

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Uncompromising Boldness

Acts 4:1–22

Go ahead and take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Acts, chapter 4. The title of today's message is "Uncompromising Boldness." The key word for today's message is "boldness." The Greek word is **παρρησία**.¹

One prayer for my life, one prayer for our church as a whole, is that we would have an uncompromising, unapologetic boldness for Jesus Christ. Peter and John had that in the book of Acts. The other apostles and the women who were part of the early church had that. You *can* have that as well, and in fact you *should* have that if you call Jesus Christ, "Lord."

And one of the ways in which our boldness for Jesus is tested is through persecution in this life. The passage that we are going to look at today, Acts 4:1–22, has to do with the boldness that Peter and John displayed despite the fact that their very lives were in danger. They stood before the same people who had executed Jesus Christ, and they proclaimed their allegiance to Christ with boldness. They preached the gospel to them with boldness. Would we do the same? Would you do the same?

One of the reasons that I think Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote these verses for us is so that we would be prepared to do the same when we experience persecution. God is telling us here how much he values courageous Christianity that is unimpeded by the opposition we experience in this world. The "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), Satan, will attack us. What are we going to do about that? Are we going to tuck tail and run? Or are we going to imitate the boldness that these disciples display?

The big question that I want to ask and answer today is "Why be bold for Jesus in this world of opposition?" Or let me ask it this way "Why does uncompromising boldness for Jesus Christ matter?" I'll give you three answers to that question. You can see those answers in the Exposition portion of your notes, and after those three points, I'll give you three additional Application points, so we can put in to practice what we learn in Acts 4.

Here's the first point from our text today. "Why be bold for Jesus in this world of opposition?"

1) Boldness for Jesus is **rewarded** despite opposition (4:1–4)

¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 145n52: "NIV 'courage'; the Greek word *παρρησία* means *boldness, openness, freedom in speaking*." Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 243: "In Greek literature the term has primarily a political meaning, describing the right and the willingness to express one's opinion freely... Employed by the wrong person, *παρρησία* degenerates into insolence and blasphemy."

The Word of God says this. Look at **chapter 4, verse 1**.

¹ And as they² were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple³ and the Sadducees⁴ came upon them, ² greatly annoyed⁵ because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.⁶

Now if you remember from last time, Peter and John went into the temple at the normal time of sacrifice and prayer. And while in the temple they happened upon a crippled man who was lame from birth. And they looked that crippled man right in the eyes and said, “In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” And the man who was lame from birth, miraculously stood up and walked.

But he didn’t just walk; he ran and leaped and praised God throughout the temple making all kinds of commotion. These kinds of miracles, according to **Acts 2**, were commonplace for the apostles. God had uniquely empowered them in this apostolic age to do incredible miracles as the church was being launched.

So this crippled man began walking and leaping and praising God, and he created quite a disturbance in the temple. And as the people gathered around him and Peter and John, they marveled at what had taken place with this man who had been begging in the temple for years. And Peter used this great miracle, as an opportunity to preach the gospel.

And he told the audience flat-out, “You denied the Holy and Righteous One,” Jesus Christ. “You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead” (**Acts 3:14–15**). It was a terrifying and sober message for this Jewish crowd. But it was ultimately a message of hope. Because Peter preached, “Brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance.” And he preached, “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out” (**Acts 3:17–19**).

Now in **Acts 4**, Peter was still preaching to them when the authorities showed up. **Verse 1** says,

¹ And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,

Here comes the cavalry as Peter and John were preaching. The powers-that-be in Jerusalem weren’t happy with Peter and John.

The “captain of the temple,” by the way, was the person who was second in command behind the chief priest. He was responsible for security in the temple. And the Sadducees were the ruling party in Jerusalem.⁷ They were the liberal party of the Jewish faith at this time.⁸ They appeased the Romans. They pacified the people. They denied the more conservative beliefs of the Pharisees. They denied any resurrection from death. And they only held to the Torah (the five books of Moses) as their Scriptures.

Luke tells us in **verse 2** they were “greatly annoyed.” Maybe they were annoyed because they were saying to themselves, **“I thought we stamped out this Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We crucified him not that**

² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 138–9: “That Luke used the plural “while they were speaking” is interesting. It was Peter’s sermon that was interrupted. As always he was the spokesman, but the plural shows that John was not silent. Like all the apostles, he also was bearing his witness to Christ.

³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 233: “The ‘captain of the temple’ (ὁ στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ; Hebr. נָדָב) was the official in charge of all temple affairs, the second in authority in the temple after the incumbent high priest, the head of the temple guard (often called temple police), which consisted of 200 priests and Levites.” Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 100–1: “He is termed in the Talmudists ... the man of the mountain of the house; or, the ruler of the mountain of the temple, or in Hebrew *sagan*, *segen*, and *ish har ha-bayit*, the latter meaning ‘the Overseer of the Temple Mount.’”

⁴ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 373–4: “the Sadducees, who denied the possibility of bodily resurrection (Matt. 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27), had a political hold on the priesthood. The wealthy and powerful Sadducees also cooperated with the Romans, seeking to maintain their own power and influence. They feared that talk of a messiah, a rival king to Caesar and one who purportedly rose from the dead, would ruin a good financial and political arrangement.”

⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 187: “The verb ‘annoy’ (διαπονέω, *diaponēō*) appears only twice in the NT; here and in 16:18, where Paul is annoyed with the spirit-possessed slave girl who follows him.”

⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 101: “The apostles’ proclamation created two problems with the Sadducees. The first problem was the teaching on the resurrection because the Sadducees denied the possibility of any resurrection from the dead. Second, it troubled them when the apostles proclaimed this resurrection ‘in Yeshua’ because, from early on, they had rejected the Messiah and helped to get Him crucified.”

⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 139: “The prime concern of the Sadducean aristocracy, of whom the high priest was the chief spokesman, was the preservation of order, the avoidance at all costs of any confrontation with the Roman authorities.”

⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 186: “The Sadducees were one of the key sects of Judaism. They claimed that their roots went back to Zadok, high priest under Solomon (1 Kings 2:26–27, 35), and even further back to Zadok, elder son of Aaron (1 Chron. 5:30–35).”

long ago. We can't get rid of this guy and his disciples."⁹ Luke says more explicitly that they were annoyed because of two things: **1) Peter and John were teaching the people. "Nobody teaches the people but us!" "These guys aren't authorized!"** So they were annoyed by that. And they were annoyed because **2) "they were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."**

Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection. Most Jews at this time did. The prophet Daniel explicitly talks about the resurrection of the dead in the OT (**Dan 12:1–2**). But the Sadducees didn't believe that Daniel was Scripture. And they didn't believe in the resurrection. So these guys teaching that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and also that faith in Christ could allow someone else to be resurrected was... well... "annoying" to these Jewish leaders.¹⁰

And since they had most of the power positions in the temple, they started flexing their authority. Look at **verse 3**.

³ And they arrested¹¹ [Peter and John] and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

"It's late. We'll deal with you guys in the morning."¹² So Peter and John heal a guy who was crippled from birth, and they preach the gospel. And how are they rewarded? They get arrested. **At this point, I think many of us in America would be angry with the Lord and cry out, "I was faithful to you, and now I'm suffering. How could you do this to me?"** But check this out. Here's the big picture that Luke wants us to grasp. Look at **verse 4**.

⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.¹³

A few days before the number of believers was 3,000 men, women, and children. Now the number of *men alone* is 5,000. The church was exploding, despite this first real opposition the disciples experienced in the book of **Acts**.

A cynic might say something like this, "What good did your boldness get you, Peter and John? All you did was make enemies with the higher-ups in Israel and spend a night in the slammer for your preaching. A lot of good that did you." But God tells us this in **verse 4**, **"Their boldness was rewarded."** Many (not all, but many) of those who heard the word believed, and the number of believing men came to about 5,000. What's one night in the slammer, if you can be used by God to bring 5,000 people to Christ?

Let me just linger on this point a little bit more. Here in the States, I think we do face opposition when we share the gospel with others. Although it's not as pronounced as what we see in the book of Acts. But I believe one of the biggest deterrents to boldness isn't other people; it's ourselves. It's our fear of man. It's our fear of rejection. That's a powerful force in our world.¹⁴

Several years ago I was part of a church-planting team in Cameroon, West Africa. And one of the things we did as part of that time was divide up into teams and hit the streets for evangelism. Here's a picture of me and my team.

⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 186: "They react in part because in their view the apostles' teaching could be politically, socially, and religiously destabilizing to their relatively good relationship with Rome."

¹⁰ CHRYSOSTOM: "They were annoyed, not only because the apostles were teaching, but because they declared that not only was Jesus Christ himself risen from the dead but that through him we too rise again.... So powerful was his resurrection that he is the cause of resurrection for others as well." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 47.

¹¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 187: "The Jewish leaders arrest Peter and John. The Greek phrase ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας (*epebalon autois tas cheiras*) means to lay hands on someone (Acts 5:18; 12:1; 21:27; Mark 14:46; Luke 20:19; 21:12)."

¹² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 234: "In the summer (of AD 30), sunset was between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m.... 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."

¹³ Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts*, ESVEC, 374: "A pattern begins here that is repeated in Acts: persecution cannot stop the kingdom but often goes hand in hand with its growth."

¹⁴ Sproul, *Acts*, 92: "The American truth today is that what you believe does not matter so long as you are sincere, and there are many roads that go to heaven. Some go directly and some by a more circuitous route, but in the final analysis, all that God is really concerned about is that we be people of faith. I cannot think of a principle more plainly and categorically opposed to the universal teaching of sacred Scripture—both Old and New Testaments—than that idea."



We broke up into groups and went around the neighborhoods near the church, and we just talked with people about Jesus and the church. And I was teamed up with a young man named James who was about 18 years old. And our strategy was something like this. I was the big white guy that attracted attention. And then when people would circle around us, he would share Christ with them and invite them to our church plant. It was a remarkably effective strategy.

And at that time, I thought I had boldness for Christ. But compared to this guy, I was a wimp. Because I just remember this guy James having incredible enthusiasm and boldness for Jesus. And I thought to myself, “I’d would love to bottle this guy’s enthusiasm for Christ and take it back to the States with me!”

For the record, I love mission trips. I love evangelizing in other parts of the world. I love meeting Christians in other parts of the world. I’ve gotten to preach in Europe, Asia, and Africa throughout my life multiple times. And I pray I get more opportunities to do that throughout my life. **But I also pray, “God increase our boldness for Jesus here in San Antonio, Texas! May God give us the kind of boldness that we see here in Acts from Peter and John, a boldness that is undeterred by human opposition!”**

Back to Acts. Look at verse 5. Luke writes,

⁵ On the next day¹⁵ their rulers¹⁶ and elders¹⁷ and scribes¹⁸ gathered together in Jerusalem,¹⁹ ⁶ with Annas the high priest²⁰ and Caiaphas²¹ and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.²²

¹⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 140–1: “The next morning the council convened to hear the apostles, just as they had tried Jesus in a morning session (Luke 22:66).”

¹⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 235: “The ‘leaders’ (οἱ ἄρχοντες) are probably identical with the names given in v. 6, i.e., they are the leading representatives of the high-priestly class, which consisted of the chief priests and their families.”

¹⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 235: “The ‘elders’ (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) are senior officials, members of the Jewish élite which presumably included both priests and laymen, among the latter presumably the rich landowners. It is possible that Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43) belonged to this group.”

¹⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 141: “Most scribes were of Pharisaic outlook, so it was likely in this group that the Pharisees were represented on the Sanhedrin.”

¹⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 141: “Matters regarding local jurisdiction were entrusted by the Hellenistic overlords to a council of Jews, which developed into the Sanhedrin of New Testament times. It seems to have consisted of seventy-one members, based on Num 11:16, counting the seventy elders mentioned there plus Moses as presiding officer. The presiding officer in the New Testament period was the high priest. At first the Council seems to have consisted primarily of the leading priests and lay elders from the aristocracy. From the time of Queen Alexandra (76–67 b.c.), however, Pharisees were admitted on the Council. Probably always in the minority, the latter still had considerable clout because of their popularity with the people (cf. Josephus, Ant.13.298).”

²⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 236: “The significance of the high priest is reflected in Josephus who asserts that the high priest, with his priestly colleagues, ‘will sacrifice to God, safeguard the law, adjudicate in cases of dispute, punish those convicted of crime. Any who disobey him will pay the penalty as for impiety towards God himself’ (Ag. Ap. 2.194).”

²¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 236: “Josephus mentions Caiaphas only in connection with his appointment and with his removal as high priest, despite the fact that he held office for eighteen years. The long tenure, rivaled only by the nine-year tenure of his father-in-law Annas, suggests that he was a shrewd diplomat who was acceptable to two Roman governors.”

²² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 231: “This is the first of thirteen trial scenes in Acts.”

So, all of the big shots from the Sanhedrin gather to examine Peter and John.²³ The high priest at this time was actually Caiaphas.²⁴ But Annas was his father-in-law and had served as high priest in previous days. Annas was the ecclesiastical boss of Israel.²⁵

It's clear from the NT that Annas exercised a lot of power in the Sanhedrin. Both of these men along with the other Jewish leaders were instrumental in getting Jesus condemned and executed. So Peter and John have angered the very group of people that were responsible for Jesus's death. They should be, at this point, fearful for their lives.

Notice too how inbred the Jewish leadership was at this time. There wasn't just a high-priest, there was a high-priestly family. So a very small contingent of closely related leaders ruled over the Jerusalem temple at this time. This is a not so subtle dig at these leaders by Luke.

And look at **verse 7**.

⁷ And when they had set them in the midst,²⁶ they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you²⁷ do this?"²⁸

By the way "this" in Greek is singular. So they aren't asking about the preaching and the miracle.²⁹ They are asking about the miracle. They are asking, **"In whose name did you perform this miracle?"** They aren't denying that a miracle was done. They just want to know whose name they did it in.

And it should be obvious to them whose name they did it in.³⁰ It's not like they were hiding the fact that they did this in Jesus's name. Probably what's happening now is that these Sanhedrin leaders are giving Peter and John a chance to recant. They've had a night in the slammer to think about it. Now it's time to back off.

And if Peter had a lawyer by his side, he would probably tell him, "Okay, Here's your chance, Peter. Don't be a fool. Be evasive. Be noncommittal. Equivocate on your loyalty to Jesus. Do what you did the night Jesus was sentenced to death. Deny that you even know him, and then you can get off scot-free."

But is that what Peter does? Look at **verse 8**.

⁸ Then Peter,³¹ filled with the Holy Spirit,³²

²³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 236: "The available sources suggest that there was a permanent council in Jerusalem, sometimes called Sanhedrin (συνέδριον), but also known as senate (γερονσία) and council (βουλή), consisting of the chief priests and the leading citizens of Jerusalem, which had power (or, depending on the political situation, some level of influence) over Judea and the rest of Palestine. We do not know for certain whether the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem had seventy-one members (seventy members plus the president) at this particular time, as later rabbinic sources suggest. The members of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem represented the Jewish people in some fashion, but they should not be confused with a democratically elected 'House of Representatives' who deliberate political, legal, economic, cultural, and religious matters."

²⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 141–2: "Actually, Annas was high priest from a.d. 6–15, and at this time (early a.d. 30s) his son-in-law Caiaphas was the reigning high priest."

²⁵ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, chapter 7, Kindle: "Annas is called 'high priest' here, but at this point in time this was more of an honorary title for him. Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was the actual high priest. Nevertheless, Annas was the ecclesiastical boss of Palestine."

²⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 142: "The Greek says literally 'in the middle' (v. 7), which comports well with the rabbinic statement that the Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle: 'The Sanhedrin was arranged like the half of a round threshing-floor so that they might all see one another.'"

²⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 190: "The subject, 'you' (ὁμεῖς, *hymeis*), is delayed to the end of the question, making it emphatic. In effect, the emphasis is, 'What power or authority gave this right to you?' One thing the leadership knows: they did not give them this authority, and in their view, it is theirs to give or withhold."

²⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 237: "The members of the Sanhedrin question Peter and John concerning the 'power' (δύναμις) through which 'this' (τοῦτο), i.e., the miraculous healing of the lame man, has taken place."

²⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 142 disagrees: "Some interpreters assume that the question has to do with the man's healing, but the main reason for the arrest had been the preaching of the apostles (v. 2)."

³⁰ Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 374: "They likely know that Peter invoked the name of Jesus in healing the lame man and are attempting to get Peter and John to admit this publicly. Later they recognize the apostles as followers of Jesus (v. 13), and Peter's reply (v. 9) implies that the council has some knowledge of what has transpired."

³¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 143n45: "filled The aorist participle πλησθεῖς is used for special moments of inspiration as here (cf. Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 13:9). It is to be distinguished from the reception of the Spirit, which abides on every believer (2:38), as well as from the adjective form πλήρης ("full of the Spirit") used of especially spiritual persons (Jesus, Luke 4:1; Stephen, Acts 6:5; 7:55; Barnabas, 11:24)."

³² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 143: "Instead of the expected defense, Peter gave them a sermon."

Look, Peter is already saved. He's already been baptized by the Spirit. But now Peter is experiencing a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit.

By the way, Jesus prophesied this! In **Luke 12**, he told them, “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (12:11–12). Jesus also said, “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict” (Luke 21:15).³³

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give them utterance in these moments of persecution, and sure enough that's what happens with Peter. He is filled with the Holy Spirit as he begins to speak...

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers³⁴ of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined³⁵ today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man,³⁶ by what means this man has been healed,³⁷ ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ³⁸ of Nazareth, **whom you crucified**, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.”³⁹

Wow! Preach it Peter.⁴⁰ **If Peter did have a lawyer right now, he might tell the court, “Can I have a moment to confer with my client?” “Don’t you know, Peter, that these guys have the authority to make your life miserable? Don’t you know these guys could turn you over to the Romans to be crucified just like Jesus! Are you crazy? Do you have a death wish?”**

Well, Peter is crazy. He's crazy for Jesus. And in this time of intense persecution by the religious leaders, the Holy Spirit gives him divine utterance to communicate the gospel.

Here's the second point from our text today. Boldness for Jesus is rewarded despite opposition.

2) Boldness for Jesus is **empowered** in times of persecution (4:5–12)

These Jewish leaders asked Peter the wrong question. They should have said something like this, “**How do you think we feel when you say these things to the people without consulting us?**” They should have asked, “**Can you please not be so aggressive in communicating your beliefs to the people?**”

Instead they asked, “**By what power or by what name did you do this?**” That's the wrong question, guys. That's going to light a fire under Peter. **They might as well be throwing lunchmeat to a pack of wild dogs.**

Peter's like, “**By what power are we doing this? In whose name are we doing this? Haven't you been listening? It's by the name of Jesus Christ that we are doing this. It's by the power of him whom God raised from the dead. We didn't heal this guy in our own name. We don't just heal willy-nilly**

³³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 145n54: “There is likely a conscious parallel here, since Luke used the same verb (ἀντειπεῖν, ‘answer back’) both here (v. 14) and in Luke 21:15.”

³⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 238: “It should be noted that the term ‘leaders’ (ἄρχοντες) occurs in Ps 118:9 (LXX 117:9), the psalm which Peter will quote in v. 11, in the statement that ‘it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes (ἐπ’ ἄρχοντας),’ as well as in Ps 2:2 which is quoted in v. 26 in the prayer in which the Jerusalem Christians express the lament that ‘the kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers (οἱ ἄρχοντες) band together against the Lord and against his anointed [Messiah].’”

³⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 191: “In using the verb ἀνακρίνω (*anakrinō*, judge), Peter alludes to the fact that there is a judicial examination taking place.” Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 238: “The present tense of the verb [ἀνακρινόμεθα] suggests an extended period of time that the judicial hearing is expected to take, as such examinations are seldom quick affairs.”

³⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 106: “There is a sense of sarcasm here: The miracle was a good thing, not a crime.”

³⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 143: “The crux of the sermon is a play on the Greek word *sōzō*, which means both physical ‘salvation’ in the sense of healing (v. 9) as well as the spiritual, eschatological sense of salvation (v. 12).⁴⁶ The physical “salvation” of the lame man through the name of Jesus is thus a pointer to the far greater salvation that comes to all who call upon his name in faith.”

³⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 239: “As Peter addresses the Sanhedrin in Hebrew or Aramaic, he would have used the word “Messiah” (*māšīah*; מָשִׁיחַ) which is not a Hebrew name but a reference to the promised Messiah. Peter asserts that Jesus is Israel's Messiah.”

³⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 200: “It is when religion is imposed that it does damage. Here we see apostles making an appeal and leaving the decision and consequences to individual response. There is no effort to impose the faith, only to inform about it and to stress the responsibility every creature ultimately has to be responsive to the living God.”

⁴⁰ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 374–5: “Many of those listening would have sat in the same place at the rigged trial of Jesus, condemning him for blasphemy and deeming him worthy of death. For this, Peter condemns them and asserts that though they were against Jesus, God was on his side. The healed man standing right in front of them is irrefutable proof of Jesus' vindication.”

without any claim to divine power. We healed him in the name of Jesus. You better recognize that name! It's not going away."

Notice Peter says again with an accusatory tone, "whom you crucified" (4:10). He doesn't miss an opportunity to assign blame. **"You crucified him. You killed the Author of Life. You killed the supreme power in the universe!"**

It's as if Peter turns the tables on them in this interrogation. They are trying to accuse Peter and expose his guilt, but all of a sudden he accuses them and exposes *their* guilt.⁴¹ Masterful!

Look at **verse 11**.

⁴¹ *This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.*⁴²

Now Peter quotes the OT. And we've seen him do that before. Peter quotes from **Psalms 118** about the cornerstone that was rejected.⁴³ Peter is never without a reference to the OT when he talks. Have you noticed that? **He's always got his Bible on the tip of his tongue. I think there's a powerful principle there for us. Peter always wants his assertions to be grounded in Scripture.**

In this case, Peter does something that Jesus himself did. Jesus quoted this verse to the chief priests and Pharisees the week that he was crucified (**Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10–11; Luke 20:17**). Jesus said essentially, **"You builders, are building your religion without the cornerstone, the Messiah Jesus. Your building is in vain."**

Why would Jesus say that? Why does Peter say that? What are they getting at? Here it is. Look at **verse 12**. This is one of the greatest verses for Christian apologetics in the Bible.

⁴² *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.*⁴⁴

No other name! Period! **The name Buddha... doesn't save! The name Muhammed... doesn't save! The name Moses ... doesn't save! The name Joseph Smith ... doesn't save! The name Confucius ... doesn't save!** It's Jesus or nothing.⁴⁵ It's salvation through faith in Christ, or it's eternal damnation and separation from God. There's no other way to be saved.⁴⁶

That's Peter's message. That's what he was filled with the Holy Spirit to convey to these religious leaders. **And his boldness for Jesus was empowered in this time of persecution.**

Now let me just step outside of this story for a second and talk about Acts 4:12. This is a verse that I have cited often in my life. I can't ever remember a time in my life when I didn't have that verse memorized and on the tip of my tongue. It's a great verse. And it communicates for us very succinctly the centrality of Christ for salvation and the exclusivity of Christ as the means of our salvation.

⁴¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 192: "Peter is 'guilty' of preaching Jesus. But he is guilty for good, even divine, reasons. The leaders, however, are even more guilty before God."

⁴² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 241: "Jesus has become the 'cornerstone' (κεφαλὴ γωνίας), the most important stone in the foundation of a new building at the corner of the longitudinal side and the broad side, determining the location, the direction, and size of the building. This application of Ps 118:22 has a fourfold significance. First, Jesus has been vindicated by God. Second, the Jewish leaders have been mistaken in their rejection of Jesus. Third, the fatefully misguided action of the Jewish leaders has been reversed by God, who has raised Jesus from the dead. Fourth, God is building a new building; the reference to a cornerstone suggests a monumental building—a new (spiritual) in which God's presence among his people is based on Jesus' death and resurrection, and thus contingent upon the acceptance of God's revelation in Jesus, Israel's Messiah, and upon faith in the significance of Jesus for God's people."

⁴³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 144: "[T]here is a proof from Scripture, this time from Ps 118:22. It establishes the guilt of the Sanhedrin. They were the 'builders,' the leaders of the nation, who rejected the very rock on which God's people are to be built... This text also appears in Luke 20:17 as well as in 1 Pet 2:7."

⁴⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 242: "The phrase 'through which we are to be saved' (ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς) emphasizes that (1) Jesus is the only 'place' (spherical meaning of ἐν) or agent (instrumental) of salvation; (2) the granting of salvation exclusively through Jesus is a necessary part of God's plan (δεῖ); (3) God is the one who grants salvation through Jesus (passive infinitive); (4) the salvation that comes through Jesus is an accomplished reality (aorist infinitive)."

⁴⁵ BEDE: "If the salvation of the world is in no other but in Christ alone, then the fathers of the Old Testament were saved by the incarnation and passion of the same Redeemer, by which we also believe and hope to be saved." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 49.

⁴⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 248 comments on this verse that some "evangelical voices have suggested that v. 12 need not be interpreted in an exclusive sense [e.g. Clark Pinnock]." Those evangelical voices are dead wrong. And they need to stop calling themselves (and being called) evangelical.

Now I know that this verse, Acts 4:12, smacks of pride and intolerance in our modern, pluralistic society. And if you quote Acts 4:12 to the outside world, and if you believe this truth that is communicated in the Bible, you will be labeled as a narrow-minded, intolerant person. Just get ready for that. People will say things like this, “How can you be so hateful as to say Christ is the only way to salvation?”⁴⁷

But here’s the truth about that statement. Hear me on this. If we really believe that salvation is found only through Jesus Christ and none other... if we really believe what the Bible actually says... then the most hateful thing that we could do is be silent. It’s because we love people and we believe in Christ’s free gift of salvation that we speak boldly about the exclusivity of salvation found through Christ.

Don’t be bullied into silence by this pluralistic world. Be bold. Be courageous. And be loving enough to tell people about Christ.

If we fail to speak boldly about Christ to those we love, then we consign them to hell. If our faith is marked by cowardice instead of courage, then we forfeit our roles as ambassadors for Christ. In fact I would suggest to you that a faith marked by cowardice and silence is no faith at all.

The sincerity of a person’s faith is often revealed in times of opposition. Let me say that again. The sincerity of a person’s faith, or lack thereof, is often revealed in times of opposition. The bold get bolder and the cowardly get exposed.⁴⁸

Write this down as a third point for today’s message.

3) Boldness for Jesus is **unimpeded** by threats and intimidation (4:13–22)

Real boldness for Jesus... sincere, courageous faith in Christ... is unimpeded ... it’s undeterred by threats and intimidation. When you find a group of people that are radically committed to Jesus, come hell or high-water, persecution is like throwing gasoline on a fire. It doesn’t stem the tide of gospel witness. It accelerates gospel witness!

Look what happens with Peter and John in verse 13:

¹³ Now when they [the religious leaders] saw the boldness [παρρησία]⁴⁹ of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated,⁵⁰ common men, they were astonished.

It’s not that they were illiterate. Don’t misunderstand what they are saying here. Peter and John had grown up in a synagogue just like other Jewish boys. They knew the Scriptures. But they weren’t formally trained in matters of Law in the Rabbinic schools. They were laymen. **In our day, you might say, they didn’t go to seminary for training.**⁵¹

I had someone tell me once that they didn’t feel confident in their ability to articulate their faith because they didn’t go to seminary. And I told them, “forget that.” Since when was seminary a qualification for boldness? If only seminarians were bold for Christ in this world, we would have a

⁴⁷ Sproul, *Acts*, 93: “There is nothing in our culture today more intolerable than exclusivity, than to meet with the Christian assertion that there is only one way to God. Only a handful of professing Christians in our culture will stand up publicly and say there is only one way to God and that way is through Christ. The rest, by denying that principle, are guilty of nothing less than treason to the Son of God.”

⁴⁸ Sproul, *Acts*, 95: “The Apostles had healed by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the One whom the people had crucified but whom God had raised from the dead. Why? So that all Israel might know that this is the only name there is under heaven through which men may be saved. If you are a Christian, you should be prepared to die for that affirmation. If you are not, you are playing at religion, and you have missed the Son of God.”

⁴⁹ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 375: “The boldness of the apostles should not be confused with brash self-confidence. Their confidence is not in themselves but in God, relying on him to make them bold (cf. 2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27–28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31).”

⁵⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 145n53: “NIV ‘unschooled,’ ἀγράμματος, often has the meaning illiterate but came to mean merely uneducated, which is the likely meaning here. The other word is ἰδιώται (‘ordinary,’ NIV), meaning private person, a layperson, nonprofessional.” Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 108: “The Greek word for ‘unlearned,’ *agrammatotai*, means that they were untrained in rabbinic schools. The Pharisees had observed the same thing about Yeshua in John 7:15.”

⁵¹ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 375: “John and Peter were trained by Jesus and empowered by the Spirit. There is no suggestion here for discounting theological education when available, but it is not theological training or lack thereof that counts but the Spirit.”

woefully ineffective church. Peter and John didn't let a lack of formal education keep them from bold proclamation of the gospel.⁵²

Now here's a key point—Peter and John sat at the feet of Jesus for three years. That's key. They went to seminary with Rabbi Jesus. So much so, that these Jewish leaders recognized their affiliation with Jesus.

Look at the end of **verse 13**.

*And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*⁵³

They weren't bold in their own power; they were bold in the power of the Holy Spirit. They weren't bold in their own learning; they were bold in the teachings of Christ that he had passed onto them.

¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them,⁵⁴ they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred⁵⁵ with one another,⁵⁶ 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."⁵⁷

My understanding here is that the crippled man was being interrogated with Peter and John. He was in trouble, I guess, for getting healed. How dare he?

But these Jewish leaders couldn't argue with the facts. A crippled man now stood before them healed. So they huddle up and try to figure this thing out together. **"Alright you, Peter and John and the crippled man, step outside, we've got to think this through. Okay, huddle up guys. We've got a real humdinger of a problem that we've got to deal with. These disciples of Jesus are causing all kinds of problems. But we can't punish them, because the crippled guy got healed in front of everyone. What are we going to do?"**

"I know! Let's just warn them not to speak anymore of this Jesus person, and we'll just sweep this whole matter under the carpet. We'll just pretend it didn't happen, and then everything we'll go back to normal." "Sound good?" "Yeah, Yeah, that sounds great."

So that's what they do in **verse 18**.

¹⁸ So they called [Peter and John] and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Now these guys have to be somewhat smart to get to this level of leadership, right? They are not idiots. But I will say this. In this episode they are being portrayed as not too bright.

Here's why I say that. Two reasons: **1)** They know a miracle took place. They acknowledge it. Yet they totally ignore the supernatural power that made this miracle occur. It's as if they are oblivious to what has just happened.⁵⁸

You'd think that someone in their huddle might say something like this, **"Maybe we should take this guy Jesus seriously?" The truth is that there are people in this world that see and experience the mighty works of God and yet they fail to exercise their faith. Make sure that you are not one of those people.**

⁵² BEDE: "Unlettered men were sent to preach, so that the faith of those who believed would not be thought to have come about by eloquence and teaching instead of by God's power." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 50–1.

⁵³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 196: "The recognition here is not that they recognize them only now as his followers but that their association with Jesus explains their ability."

⁵⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 244: "The presence of the healed man who had been begging at one of the temple gates for many years, and who is now standing in front of the Jewish leaders, no longer a beggar, suggests that he may have been locked up with Peter and John during the previous night."

⁵⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 244: "The imperfect of the verb translated as 'conferred' (συνέβαλλον) suggests that their deliberations lasted an extended period of time."

⁵⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 190: "Information from such a gathering could have come from Paul or from anyone who had been close to him, such as Gamaliel."

⁵⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 110: "One should note the contemptuous use of the phrase 'in this name,' for the religious leaders did not even want to say the name 'Yeshua.' Rabbinic writings often refer to Yeshua as 'that man.'" Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 110n25 says also, "In Matthew 27:63, the Pharisees called Yeshua 'that deceiver,' as was typical in Pharisaic Judaism. When the rabbis had an issue with someone, they substituted an epithet, title, or derogatory term for that person's proper name. Even today, Yeshua is still called *Yeshu*, which in Hebrew forms a three-letter acronym meaning 'May his name and memory be blotted out.' He is also referred to as *Ha-Ish Ha-Hu*, meaning 'that man,' and *Ha-Taloui*, meaning 'the hanged one.'"

⁵⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 197: "The fact that the miracle is not responded to in a proper way, given its role as a sign, portrays the leaders as hardhearted."

2) The second way in which they are portrayed as not too bright by Luke is the following. They honestly believe that they can charge Peter and John to not speak in the name of Jesus... and they'll obey them. Here's what Peter and John are left to decide. **"Should I obey Jesus who was literally raised from the dead after crucifixion? Or should I obey this group of know-nothings who are oblivious to the power of God at work right in front of them."**

What do you think Peter and John are going to do when they hear this? Do you think they are going to comply? Don't they have an obligation to obey their political and spiritual leaders?

Look at **verse 19**.

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 but⁵⁹ speak of what we have seen and heard."

In other words, **"We are morally obligated by God Almighty to speak of what he has revealed to us. We must obey God rather than men."**⁶⁰

Let me just make a note quickly here about civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is only sanctioned in Scripture when the commands of Government directly conflict the commands of God.⁶¹ In this case, the governing authorities were commanding these disciples to quit speaking the name of Jesus.⁶² That's not possible if they are to obey Jesus. Jesus told them to be witnesses.⁶³

So they tell their political leaders, **"We are morally obligated to preach the name of Jesus. Jesus gave us a direct command:** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." **We can't keep quiet. We can't not speak or teach in the name of Jesus."** How's that for boldness?⁶⁴ **"Boldness for Jesus is unimpeded by threats and intimidation."**⁶⁵

I heard a pastor say once, "If you don't stand up to persecution when the consequences are minimal; then you won't stand a chance when the consequences are severe." "If you can't stand up for Christ when the stakes are low; you won't stand up for Christ when the stakes are high." If you can't stand up for Christ when your brother-in-law calls you an idiot... if you can't stand up for Christ at work because you'll lose a promotion... if you can't stand up for Christ when you are ostracized by family and friends for your faith, then you won't stand a chance when someone puts a gun to your head and says, "Renounce Christ or I'll pull the trigger!"

⁵⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 198–9: "When this phrase is combined with another negative at the start of the clause, it creates a double negative (οὐ ... μή, ou ... mē) and states the refusal to obey most emphatically."

⁶⁰ CHRYSOSTOM: "For who, I ask you, were the frightened? Was it those who said, 'in order that it may spread no further among the people,' or these who said, 'we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard?'" These had a delight, a freedom of speech, a joy surpassing all; those a despondency, a shame, a fear, for they feared the people. While these spoke what they wished to say, those did not do what they wished to do. Which were in chains and dangers? Certainly not these." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 51.

⁶¹ Sproul, *Acts*, 100: "Consider soldiers who had participated in genocide and later went on trial for their war crimes at Nuremberg. When the court interrogated them, they all said, 'I was only obeying orders.' The court refused to uphold that excuse and said the soldiers were required to disobey the magistrate rather than commit genocide."

⁶² Even church leaders who oppose God should be disobeyed as John Calvin makes clear: "The apostles further make clear that obedience offered to evil and unfaithful pastors even though they exercise lawful authority in the church is contrary to God." Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 52.

⁶³ Sproul, *Acts*, 101: "If any authority under heaven comes to the Christian and tells him he may not pray, or preach, or worship, or tithe, or do any of the things God commands, that Christian not only may disobey, but he must disobey."

⁶⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 249: "While such opposition may result in prolonged imprisonment and even martyrdom, Christians have no choice but to obey the clear will of God. Martin Luther's refusal to abandon his convictions concerning the significance of Jesus Christ for salvation (only faith in Jesus Christ saves, rather than prayer to the saints or reliance upon indulgences) and concerning the authority of Scripture (which trumps the authority of church councils and of the pope) is perhaps the most famous, history-changing example."

⁶⁵ CHRYSOSTOM: "The more [the religious leaders] wished to hinder, the more it prospered." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 51.

You might say, **“That’s so extreme, Tony.”** Is it? Is that really outside the realm of possibility in our world in the years ahead? We have Christian brothers and sisters right now dying for their faith in Christ. Are we really so immune to that in America?

I take courage knowing that these disciples, full of the Holy Spirit, went right into the Lions’ Den and stood face to face with the very people who were responsible for putting Jesus Christ to death, and said, **“No dice. I’m sorry we cannot agree to your terms. We must obey God and not men.”** Man, that’s powerful. That kind of bold fearlessness sends shivers down my spine. We don’t see that a lot in America today. I’m afraid that much of Christianity in the country could be characterized as wimpy and cowardly and spineless.

Where are the people who are willing to display uncompromising boldness for Christ? Look at **verse 21**.

²¹ *And when they had further threatened them [probably threatening their life, I imagine. “We killed Jesus and we’ll kill you if you don’t shut up”], they let them go, finding no way to punish⁶⁶ them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign⁶⁷ of healing was performed was more than forty years old.⁶⁸*

Now to all that, you might say, “So what? So what, Pastor Tony? What does this mean for us in San Antonio, 2,000 years later? Why did the Holy Spirit inspire this for us? How do we live this out in our day?”

Those are good questions. Let me answer those with three statements of application. Go ahead and write these down.

1) Opposition tests the **sincerity** of our faith⁶⁹

I spoke earlier about some of the things that I admired about Cameroonian Christianity. Well one of the struggles that the church in Cameroon has is that they don’t have a category for persecution or suffering in the Christian life. What’s happened there is that the Health and Wealth Gospel has taken over many of the churches. It’s kind of embarrassing that most Cameroonians are more familiar with Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, and Kenneth Copeland than they are more reputable pastors. I don’t think I realized how influential TBN is in other parts of the world, until I went to Cameroon.

And so most people in Cameroon believe that if you have enough faith you will never get sick, you will never experience persecution, and God’s will for your life is health, wealth, and prosperity. And so joblessness results from lack of faith. And suffering exists because you aren’t naming and claiming victory in Jesus.

But the NT talks extensively about the suffering that we endure as Christians. It’s part of our DNA as those who are connected to Christ. Paul wrote, “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” (Phil 1:29). 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Jesus told us, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). In fact, I believe that one of the truest tests of a person’s faith is how it holds up when a little bit of pressure is applied. Does Satan come in and steal the seed? Do the cares of the world choke the seed?

I don’t want to just pick on the Cameroonians, because I know that there are plenty of people in our country who were “converted” because they were promised health, wealth, and prosperity, instead of

⁶⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 247: “The options for punishment included a beating (forty lashes minus one), a monetary fine, banishment from Jerusalem, or the ultimate punishment of a death sentence.”

⁶⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 147: “The little word ‘sign’ should not be overlooked in the Greek text of v. 22. That is what the man’s healing had been—a sign to the temple crowd in Solomon’s Colonnade that attracted them to the gospel and ultimately to faith.”

⁶⁸ THE ENGLISH ANNOTATIONS: “It may seem strange that being so old, and daily laid at the gate of the temple, into which Jesus so often entered (considering that it seems that he never denied to heal or cure anyone who asked), he did not receive help from Jesus all this time, but it is certain that he was reserved for this time. By means of this healing, through the all-disposing providence of God, the apostles were further confirmed, but more importantly so was the gospel.” Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 52.

⁶⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 249: “Opposition and persecution cannot hinder the growth of the church (vv. 4, 31), on the contrary, ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.’”

clinging to Christ because they were sinners in need of salvation. Sure enough a little bit of trial, tribulation, and hardship will bring the sincerity of their faith to the surface.

Secondly, write this down as a second application.

2) God rewards **boldness** with more **boldness**

Be bold, church! Why? Because God rewards boldness with the Spirit-empowered boldness that we need. Even before it was explicitly said of Peter that he was filled with the Spirit, he displayed boldness. He preached with boldness in Acts 3. He preached with boldness in Acts 2. I don't want to give the impression that all we do is just sit around and wait for boldness to come upon us from on high. Peter displayed great boldness in his proclamation of the gospel, and in the course of time God supplied him with even more boldness.⁷⁰

I see the boldness displayed here in many ways like I see the pursuit of holiness in the Christian life. God tells us to "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 19:2; 1 Pet 1:16). And so we pursue that with the will that God has given us, and in due course that pursuit is aided by the Holy Spirit that dwells inside of us. So it's a divine merging of our human will and the power that God supplies. Similarly in this passage, we see Peter display uncanny boldness in his preaching of the Gospel, and as the stakes get higher, God supplies him with power by the Holy Spirit to meet that challenge.

Some might wonder why Peter is boldly proclaiming Christ now even with his life in danger, when just a few days earlier he was denying Christ. I would say there's two answers to that: 1) He has seen the resurrected Christ which has given him an unshakable faith and a newfound boldness and 2) He has the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of him.

And finally, write this down as #3.

3) Times of **hardship** are opportunities for building **perseverance** and **character**

The Bible says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (Jas 1:2-3). The Bible says, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:3-5)."

I think many of us, if we were arrested and thrown in prison like Peter and John, would have been tempted to raise our fist to heaven and cry out, "Why God? Why? I served you faithfully. I healed that guy for you. I preached the gospel for you, and this is what I get in return?" Instead of rejoicing in the testing of our faith. Instead of rejoicing in the opportunity to suffer as Christ has suffered for us.⁷¹ Instead of saying like the three Hebrew children did to Nebuchadnezzar, "Go ahead, throw us into the fiery furnace, but we will not forsake our God by bowing to your false idols."

Now I don't know where each of you are this morning, but I imagine that there are some people here who are going through some difficult trials. Maybe it's a marriage that's struggling that isn't as healthy as it used to be? Maybe it's a chronic sickness that keeps you debilitated? Maybe it's outright persecution at work or school or within your family as a result of your faith? Whatever it is, let me encourage you that God has gifted you with those hardships in order to build faithfulness and character.

We don't form character when everything in life is hunky-dory. Character is formed through pain. Character is forged in the fires of suffering. And if you find yourself in the midst of a season of suffering right now, let me encourage you to, "Count it all joy, brother, sister, when you meet trials of various kinds for the test of your faith produces perseverance."

⁷⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 200: "These first-century Spirit-filled men knew their calling and would not be deterred. They would serve and preach God's way through Jesus, the only one through whom salvation comes. They show that suffering is not to be feared, nor is it necessarily an indication of failure. In fact, it may well come with the territory of sharing the need for Jesus in a world that seeks self-sufficiency (John 15:20)."

⁷¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 249: "But even in free and open democracies, Christians can easily suffer ostracism and discrimination if they do not 'go with the flow,' if they are not willing to cut corners, to lie for their boss, or to arrange bribes."

Pray with me, and then we can take communion together.

