus*” (4:18). To which Peter and John reply, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*” (4:19-20).² These words have “inspired persecuted Christians throughout the history of the church.”³ And these are the key words for our consideration today, and they remind us that...

Jesus Should Be the Highest Authority of the Christian Life (4:19-22)

This is quite a scene. “The opposition escalates, and the boldness abides.”⁴ And it is a boldness that is based on the recognition that Jesus is Lord. His authority is greater than that of the Sanhedrin. Peter and John’s actions have to be understood in light of that fact. Their words convey as much. And this is the reason they admit that they cannot comply with the demands of the Sanhedrin. This is a significant account. It’s the first instance of Christian persecution in Acts. And it’s been said that “these verses establish Christian civil disobedience.”⁵

As it relates to Christian civil disobedience, I think this passage, while not saying all there is to say on the matter, does remind us of a few key principles. They all relate to the larger point I’ve already made—that Jesus should be the highest authority of the Christian life. Because this is true, then we have to keep in mind the following principles that we see worked out in the example of Peter and John in our text. The first principle is that...

We Respect Civil Authority

If we comb through this story, we notice several examples of Peter and John showing respect for these authorities that are opposing them. When they were taken into custody for simply preaching the resurrection of Jesus, they did not resist arrest but complied with the temple guard. When they were questioned before the Sanhedrin, they addressed them respectfully as “*Rulers of the people and elders*” (4:8). When they are threatened to keep quiet, they did not return evil for evil. At every point they were matter of fact in their replies, but civil. Their boldness should not be confused with brashness or arrogance. There was none of that.

This should surprise no one familiar with the New Testament. The early church was a peaceful community. They were not like the Zealots, seeking to undermine authorities at every turn, sometimes even by force. They were instead those who sought, whenever possible, to be good citizens because they recognized God’s hand and purposes in governing authorities. So Paul, for instance, would eventually write,

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” (Romans 13:1-7)

Concerning the people left under his charge, Paul told Titus to...

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” (Titus 3:1-2)

To Timothy, he wrote,

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” (1 Timothy 2:2)

Even Peter, years later, would instruct believers in Asia Minor to...

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.” (1 Peter 2:13-17)

Be subject to the governing authorities. Pay your taxes. Pray for the king and people in high positions. Honor the emperor. In short, strive to be good citizens. They’re not anarchists. They are a people who recognizes and submits to God-appointed authorities, whether they be governmental authorities in our country, parental authorities in our homes, employers in our vocations, pastors in our churches, and so on.⁶ And notice I didn’t say *godly* authorities, but God-appointed. The reason for that is sometimes we wrongly assume that we owe no submission to an authority simply because they are ungodly, but that’s not necessarily true. All of those passages I just read were written to Christians who lived in places where the secular authorities were, at best, not aligned with their biblical convictions or, at worst, openly opposing the church. When Paul says, “*be subject*

to the governing authorities” and “*pray for the emperor*,” Nero, the great persecutor of the church, was on the throne. The one Paul prayed for would, literally, have his head in short order. Yet Paul, in remarkable and appropriate ways, submitted himself to the Romans authorities of his day. “The Christian life leaves no place for anarchism or for radical individualism that rejects all forms of authority” except those that are convenient.⁷

Nevertheless, there are limits to the submission we owe to governing authorities. Indeed there are limits to every earthly authority! “[A]ll authorities are subordinate to God and cannot bind our consciences against His word.”⁸

In a helpful book entitled, *Authority: How Godly Rule Protects the Vulnerable, Strengthens Communities, and Promotes Human Flourishing*, Jonathan Leeman writes,

“...no human authority is absolute. Authority is always relative to the assignment given by the Authority Giver. When Paul says, ‘there is not authority except from God,’ and ‘whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed’ (Rom. 13:1, 2), he doesn’t mean that human authority is unlimited, and that every action of every authority is morally legitimate, and that every act of resistance is morally illegitimate. Rather, he’s describing the government’s job description and presenting several basic principles: human authority comes from God; we cannot randomly assert authority over one another; we should generally submit. But this does not mean that everything a human authority says or does, without exception, must be obeyed. All God-given authority has limits, and the fact that authority has limits means that our call to submit to authority has limits, too.”⁹

Peter and John understood this, which is why they say, in verses 19 and 20, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.*” And this leads us to the next point. Not only should we respect civil authority, but, second...

We Recognize a Higher Authority

Peter and John make it clear that there is a conflict of authorities playing out. There is the authority of the Jewish Sanhedrin and the authority of King Jesus. The former is demanding that they no longer teach in the name of Jesus, and the latter has commanded them teach others to observe everything He had instructed (Matt 28:20; cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). Those two instructions are incompatible. And when there is a clash of authorities, we have to sort out which authority is the greater authority and render our submission in that direction.

In this case, the highest authority is easily discerned because “*All authority in heaven and earth has been given to [Jesus]*” (28:18). The authority of God the Son, in other words, trumps that of this Jewish court. It’s a choice between God and man. And Peter and John have chosen to submit to God. This should always be true. The issue is always, in every instance, a matter of faithfulness to God. “Sometimes this takes the form of opposing governing authorities; sometimes it takes the form of submitting to them” (cf. 1 Pet 2:20).¹⁰ In this case it’s the former. And Peter and John want these men to see that they cannot obey because Jesus is Lord of all.

But how do we know if there is an instance where it is appropriate to defy some legitimate earthly authority. This is not always easily discerned. Leeman suggests there are three limits. One limit involves “protecting ourselves from wrongful harm.”¹¹ The operative word is “wrongful” because any act of discipline creates a sense of harm, but that doesn’t mean that it should be resisted. A parent may forbid a child from spending the night at a friend’s house, which in turn might “harm” the child’s weekend plans, but that is *not* an instance that calls for civil disobedience. It calls for submission to one’s parents. But that’s not the same as a wife subjecting herself to the physical abuse of her husband. She should not. She should seek help from the police and her pastors. Intervention is needed. A husband’s authority in a home is never a license for abuse. And these principles apply in the relationship with parents and children as well. “If a father swings his fist at the onery

child, the child should duck, run, and find help, even if he wrongly spoke back against his father. Two wrongs don't make a right."¹² Furthermore, there are times, as in the case of persecution for our faith, when we may opt to incur harm for the sake of Christ's name and our witness without trying to escape it. That's not necessarily the case though. Sometimes it's wise to seek to avoid persecution, as long as it doesn't involve disobedience to the Lord or compromising our witness. The point is that authority figures are not authorized to cause wrongful harm.

A second limit on our call to submit to authority figures is "when an authority drives outside its God-assigned lane."¹³ In other words, not every authority figure has been delegated the same scope of authority in our lives. As Leeman explains,

"Churches should not wield the sword. Governments should not decide who gets baptized. Politicians generally should not tell pastors which doctrines to hold. Parents generally should not forbid children from seeking morally legitimate and necessary medical treatment. And schools generally should not undermine a parent's authority concerning what to teach their children."¹⁴

Are there exceptions? Of course. That's why Leeman says "generally." But our passage is not about those exceptions, so we won't linger there for now.

What our text is about is a third limit—the primary limit—on our call to submit to legitimate authority figures and that is "when an authority requires sin."¹⁵ In Acts 4, obedience to the Jewish authorities' command to keep quiet about Jesus would require disobedience to the command of Jesus, which is to say it would require Peter and John to sin. The only appropriate response in that instance is the one they gave, "*we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*" (Acts 4:20).¹⁶ R. C. Sproul puts the principle like this: "we are always to obey those in authority over us, unless that authority commands us to do something that God forbids, or forbids us from doing something that God commands."¹⁷ Sometimes this will be clear. Sometimes it will take discernment. But the principle is sound. And this is why Peter and John could not obey the Jewish authorities in this instance.

Derek Thomas asks some helpful, albeit convicting, questions for our consideration.

"If placed in similar circumstances, are we willing to offer such a response as that offered by the apostles in Jerusalem that day? There may come a day when preaching the exclusiveness of Jesus as the only way of salvation may incur a 'hate crime' from the point of view of the secular state. Declaring that all other forms of salvation are false may one day be viewed as a judgment of intolerance by the secular state. If such a day should come, will we be willing to declare with the apostles: 'we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard' (Acts 4:20)? If we shrink now from giving a faithful witness to our Savior, when no such threat exists, how will we possibly remain faithful if such a threat materializes? Let us pray that God the Holy Spirit would grant us the same 'boldness' as was given Peter and John."¹⁸

Amen to that!

What Peter and John model for us here is very reminiscent of the instructions that Peter gave elsewhere in the New Testament. In his first epistle, he says,

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, 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. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:13-17)

Notice, first, that Peter says that when we suffer for righteousness' sake, we should respond with gentleness and respect in our answers. This is what Peter and John do. Why? Because they respect civil authority (our first point). Next observe that the authorities in Acts 4 are indeed "*put to shame*" (1 Pet 3:16) since they had to "*let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened*" (Acts 4:21). Perhaps Peter had in mind this encounter with the Sanhedrin when he penned his words in his first epistle.

But look closely at verse 14 and 15 again. Concerning those who persecute us, Peter says, "*Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy*" (1 Pet 3:13-17). Negatively, Christians are not to fear those who persecute them (3:14). Positively, they are to "*honor Christ the Lord as holy*" (ESV), or your translation might say something like, "*sanctify Christ as Lord*" (NASB) or "*set Christ apart as Lord*" (NET) (3:15). Our time is not best spent on teasing out the merits or demerits of each of these renderings,¹⁹ so let me just not a couple significant truths.

The verb translated "*honor...as holy*" in the ESV translates just one word in the original language. It's the same verb found in the opening petition of the Lord's Prayer, which is often translated "hallowed" or "sanctified" be your name (Matt 6:9). When you "hallow" something you make it holy or you treat it as holy, or set apart. In the case of the Lord's prayer, we are told to ask God for His name to be hallowed, which cannot mean to become holy. His name stands for who He is. He is holy. He can't be made any holier than He already is by His very nature.

Jesus then is not telling us to pray that God would become holy, but rather that He would be treated as holy. He must be regarded as holy by us (cf. HCSB, NLT). Do our lives, which bare the name of God as Christians, convey the holiness of God? When we pray for His name to be hallowed, we have to be mindful of the way our lifestyles and choices may not reflect His holiness. We know the world certainly cares little for God's holiness and even despises it. We should be asking God in our prayers to make this not so, both in our lives and in the nations. Jesus gives this petition priority. Do we?

Of course, in 1 Peter we are told to "hallow" something else, that Christ is Lord. Do we make Christ Lord? Absolutely not. He is that by His nature and exaltation. So just like with the Lord's prayer, we are not being told to make something so, but to live in a way that show it to be so. Our lives are meant to magnify the fact that Christ is Lord. He is "set apart," distinguished, as Lord of all. We show this as we submit to Him as Lord and honor His name. This is precisely what Peter and John do in Acts 4 before their persecutors. They make their allegiances clear. They communicate that Christ is Lord. They call attention to His lordship. He is the highest authority. Their civil disobedience, if we want to call it that,²⁰ is in no way provocative or violent. But it's clear about Jesus. And every believer is to live in such a way that makes this truth known in their lives as well. Christians honor Christ as Lord. Sam Storms offers some helpful commentary on what this looks like:

"To honor Christ as Lord means to believe truly and sincerely that Christ alone is Lord and that our enemies are not, no matter how much power and authority they may wield. He alone must be cherished in our 'hearts' as utterly unique and precious above all. We must let the reality of his supremacy be preeminent in our thinking and feeling and govern our response to those who seek our harm. In this way our refusal to fear our enemies honors Christ as Lord as it shows our hope in him to be unshakable."²¹

Nevertheless, when we live in such a way, those who oppose us may not look to kindly on us. And this leads to the next principle...

We're Ready to Suffer for Our Allegiance

Loyalty and submission to King Jesus—especially when such loyalty means defying the commands and preferences of others—will often lead to suffering. However, that doesn't always mean suffering persecution. Sometimes it means suffering inconvenience. Just because an authority figure requires us to do something we

don't want to do, doesn't mean that we are to engage in civil disobedience if it doesn't contradict the clear teaching of Scripture. Do you think it was convenient for Mary and Joseph to make their way to Bethlehem, at the risk of the pregnant Mary and the unborn infant Jesus, just because some ruler desired a census? Of course not. But they did it. They obeyed the authorities.²² And we should too whenever possible. Even when it's inconvenient.

That said, sometimes we will suffer harm because of our loyalty to Jesus. Persecution, to some degree, is inevitable for followers of Jesus. "Believers do not set out to oppose authorities, but their faith in Jesus may cause the authorities to oppose them."²³ We should be ready for that. Peter and John certainly were. Their response was infuriating to the Jewish leaders, who, as a result, "*further threaten them*," according to verse 21, before releasing them. And the Apostles know they mean business, because these are the same authorities who led the effort to have Jesus crucified a month and a half ago (or so). And Acts will make it clear that deliverance is never guaranteed to the Christian (e.g., Stephen, James, Paul).²⁴ "Real discipleship has always been, and continues to be, costly."²⁵ But it's always worth it, which is why, finally...

We Remain Steadfast in Affliction

This is what Peter and John will prove to do. "They know that the high court in Israel will be overruled by the high court of heaven, and they are constrained to proclaim the gospel (cf. Acts 22:15; 1 Cor. 9:16)."²⁶ Wayne Grudem notes that revering Christ as Lord amounts to believing "that Christ, not one's human opponents, is truly in control of events." He is sovereign. And He doesn't relinquish that sovereignty just because someone means to heap abuse on His children. He is no less sovereign when people threaten His people. And this is why Peter's words, again, are so appropriate: "*Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened. But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord*" (1 Pet 3:14-15; NIV). We don't need to fear them, because we fear the Lord.²⁷ We don't fear them because we recognize that Christ is Lord, not them. Our hope in Christ is secure. What true and lasting harm can anyone do to us? This is very much the mindset that Paul modeled for the Romans when he wrote,

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us....And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:18, 28-39)

Do you hear the same mindset that Acts 4 and 1 Peter 3 are trying to impress upon us? In all three passages the point is the same: "no one can ultimately and finally triumph over believers since God will vindicate them on the last day."²⁸ This is a consequence of the fact that Christ is Lord. And a consequence of us recognizing this fact is that we will fear those who seek to do us harm less and less. Come what may, our faith is in Christ the Lord. And He does not disappoint. He delivers. Not necessarily *from* our suffering, but certainly *through* it. The

worst thing that could happen to us already happened to Him in our place when He bore our sin and judgment on the cross. So the worst thing that can happen to us now is that we die and enter into the promised inheritance. That doesn't sound all that bad when seen against the backdrop of eternity. What are several decades of suffering compared to unending millennia of glory and joy in the presence of our God and Savior? Paul calls all his years of suffering "*light*" and "*momentary*" compared to what awaited him in the next life, "*an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*" (2 Cor 4:17). That's the perspective that Christians should have. And can you imagine if we did? "When we know there is nothing anyone can do to us to separate us from our future inheritance, fear is replaced by hope and boldness."²⁹ So it was for Peter and John. So it can be for every Christian in this place.

So what have we learned? We've learned that Jesus should be the highest authority of the Christian life. If this is true, then we will respect civil authorities, recognize His higher authority, stand ready to suffer for our allegiance if necessary, and remain steadfast in that affliction. And, as we've seen, a knowledge of the victory of Jesus and the sovereignty of God will help us endure. And this is exactly what the next couple paragraphs in Acts 4 are going to make even more clear for us, as we will see next week. Where do Peter and John turn for support and strength when they are released? The answer is the church, and with them, the Lord. To be continued.

But I would be remiss if I did not add this morning no one is more sympathetic to Christian suffering than Christ Himself. Peter reminds us elsewhere that "*Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God*" (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus had quite literally stood where Peter and John were standing. He received the worst the world could throw at Him, and He did it for our sakes. The Righteous One (Jesus), suffered for the unrighteous (us). Why? Because without the cross of Christ we would have no hope of salvation. His blood alone can wash away our sin. Turn from your sin. See your need for the Savior. And call upon His name, the name of Jesus, to be saved, and so it shall be. Not because you are deserving, but because you are loved by the God of the universe. So loved, in fact, that He gave His only Son for you. And as we have seen in Peter's bold witness in Acts 4, "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 4:12). Won't you call on His name? I pray you do. I pray we all do, before it is too late.

Pray with me...

¹ See David E. Garland, *Acts* (TTCS; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 47-48.

² "The double negative, translated literally as 'we cannot ... not speak' (οὐ δυνάμεθα ... μὴ λαλεῖν) has the force of a strong affirmative: the apostles must speak about Jesus." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 246.

³ Ajith Fernando, *Acts* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 153.

⁴ Joe Rigney, *Courage: How the Gospel Creates Christian Fortitude* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2023), 81.

⁵ Drawn from a sermon by Richard D. Phillips, which can be accessed here: <https://sermons.spcgreenville.org/sermons/10815915100/>.

⁶ Perhaps it's worth adding that not all opposition that we face is inappropriate. As N. T. Wright notes, "Sometimes the warning may be wise and you may actually need it. The fact of somebody opposing you doesn't automatically mean you're in the right! But in all genuine kingdom-work there will be moments when you find yourself confronted with one kind of challenge or another." N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Acts: Rediscovering What the Church Was and Is* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 33.

⁷ Iain M. Duguid, *Turning the World Upside Down: Lessons from Acts 1-8* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025), 87.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jonathan Leeman, *Authority: How Godly Rule Protects the Vulnerable, Strengthens Communities, and Promotes Human Flourishing* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2023), 75-76.

¹⁰ Brian J. Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 387-388.

¹¹ Leeman, 79.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 77.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “‘What [they] have seen and heard’ (i.e., the works and words of Jesus) was a message worthy of proclamation to the whole world. Loyalty to God and the nature of the message combine to give compelling reasons to disobey the command of the Sanhedrin.” Fernando, 154.

¹⁷ R. C. Sproul, *Acts* (SAEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 101. He does acknowledge that, in practice, this can be “excruciatingly difficult” how the principle applies in particular instances. “If a husband says to his wife, ‘I want you to earn some extra income for us by turning to prostitution,’ not only may she disobey him, but she must disobey him. Conversely, if a woman is married to an unbelieving man who says to her, ‘You may not go to church on Wednesday night and join the choir,’ what should the wife do? She should stay home, because God nowhere commands women to sing in the choir. I plead for it, but I cannot command it. But if the husband says to his wife, ‘You are not permitted to go to church on the Sabbath and join the corporate worship of the people of God,’ not only may she disobey him, but she must disobey him, because God commands her to be in the assembly of the saints... The general principle is that we bend over backwards to be submissive, but we stand with ramrod defiance when the magistrate commands disobedience to God. That is why it is very important for us to understand, in our daily lives, what God commands and what He forbids; otherwise, we are like sheep without a shepherd, and we go along with what Nietzsche called a ‘herd morality,’ doing whatever anybody tells us to do, when, in fact, there are times the Christian has to say no. There is a reason why the blood of the church became the seed of its growth in the first century—the many who would not submit to the tyrants who told them to deny faith in Christ. With Job we have to say, ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him’ (Job 13:15). I urge you to be prepared for that time when you have to choose obedience to those who command sin or obedience to Christ.” Ibid., 101-102.

¹⁸ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 103.

¹⁹ “The meaning is much the same whether Peter intends us to ‘honor Christ as the Lord’ (in which case *ton christon* is the direct object of the verb *hagiasate* and *kyrion* is the complement) or to ‘honor the Lord, that is, Christ’ (where *kyrion* is the direct object and *ton christon* is in apposition to it). The ESV takes a slightly different tack and makes ‘Lord’ appositional to ‘Christ’ (hence ‘Christ the Lord’).” Sam Storms, “1 Peter” in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 336.

²⁰ For an alternative characterization, see Vickers, 387.

²¹ Storms, 336.

²² Sproul, 99. “The point is, all authority is to some measure relative, as is our obligation to obey. God’s authority alone is absolute, which means, he will judge all our obedience and disobediences on the last day. With some decision we make, God will say to us, ‘You should have obeyed.’ With others he will say, ‘You should have disobeyed.’ And with still others, ‘You would have been free to disobey, but it was wise that you didn’t.’ The point is, his final judgment is always the final standard.” Leeman, 81.

²³ Vickers, 388.

²⁴ Patrick Schreiner, *Acts* (CSC; Holman Reference: 2021), 180.

²⁵ Dean Pinter, *Acts* (SGB; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 115.

²⁶ Garland, 45.

²⁷ Cf. Matthew 10:28.

²⁸ Schreiner, 194.

²⁹ Juan R. Sanchez, *1 Peter for You* (Good Book Company, 2016), 126-127.