

# Acts 4 Commentary

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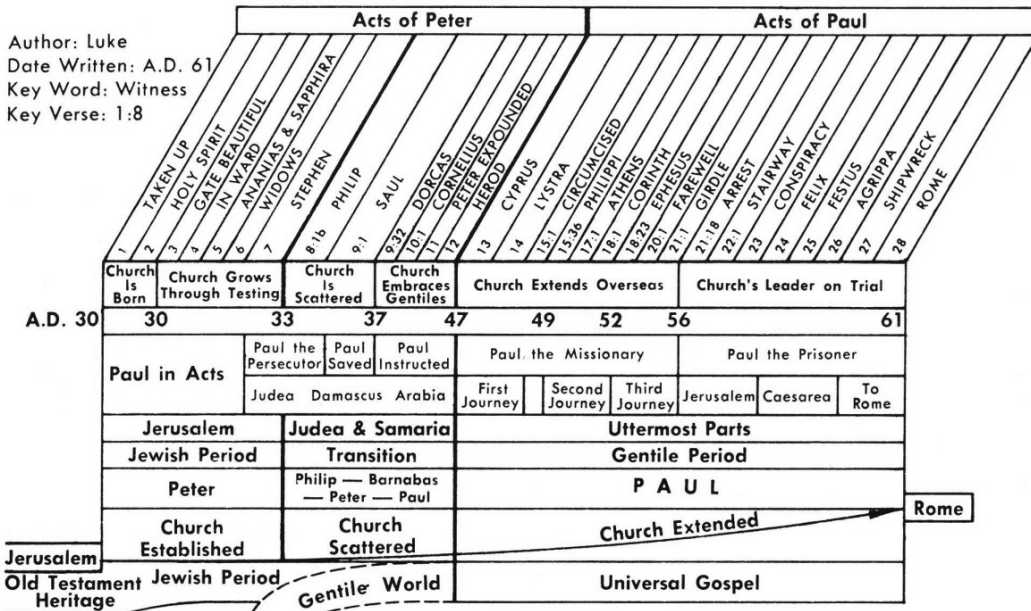
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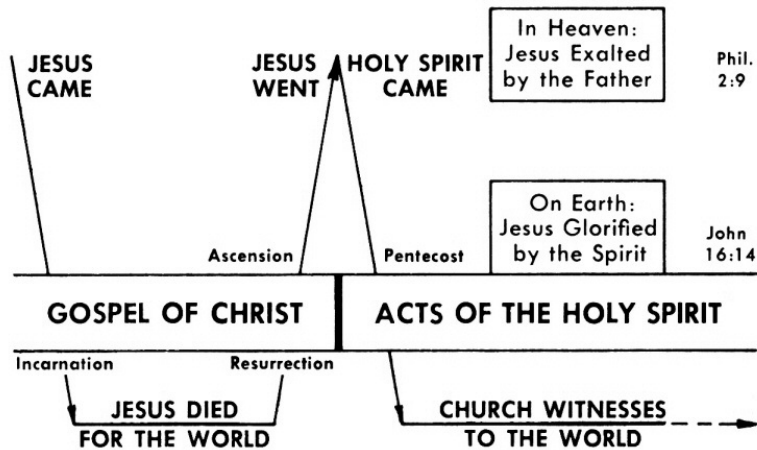
Author: Luke  
 Date Written: A.D. 61  
 Key Word: Witness  
 Key Verse: 1:8



Click chart to enlarge

Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

### THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

**Acts 4:1** As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them,

KJV Acts 4:1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

- **the priests** Acts 4:6; 6:7,12; Mt 26:3,4; 27:1,2,20,41; John 15:20; 18:3
- **the captain of the temple guard** Acts 5:24,26; 2 Chr 23:4-9; Luke 22:4
- **the Sadducees came up to them** Acts 23:6-9; Mt 16:12; 22:16,23,24
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAVES OF PERSECUTION

**Persecution** is defined as hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs, causing the persecuted person to suffer because of their belief.

And so chapter 4 is more than a historical record. It is a template for all disciples of Jesus to follow *when* (not *if*) persecution comes. Acts 4 is one of those chapters in which we would do well to spend focused time, meditating and soaking up the truths, so that they

may become part of our innermost being (cf Jn 17:17). Peter and John's response to persecution teaches us how we are to respond to persecution. The exhortation from the writer of Hebrews is apropos...

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but **imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** (Hebrews 6:11-12)

God desires us to become imitators of men like Peter and John, so that we can weather the waves of persecution that are sure to come our way. And so we see the beginning of the waves of persecution crashing against the Body of Christ in Acts 4. I am looking over the sea as I write these words, and it strikes me that those waves are a perfect picture of the "waves of persecution" that come against believers -- some days the waves are small, but other days like today they are large with whitecaps everywhere, and whether small or large, one can always count on the waves coming one after another, because God controls the "pulse" of the ocean. And so too the Sovereign God controls the events of our lives, so that we can be sure that waves of persecution will come throughout our life, sometimes barely imperceptible, but other times like a hurricane. Are you experiencing a wave of persecution? God is in control and He has given us His Spirit and His Word in Acts to be our compass and guide to bring us safely home to our eternal destination in Christ.

**Note the progression** from Acts 3 into Acts 4 - **healing** led to **preaching** which led to **persecution**. Note that the persecution came from the religious establishment, the Jewish leaders, just in the case of the Lord Jesus. Peter and John were surely not surprised for Jesus had taught them "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also." (Jn 15:20) The old adage was playing out - forewarned is forearmed! Peter the *denier*, had become Peter the *proclaimer* and in fact passed along a similar warning to every saint of every age - "**Do not be surprised** ([present imperative with a negative](#) = Stop this or don't let it begin) at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you, but to the degree that **you share the sufferings of Christ** (THIS IS THE KEY POINT), keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory (SECOND COMING - cf 1 Jn 3:2-3+, WHO YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN THE FUTURE, WILL IMPACT HOW YOU ARE LIVING TODAY!), you may rejoice with exultation (IN OTHER WORDS A CROSS PRECEDES A CROWN! KEEP YOUR EYES FIXED ON THE END OF THE RACE, NOT THE "HURDLES"!)." (1 Pe 4:12-13+).

In his last letter (written from prison and just prior to his martyrdom) Paul wrote words which could be emblazoned across this chapter

**Indeed** ("now in fact" - NET), **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**(2 Ti 3:12+)

Several truths can be gleaned from Paul's warning...

- (1) **Indeed** means in truth and often tends to intensify what follows. One dictionary adds it is "used to emphasize a statement or response confirming something already suggested." In fact in context Paul had just emphasized persecutions and sufferings were his lot in his ministry in Christ (2 Ti 3:10-11).
- (2) **All** means no exceptions -- if the following condition is fulfilled.
- (3) Godliness is to be the **desire** of our heart.
- (4) Godliness is only possible as we abide **in Christ Jesus**.
- (5) Godliness will incite ungodliness against us.
- (6) Persecution is a promise - it is *will* come, not *may* come.
- (7) The Greek verb for persecution ([dioko](#)) means to be chased after, like bloodhounds chase after a fox seeking to tear it apart!

Here is the point, followers of Christ should expect persecution and not be surprised by it or caught off guard. I was not taught this principle and was so caught off guard by persecution from people within the church that I was tempted to give up on ministry because of the cost. You have probably had a similar experience. As an aside, this is one of those "*promises*" you will probably not find in "**God's Book of Promises!**"

Sermon by the great revival preacher **George Whitfield** who suffered persecution (often severe) daily! - [Persecution: Every Christian's Lot](#)

So as a believer you can be sure that you will be persecuted in some way for the Name of Christ. You may not be tossed in jail like the apostles, but it may come in the form of verbal attacks such as accusations of being considered "narrow minded" or intolerant. It might come in the form of government restrictions imposed for perceived discrimination against certain people. It could be by being ridiculed, rejected, misunderstood, stared at, ostracized or "cold shouldered" by others. It could be persecution that negatively

affects your job and hurts economically. So count on it -- you will experience opposition because of your faith. Are you willing to suffer persecution for the sake of (potentially) winning one lost soul to Christ? Have you taken the "risk" to witness (ever?, this past year? this past week?)? See Barna's fascinating study [Is Evangelicalism Going Out of Style?](#) What's the one (good) thing Christians will no longer be able to do in Heaven? Share the Gospel. Be filled, be ready, be witnesses! (Acts 1:8+). So GET WITH IT - this is your (one) "chance of a lifetime!" Only one life, twill soon pass, only what's done for (in) Christ, will last! And do not be worried is you don't lead them to Christ! Sown seed is never wasted in the field of our Sovereign God! (See Mt 5:16+, Da 12:3+, Ps 126:5, Eccl 11:6).

Jesus warned that persecution would be the expected lot for His followers

"If (THIS MEANS SINCE- IT IS A SURE THING) the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this **the world hates** (present tense = continually) you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (Jn 15:18-20)

So Jesus says the world (unsaved) persecutes us is because they hate Christians. And they hate Christians because they hate Jesus Christ. And they hate Him because He is so different they are. That is the implication of Jesus' words "because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you." If you behaved like the unsaved world, they would not hate you, but they would love you for you would re-enforce the way they live. But because we are so different from the world, they hate us. And they may not even understand fully why they hate us, but the fact remains. Our new and godly way of living and thinking is a "rebuke" to their sinful, ungodly way of living and thinking. And so they persecute us, just like the persecuted Jesus. And Jesus goes on to identify the source of persecution - the religious establishment, the Jewish religious authorities...

"They will make you outcasts from the synagogue (EXCOMMUNICATION), but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God (THEY THINK THEY ARE HONORING GOD BY KILLING "HERETICS"). (Jn 16:2)

**As they were speaking to the people** - Note the "**they**" (auton = plural) suggesting that not only was Peter **speaking** but John was also **speaking**. Since Peter and John have been at the Portico of Solomon for about 3 hours (~3 PM - Acts 3:1, ~6 PM - Acts 4:3), it is possible that at this point they were each answering individual questions from the audience. **Speaking** is also in the plural (compatible with both Peter and John speaking) and in the present tense (continually). So as they continued **speaking** they were rudely and suddenly interrupted.

**POSB** notes that the religious leaders "thought they had eliminated the "Jesus movement" eight weeks earlier when they had crucified Jesus. They had heard about the preaching incident several days earlier and how excited the people had become (Acts 2:5f). Now these two men (Peter and John) were publicly preaching the rumor that God had raised Jesus from the dead. And they were preaching, of all places, in the temple precincts. It was time to investigate the matter, to nip the movement in the bud before it could spread. Note those who came to arrest them. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts)

**J Vernon McGee** speaks of the source of persecution - "I have found that the biggest enemies of the preaching of the gospel are not the liquor folk. The gangsters have never bothered me. Do you know where I had my trouble as a preacher? It was with the so-called religious leaders, the liberals, those who claimed to be born again. They actually became enemies of the preaching of the gospel. It was amazing to me to find out how many of them wanted to destroy my radio ministry."

**The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them-** One would have thought just **the temple guard** would have been sufficient, but these religious **bigots** come with a "*show of force*" much like they did when Jesus was arrested (Jn 18:3 = "Roman cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees"). The only major difference between the two groups was that the **Sadducees** replaced the Pharisees. The Romans did give the Jews permission to police the Temple area with their own "police force."

**Priests (2409)** (**hierous** from **hieros** = sacred, holy, consecrated to God, used as a noun to mean a sacred place or temple, cp Mark 11:11; cp English derivative "hierarchy" = leadership) is a sacred or consecrated person who serves deity. **Priests** in the NT refer primarily to the ceremonial officials of Jesus' day, that group of men who offered Temple sacrifices and carried out the other sacred rites associated with the Jewish Temple and Jewish people (cp Heb 8:4) In this context the **hierous** were ordinary priests who conducted the evening sacrifices (cf Acts 3:1) and they "were divided into twenty-four courses and were chosen by lot to serve at a given time. They had eagerly anticipated their week to minister and were no doubt upset at the disturbance Peter and John had caused." (MacArthur)

**Captain (4755)** (**strategos** from **stratós** = an army + **ágō** = to lead) literally referred to the leader of an army or the chief legal official of a city. In this passage strategos refers to the official (who was also a priest) second only to the high priest who was responsible

for order in the Temple and was known in Jewish writings as "the man of the Temple Mount." **Knowing** adds that the captain "had the chief superintendence of the Levites and priests who were on guard in and around the Temple, and under him were *strategoí*, who were also captains of the Temple police, although subordinate to the **strategos** as their head." (Expositor's Greek Testament) **POSB** adds he "was the right-hand man, the chief executive officer or chief of staff to the High Priest."

**A T Robertson** on **strategos** - Twenty-four bands of Levites guarded the temple, one guard at a time. They watched the gates. The commander of each band was called captain (*stratēgos*).

**Vincent** on **captain of the Temple** adds that "It was the duty of the Levites to keep guard at the gates of the Temple, in order to prevent the unclean from entering. To them the duties of the Temple-police were entrusted, under the command of an official known in the New Testament as "**the captain of the temple**," but in Jewish writings chiefly as "*the man of the Temple mount*." Josephus speaks of him as a person of such consequence as to be sent, along with the high-priest, prisoner to Rome." (Word Studies in the New Testament)

**Spurgeon** on **Sadducees** - The Sadducees, as you know, were the Broad School, the liberals, the advanced thinkers, the modern-thought people of the day. If you want a bitter sneer, a biting sarcasm, or a cruel action, I commend you to these large-hearted gentlemen. They are liberal to everybody, except to those who hold the truth; and for those they have a reserve of concentrated bitterness which far excels wormwood and gall. They are so liberal to their brother errorists that they have no tolerance to spare for evangelicals.

**Sadducees** (4523)(**saddoukaios**) is one of the four major sects of Judaism and were in opposition to the Pharisees and Essenes (the Zealots were the fourth sect). **Sadducees** were the religious and political liberals of the day and made up most of priests and their primary concerns were for the operation of the temple and the interpretation of the Law. They were fewer in number than their major rivals, the Pharisees (who had more influence on the people), but they were more influential and all the high priests of that day were from this sect (cf Acts 5:17) and presided over the **Sanhedrin** or Jewish "supreme court." The **Sadducees** were men of position and often wealthy landowners (aristocrats). The irony is that while they were the dominant religious force in Israel, they were worldly minded, materialistic secularists with little genuine interest in religion. They generally were against any opposition to Rome for fear that it would jeopardize their political position and wealth. John records "Therefore the **chief priests** (SADDUCEES) and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48"If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (Jn 11:47-48) "The **Sadducees** controlled the official political structures of Judaism at this time, being the majority members of the **Sanhedrin**. They were known as extremely strict on law and order issues." (NET Note)

The theology of the Sadducees were diametrically opposed to that of the Pharisees. Thus the Sadducees (1) rejected oral traditions which was vital to the "religion" of the Pharisees, (2) accepted the teaching of Moses but seem to have rejected the later books of the OT, (3) they rejected the resurrection (Mt 22:23), along with the doctrine of future rewards or punishment, there was no heaven or hell, no existence whatsoever except on this earth so that when a man died he just ceased to exist (WHAT A HOPELESS, PESSIMISTIC BELIEF!), (4) they also denied the existence of beings in other dimensions such as angels and spirits (Acts 23:7, 8) (they were essentially "anti-supernaturalists" consequently, they opposed apocalyptic and messianic movements in general and not just Christianity in particular), (5) and finally as MacArthur says "they rejected predestination and the sovereignty of God, believing man to be the master of his own destiny. These **theological liberals** were the first to persecute the church."

**POSB** adds that "The Romans readily saw to it that the Sadducees held the positions of leadership in the nation, for the Sadducees favored Greek customs over Jewish customs. And they aided the Romans in doing away with religious practices and instituting Greek and Roman customs (Hellenism)." (Ibid)

**Gilbrant** - The close association between the Sadducees and the Pharisees implied by Matthew 3:7 and Mt 16:1-12 was certainly not the normal state of affairs, but it shows how great their opposition to Jesus had become. Deep theological divisions existed between the two groups, as is evidenced by Paul's use of their differing views regarding the resurrection of the dead to divide the Pharisaic and Sadducean elements within the **Sanhedrin** (Acts 23:6-9). It is their lack of belief in the resurrection of the dead or of any type of life after death which is perhaps their most widely attested theological position (cf. Matthew 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27, and Antiquities 13.4.6). While the Sadducees apparently recognized the Prophets and other writings of the Old Testament, they did not feel these books provided an authoritative interpretation of the Law. Consequently, any doctrine that could not be directly substantiated from the Torah was rejected by them. Since the Pharisees maintained there was an "Oral Torah" that had been handed down in the "traditions of the fathers" that interpreted the "Written Torah," these two groups were constantly in conflict....The little that is known about the Sadducees has been reported by their opponents. Even Josephus, originally a member of the Sadducees by his birth into an aristocratic priestly family, had already joined the rival party of the Pharisees before writing any of his accounts about the group. His portrayal of the Sadducees is clearly biased against them. ([The Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Sadducees** - 14x in 14v - Matt. 3:7; 16:1; 16:6; 16:11; 16:12; 22:23; 22:34; Mk. 12:18; Lk. 20:27; Acts 4:1; Acts 5:17; Acts 23:6; Acts 23:7; Acts 23:8

#### Related Resources:

- [What are the differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees?](#)
- [Who were the Sadducees?](#)
- [What are the different sects of Judaism?](#)
- American Tract Society [Sadducees](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Sadducees](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Sadducees](#) [Sadducees \(2\)](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Sadducees](#)
- [Wikipedia](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Sadducees](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Sadducees](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Sadducees](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Sadducee](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Sadducees](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Sadducees](#)

**Robertson** on **came up** - Burst upon them suddenly or stood by them in a hostile attitude here (Luke 20:1; Luke 24:4; Acts 6:12; Acts 17:5; Acts 22:20; Acts 23:11). (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Came up** (2186) ([ephistemi](#) from **epi** = upon, by, near + **histemi** = stand) means literally to stand by, upon or over. Vincent adds "Of *dreams or visions, to appear to.*" **Ephistemi** generally conveys the idea of a sudden unexpected appearance upon another (other passages with this sense = Lk 2:9+ = "an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them"; Lk 24:4+; Acts 12:7). Sometimes **ephistemi** conveyed coming upon one with a hostile intent (Acts 6:12 = "**came up to** him [Stephen] and dragged him away", Acts 17:5 = "attacking"), which undoubtedly was an element in this abrupt confrontation. So as they were speaking the "birds of prey" swoop in for a "kill!" This scene is easy to visualize! The religious officials may have come suddenly, but the Spirit had already used Peter's proclamation of the Gospel to bring about irreversible regeneration in about 2000 men (Acts 4:4)!

Luke has most of the NT uses of **ephistemi** - Lk. 2:9; Lk. 2:38; Lk. 4:39; Lk. 10:40; Lk. 20:1; Lk. 21:34; Lk. 24:4; Acts 4:1; Acts 6:12; Acts 10:17; Acts 11:11; Acts 12:7; Acts 17:5; Acts 22:13; Acts 22:20; Acts 23:11; Acts 23:27; Acts 28:2

**Acts 4:2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**

KJV Acts 4:2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

- **being greatly disturbed** Acts 5:17; 13:45; 19:23; Neh 2:10; John 11:47,48
- **proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead** Acts 10:40-43; 17:18,31,32; 24:14,15,21; 26:8,23; Ro 8:11; 1 Cor 15:12-20; 1 Cor 15:23; 2 Cor 4:13,14; 1 Th 4:13,14
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PREACHING THE RESURRECTION PROVOKES PERSECUTION

This is the first account of opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it came from religion, not from paganism. While the Pharisees had been the main opponents of Jesus, now the Sadducees become the main opponents of Jesus' teaching through His

apostles.

Religion opposes the teaching of the pure milk of the Word of God. Religion claims the sole right to instruct the people. As Jesus said "'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.'" (Mt 23:15). Have you ever been persecuted for teaching or preaching the pure Word of God? (I bet I hear an "Amen" or two out there!) I have and it came from the most unexpected place (because I had yet been taught the truth of Acts 4) -- it came from "religious" folks even in the ranks of conservative evangelicalism! I was utterly shocked. I remember one young pastor raise his hand after I had taught on the power of lust in a man's life (it was a class for men at 6-7:AM) and he objected that there was too much talk about sin and the power of sin. He suggested I "tone it down a bit." I was shocked again. As God would have it several weeks later I overheard him telling an assistant pastor that I did not have any formal religious training in seminary, but he then added "I have to admit that he is Holy Spirit taught." I think God allowed me to hear that word, because I was discouraged that he had canceled more morning classes for the men! And so I can understand when Luke writes that these religious leaders were "**greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people!**" As Ian Paisley once said "Gospel truth is the bane of priests. Let us sow it bountifully!" Amen and amen!

**Being greatly disturbed** (present tense = continually provoked)(1679)(**diaponeomai** from **dia** = through or intensifier + **poneo** = to labor from **ponos** = toil or pain) means literally to labor through, produce with labor, to work out with labor and to be worn out. Then (as in the 2 NT uses - here and Acts 16:18 = "Paul was greatly annoyed" at the demon possessed girl following them) it means to be greatly annoyed, be wearied or grieved at continuance of anything. In the present passage it describes a mixed emotion of indignation and anger. **BDAG** = "to feel burdened as the result of someone's provocative activity." As we might say today they were "worked up!" This word is used once in the Septuagint in Ecc 10:9 "One who quarries stones may be **hurt** by them..." where "**hurt**" in Hebrew is **atsab** meaning to be in pain from grief or heavy toil and is translated by **diaponeomai** in the Greek.

As **Knowing** says in the present passage **diaponeomai** refers not "to the exertions made by them, but to the **vexation** which they felt." (Expositor's Greek Testament)

**Albert Barnes** adds "They did not **grieve** because they thought it a public calamity, but because it interfered with their authority, and opposed their doctrine. It means that it was **painful** to them, or they **could not bear it**. It is often the case that bigots, and men in authority, have this kind of **grief** at the zeal of men in spreading the truth, and thus undermining their influence and authority....It is worthy of remark, that it excited so much and so speedily the enmity of those in power; and that the apostles were so soon called to test the sincerity of their attachment to their Master. They who but a few days before had fled at the approach of danger, were called to meet this opposition, and to show their attachment to a risen Redeemer; and they did it without shrinking. They showed now that they were indeed the true friends of the crucified Saviour: and this remarkable change in their conduct is one among the many proofs that they were influenced from above. (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

**Because** - Term of explanation.

As **Knowing** says "It was not merely a dogmatic question of the denial of the Resurrection which concerned the Sadducees, but the danger to their power, and to their wealth from the Temple sacrifices and dues, if the Resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed and accepted." (Expositor's Greek Testament)

**They were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead**- The **teaching** and **proclaiming** refers back to Acts 3 and Peter's sermon ( Acts 3:12-26). The religious leaders were annoyed by the very fact that they were teaching, for after all, these were unlearned, unschooled former **Galilean** fishermen (cf Acts 4:13, Jn 1:46, 7:41, 52), who had no official rabbinical training, no connection to the religious establishment and no authorization to speak publicly (although there was no obvious rule forbidding them to speak out). And it must have been particularly offensive to the Sadducees (whose function was to teach and interpret the Scriptures) that they were able to draw such large crowds of eager listeners (Do you think there was any jealousy here? cf Acts 5:17+). Finally, the Sadducees would have been especially annoyed at their **teaching** the resurrection from the dead (Acts 3:15+, cf Lk 20:27-40+). As discussed above, since the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, if Peter's teaching was true, their entire theological system would crumble! And if the people began to believe that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, the Sadducees would lose influence over the people.

As **Barnes** points out "We have here, also, a striking instance of the fact that men may turn away from evidence (THE WALKING, LEAPING, PRAISING GOD FORMERLY LAME MAN!), and from most important points, and fix on something that opposes their prejudices, and which may be a matter of very little moment. No inquiry was made whether the *miracle* had been really wrought; but the only inquiry was, whether they had conformed to their views of doctrine and order." (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

**Teaching** (present tense - continually)(1321)(**didasko** - English "**didactic**") refers to the passing on of information, often in a formal setting, but not always the case (e.g. here the setting is the Temple grounds). It focused on content, with the purpose of discovering the truth-contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about of various ideas and opinions

was the primary concern. The root word carries with it the idea of systematic teaching or training and was used of a choir director who trains a choir over a long period of rehearsals until they are able to perform.

**Proclaiming** (2605) ([kataggello](#) from **kata** = an intensifier, down + **aggelos** = messenger from **aggello** = to declare, report) literally means to "declare down". It means to announce, with focus upon the extent to which the announcement or proclamation extends and so to proclaim throughout. It means to declare plainly, openly and loudly! It was used of solemn religious messages. This is the very word Luke used to describe the beginning of the ministry of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2) when they were sent out from Antioch on the first missionary journey and "began to **proclaim** (*kataggello* in imperfect tense = over and over, again and again) the Word of God in the synagogues." (Acts 13:5).

**A T Robertson** on the sense of the phrase "**in (en) Jesus**" - *In the case of Jesus*, an actual instance of resurrection which the Sadducees denied (Matthew 22:23). This same use of *en* (= "in") appears in 1 Cor. 4:6 (in us). The Sadducees were also aristocrats and political ecclesiastics who disliked popular disturbances. In particular, they resented the claim about Jesus Whom they had helped crucify. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

The phrase **resurrection from the dead** occurs 5x in the NT - Lk. 20:35; Acts 4:2; Acts 26:23; Rom. 1:4; Phil. 3:11.

As noted the Sadducees did not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection (which is why they were "sad, you see") and so this teaching and proclamation would be especially abhorrent to them. If this were true, it would put one of their main beliefs in danger. And indeed, it was obvious that many Jews were beginning to believe this doctrine.

**MacDonald** makes an interesting point on the phrase **resurrection from (ek = out of) the dead** - If Jesus had risen **from** among **the dead**, then the Sadducees were discredited....the expression **resurrection from the dead** is important because it disproves the popular idea of a general resurrection at the end of the world. This passage and others speak of **resurrection out from** among dead ones. In other words, some will be raised while others (unbelievers) will remain in the grave until a later time. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Life Application Commentary** on the importance of **teaching and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection** - According to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, the resurrection of Christ means that He is the Son of God and that His word can be trusted. It means that His sacrifice for sin was acceptable to God, so we can be completely forgiven. It means that our Savior is alive and active, able to help us in times of need. It also means that one day we, too, will conquer death. The Christian faith rests on the basic fact of the empty tomb. **Don't neglect this essential part of the Gospel when you share your faith with others** (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Resurrection** (386) ([anastasis](#) from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = to cause to stand) literally means "to stand again" or "to cause to stand again" and most NT uses refer to a physical body rising from the dead or coming back to life after having once died. The **resurrection** is distinguished from belief in the false teaching of [reincarnation](#), which usually is portrayed as involving a series of rebirths from which the soul may seek release. Resurrection has primary reference to the body. The resurrection is the central, defining doctrine and claim of the gospel for as Paul wrote "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." (1 Cor 15:14)

**Vincent** on **resurrection** - The Sadducees denied both the resurrection and a future state. "In the Gospels the Pharisees are represented as the great opponents of Christ; in the Acts it is the Sadducees who are the most violent opponents of the apostles. The reason of this seems to be, that in the Gospels Jesus Christ came in direct collision with the Pharisees, by unmasking their hypocrisies and endangering their influence among the people; whereas the apostles, in testifying to the resurrection of Christ, opposed the creed of the Sadducees. Perhaps, also, in attacking the apostles, who taught the resurrection of that Jesus whom the Pharisees had persecuted and crucified, the Sadducees aimed an indirect blow at the favorite dogma of their rival sect" (Gloag, "Commentary on Acts"). (Word Studies in the New Testament)

#### **Related Resource:**

- [Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ important?](#)
- [Why should I believe in Christ's resurrection?](#)
- [Why is the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ so important?](#)
- [When will the Resurrection take place?](#)
- [What is the first resurrection? What is the second resurrection?](#)
- [Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ true?](#)
- [What is more important, the death of Christ or His resurrection?](#)
- [Can the various resurrection accounts from the four Gospels be harmonized?](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" \(John 11:25\)?](#)



## Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

KJV Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

- **laid hands** Acts 5:18; 6:12; 8:3; 9:2; 12:1-3; 16:19-24; Mt 10:16,17; Luke 22:52,54; John 18:12
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### APOSTLES' SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT

Notice that Peter and John do not attempt to resist their arrest and complain that it was without justification. They accepted their lot. They accepted that what was happening to them God allowed, which tends to change one's perspective. Little did they know that their persecution would soon become a platform to proclaim the Name of Jesus before an audience they could never have gained in their own power or merit (cf Ge 50:20). Years later Peter would write a letter that put on paper what they had put into practice in Jerusalem...

**Submit** yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1 Peter 2:13-15+)

**Lyall** says: The ultimate Christian answer to persecution, detractors and critics is that of a blameless life, conduct beyond reproach and good citizenship. In particular... submission is a supremely Christlike virtue.

Servants, **be submissive** to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1 Peter 2:18-24+)

Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But **even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.** AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, 15 but **sanctify** Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (1 Pe 3:13-18+)

**And they laid hands on them** - The verb **epiballo** (laid) is literally to "throw upon," in this case the hands of the authorities on Peter and John (and possibly the healed lame man - he is present the next day - cf Acts 4:14). In other words, they seized them. To seize means to take hold of suddenly and forcibly. As noted the Romans had given the Jews authority over the Temple precincts and thus the Sadducees exercised almost unlimited power in this area and could arrest the apostles for no reason other than teaching doctrines which were abhorrent to them.

**Laid hands on them** does not suggest a gentle grasp, but rough handling. In addition Acts 4:21 mentions **further** threats (which implies *prior* threats!), so it is very likely they were threatened at the time of their arrest. The point is that the entire atmosphere and manner of treatment was calculated to make them afraid, to be dominated and controlled by fear. You can mark it down that our Adversary traffics and specializes in fear, but God trumps Satan's fear with faith. And as we see the story unfold, it is clear that Peter and John are controlled by faith not fear. In fact Peter is described as controlled by the Spirit of holiness, not a spirit of fear (cf 2 Ti 1:7). We need to remember Peter and John's response the next time we are persecuted.

**Laid...upon** (1911)(**epiballo** from **epi** = upon + **ballo** = throw) means to cast over or throw upon (coats on donkey Mk 11:7). In the active sense (transitive), of a violent movement meaning to throw something over someone (Rev 18:19), to lay (hands) on = Mk 14:46. Put (sew) a patch on (Mt 9:16, Lk 5:36). Put a hand to = to start (Lk 9:62). To place something on something as when they

put the cross upon Simon of Cyrene (Lu 23:26) Metaphorically to throw over = put a noose or restraint on = a restriction (1 Cor 7:35), to lay on, put on (Mt 9:16; Mk 14:46; Jn 7:44; Ac 21:27). In the active sense (intransitive) it describes waves beat or splash upon, dash against (Mk 4:37). Of a legal inheritance to fall to meaning to belong to in Lk 15:12.

Frequently used of attempt to lay upon another person one's hands = Laid (hands) on Jesus (Mt 26:50, Mk 14:46, cf Lk 20:19, Jn 7:30, 44, Lk 21:12) and on the apostles in Acts (Acts 4:3, Acts 5:18, Acts 12:1, Acts 21:27)

**Gilbrant** - In classical writings there exists a wide range of definitions including "beat" (lay on blows) and "throw upon" (one object upon another). Also attested is the idea of "throwing oneself upon," especially in a hostile manner but also in a positive way (see Liddell-Scott).

**Epiballo** - 17x in 17v - breaking over(1), falls(1), laid(8), lay(2), put(2), puts(2), putting(1).

Matt. 9:16; Matt. 26:50; Mk. 4:37; Mk. 11:7; Mk. 14:46; Lk. 5:36; Lk. 9:62; Lk. 15:12; Lk. 20:19; Lk. 21:12; Jn. 7:30; Jn. 7:44; Acts 4:3; Acts 5:18; Acts 12:1; Acts 21:27; 1 Co. 7:35

**Epiballo** - 54x in the Septuagint - Of the Lord "casting upon" Adam a deep sleep (Ge 2:21). Of Lord's command to Abraham not to "lay his hand upon" Isaac (Ge 22:12). Of Potiphar's wife "casting (her eyes) upon" Joseph (Ge 39:7). Of Jacob laying his hand upon Ephraim to bless him (Ge 48:14). Of God's promise to Moses to "lay His hand upon" Egypt (Ex 7:4). Of Nadab and Abihu putting upon their firepans strange fire (Lev 10:1). Of the grieving elders putting dust upon their heads after the defeat at Ai (Josh 7:6). Of a child putting his hand upon the viper's den and not getting bit (in the Millennium - Isa 11:8).

Gen. 2:21; Gen. 22:12; Gen. 39:7; Gen. 46:4; Gen. 48:14; Gen. 48:17; Exod. 5:8; Exod. 7:4; Exod. 20:25; Exod. 21:22; Exod. 21:30; Lev. 10:1; Lev. 19:19; Num. 4:6; Num. 4:7; Num. 4:8; Num. 4:14; Num. 11:31; Num. 16:18; Num. 16:46; Num. 16:47; Num. 19:2; Deut. 12:7; Deut. 12:18; Deut. 15:10; Deut. 20:19; Deut. 23:25; Deut. 24:5; Deut. 27:5; Deut. 28:8; Deut. 28:20; Jos. 7:6; Jos. 8:30; 2 Sam. 18:12; 1 Ki. 20:6; 2 Chr. 36:3; Est. 1:1; Est. 6:2; Job 27:12; Ps. 81:14; Prov. 18:17; Prov. 20:26; Prov. 23:2; Isa. 5:25; Isa. 11:8; Isa. 11:14; Isa. 11:15; Isa. 19:16; Isa. 25:11; Isa. 34:11; Isa. 34:17; Isa. 37:33; Hos. 7:12;

**And put them in jail** - Was this a legal or justified arrest? That hardly seems to be the case as there were no rules stating one needed to obtain permission to speak publicly in this Temple confines. For example, Jesus spoke (Lk 21:37+) and was never imprisoned (of course the leaders may have feared the reaction of the Jewish crowd).

**Until the next day, for it was already evening** - Recall they had arrived about 3 PM (Acts 3:1+) so it would now be about 6 PM. Did Peter preach for 3 hours? Perhaps, but we cannot be sure. As one pastor said "I love any verse in the Bible that justifies long sermons and this is one of them!" (Kreloff). As an aside, what does this say about the tendency in many if not most evangelical churches to shortening the sermons so that they are around 30 minutes? I know of one pastor who was rebuked by his elder board for going over 35 minutes! You have to wonder what Peter would have said had been in that meeting? It is interesting to me that one of the most influential pastors in the evangelical community is John MacArthur and his sermons are routinely between 50-60 minutes.

Why does Luke give this detail about it being **evening**? The simple answer is that Jewish law forbade night trials! Of course this did not prevent the Sanhedrin from illegally trying Jesus, although they clearly were under a time constraint because of the Passover feast (and more importantly because God had sovereignly foreordained the Lamb of God would be sacrificed on the Passover). And besides, in this case they had no time constraint, so the 71 members of the Sanhedrin could enjoy an evening meal with their families and take care of these upstarts the next day.

**Illustration** - What is it that discourages you from witnessing? During China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900, insurgents captured a mission station, blocked all the gates but one, and in front of that one gate placed a cross flat on the ground. Then the word was passed to those inside that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted their freedom and life, but that any refusing would be shot. Terribly frightened, the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. But the eighth student, a young girl, refused to commit the sacrilegious act. Kneeling beside the cross in prayer for strength, she arose and moved carefully around the cross, and went out to face the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining ninety-two students followed her to the firing squad. (Today in the Word, Feb. 89). What do I risk in witnessing? Possibly rejection or persecution from someone. Whatever the risk may be, I must realize that nothing done for Christ is ever wasted.

**Acts 4:4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**

KJV Acts 4:4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

- **many** Acts 28:24; 2 Cor 2:14-17; Php 1:12-18; 2 Ti 2:9,10
- **the number** Acts 2:41; Genesis 49:10; Isa 45:24; 53:12; John 12:24
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE RECEPTIVE RESPONSE TO THE GOOD NEWS

**But** - What an incredible term of contrast! Peter and John and probably the healed man imprisoned, but the Word of God setting captives free! Oh, blessed contrast! Persecution would not prevent the spread of the Word. As has been said "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Believers can be killed but the Word of God is living and active (Heb 4:12) and cannot be "killed" by persecuting Christ haters!

Remember that persecution always strengthens and purifies the church. So as unbelievers watch how we handle suffering and persecution, it gives a visible reality to our faith which the lost can see. While not all will be attracted, some will be attracted to the Gospel we are living out before their eyes.

**Paul** said the same thing in his last letter ever written...

**Remember** Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my **Gospel**, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the **word of God** (GOSPEL) is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. (2 Ti 2:8-10+)

Beloved, persecution did not then, nor will it now hinder the spread of the Gospel. God's Word will go forth and it will go forth with power. Luke records an examples later in Acts...

The **word** (**logos**) of **God** (~ THE GOSPEL) kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7+)

But the **word** (**logos**) of the **Lord** (~ THE GOSPEL) continued to grow and to be multiplied. (Acts 12:24+)

And the **word** (**logos**) of the **Lord** (~ THE GOSPEL) was being spread through the whole region. (Acts 13:49+)

**Many of those who had heard the message believed** - **Many** indicates there was a good response to the **message**, but still not everyone believed.

**Message** (3056)(**logos** from **légō** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. In the present context the **message** or word which Peter spoke is synonymous with the Gospel.

**Logos** is used 64 times in the book of Acts (not all refer to the Gospel but many do) -

Acts 1:1; Acts 2:22; Acts 2:40; Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4; Acts 4:29; Acts 4:31; Acts 5:5; Acts 5:24; Acts 6:2; Acts 6:4; Acts 6:5; Acts 6:7; Acts 7:22; Acts 7:29; Acts 8:4; Acts 8:14; Acts 8:21; Acts 8:25; Acts 10:29; Acts 10:36; Acts 10:44; Acts 11:1; Acts 11:19; Acts 11:22; Acts 12:24; Acts 13:5; Acts 13:7; Acts 13:15; Acts 13:26; Acts 13:44; Acts 13:46; Acts 13:48; Acts 13:49; Acts 14:3; Acts 14:12; Acts 14:25; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:7; Acts 15:15; Acts 15:24; Acts 15:27; Acts 15:32; Acts 15:35; Acts 15:36; Acts 16:6; Acts 16:32; Acts 16:36; Acts 17:11; Acts 17:13; Acts 18:5; Acts 18:11; Acts 18:14; Acts 18:15; Acts 19:10; Acts 19:20; Acts 19:38; Acts 19:40; Acts 20:2; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:24; Acts 20:32; Acts 20:35; Acts 20:38; Acts 22:22

See study on the **Power of God's Word**

God's Word is a **word**...

- ... of Thy lips - Ps 17:4
- ... of this salvation - Acts 13:26
- ... of God - Acts 13:44, et al
- ... of the Lord - Acts 13:48, et al

- ... of His Grace - Acts 14:3, 20:32
- ... of the Gospel - Acts 15:7
- ... of promise - Romans 9:9 (note)
- ... of faith Romans 10:8 (note)
- ... of Christ - Romans 10:17 (note)
- ... of the Cross - 1 Co 1:18
- ... of reconciliation - 2 Co 5:19 ([note](#))
- ... of truth - 2 Co 6:7, Col 1:5 (note), 2 Ti 2:15 (note), James 1:18-note
- ... of life - Philippians 2:16 (note)
- ... of God's message - 1Th 2:13 (note)
- ... of His power - Heb 1:3 (note)
- ... of righteousness - Heb 5:13 (note)
- ... of the oath - Heb 7:28 (note)
- ... of exhortation - Heb 13:22 (note)
- ... (living and abiding) - 1Pe 1:23 (note)
- ... of Life - 1 Jn 1:1 ([note](#))
- ... of My perseverance - Rev 3:10 ([note](#))

Note Luke says believed and there is no mention of baptism! These souls were added to the Body of Christ based on belief not baptism!

**Believed** (4100) (**pisteuo** from **pistis**; **pistos**; related studies the faith, the obedience of faith) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust. To have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something or someone. **Vincent** adds that **pisteuo** "means to persuade, to cause belief, to induce one to do something by persuading, and so runs into the meaning of to obey, properly as the result of persuasion." In secular Greek literature, as well as in the New Testament, **pisteuo** (pistis, pistos) has a basic meaning of an intellectual assent or a belief that something is true. Michel says that this use arose during the Hellenistic period. During the struggle with skepticism and atheism, it acquired the sense of conviction concerning the existence and activity of the Greek gods. Thayer calls this the intransitive use of the word which conveys the idea of to be sure or be persuaded that something is a fact. This kind of faith does not require any action on the part of the believer but only an intellectual acceptance. James used this type of faith as an example of a dead faith stating that "The devils also believe, and tremble" (Ja 2:19+), discussed in more detail below. See notes on a disturbing passage on genuine, saving belief in John 2:22-25.

**Pisteuo** can refer to an "**heart belief**" (saving faith, genuine belief that leads to salvation, this believing involves not only the consent of the mind, but an act of the heart and will of the subject). This describes the belief of many in Peter's Jewish audience. Keep in mind that **pisteuo** in other contexts refers only to an **intellectual belief** (mental assent, "head" knowledge, not associated with bringing salvation if it is by itself). We see both meanings in Jesus statement in John 11,

**John 11:26** Everyone who lives and **believes** (refers to genuine saving faith) in Me shall never die. Do you **believe** (intellectually) this?

**James 2:19+** You **believe** (pisteuo) that God is one. You do well; the demons also **believe** (pisteuo), and shudder.

**Comment:** In this passage, James explains that not all believing will result in salvation. The believing he is describing in this passage is a mental or intellectual believing that is not associated in a change in one's heart and thus in one's behavior or actions. Belief in the New Testament sense that effects the **new birth** denotes more than a "demonic" like, intellectual assent to a set of facts or truths. The demons believe but they are clearly not saved. Genuine belief does involve an intellectual assent and consent of one's mind, but also includes an act of one's heart and will. Biblical saving faith is not passive assent but an active staking of one's life on the claims of God. The respected Greek lexicon author **W E Vine** defines belief as consisting of

(1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2 Th 2:11 -"in order that they all may be judged who did not **believe** [pisteuo] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")

(2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12+ "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** [pisteuo] in His name") and

(3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender.

**Albert Barnes** comments on the effect of persecution - there is no lesson which men have been so slow to learn, as that *to oppose* and persecute men is the very way to *confirm* them in their opinions, and to spread their doctrines. It was supposed here that the disciples were few, that they were without power, wealth, and influence, and that it was easy to crush them at once. But God made their persecution the means of extending, in a signal manner, the truths of the gospel and the triumphs of his word. And so in all ages it has been, and so it ever will be. (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

**And the number of the men came to be about five thousand**- Luke does not use the word *anthropos* which is the term for humankind in general. He uses the word *aner* for men which usually refers to males. The 5000 believers in Messiah therefore does not include women and children so that this first church probably had upwards to 10,000 "members" or more. Given that 3000 had believed on hearing Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:41+), about 2000 responded to Peter's second sermon.

This is the last time that Luke mentions a specific number of believers in the church but he does describe the continued growth in Acts 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31.

As an aside, you might be thinking there is no way Peter could have addressed more than 2000 Jews (and there would have been more because not all believed the Gospel) in the Portico of Solomon. Take a look at [this diagram of the Temple grounds](#) and note for comparison the football field in the bottom right side of the diagram. Here is the point - the Temple grounds adjacent to the Portico of Solomon would have been approximately 4 football fields in size which could have easily provided room for several thousand Jews. And before you say that Peter could never have addressed that many because he did not have a PA System or a megaphone, you need to realize that George Whitefield is said to have addressed 20-30,000 in an open field and he likewise had no megaphone. What both men did have was supernatural enablement by the Holy Spirit!

**Life Application Bible Commentary** - Estimates of Jerusalem's population at this time range from twenty-five thousand to eighty-five thousand. Josephus recorded that there were a total of six thousand Pharisees in Palestine. Thus, a total of five thousand Jewish Christian men (not counting women and children) was a very high percentage of the population! (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

In sum, Peter's Gospel proclamation produced two effects (1) conversion of some and (2) confrontation from others. The Gospel ultimately either comforts the afflicted or afflicts the comfortable.

**Illustration** - The June 1988 issue of Mission Frontiers, the bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission, describes the arrest of Xu Yongzhe, an itinerant evangelist from China, who risked coming to Beijing so that he might meet Billy Graham. Xu Yongzhe was a fugitive for refusing to follow a government policy designed to prevent itinerant evangelists from preaching the gospel. Yet despite persecution, house churches overseen by Xu Yongzhe had grown from 200 to more than 3,000 during the previous eight years.

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**POWER OF THE WORD** - The renowned preacher C H Spurgeon once tested an auditorium in which he was to speak that evening. Stepping into the pulpit, he loudly proclaimed, "Behold the lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." Satisfied with the acoustics, he left and went his way. Unknown to him, there were two men working in the rafters of that large auditorium, neither one Christians. One of the men was pricked in his conscience by the verse Spurgeon quoted and became a believer later that day! Such is the penetrating power of God's eternal word! Little wonder that Paul is so insistent on our "preaching of the Word."

**Spurgeon** also tells the story illustrating the power of the gospel...

**Preacher converted by his own preaching.** I wish that it might happen to you as it did with my dear friend, Mr. Haslam, whom God has blessed to the conversion of so many. He was preaching a sermon that he did not understand, and while he preached it, he converted himself. By God's grace he began to feel the power of the Holy Spirit and the force of divine truth. He so spoke that a Methodist in the congregation called out, "The parson is converted"; and so the parson was. He owned it, and praised God for it, and all the people sang:—

"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

His own utterances concerning Christ crucified had been the power of God unto salvation to him. (Barbed Arrows from the Quiver of C. H. Spurgeon)

**Acts 4:5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;**

KJV Acts 4:5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

- **On the next day** Acts 5:20,21; Micah 2:1; Mt 27:1,2

- **rulers and elders and scribes** Acts 4:8; 5:34; 6:12; Isa 1:10; Mark 15:1; Luke 20:1; 22:66; 24:20
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE PRELIMINARY HEARING

**On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem**- These were undoubtedly members of the Council or the Sanhedrin ([sunedrion](#)) (see Acts 4:15) which was the "Supreme Court" of the Jews. Think about having to appear before the US Supreme Court! The Sanhedrin was known also as the Gerousia (Assembly, Senate - Acts 5:21) and the Presbiterion ("the body of elders" - Acts 22:5). The high priest (Caiaphas in this case) was always the "president" or "chief justice" so to speak.

**Rulers** (758)([archon](#) from present participle of **archo** = to rule) describes one who has eminence in a ruling capacity, referring to earthly figures, in this case the Jewish rulers who had opposed Jesus.

**Elders** (4245)([presbuteros](#) the comparative form of **présbus** = an old man or an ambassador) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. In this context **elders** refers to those family heads and heads of tribes who were chosen from among the people to sit in the Council.

Uses of **presbuteros** in Acts -

Acts 2:17; Acts 4:5; Acts 4:8; Acts 4:23; Acts 6:12; Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:2; Acts 15:4; Acts 15:6;  
Acts 15:22; Acts 15:23; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17; Acts 21:18; Acts 23:14; Acts 24:1; Acts 25:15;

**Scribes** (1122)([grammateus](#) from [grapho](#) = to write) were those men skilled in interpreting the law of Moses and the traditional rabbinic writings (Mt 2.4). While most of the scribes were [Pharisees](#), not all [Pharisees](#) were scribes. In fact, according to Josephus the Scribes were all Pharisees (cf Acts 23:6). Jesus gives a long rebuke including **8 WOES** primarily to the Scribes and Pharisees which should be read to help understand how this group of Jewish religious men functioned (See Mt 23:1-39, 13, 14, 15, 16, etc). Most sources consider the men referred to as **lawyers** ([nomikos](#)) or **experts in the law** (HCSB translation) to be **scribes** who were specialized in the jurisprudence of the Law of Moses. Finally, the **teachers of the law** (KJV = "doctors of the law")(Lk 5:17, Acts 5:34, 1 Ti 1:7 = [nomdidaskalos](#) - were teachers of the Jewish law who were equal to the lawyers and scribes. While the **scribes** were frequently the protagonists of Jesus in the Gospels, we encounter them only 4 times in Acts - Acts 4:5, Acts 6:12, Acts 19:35 and Acts 23:9.

**A T Robertson** - The three classes composing the Sanhedrin (rulers = chief priests who were Sadducees, the scribes usually Pharisees, the elders not in either class: 24 priests, 24 elders, 22 scribes). (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Gathered together** (4863)([sunago](#) from **sun** = with + **ago** = to lead) means literally to lead together. This verb gives us our English word [synagogue](#) a place where Jews pray and worship. It is interesting that most of the uses by Luke in Acts (not counting Acts 4:5) describe the church gathering together (Acts 4:5; Acts 4:26; Acts 4:27; Acts 4:31; Acts 11:26; Acts 13:44; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:30; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:8).

**Acts 4:6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.**

KJV Acts 4:6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

- **Annas the high priest was there** Luke 3:2; John 11:49; 18:13,14,24
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ATTENDEES AT THE TRIAL

It is worth noting that Acts 4:1-6 lists no less than 11 different groups or individuals opposing these two followers of Jesus -- Priests and the Sadducees (Acts 4:1); Rulers, elders, scribes (Acts 4:5); and others from the family of the high priest (Acts 4:6). The captain of the temple (Acts 4:1); Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander (Acts 4:6). One's natural reaction would be to cower back in fear when faced with such a large contingent of adversaries, but Peter and John choose the supernatural reaction instead,

and we can do the same!

**James Montgomery Boice** suggests what these adversaries may have been shouting - "We have the power. If you are allowed to preach, as you have been preaching, it is because we have permitted you to do it. . . . Anytime we want, we can arrest you and carry you off to jail."

**David Guzik** comments that "In the Western world, Christians rarely face persecution. Satan instead has attacked us with worldliness, selfish pride, a need for acceptance, and status. The martyr can impress unbelievers with his courage and faith; the self-centered, compromising Christian is despised by the world."

**And Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander** - [Annas](#) (official high priest from 6-15 AD until Romans replaced him with his son Jonathan and then with son-in-law Caiaphas) is referred to as "**high priest**" but in fact Caiaphas was the high priest. Annas bore the title just as do former presidents in America. Annas unlike former presidents was still the major power broker behind the scenes. The identity of **John and Alexander** is uncertain, but some feel they were sons of Annas who had five sons.

**Wiersbe** - In fact, five of Annas' sons held the office at one time or another. Somebody has defined a [hepotist](#) as "a man who, being evil, knows how to give good gifts to his children." Annas certainly qualified. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Dynamic).

**And all who were of high-priestly descent** - NET translation reads "and others who were members of the high priest's family" noting that "This family controlled the high priesthood as far back as A.D. 6. Annas, Caiaphas, and Alexander were all high priests at one time (though Alexander held that office after this event)."

The irony is that the name [Annas](#) (see Luke 3:2 notes) is from Hebrew ([Chananyah](#) from [chanan](#) = show favor, be gracious) means merciful or gracious! He was the primary mover and shaker in the priesthood even though he was not the acting high priest. [Caiaphas](#) is his son-in-law. In Jesus' mock trials, the first "trial" was before Annas, followed by **Caiaphas**. How interesting that those two are named again in the setting of a trial, this time a "mock" trial (Peter and John had done nothing illegal) of men who represented Jesus and he said He was alive! You can imagine the reaction of Annas and Caiaphas to this news (which they had undoubtedly heard from other sources, but now from the mouth of men who traveled intimately with Jesus)!

**Caiaphas** ([2533](#)) (**Kaiaphas**) means "rock" or "depression." He was the high priest at the time of Jesus' crucifixion (he served 18-36 AD) and was over the second illegal trial (Mt 26:3, 57). He was the son-in-law of Annas and a chief player in the plot to have Jesus arrested and executed (Woe to him!). Little is known about Caiaphas beyond what can be learned from the New Testament. Evidently he was appointed high priest about A.D. 18 and removed from office about A.D. 36 or 37. In John 18:14 he made somewhat of a "prophetic" pronouncement "Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people."

**Caiaphas** - 9x - Mt 26:3,57; Lk 3:2; Jn 11:49; 18:13-14,24,28; Acts 4:6

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Caiaphas](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Caiaphas](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Caiaphas](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Caiaphas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Caiaphas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Caiaphas](#) [Caiaphas \(2\)](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Caiaphas](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Caiaphas](#)

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**RELIGIOUS AND LOST** - The men gathered to interrogate Peter and John were a "who's who" of the most powerful and prominent religious leaders of Israel. These men knew the Old Testament Scriptures in painstaking detail. They were completely immersed in a world of religious ritual. They could argue theology for hours on end. The only problem was, they were spiritually lost! God, in the person of Jesus Christ, had been in their very presence, and they had missed him. Worse than that, they had killed him! Now they were blindly trying to silence the messengers of Christ. Here is a powerful demonstration of the truth that knowing *about* God is not enough. We must know him in a personal way. Until we encounter God through Christ and humbly receive his forgiveness, all our

## Acts 4:7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"

KJV Acts 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

- **When they had placed them in the center** Acts 5:27; 1 Kings 21:12-14; John 8:3,9
- **By what power** Ex 2:14; Mt 21:23; Mark 11:28; John 2:18
- **in what name** Acts 4:10; 5:28,40
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### CENTER STAGE FOR PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL!

**When they had placed them in the center** - Peter and John *and* the healed lame man (cf Acts 4:14) were placed in what was called the **Hall of Hewn Stones**, ([watch this computer animation](#)) the meeting place of the **Sanhedrin** ([see also Wikipedia](#)) during the Second Temple period. In the diagram above, one can picture these three men standing in the center facing their accusers, 70 men (plus the high priest who presided) who were sitting in a semi-circle and elevated chairs so that they looked down with disapproval and [scowls](#) on their faces at the accused! Talk about an intimidating power play! Peter was intimidated by a servant girl in his denial of Jesus. But then Peter was "empty," filled only with "self." Now as we see in the next verse Peter is "full," filled with the Spirit and filled with boldness (cf Acts 4:31<sup>±</sup>).

**Homer Kent** comments that "The Sanhedrin was acting within its jurisdiction when it convened to examine Peter and John. the Mosaic Law specified that whenever someone performed a miracle and used it as the basis for teaching, he was to be examined, and if the teaching were used to lead men away from the God of their fathers, the nation was responsible to stone him (Dt 13:1-5). On the other hand, if his message was doctrinally sound, the miracle-worker was to be accepted as coming with a message from God." ([Jerusalem to Rome](#))

**Began to inquire** is in the **imperfect tense** - You can just picture the three men in the center of the Council, being repeatedly questioned, over and over! A veritable "Jewish [inquisition](#)!"

**They began to inquire** (4441)(**punthanomai**) means to **inquire**, ask, seek to learn usually from someone (Mt 2:4; Lk 15:26; 18:36; Jn 4:52; Acts 4:7; 10:18, 29; 21:33; 23:19f. The word carries the sense of asking by inquiry, rather than asking by making a request to receive something. (2). To learn by inquiry, to find out by inquiry (Acts 23:34). When the twins Jacob and Esau struggled in the womb, Rebekah "went to **inquire** of the LORD." (Ge 25:22).

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek the word is used in four related ways. The first is to learn from a person. The second is to hear and thereby to learn. The third is to make an inquiry. The fourth is to ask for something from another (Liddell-Scott). The classical usage is much softer than the later New Testament meaning of "demand." **Punthanomai** appears in the Septuagint on several occasions, generally indicating an inquiry of any sort. Concerned over the jostling of Jacob and Esau in her womb, Rebekah "inquired" of the Lord (Genesis 25:22). When he saw great piles of tithed items, Hezekiah "asked" the priest about them (2 Chronicles 31:9). A certain Heliodorus, upon arriving in Jerusalem, inquired about the situation there (2 Maccabees 3:9).

**Strong's** says **punthanomai** means "to question, i.e. ascertain by inquiry (as a matter of information merely; and thus differing from <G2065> (**erotao**), which properly means a request as a favor; and from <G154> (**aito**), which is strictly a demand of something due; as well as from <G2212> (**zeteo**), which implies a search for something hidden; and from <G1189> (**deomai**), which involves the idea of urgent need); by implication to learn (by casual intelligence) :- ask, demand, enquire, understand.

**Punthanomai** - 11x in 11v - ask(1), asking(2), inquire(4), inquired(2), inquiring(1), learned(1). Matt. 2:4; Lk. 15:26; Lk. 18:36; Jn. 4:52; Acts 4:7; Acts 10:18; Acts 10:29; Acts 21:33; Acts 23:19; Acts 23:20; Acts 23:34. Used 6 times in the Septuagint - Ge 25:22; 2 Chr. 31:9; 32:31; Est. 3:13; 6:4; Da 2:15;

Matthew 2:4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he **inquired** of them where the Messiah was to be born.



Luke 15:26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began **inquiring** what these things could be.

Luke 18:36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to **inquire** what this was.

John 4:52 So he **inquired** of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

Acts 4:7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to **inquire**, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"

Acts 10:18 and calling out, they were **asking** whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

Acts 10:29 "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I **ask** for what reason you have sent for me."

Acts 21:33 Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began **asking** who he was and what he had done.

Acts 23:19 The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, began to **inquire** of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"

Acts 23:20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to **inquire** somewhat more thoroughly about him.

Acts 23:34 When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he **learned** that he was from Cilicia,

## WHAT POWER?

## WHAT NAME?

**By what power, or in what name** (see Acts 3:6+), **have you done this?** - You cannot see it in the English translations, but the Greek sentence closes with "touto humeis" which is essentially a contemptuous or derogatory "*you people*." What sort of power, what kind of name? Why do the members of the Sanhedrin ask these questions? Where were their credentials? What theological training had they had to give them the right to speak out on the Scriptures? Of course the real reason they were asking is because they were annoyed (that might be too mild) that Peter spoke of the resurrection of Jesus (cf Acts 3:15, Acts 3:21) which of course pointed the people to the truth that Jesus had literally been resurrected from the dead. And as noted, the liberal, anti-supernaturalistic Sadducees did not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection.

But there is one other factor to consider. Now, think about this for a moment. Why would they want to know the power and the name? If the source of the power and the name is any other name than God (Adonai), then the Sanhedrin would have grounds for accusing Peter and John of blasphemy, the very thing with which they had accused the Lord Jesus (Mt 26:65, 66). Then they would have justification to turn them over to the Roman authorities to be executed. Peter and John must have known this was their devilish plot, but this dilemma did not deter them from speaking the Name of Jesus, for they knew that was not blasphemy!

**A T Robertson on in what name** - As if by some magical formula such as exorcists practised (Acts 19:13) as if to catch them by (Dt. 13:1).

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and **gives you a sign or a wonder**,<sup>2</sup> and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' (TO THE SANHEDRIN "JESUS" WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO "OTHER GODS")<sup>3</sup> you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.<sup>4</sup> "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.<sup>5</sup> "But **that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death**, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. (Dt 13:1-5)

**Power** (1411) (**dunamis**) in this context speaks of supernatural power. What is your "power source?" Recall the Jews had accused Jesus of casting out a demon by the power of "**Beelzebul** the ruler of the demons"! (See Mt 12:22, 23, 24)

Regarding the **name**, the **NET note** explains "The issue of the "name" comes up again here. This question, meaning "by whose authority," surfaces an old dispute (see Luke 20:1–8+). Who speaks for God about the ancient faith?" I might add that some suggest that the phrase "in what name" speaks of exorcism practices, and so the religious leaders may have wanted to know "What formula did you use? (see Acts 19:13-16 )

**Lenski on have you done this** - The English cannot reproduce the pointed τὸ τοῦ μὲν ἑσθὲν at the end of the question: "this things—*you*,"

fellows like you. The pronoun has an emphasis of scorn. "This thing" declines to describe it in any way, for that would bring into prominence the greatness and the beneficence of the deed of the apostles. Not *what* they had done is asked about, for who could condemn the restoration of a congenital cripple; the *way* they had done what they had done, the *means* by which they had done it, are assailed....Now also the Jewish exorcists claimed to do wonderful things by using the formulas of their day, the names of the patriarchs or the name of Solomon, and this procedure was considered proper and orthodox. The question thus implies that, if some other power and especially some other name was used by the apostles, they lay themselves open to the most serious charge. Jesus of Nazareth was regarded as a rank blasphemer in the eyes of the Sanhedrin because he had called himself the Son of God. To use his power and his name for healing, no matter what the blessed result, was using the power and the name that were as blasphemous as this blasphemer himself. (The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles)

### Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

KJV Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

- **filled with the Holy Spirit** Acts 4:31; 2:4; 7:55; Mt 10:19,20; Luke 12:11,12; 21:14,15
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HOW TO RESPOND TO PERSECUTION

How did Peter respond to unjust treatment? By being filled with the Holy Spirit and in so doing he shows us how we too can respond to persecution. Of course he did not fill himself, but he surrendered to the Spirit, confessed any known sin, repented, and ultimately yielded himself to the Spirit's control. Note that Peter did not get more of the Spirit, but the Spirit did "get more" of him, and the same dynamic applies to our lives beloved.

**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them** - It is interesting that in Ephesians 5:18-19+, the first Greek word in verse 19 is *laleo* in the present tense which is significant as it shows that one of the first "effects" of being filled with/controlled by the Spirit (and not by alcohol or other "intoxications" of the world - as in Eph 5:18a) is **controlled speech!** And all through Acts, it is not just "controlled" speech, but it is bold speech.

As the **Life Application Commentary** says "There are two kinds of courage: reckless courage that is unaware of the dangers it faces, and the courage that knows the peril and yet is undaunted. Peter's boldness is of the latter variety. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Jesus** had promised the disciples supernatural enablement to speak boldly

"When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11–12) (Mt 10:18-20 is similar adding in v20 ""For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.")

Peter was ready to make a defense which is what he called on all believers to do in his first epistle...

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness (cf A GOOD DEED BY PETER AND JOHN), you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, 15 but (INSTEAD OF BEING FEARFUL OF MEN - cf Isa 8:13) **sanctify** Christ as Lord in your hearts (CHRIST RULING ONE'S HEART, NOT FEAR! IF HE IS LORD, HE IS IN CONTROL!), always being ready to make a defense (apologia) (AN ANSWER BACK, NOT AN EXCUSE) to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (1 Pe 3:14-15+)

**Alexander Maclaren** said "Only he who can say, "The Lord is the strength of my life" can go on to say, "Of whom shall I be afraid?"

The verb **filled** is aorist tense, meaning at a point in time and in context a point in time in the past. Passive voice signifies that the filling is from a Source independent of Peter. Peter's yielded spirit and obedient walk, allowed the Spirit to exert His influence and power in and through Peter. There was no emotional high or mystical filling associated with Peter's filling. Peter did not even pray to be filled. He simply walked in a manner worthy of the Lord, which resulted in his being filled. That's how Peter was filled and that is how every believer in Christ can be filled. Obviously, one needs to keep short accounts of one's sin. We all struggle with sin and we

all sin every day. In order to not grieve or quench the Spirit's filling and power, we need to confess our sins and repent of our sins.

**Filled** (4092)([pimplemi](#) from the obsolete **pláō** = to fill) to fill, to make full, to complete. It as was used of literal filling (as boatfilled with fish so that it began to sink - Lk 5:7), filling a sponge with sour wine (Mt 27:48), of a wedding hall filled with dinner guests (Mt 22:10), in Lxx of filling a skin with water (Ge 21:19, 24:16). In this context of course Luke is speaking figuratively of Peter **filled with the Spirit** in the sense that he was wholly (good pun - "Holy") imbued, affected and influenced by the Spirit. It was used this way in Acts 2:4 of the Spirit filling the disciples. In Acts 3:10 it was used on the Jewish crowd "filled with wonder and amazement." It is used again in Acts 4:31 to describe the disciples "all filled with the Holy Spirit," Who controlled them and empowered them "to speak the Word of God (THE GOSPEL) with boldness." In Acts 5:17 it describes the Sadducees who "were filled with jealousy."

Remember, what (Who) fills you controls you.

I agree with **Dr John MacArthur** that "ALL Christian ministry and witness depends on the filling of the Holy Spirit." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts) I would add that "**all fruitful**" ministry depends on filling with the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19), for Jesus Himself made it crystal clear when He declared to His disciples that "apart from Me you can do (absolutely) **nothing** (pleasing to God or of eternal value)!" (Jn 15:5) How much ministerial activity in your church would continue if the Holy Spirit were removed?

**Rulers and elders of the people** - Peter teaches us all a lesson about how to handle persecution. Bless those who curse you! And he blesses them by giving them the Gospel! And he does so in the next verses with absolutely no compromise.

**MacArthur** writes "A Spirit-filled, uncompromising church will be uncomfortable in the world, since it will be a rebuke to it. It will, however, be a powerful, victorious church. Peter and John confronted the world head on, with a boldness and eloquence that caused their opponents to marvel (cf. Acts 4:13). They were victorious because they were Spirit-filled." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**ILLUSTRATION OF A MAN FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT AND COURAGE** - [Peter Cartwright](#), a nineteenth-century circuit-riding Methodist preacher known as the "Lord's Plowman" or the "Lord's Breaking-Plow" (cf Hosea 10:12, Jer 4:3-4), was an uncompromising man ([Does this portrait look like a man who would back down?](#) That's a rhetorical question!) One Sunday morning when he was to preach, he was told that President Andrew Jackson was in the congregation, and warned not to say anything out of line. When Cartwright stood to preach, he said, "I understand that Andrew Jackson is here. I have been requested to be guarded in my remarks. Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn't repent." The congregation was shocked and wondered how the President would respond. After the service, President Jackson shook hands with Peter Cartwright and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could whip the world." As an aside the first sermon he ever preached was from Isaiah 26:4KJV "**Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.**" Those words still preach don't they beloved?

**EXCURSUS:  
FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT  
RICHLY INDWELT BY THE WORD**

Colossians and Ephesians are parallel epistles in a number of respects and Ephesians 5:18-6:9 presents a very interesting parallel with Colossians 3:16-4:1 as summarized in the following table (NAS77). First, take a few minutes to pray (Ps 119:18-[note](#), Eph 1:17, 18, 19-note) and read through both sections of Scripture, especially observing the similarities (Ps 119:130-[note](#)). Then go through the following chart to see if you agree with the parallel comparisons.

Ask yourself, what parallel truths is God teaching us in these two great sections of Scripture? Which of my interpersonal relationships do these passages address? How can we apply these truths to our personal life, our marriage, our family, our workplace, etc? What might transpire in each of those points of application? Then read the explanatory notes that follow.

Ephesians 5:18-6:9	Colossians 3:16-4:1
<p><b>Be filled</b> (present imperative)</p>	<p><b>Let...dwell within you richly</b> (present imperative)</p>
<p><b>THE SPIRIT</b></p>	<p><b>THE WORD OF CHRIST</b></p>

<p>Speaking to <b>ONE ANOTHER</b> Eph 5:19-note</p>	<p>Teaching &amp; Admonishing <b>ONE ANOTHER</b> Col 3:16-note</p>
<p>In <b>PSALMS</b> and <b>HYMNS</b> and <b>SPIRITUAL SONGS</b> Eph 5:19</p>	<p>With <b>PSALMS</b> and <b>HYMNS</b> and <b>SPIRITUAL SONGS</b> Col 3:16</p>
<p><b>SINGING</b> and making melody with <b>YOUR HEART</b> to the Lord Eph 5:19</p>	<p><b>SINGING</b> with thankfulness in <b>YOUR HEARTS</b> to God Col 3:16</p>
<p>Always <b>GIVING THANKS</b> for <b>ALL</b> things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father Eph 5:20-note</p>	<p>Do <b>ALL</b> in the name of the Lord Jesus, <b>GIVING THANKS</b> through Him to God the Father Col 3:17-note</p>
<p><b>WIVES</b> <b>BE SUBJECT</b> to your own husbands Eph 5:22-24-note</p>	<p><b>WIVES</b> <b>BE SUBJECT</b> to your husbands Col 3:18-note</p>
<p><b>HUSBANDS</b> <b>LOVE</b> your wives Eph 5:25-33-note</p>	<p><b>HUSBANDS</b> <b>LOVE</b> your wives Col 3:19-note</p>
<p><b>CHILDREN</b> <b>OBEY</b> your parents in the Lord Eph 6:1-3-note</p>	<p><b>CHILDREN</b> <b>BE OBEDIENT</b> to your parents Col 3:20-note</p>
<p><b>FATHERS</b> <b>DO NOT PROVOKE</b> your children to anger <b>BRING THEM UP</b> in discipline &amp; instruction of the Lord Eph 6:4-note</p>	<p><b>FATHERS</b> <b>DO NOT EXASPERATE</b> your children Col 3:21-note</p>
<p><b>SLAVES</b> <b>BE OBEDIENT</b> to those who are your masters according to the flesh Eph 6:5-8-note</p>	<p><b>SLAVES</b> in all things <b>OBEY</b> those who are your masters on earth Col 3:22-25-note</p>
<p><b>MASTERS</b> <b>DO</b> the same thing to them (slaves) Give up threatening knowing that both their Master &amp; yours is in heaven &amp; there is no partiality with Him Eph 6:9-note</p>	<p><b>MASTERS</b> <b>GRANT</b> to your slaves justice and fairness knowing that you too have a Master in heaven! Col 4:1-note</p>

Note that every verb in **bold red font** signifies **imperative mood** (commands, not good suggestions) and all are in the **present tense** (continuous action, habitual practice, as one's "lifestyle", speaks of our general "direction," not perfection!). Now stop for a moment and ask yourself - can I keep even ONE of these commands in my own strength? If you think you can, just try it the next time your spouse "verbally insults/assaults" your intelligence! None of us can keep these commands in our strength and to try to do so is to fall into the trap of self reliance and legalism. Here is the key that unlocks the door to supernatural living...

## **THE HUMAN SPIRIT FAILS UNLESS THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLS**

Too often we read Paul's long list of commands and forget to examine the **context**, which is critical for accurate **interpretation** and in this case crucial for real-life **practical application!** The context in this case clearly gives us the answer regarding how we can carry out the commands. These "holy" actions can only be energized or enabled by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in each saint. If we are filled with or controlled by Him, yielded to Him, depending on Him, casting off any semblance of self-reliance, then, and only then, can we successfully keep these commands. And as we do so, we are in effect also fulfilling Paul's (present imperative) command to walk by the Spirit which effectively prevents us from carrying out the desires of the **flesh** (cp Gal 5:16-note).

**Notice that Spirit filling SHOULD RADICALLY AFFECT ALL of our relationships** - wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves (think "employee" today), masters (think "employer" today)! Every vital social interaction is to be impacted by the Holy Spirit! So let me ask you a rhetorical (for effect primarily) question --

"How important is obedience to Paul's command that we be continually filled with/controlled by the Holy Spirit? And can you even obey his command without the help of the Helper Who fills you (and enables you. We need Him to enable us. To say we need His help implies we just need a little "push" which is not the case. We need His life lived out wholly in and through us.)? Meditate on that thought today! And then, as Ray Pritchard puts it do what you do when you go to full service gas station (yes you younger folks, there once was such a fabled entity!)...Cry out " Fill me up! " expressing your deep desire for and desperate dependence on the Spirit's enabling power to carry out God's commands which are not burdensome (1Jn 5:3)!

As an aside, it is interesting that we see so many Christian marriages and families in various states of disturbance, dissonance (lack of agreement) and/or even imminent dissolution. Paul was written us a "prescription", so to speak, for the "balm" (a soothing restorative agent) that can bring healing to families and marriages in dire (dismal, dreadful) straits! But like any medicine, the doctor can prescribe the best remedy, but the pill still has to be swallowed in order to effect a cure. What would happen to marriages and families that made an intentional effort (initiated by and energized by the Spirit of Grace-Heb 10:29b) to study and **meditate** on Paul's prescription in these passages and related cross references? In Psalm 107 the Spirit says that when the disobedient and distressed children of Israel "cried out to the LORD in their trouble, He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." (Psalm 107:19, 20). Beloved, His Name is **Jehovah Rapha (Jehovah Rophe) The LORD our Healer** and He is the same yesterday, today and forever and His Word is able to bring hope and healing to the hopeless and broken hearted!

Notice that the **"variable"** in these parallel passages is **God's Holy Spirit** in Ephesians and **God's Holy Word** in Colossians. The **effects** of being filled with the Spirit and the **commands** to be carried out by Spirit filled saints are virtually identical to those seen in saints who are in a sense "filled" with the Word of God! And so how can we discern if a person is filled with the Spirit as described in Ephesians? He or she is joyful and thankful. How can we tell if a believer is filled with the Word of God as described in Colossians? He or she is joyful and thankful!

So clearly, one of the keys to the **Spirit filled life**, is to marinate our mind with the Word of life (Php 2:16-note, 1Jn 1:1), the Word of truth by which we are set apart (Jn 17:17) and walk (in the Spirit's enabling power) in obedience to the Truth we have learned. The result will be a growing understanding and experiencing of the eminently practical **Spirit filled life**. So let me ask you - **How's your "appetite?" Are you eating His Word daily?** (Observe how important Jesus thinks this is in Mt 4:4) Notice that the question is not are you reading your daily devotional, but are you spending time **with Jesus, Who is the Word** (Jn 1:1) letting His living and active Word dwell in your richly? (Cp Heb 4:12,13, 1Pe 1:23, 24, 25-note, 1Pe 2:2-note)? If not, then you need to decrease your "dietary intake" of devotionals, Christian books, etc, and replace them with intake of solid meat (Heb 5:14) and the **pure** (unadulterated, no additives) milk of the Word, **so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation** (1Pe 2:2-note, 2Pe 3:18-note).

A Word-filled Christian is a Spirit-filled Christian, a believer who is so controlled by the Word of God that it dominates his or her entire life. Their life demonstrates that they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Warren Wiersbe** alludes to the filling of the Spirit in reminding us of a vital truth if we are live and minister as more than conquerors - "Jesus performed His ministry on earth in the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:1 = "full of the Holy Spirit", Lk 4:14 = "in the power of the Holy

Spirit", Acts 10:38 = "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power") and this (**Ed**: I would say "*He*" referring to the Person of the Spirit) is the **only resource** we have for Christian living (**Ed**: and ministry) today. As you read the Book of Acts, you see the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, for there are some fifty-nine references to the Spirit in the book, or one fourth of the total references found in the New Testament. Someone has said, "If God took the Holy Spirit out of this world, most of what we Christians are doing would go right on—and nobody would know the difference!" Sad, but true. The **power of the Spirit** is given to us "according to the riches of His glory" (Eph. 3:16-**note**). Christ returned to glory and sent the Spirit from heaven to indwell and empower His people. It is not necessary for us to "work something up." The power has to be sent down. How marvelous that God does not give the Spirit's power to us "out of His riches" but "according to"—which is a far greater thing. If I am a billionaire and I give you ten dollars, I have given you out of my riches; but if I give you a million dollars, I have given to you according to my riches. The first is a **portion**; the second is a **proportion**. This power is available for "**the inner man**." This means the spiritual part of man where God dwells and works. The inner man of the lost sinner is dead (Eph. 2:1), but it becomes alive when Christ is invited in. The inner man can see (Ps. 119:18), hear (Matt. 13:9), taste (Ps. 34:8), and feel (Acts 17:27); and he must be "exercised" (1 Tim. 4:7–8). He also must be cleansed (Ps. 51:7) and fed (Matt. 4:4). The outer man is perishing, but the inner man can be renewed spiritually in spite of outward physical decay (2Cor. 4:16-18). It is this inner power that makes him succeed. **What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit empower the inner man? It means that our spiritual faculties are controlled by God, and we are exercising them and growing in the Word** (Heb. 5:12–14). **It is only when we yield to the Spirit and let Him control the inner man that we succeed in living to the glory of God.** This means feeding the inner man the Word of God, praying and worshiping, keeping clean, and exercising the senses by loving obedience. " (Bible Exposition Commentary - Comments on Ephesians 3:16). (Bolding and italics added)

**Alexander Maclaren** related the Spirit to the Word declaring that "He who has the Holy Spirit in his heart and the Scriptures in his hands has all he needs."

**Wayne Barber** on **filling** - As we **yield** to the Holy Spirit of God Who resides in our spirit, as we **surrender** to Him, as we **allow Him to control** us, we experience the fullness of all that He has given us in Christ Jesus....We are never to grieve the Spirit. We are to continually be under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. When you and I are willing to do that, we start tapping into that which is ours in Christ Jesus. Then comes the fullness of God (Ed: He is referring specifically to Paul's prayer for **fullness of God** in Eph 3:19). The degree of my surrender determines the degree of my realization of the fullness that He offers.

**J N Darby** wrote "To have the Holy Ghost is one thing; to be filled with the Holy Ghost is another. When He is the one source of my thought, I am filled with Him. When He has possession of my heart, there is power to silence what is not of God, to keep my soul from evil, and to guide in every act of my life and walk; so that in both I am kept apart from the world.

**The Word of God teaches the Children of God how to live  
while the Spirit of God supplies the power to live for the Glory of God.**

**Dr Howard Hendricks** has a witty exhortation that relates to the saint's continually letting the Word of Christ dwell within "The text (1Peter 2:2) tells us: in order that you might **grow**. Please note, it is not that you may **know**. Certainly you can't **grow** without **knowing**. But you can **know** and not **grow**. The Bible was written not to satisfy your curiosity but to help you conform to Christ's image. Not to make you a smarter sinner but to make you like the Savior. Not to fill your head with a collection of biblical facts but to transform your life....How many years have you been a Christian? Nine months? Seven or eight years? Thirty-nine years? The real issue is, "**How much have you grown?**" Step up to God's growth chart, and measure your progress. That's what this passage is teaching. So the first reason for studying Scripture is that it is a means of spiritual growth. **There is none apart from the Word.** It is Gods primary tool to develop you as an individual. ([Living By the Book Revised - Howard Hendricks](#)).

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that the Spirit filled...

believer sings to himself as well as to the other believers and to the Lord. Our singing must be from our *hearts* and not just our *lips*. But if the **Word of God** is not in our hearts (cp Mt 12:34, Col 3:16), we cannot sing from our hearts. This shows how important it is to know the **Word of God**, for it enriches our public and private worship of God...Someone has said that a successful Christian life involves attention to three books:

**God's Book, the Bible;  
the pocketbook;  
and the hymn book.**

I agree. I often use a hymnal in my devotional time, to help express my praise to God. As a believer grows in his knowledge of the Word (cp 2Pe 3:18), he will want to grow in his expression of praise. He will learn to appreciate the great hymns of the church, the Gospel songs, and the spiritual songs that teach spiritual truths. To sing only the elementary songs of the faith is to rob himself of spiritual enrichment. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible](#))

In **Acts** we see the **opposite attitude** of allowing oneself to be controlled by the Spirit, the unbelieving Jews described by Stephen as...

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always **resisting** (present tense = continually) the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. (Acts 7:51)

**Comment:** **Resist** is **antipipto** from **anti** = against + **pipto** = fall and so literally means fall against, rush against; hence, strive against, oppose, resist by actively opposing pressure, force, power or violence. To resist implies an overt recognition of a hostile or threatening force and a positive effort to counteract or repel it. Antonyms of **resist** are to accept, submit, surrender or yield

The person who is **filled** with sorrow (Jn 16:6) is no longer under his own control but is under the control of that emotion. In the same way, someone who is filled with **fear** (Luke 5:26), **anger** (Luke 6:11), **jealously** (Acts 5:17) or even **Satan** (Acts 5:3) is no longer under his or her own control, but under the control of that which "fills". This sense is so important to understand that it is elaborated on more in the section below. The point is that to be filled is to be totally dominated and/or controlled by what fills you and this is shade of meaning of **pleroo** that is especially relevant to our understanding of Paul's command in Ephesians 5:18.

**Wuest** writes that "**Filled** is **pleroo**, "to fill up, to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, to flood, to diffuse throughout." In Acts 6:15 we have Stephen, a man **filled with** faith and the Holy Spirit. Faith filled Stephen in the sense that it controlled him. The Holy Spirit filled Stephen in the sense that He controlled him. Therefore, the fullness of the Spirit has reference to His control over the believer yielded to Him. ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Erdmans](#))

**Adam Clarke** - The heathen priests pretended to be **filled** with the influence of the god they worshipped; and it was in these circumstances that they gave out their oracles. See a remarkable instance of this quoted in the note on Luke 9:39, where the case of a Bacchanalian is described. The apostle exhorts the Ephesians not to resemble these, but, instead of being filled with wine, to be filled with the Spirit of God; in consequence of which, instead of those discoveries of the Divine will to which in their drunken worship the votaries of Bacchus pretended, they should be wise indeed, and should understand what the will of the Lord is.

Let's look at several illustrations of **filling** and **controlling**...

**Luke** records that when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue and reminded the Jews that in the days of Elijah only Naaman, a Gentile (to them a veritable "dog") was healed of leprosy, there was a sudden and dramatic change in the "political climate" in the room (previously they had all speaking well of Him, cf Luke 4:22)...

And all (all without exception!) in the synagogue were **filled** (pletho) **with rage** (thumos describes agitated, vehement anger that rushes along relentlessly) (Lk 4:28+)

**Comment:** The **rage** resulted from the teaching that the Jews did not occupy an exclusive place in the blessings of God, but that God's help was available to those who had faith, irrespective of whether Jew or Gentile.

What were these Jews **controlled** by? They were clearly **controlled** by what **filled** them and what **filled** them was **rage**! And what was the resultant **action** that emanated from their boiling agitation? Luke tells us that...

They rose up and cast Him (Jesus) out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. (Lk 4:29+)

The rage so controlled these Jews that they were driven to the point of seeking to murder the Messiah! We have all experienced this type of controlling emotion, haven't we? When our anger boils and takes control, we realize that we are capable of doing things we would otherwise never consider.

In **Luke 6** we read the following interaction as Jesus healed a lame man's hand on the Sabbath...

And after looking around at them (scribes and Pharisees) all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored. But they themselves were **filled with rage**, (anoia = irrational anger, fury, extreme rage) and discussed together what they might do to Jesus. (Lk 6:10, 11+)

**Comment:** Observe the causal relationship between filling and "feelings" that controlled them to the point of conspiring to put Jesus to death!

In Acts **Peter** confronts Ananias who failed to present the offering from the sale of his land, Luke recording that...

a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the

price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan **filled** (pleroo) **your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land?** (Acts 5:1-3+)

**Comment:** Observe the father of lies filled Ananias' with falsehood which directly countered the Holy Spirit and resulted in holding some of the money back. What filled Ananias controlled him!

In **Acts 13** when Paul and Barnabas arrived at Pisidian Antioch, Paul began proclaiming Jesus as Savior to the point that people were even begging for more of Paul's expository preaching and...

when the Jews saw the crowds, they were **filled** (pletho) **with jealousy** (resentment), and (notice the actions that resulted from their being filled with jealousy) began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. (Acts 13:45)

What you observe is that when a person is filled with an emotion, that emotion can totally control and dominate the individual and result in actions or words reflective of that emotion.

## **SPIRIT FILLED SAINTS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS**

First, we should not forget that the Gospels record that our Lord Himself was **filled with the Holy Spirit**, Who empowered Him for ministry, Luke recording...

And Jesus, **full** (pleres related to pletho) **of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was **led about by the Spirit** in the wilderness (so the Spirit's filling is associated with His leading)...14 And Jesus returned to Galilee **in the power of the Spirit**; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. (Luke 4:1, 14+)

**Comment:** Mark records that after Jesus' baptism, "*immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness*" (Mark 1:12) As an aside note that the terms **Spirit** and **power** are frequently associated = Lk 4:14; Acts 1:8; Acts 10:38; Ro 15:13; 1Cor 2:4; Eph 3:16; 1Th 1:5; cp 2Ti 1:7. Clearly, the Holy Spirit imparts power for ministry.

This begs several vital questions to all preachers of the Gospel and all Gospel workers -  
Are you ministering with power? Are you preaching with power? In short, are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you filled with the Holy Word? Do not think you can be filled with the Holy Spirit if you neglect being filled with His Holy Word!

## **THE SECRET OF THE ABUNDANT LIFE**

**Why is this truth so important to comprehend and to put into action?** While Jesus was perfect and we can never be Jesus, the NT clearly calls for us to follow His example (1Cor 11:1, 1Pe 2:21, 1Jn 2:6, Jn 13:14). **What was His example? Or stated another way, how was Jesus able to live the life He lived?** A teaching that is often overlooked is that Jesus ministered in the enabling power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14, 18 Acts 10:38, cp Acts 1:2 = after the resurrection! Isa 11:2-4 = in the millennium!) giving us the perfect example to follow. The only way we can live a supernatural life is by discarding self effort and surrendering to Spirit dependence! That is the "Jesus way!" From the beginning to the end of His ministry Jesus submitted to the Father to direct His steps ("not My will but Thine" - see Jn 5:19, 30, Jn 8:28) and surrendered to the Spirit to empower His steps! We cannot improve on His example. This begs the question - are you following His example? Are you learning what it means to be filled with the Spirit so that you might walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16)? This is the profound and yet simple "secret" of the "abundant life" (Jn 10:10b).

In the book of Acts observe the repetition of the **filling** of believers and the specific manifestations or effects that are associated with filling...

**Acts 2:2** And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

**Comment:** Peter was present and was filled at this time but note in the passage below Luke again records that Peter was filled, indicating that filling unlike the baptism of the Spirit is not one time event, but



is repeated. Note also that here filling was associated with speaking in tongues but not in the other examples below.

**Acts 4:8** Then Peter, **filled** (passive voice shows Peter's yieldedness to the Spirit's control) **with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people

**Comment:** Here we see Peter filled with the Spirit, the effect being to give him boldness to proclaim Jesus to the Jewish leaders even reminding them that they had crucified their own Messiah! Boldness in speech and ability to face persecution triumphantly are effects of being filled with the Spirit in contrast to being filled with the flesh which was Peter's former condition that led to his denial of His Lord on the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas --

*Mt 26:69, 70 "Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a certain servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about."*

In sum, yielding to the Spirit's filling/control releases His power in the believer's life. This principle is the foundation of the "victorious Christian life"! As corollary, remember not to be surprised by persecution because a genuinely Spirit filled believer -- and a Spirit filled church -- will be be a living rebuke to the world, which is exposed by the Light of Christ, cf . Ep 5:8,11-see notes Ep 5:8; 11.

**Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken (as at Pentecost there was a physical manifestation of the Spirit's presence), and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit**, (indicating their obedience to the Lord, their walking in the light, their yieldedness to Him) and began to speak the word of God with boldness (literally this Greek word conveys the idea of freedom to say all = an attitude of openness that stems from freedom and lack of fear).

**Comment:** This verse records at least the second time that these early Christians in the Jerusalem church were filled with the Holy Spirit, the first time being at Pentecost in **Acts 2:2-4**)

**Acts 6:3** (The 12 Apostles summoned the congregation of disciples and explained they as apostles must not neglect the Word of God to serve tables) "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, **full of the Spirit** and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man **full of faith and of the Holy Spirit**, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

**Acts 7:55** But (Stephen) **being full of the Holy Spirit**, gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

**Comment:** Here Stephen, a man filled with the Spirit and so controlled that he proclaimed to this hostile Jewish audience one of the most powerful sermons ever recorded in **Acts 7**. And what was the price for his bold Spirit empowered proclamation? They stoned him to death. Do not miss the truth that one of the great evidences of his being Spirit filled was that he had a forgiving spirit (see Acts 7:60, cp Jesus Who as the God-Man was [in a way that is surely a divine mystery] controlled by the Holy Spirit [Lk 4:1, 14, Mt 4:1, Mk 1:12] uttered a similar prayer for forgiveness from the Cross in Lk 23:34. The truth be said, only Spirit filled folk can genuinely forgive insults and injuries from the heart! See in depth discussions on forgiveness in the Expositions in Matthew 6:12; 6:13, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13)

**Acts 9:17** And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be **filled with the Holy Spirit**."

**Acts 11:24** for he was a good man, and **full of the Holy Spirit** and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

**Acts 13:9** But Saul, who was also known as Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, fixed his gaze upon him, 10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

**Acts 13:52** And the disciples were continually **filled with joy** and with the **Holy Spirit**.

## Acts 4:9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

KJV Acts 4:9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

- **for a benefit done to a sick man** Acts 3:7; John 7:23; 10:32; 1 Peter 3:15-17; 4:14
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ON TRIAL FOR A GOOD DEED

**If we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man**- The "if" marks a first class condition, assumed to be true. They were indeed on trial. The **NET note** adds "It assumes for the sake of argument that this is what they were being questioned about." Note Peter's piercing logic at the outset - why are we on trial for a **benefit**, a good deed? Peter uses the rare word **euergesia**, about which **Robertson** says is "as a [benefactor](#), not a [malefactor](#). Skillful turn made by Peter." They were being treated like malefactors!

**We are on trial** is one word in Greek, **anakrino** ([350](#)), which means to sift up and down, to examine accurately or carefully (re-examine), to make careful and exact research as in legal processes (interrogating, cross examining). The idea of **anakrino** is to put one through a series of questions as when being examined by a judge in a court of law. It was often used in secular Greek of the interrogation of a prisoner which is apropos here for Peter and John were prisoners of the Sanhedrin! What a difference context makes in the meaning of the word **anakrino**! In Acts 17:11+ we find the Jewish believers in Messiah examining the Scriptures (not Paul) daily to see whether the words of Paul were corroborated by the Word of God! Quite a different goal compared to the Jewish religious leaders! Instead of persecuting Peter, the religious leaders should have been perusing the pages of God's Word to see whether Peter and John spoke truth or error. God's Word of truth always tests men's motives, and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12+) The intentions of the Sanhedrin were evil, while the intentions of the Bereans was noble!

**Matthew Henry** - It is no new thing for good men to suffer ill for doing well. To do well and to suffer punishment is the Christian's lot.

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones** applies the idea of **benefit** to the church -- All the greatest benefits that humanity has ever known have come through this Gospel. Good deeds! Where did hospitals come from? The Christian church. Where did education come from? The Christian church. Where did relief for the poor and suffering come from? The Christian church. Look at the great missionary enterprise. Look at the light that has been taken to the dark places of the earth. . . Look at the unreasonableness of it all. If the apostles had hit the lame man on the head, I could understand why the authorities threw them into prison. But fancy throwing them into prison because they had healed a man! What is it that makes people do such things? There is only one answer: It is the blindness and the deadness that is ever produced by prejudice. Something in human nature is malignant.

**Benefit** ([2108](#)) (**euergesia** from **euergetes** = a doer of good from **eu** = good + **ergon** = deed) means well doing or good service (1 Ti 6:2 = only other NT use) or benefit. Here in Acts 4:9 it refers to an individual act of kindness (benefit, good deed). In the only Septuagint use it says that Israel "forgot His **deeds** (Lxx = euergesia ~ God's benefits!) and His miracles." (Ps 78:11) **Euergesia** is used in secular Greek documents "mentioning "benefits" that increased the welfare of an empire." (Gilbrant)

**As to how this man has been made well** - Or "how he was healed." It is interesting to me as a doctor, that Dr Luke had a choice of some excellent Greek words which describe healing, including [iaomai](#) and [therapeuo](#). He opted (of course inspired by the Spirit) for another verb, [sozo](#), described below. It is no accident that he uses the same verb [sozo](#) a few verses later in that great declaration in Acts 4:12 describing the only way for a soul to obtain "spiritual healing!" Of course in a sense sozo is a perfect verb to describe the lame man for he had received both physical healing and spiritual healing! Of course the question of the Sanhedrinists was focused solely on the physical, not realizing that they had just opened themselves up to Peter's use of the same verb in the far more important use, spiritual healing!

**Longnecker** on [sozo](#) - The double use of the verb *sothenai* ("to be saved") to mean both "restoration to health" physically and "preservation from eternal death" spiritually allows Peter to move easily from the healing of the cripple to the salvation of mankind and, therefore, from a defensive to an aggressive witness. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 9: John and Acts)

**Has been made well** (perfect tense = has been made and remains well - indicates continuing results of the completed action) ([4982](#)) ([sozo](#)) has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. **Sozo** is sometimes used of physical deliverance from danger of perishing (see Mt 8:25; Mt 14:30; Lk 23:35; saved from drowning in Acts 27:20, 27:31), physical healing from sickness (Mt 9:21, 22 = "made you well"; Mk 5:23, Acts 4:9,

Acts 14:9 = to be made well"), and deliverance from demonic possession (Lk 8:36). More often **sozo** refers to **salvation** in a spiritual sense as used in Acts 2:40, 47, 4:12.

All of Luke's uses of **sozo** -

Lk. 6:9; Lk. 7:50; Lk. 8:12; Lk. 8:36; Lk. 8:48; Lk. 8:50; Lk. 9:24; Lk. 9:56; Lk. 13:23; Lk. 17:19; Lk. 18:26; Lk. 18:42; Lk. 19:10; Lk. 23:35; Lk. 23:37; Lk. 23:39; Acts 2:40; Acts 2:47; Acts 4:9; Acts 4:12; Acts 11:14; Acts 14:9; Acts 15:1; Acts 15:11; Acts 16:30; Acts 16:31; Acts 27:20; Acts 27:31

**Acts 4:10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead--by this Name this man stands here before you in good health.**

KJV Acts 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

- **let it be known to all of you** Acts 13:38; 28:28; Jer 42:19,20; Daniel 3:18
- **that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene** by Acts 2:22-24,36; 3:6,13-16; Acts 5:29-32
- **Whom God raised from the dead** Acts 2:24; 10:40-42; 13:29-41; Mt 27:63-66; 28:11-15; Ro 1:4
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHO WAS REALLY ON TRIAL?

Little did they realize when they asked "by what Name" that they had just tossed Peter a "softball" so to speak and he hits a "grand slam!" Their straight question received a straight answer.

What Peter accomplishes with just a few words is to deftly turn the tables and put the Sanhedrin in a semi-circle (enabling them to see each other) on trial! Can you imagine their reaction and their faces? He answers their question (what power? what name? Acts 4:7), but in so doing he turns the tables on them!

**Let it be** - This functions like an imperative or command. Peter's is confident and it shows just as it had with a similar introduction in Acts 2:14+ ("let this be known to you"). In case they were "fuzzy" on how this miracle had transpired Peter says "Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel." (NLT).

**Known** - This is the word [gnostos](#) which describes that which is clearly recognizable, that which is made known. The miracle was living proof of the Living Savior!

Note that Peter is in repeating the truth he had declared to the temple crowds the previous day in Acts 3:13-16+, truth which resulted in salvation for 2000+! There is no record of any similar impact on the members of the Sanhedrin.

**To all of you and to all the people of Israel** - Think about what God is doing through Peter's message. He is giving the Jews another chance to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. **All of you** is the very group who had convicted Jesus of blasphemy and delivered Him to Pilate for crucifixion (Lk 27:1)! What do we learn from this statement? In short, but in truth, God is long suffering with sinners! Peter later wrote about God's long suffering attitude toward sinners in his second epistle

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish (EVEN THE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN!) but for all to come to repentance (2 Pe 3:9+)

**Matthew Henry** - Be it known to you all who pretend to be ignorant of this matter, and not to you only, but to all the people of Israel, for they are all concerned to know it... that precious, powerful, prevailing name, that name above every name, even by him whom you in contempt called Jesus of Nazareth,

**John Stott** - Whether they were preaching to the crowd in the temple or answering accusations in court, their preoccupation was not their own defence but the honour and glory of their Lord. (The Message of Acts)

**That by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene** - Peter takes no credit for the miracle, but transfers all the praise and glory for the good deed to Jesus Christ. Peter is filled with the Spirit and Jesus had said that "He (the Spirit) shall glorify Me" (Jn 16:14), which is exactly what Peter was doing by giving Jesus all the credit. Do we give Jesus all the glory when something clearly supernatural transpires in our life?

Note that the "double title" is a confession by Peter that the Man the Sanhedrin knew as Jesus, Whom they illegally tried and gave over to Roman crucifixion, is also the One called **Christos**, the **Anointed One**, the **Messiah**. Recall that the Sadducees had little interest in a Messiah, for they did not want their political position or power to be disrupted by this "Upstart Messiah!" How deceitful sin can be - in them and in us! (cf Heb 3:13).

The Name **Jesus Christ** is used 135x in 132v in the New Testament, only 3 times in the Gospels, with 13 uses in Acts (some prefixed by "**Lord**" - Acts 11:17; Acts 15:26; Acts 20:21; Acts 28:31) and most by Paul - Acts 2:38; Acts 3:6; Acts 4:10; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:37; Acts 9:34; Acts 10:36; Acts 10:48; Acts 11:17; Acts 15:26; Acts 16:18; Acts 20:21; Acts 28:31

**Christ** (5547)(**Christos** from **chrío** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) means one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. It is used here as the title "Anointed One" and is the Greek synonym for "Messiah." Christos is used in the Septuagint describing everyone anointed with the holy oil, especially the priesthood (Lev. 4:5, 16) and it is also a name applied to those who were acting as redeemers like Cyrus (see below).

**Gilbrant** writes that "Hamilton suggests a fourfold significance to such anointing ("māshach," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 1:530): (1) separation unto God, (2) authorization by God, (3) divine enablement, and (4) the coming Deliverer. In regards to this final use he says, "Though this association with the term māshach is not as prevalent in the OT as often supposed, the prospect of a righteous, Spirit-filled ruler is increasingly discernible in the OT (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7+; Isa1 1:1-5+; Isa 61:1)" (ibid.). It was probably because of his role as a deliverer of God's people, selected by the Lord for His purpose, that Cyrus, a Gentile emperor, was given the title of "**messiah, anointed**" (Isaiah 45:1). However, long after Cyrus, God's people were still promised Messiah the prince, the one to fulfill all of the Biblical promises (Daniel 9:25,26+)." ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**BDAG** adds Christos signifies the "Fulfiller of Israelite expectation of a Deliverer" and was used in the Septuagint of the great messianic Ps 2:2 describing the future day when "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His **Anointed** (Hebrew = [Mashiach/masiyah](#); Lxx = Christos)." The first use of **Christos** in the Septuagint describes "**the anointed** (Hebrew = [Mashiach/masiyah](#); Lxx = Christos) priest" (Lev 4:5) carrying out a blood sacrifice, clearly foreshadowing the One Who would come as both the Sacrifice and the Priest! Daniel 9:26+ gives us the incredible prophecy that after 69 weeks (483 years) "the Messiah (Hebrew = [Mashiach/masiyah](#); Lxx = Christos) will be cut off," a specific prophecy of **what** would happen to Messiah and **when** it would happen. The Jews could have known and should have known (and some Jews have been saved when they read this prophecy) (See Luke 19:42+)

#### Related Resources:

- [Messiah - Anointed One](#)
- Related word - [messias](#) = Messiah
- [Is Jesus the Messiah?](#)
- [What does Messiah mean?](#)
- [Why do most Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah?](#)
- [Does the Old Testament truly predict a second advent of the Messiah?](#)

Put yourself in the place of the members of the Sanhedrin who had thought that crucifixion had put a permanent end to Jesus! The ones that pierced Jesus were now having their hearts pierced by Peter's words! Notice Peter uses the word **Christ** which is synonymous with Messiah. In so doing he is declaring that the Man Jesus is the anointed One of God, the One Who had been predicted in the Old Testaments.

**Jesus** (2424)(**lesous**) is **transliteration** of lesous, which in turn is derived from the Hebrew **Jehoshua** (Yehoshua) or **Jeshua** (Yeshua) which mean *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. Jesus' very Name depicts His mission! He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10+)

**Whom you crucified** (cf Acts 2:23+ and Acts 3:15+) - Note that again Peter adds the piercing pronoun "**you**." One can almost see Peter's eyes panning from side to side as he had eye contact with every member in the council chamber! Only a Spirit filled man would have spoken such a scathing accusation against the Sanhedrin. For context, remember that this same group (probably actually the same individuals) led by Caiaphas had declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy and sentenced Him to die only 7-8 weeks earlier. Peter was literally taking his life in his hands. Peter countered fear with faith, because He knew Who really held His life or as Paul said "I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know Whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." (2 Ti 1:12+) So while Peter and John could have died this day, it was not God's will for them to die until they had "finished their testimony" like the two witnesses in Rev 11:7+. Our life as a disciple of Christ is immortal until our work for Him has been accomplished.

This is Peter's third "sermon" to the Jews and each time he accused them of killing the Messiah - Acts 2:22–24 ("put Him to death") Acts 3:12–15 ("put to death the Prince of life").

**Whom God raised from the dead** (similar in Acts 2:23, 24; Acts 3:14, 15) - Now the Sadducees must have begun to "foam at the mouth" so to speak. They did not accept resurrection from the dead and Peter directly confronts their erroneous belief with truth.

**By this Name this man stands here before you in good health** - The saying is "seeing is believing," but that was not the case with these hard hearted religious men. The lame man was standing in front of them giving clear testimony to Peter's words.

**Warren Wiersbe** writes "The best defense of the truth of the Christian faith is a changed life. The healed beggar was "Exhibit A" in Peter's defense of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In his evangelistic ministries, the Methodist preacher [Samuel Chadwick](#) used to pray for "a Lazarus" in every campaign, some "great sinner" whose conversion would shock the community. He got the idea from John 12:9-11. God answered his prayers in meeting after meeting as infamous wicked men trusted Christ and became witnesses through their changed lives. Let's go after the "hard cases" and see what God can do! (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Dynamic).

**Stands** (3936) ([paristemi](#) from **para** = near, beside + **histemi** = place, set) literally means to place or set beside or near. Luke uses this verb frequently in Acts - Acts 1:3 (presented Himself alive); Acts 1:10; Acts 4:10; Acts 4:26; Acts 9:39; Acts 9:41; Acts 23:2; Acts 23:4; Acts 23:24; Acts 23:33; Acts 24:13; Acts 27:23; Acts 27:24

**Good health** (whole, healthy) (5199) ([hugies](#) - gives us English "hygiene") literally refers to being physically (and mentally) well or sound (emphasizes the absence of disease, weakness, or malfunction).

**Lenski** concludes - Peter says this to men like Annas and Caiaphas here in the midst of their Sadducean following. The whole Sanhedrin had tried to hush up the resurrection of Jesus, Mt. 28:11-15. Here it faced them with even stronger evidence than that which the Roman guard brought from the tomb. No dead Jesus could work a miracle such as this; the risen and glorified Jesus alone could do that. So Jesus had healed when he was alive; lo, so he had healed now after this Sanhedrin had crucified him! Why did Caiaphas and those Sadducees not leap up and denounce Peter in blazing wrath? Did the truth thrown into their faces, hurled at their consciences with such unexpected power dumbfound them for the moment? (The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles)

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**TALKING ABOUT JESUS** - As you read through the book of Acts, you discover that the apostles spoke about Christ at every opportunity. It was as natural for them to talk about Jesus as it is for us to talk about a day at work or a vacation at the shore. Why? Because they had personal experience with him. That's the most fundamental truth about witnesses—they *communicate* what they have seen and heard. If Christ is real to us, if he's important to us, if he's first in our hearts and minds, we will be like those first-century believers. We won't be able to keep from talking about him. Does your conversation ever feature matter-of-fact references to what God means to you or what he is doing in your life? Jesus said it best: "Whatever is in your heart determines what you say" (Luke 6:45NLT). (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

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## Acts Of Kindness

Read: Acts 4:1-13

By the name of Jesus . . . , whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. — Acts 4:10

I was traveling with some men when we spotted a family stranded alongside the road. My friends immediately pulled over to help. They got the car running, talked with the father and mother of the family, and gave them some money for gasoline. When the mother thanked them over and over, they replied, "We're glad to help out, and we do it in Jesus' name." As we drove away, I thought how natural it was for these friends to help people in need and acknowledge the Lord as the source of their generosity.

Peter and John exhibited that same joyful generosity when they healed a lame man who was begging outside the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1-10). This led to their arrest and appearance before the authorities who asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Peter replied, "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man . . . let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole" (Acts 4:7-10).

Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and a powerful context in which to genuinely speak to others about the Lord.

Lord, help me to love with both words and deeds,  
To reach out to others and meet their needs;

Lord, burden my heart for those lost in sin,  
With mercy and love that flows from within. —Fitzhugh

One act of kindness may teach more about the love of God than many sermons.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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I like the way **Pastor Alan Carr** summed up the Name **Jesus** in his sermon [What Makes Jesus So Special?](#) - He Is Exalted In His Name. We are told that He has been given "a name that is above every name". What is that Name? The Greeks knew Him as Kurios Iesous Christos. The Hebrews called Him Yeshua Ha-Mashiach! The redeemed saints of God just know Him as Jesus!

At the mention of that precious Name:

- Lives are altered.
- Fevered brows become cool.
- Blinded eyes open.
- Deaf ears unstop.
- Sin's bars open and the shackles of spiritual bondage fall away.
- Night turns to day.
- Defeat is swallowed up in victory.
- Hope replaced despair.
- Dead men live.
- The lost are found.
- Devils tremble.
- Sinners are broken.
- Saints shout.
- Angels bow.

More has been done through the agency and power of that Name than of all the names of all other people combined. There really is just something about that Name!

- The name Jesus is the sweetest Name ever to fall upon human ears!
- That Name is a cause for celebration in Heaven.
- That Name strikes fear into the hearts of the inhabitants of Hell.
- That Name changed my life, opened my eyes and saved my soul!

Like the songwriter said:

There's a name above all others,  
Wonderful to hear, bringing hope and cheer.  
It's the lovely name of Jesus,  
Evermore the same, what a lovely name.

What a lovely name, the name of Jesus.  
Reaching higher far, than the brightest star.  
Sweeter than the songs they sing in heaven.  
Let the world proclaim, what a lovely name.

Another songwriter said: [There's Something About That Name \(an oldie but a goodie\)](#)

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,  
There's just something about that name.  
Master, Savior, Jesus,

Like the fragrance after the rain.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,  
Let all heaven and earth proclaim,  
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away  
But there's something about that name.

Listen to [Jesus, You're the sweetest Name of all](#)

**Pastor Carr** adds that "there must be something very special about this **Name** (Iesous - Jesus) I feel that it is special because:

**A. It Is A Name Picked By The Father** - The name Jesus was not given to our Lord by Mary and Joseph. It was a name handpicked by God, Mt. 1:21. This alone makes it a name that stands out as special. A name that is worthy of further investigation.

**B. It Is A Name That Points Back To The Father** - The name Jesus means, "Jehovah Is Salvation." This precious, sweet name reveals a side of Jesus that many fail to grasp. While God is a God of wrath and judgment, He is purely and wholly love, 1John 4:8; 16. God is love and everything He does is an outgrowth and an expression of His love. Therefore, when the Father sent Jesus to come into the world, He was sending a message to humanity. It was a message that said, "I have not forgotten, nor forsaken you. I love you and I give you my Son who will reveal me to you." (Ill. John 14:9)

**C. It Is A Name That Paint's God's Portrait** - The name Jesus at once reveals the Son's mission, (Ill. Luke 19:10), and the Father's heart, (Ill. 2 Pet. 3:9). God isn't in the damning business. He is in the saving business! He wants no one to go to Hell. In fact, He tells us that hell was not made for the lost, it was made for the devil and his angels, Matt. 25:41. When the Father chose the name Jesus as the one His Son would bear during the time of His humiliation, He was telling every creature in His universe in one word that His goal was the redemption and salvation of mankind. This is what He wanted and this is what He accomplished through the Name of Jesus! ([The Name Above Every Name](#))

**Acts 4:11 "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone.**

KJV Acts 4:11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Lenski - This One is the stone, the one considered as nothing by you, the ones building, the one become corner head.

- **He is the STONE** Ps 118:22,23; Isa 28:16; Mt 21:42-45; Mark 12:10-12; Luke 20:16-18; 1 Peter 2:6-8
- **REJECTED by you** Acts 7:52; 20:26,27; Pr 28:1; Isa 58:1,2; Ezek 2:6,7; 3:7-11,18,19; 33:7-9; 2 Cor 3:12; 4:1
- **BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone** Zechariah 3:9; 4:6,7; Eph 2:20-22
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JESUS IS THE STONE THE CORNERSTONE**

Before His crucifixion Jesus had taught His disciples

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. 13 "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. 14 "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. (Lk 21:12-15).

Watch what Peter does now -- He has just answered their question by what **power** or **name** the miracle had occurred. Answer? **Jesus Christ the Nazarene**. But he does not stop there. Filled with the Spirit, Peter is guided by the Spirit to quote from Ps 118 to substantiate his previous answer. This is a passage Peter had heard Jesus use to describe the religious leaders and one which they clearly had recognized was describing themselves! So this was probably not the first time at least some of the members of the Sanhedrin had heard these words! Note that whereas Jesus had warned them that the prophecy would be fulfilled, Peter now

declares it has been fulfilled! Ouch! And both parts had been fulfilled -- not just what they had done, but what God had done!

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? (QUOTE FROM Ps 118:22,23) 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 "And he who falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, **they understood that He was speaking about them**. 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet. (Mt 21:42-46)

**He is** - Better "this One" clearly implying "this One" named Jesus. This very One is the Stone.

**He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS** - What incredible irony! Peter (the "rock") now begins to speak about the **Stone** in the Sanhedrin meeting hall known as the "**Hall of Hewn Stone!**" These men would soon find themselves "**hewn**" by the Sword of the Spirit wielded by Peter and in eternity "hewn" by the Stone breaking them when It fell on them! Woe!

Peter (whose own name means "stone") is quoting a prophecy from Ps 118:22 (I couldn't resist adding Ps 118:23) which reads

"The stone which the builders **rejected** (Lxx = [apodokimazo](#)) Has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes."

Don't miss that Peter adds **by you** to the quote in order to drive home the point that the ones who rejected the **Stone** were the very one's listening to his message, the very ones who had convicted Christ of a "crime" and facilitated His crucifixion! They are the **builders**, the religious leaders, the members of the Sanhedrin, who had sought to convict Peter but who were now themselves being convicted of the "highest treason" possible, treason against the Most High God!

As explained below, Peter did not use the Septuagint's verb [apodokimazo](#) for **rejected** (see Ps 118:22 above), but choose another verb which describes not only their act of rejection of their own Messiah but also exposes their heart motives, for this verb also means they despised and disdained Jesus! What Peter is saying to his Sanhedrin audience is that they treated Jesus as if He was of no account! Amazing example of [total depravity](#)! Their hearts were so hard as stone to the Stone that could have saved them! Their eyes were so blind that they could not see the Light of the world (Jn 8:12) standing directly before their eyes!

**Was rejected** (view with contempt) ([1848](#))([exoutheneo](#) from **ek** = an intensifies + **outheneo** = bring to naught) is a strong verb which means to despise someone based on the perception he is worthless or of no value! It means to treat contemptuously as if one was completely worthless and despicable. **Exoutheneo** is the very word used to describe Herod and his soldiers treating Jesus with contempt! (Lk 23:11). **BDAG** says the verb means "(1) to show by one's attitude or manner of treatment that an entity has no merit or worth. (2) to have no use for something as being beneath one's consideration (reject disdainfully)... (3) to regard another as of no significance and therefore worthy of maltreatment, treat with contempt."

**A T Robertson on the builders** - The experts, the architects, had rejected Jesus for their building (Psalm 118:22) as Jesus himself had pointed out (Matthew 21:42; Luke 21:17). This very Rejected Stone God had made the Head of the corner (either the highest corner stone right under the roof or the corner stone under the building, Isaiah 28:16) as Jesus showed, as Peter here declares and repeats later (1 Peter 2:6-7+). (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Builders** ([3602](#))([oikodomos](#) from **oikos** = dwelling + **doma** = building [of a house] from **demo** = to build) means literally to build, construct or erect a dwelling. In classical Greek it was used to describe the individual who constructs a building. In the Septuagint **oikodomos** refers to "builders" (of the Temple, 2 Ki 12:11, cf 2 Ki 22:6), masons (1 Chr 14:1), or restorer (Isa 58:12).

**Oikodomos** - 8x in 8v in the Septuagint - 2 Ki. 12:11; 2 Ki. 22:6; 1 Chr. 14:1; 1 Chr. 22:15; 2 Chr. 34:11 (builders); Neh. 4:18 (builders - restoring Jerusalem's wall); Isa. 58:12; Ezek. 40:3

Note that while only Acts 4:11 uses **oidodomos** to translate "builders" in Psalm 118:22, the four other NT quotations of Psalm 118:22 use the participial form of the verb [oikodomeo](#).

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?

Mark 12:10 "Have you not even read this Scripture: **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**;

Luke 20:17+ But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone**'?



1 Peter 2:7+ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,**"

**But** - A striking Term of contrast. What is Peter contrasting? The contrast could not be much more dramatic -- the Stone the religious leaders considered as worthless, by contrast is the very Stone that would be the foundation stone. Their rejection is contrasted with God's vindication and exaltation!

**John Piper** - If you compare the Kingdom of God to **abuilding**, then the **builders** are the religious leaders. They examined the **Stone** called **Jesus of Nazareth** to see if He could be a brick in the wall of truth. They said "No" and rejected Him and threw Him out as unusable. But God, the main Architect, came along and saw the Stone lying in the grave and picked Him up and made Him not only a Brick in the wall, but the Head of the corner—the Chief Stone in the **building**. Men rejected Jesus as a merely local menace with no significance beyond the killing hill of Golgotha. But God has made Jesus the universal Head over all His House. As Acts 2:36 says: "God has made Him both Lord and Christ." ([There is Salvation in No One Else](#))

Peter is saying this One, this Jesus, this Stone you men despised and considered as nothing, as unfit to be used anywhere within the building, this very One has become the "Head of the corner" as Lenksi says "the one supreme Stone which, laid at the head corner, governs every other corner and every angle in the entire spiritual temple and thus determines the angle at which every other stone is to be laid. How Jesus became this wonderful Stone Peter has already stated, namely by God's raising Jesus from the dead....Will these blind Sanhedrists at last see their terrible sin and repent?" (Ibid)

**MacArthur** adds "One of the most formidable barriers to the Sanhedrin's acceptance of Jesus as Messiah was that He could not prevent Himself from being killed. That did not fit their conception of the Messiah as a political and military deliverer. As he had done on the day of Pentecost, Peter turned to the Old Testament Scriptures to build his case. He quoted Psalm 118:22, applying it to their rejection of Jesus Christ (cf. Mark 12:10-11; 1 Peter 2:4, 6-8). Peter was not leading the Jews away from God but preaching the very truth of the Old Testament as fulfilled in Jesus. He was the stone which was rejected by them, the builders or spiritual leaders of the nation. Although they rejected Jesus, God made Him the very corner stone through His resurrection and exaltation. Again, Peter puts them in opposition to God—they rejected Jesus, but God gave Him the place of preeminence. He is the cornerstone of God's spiritual temple, the church (Eph. 2:19-22). They were the ones leading the people away from God. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone** - Literally the "head of the corner."

**Became** ([1096](#)) (**ginomai**) means He came into existence, not that He did not exist in eternity past but that He was now the Cornerstone of the new entity, the Church, His body. Paul describes the Body of Christ ("God's Household" - Eph 2;19)..

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (Eph. 2:20-21+).

**Corner** (corner stone) ([1137](#))(**gonia** from **gonu** = the knee) means literally corner (of street Mt 6:5); figuratively of the "corners" or extremities of the earth (Rev 7:1); of a building the chief corner stone (Mt 21:42, Mk 12:10; Acts 4:11; 1 Pt 2:7).

**Wikipedia** gives us a good (but secular) definition of a **cornerstone** - The cornerstone (or foundation stone or setting stone) is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure.

The Jews stumbled over the Rock

Ro 9:32-33+ Why? (see Ro 9:30, 31) Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.

1 Cor. 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

However, to those who trust Him, **Jesus Christ** is the **precious Cornerstone** as Peter explained in his first letter

And coming to Him as to a living **Stone** which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "**BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.**" 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve (LIKE THESE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN), **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS**

**BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,”** 8 and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING ([proskomma](#)) AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE ([skandalon](#))”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. (1 Peter 2:4-8+)

**Comment** - Peter is quoting the prophecy in Isaiah 28:16 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a **Stone**, a tested **Stone**, A costly **Cornerstone** for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed (Lxx = kataischuno = disappoint, bring to shame).

#### Related Resources:

- Christ our Rock - a simple study based on the Scriptural occurrences of "Rock" that are descriptive of our Messiah, Christ Jesus.
- [Christ Our Rock of Refuge](#)
- [Christ Our Rock of Refuge-2](#)
- [Christ the Smitten Rock](#)
- [Christ the Stone](#)
- [Rock of Our Salvation](#)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - There was also a tradition that during the building of the second temple (Zerubbabel's temple), that there was a stone sent up from the quarry to the building site. When the builders received the stone, they couldn't figure out where it was supposed to go, so they threw it over the hill to get it out of the way. The tradition goes that when they got near to finishing the building, the builders sent back word to the quarry asking where the corner stone was. When the quarry sent back saying that they had already sent it long ago, the builders realized that this one stone, the most important in the whole building, had been the one thrown away. Peter now says that Jesus was that stone, rejected by the builders, by the leaders of Israel, but who was indeed the very most important stone in all the building of God.

#### A Ready Witness

January 21, 1999

Read: Acts 4:1-20 | Bible in a Year: Exodus 1-3; Matthew 14:1-21

Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. —1 Peter 3:15

Whenever I read the book of Acts, I'm struck by the spontaneity of the witness of the first Christians. Everywhere they went, in every circumstance, they boldly proclaimed Jesus as the true Messiah and the Savior of mankind—and many people believed. After Peter and John were arrested for proclaiming the good news, Peter told the council, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Today many of us find it difficult to witness. Sometimes it takes the simple courage of young people to motivate and encourage us.

Last summer, some teens from our church were conducting 5-day Bible clubs in the area. One hot afternoon the pastor took them out for ice cream. The line was long, so one of the teens took out her "wordless book," which was made up of colors to help explain the gospel to young children. Before long, several children and one mom had heard the story of Jesus from that willing witness.

Peter wrote in his first letter, "Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). Sometimes the best witness is a simple response to a sudden opportunity to talk about Jesus.

Are you ready?

#### PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Do you know how to explain the gospel to others?

Do you regularly look for opportunities to tell others what Christ means to you?

The good news of the gospel is too good to keep to ourselves.

By David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

## EXCURSUS ON CHRIST AS THE STONE, THE ROCK

This picture of Christ as a **Stone** or **Rock** is intimately woven by the Spirit throughout both the Old and New Testaments and makes for a fascinating and encouraging study. This study would make an edifying series in a Sunday School class and would be very enlightening to those who are not that familiar with the Old Testament. Remember to carefully **observe** the **context** to arrive at the most accurate **interpretation**, interrogating each each "base" verse with questions such as... **When** does this take place? **Where** does this take place? **What** are the circumstances surrounding the use of this **metaphor**? **Who** are the "cast of characters"? **Who** used the name Rock? **What** attributes do you discover about the Rock or Stone? **How** should we **apply** this truth to our life today -- not **Can we?** - it is God's Word of Truth and it is **ALWAYS applicable** to our life. The more relevant question is "Will we allow the Spirit to speak the Word of Truth to our innermost being and respond with unhesitating obedience"?... here are the Scriptures...

Genesis 49:24 > Exodus 17:6 > Exodus 33:21 > Numbers 20:11 > Deut 32:4 > 2Samuel 23:3 > Psalm 18:2 > Psalm 18:31 > Psalm 18:46 > Psalm 19:14 > Psalm 27:5 > Psalm 28:1 > Psalm 31:2-3 > Psalm 40:2 > Psalm 42:9 > Psalm 61:2 > Psalm > Psalm 62:2 > Psalm 62:6-7 > Psalm 71:3 > Psalm 78:16 > Psalm 78:20 > Psalm 78:35 > Psalm 81:16 > Psalm 89:26 > Psalm 92:15 > Psalm 94:22 > Psalm 95:1 > Psalm 105:41 > Psalm 114:8 > Psalm 118:22 > Psalm 144:1 > Isaiah 8:14 > Isaiah 17:10 > Isaiah 26:4 > Isaiah 28:16 > Isaiah 30:29 > Isaiah 32:2 > Isaiah 33:16 > Isaiah 44:8 > Isaiah 48:21 > Isaiah 51:1 > Da 2:34 > Da 2:35, 44-46 > Hab 1:12 > Zech 4:7 > Mt 7:24,25 > Mt 16:18 > Mt 21:42 > Mk 12:10 > Luke 20:17 > Acts 4:11 > Ro 9:32-33 > Acts 4:11 > 1Cor 1:23 > 1Cor 10:4 > Ephesians 2:20 > 1Pe 2:4-8 (Which book of the Bible has the most allusions to Rock? Why might that be the case?)

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## CHRIST THE ROCK OUR CORNER STONE

- (1) **To God Jesus is... Smitten Stone** Exodus 17:6, 1 Cor 10:4, cp John 4:13, 14+
- (2) **To Israel Messiah is... Stumbling Stone** 1Pe 2:8 (note), Ro 9:32 (note) Ro 9:33 (note); 1Cor 1:23
- (3) **To the Church the Lord Jesus is... Cornerstone** 1Pe 2:6 (note), Ep 2:20 (note), 1 Cor 3:10, 11, 12 (foundation)
- (4a) **To all the Gentile world powers Jesus the King of kings is the... Stone cut without hands** Da 2:34+
- (4b) **To all the Gentile world powers Jesus the King of kings is the... Stone that grows and fills the earth** Da 2:35+, cf Da 2:44 45+
- (5) **To Israel at Second coming Messiah is... Capstone of the corner** Zech 4:7
- (6) **To unbelievers the Lord Jesus Christ is the... Crushing Stone of judgment** Mt 21:44

**Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."**

KJV Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

- **there is salvation in no one else** Acts 10:42,43; Mt 1:21; Mark 16:15,16; John 3:36; 14:6; 1 Cor 3:11; 1 Ti 2:5,6; Hebrews 2:3; 12:25; 1 John 5:11,12; Rev 7:9,10; 20:15
- **there is no other name under heaven** Acts 2:5; Genesis 7:19; Job 41:11; Ps 45:17; Col 1:23
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JESUS IS THE SAVIOR THE ONLY SAVIOR

### No Other Name

- Before you study this passage, take a moment to worship - [Play this old Don Moen chorus - No Other Name](#) - It will make you want to pause and praise His glorious Name!

This passage is not narrow minded. It is wide open grace! Peter in essence is issuing the Sanhedrin an offer to be repent and lay

hold of the Stone and be saved from eternal punishment and being crushed by the Stone.

This passage is one of the greatest passages in the entire Bible. I agree with **Lenski** who wrote "In plain, literal language Peter presents the fulness of the gospel with its mighty call to salvation." (Ibid)

**John Stott** - We notice the ease with which Peter moves from healing to salvation, and from the particular to the general. He sees one man's physical cure as a picture of the salvation which is offered to all in Christ. His two negatives (no-one else and no other name) proclaim the positive uniqueness of the name of Jesus. His death and resurrection, his exaltation and authority constitute him the one and only Saviour, since nobody else possesses his qualifications. (The Message of Acts)

**And there is salvation in no one else** - Literally this reads in Greek "**the salvation**," (he soteria) the idea being this is the specific salvation of mankind, the Messianic deliverance brought about by the Stone, Jesus Christ, the Nazarene. The Greek is difficult to translate literally into English, but there are actually two words for "**no**" in this first phrase (ou - no, oudeis - no one) and both signify absolute negation. **Lenski** says that what Peter is saying is that "No second, no substitute, no alternate to Jesus exists."

**Salvation** (deliverance, preservation))(4991)(**soteria** from **soter** = Savior in turn from **sozo** = save, rescue, deliver) ([Click here](#) or [here](#) for in depth discussion of the related terms **soter** and **sozo**) describes the physical rescue or deliverance from danger, destruction and peril (Acts 27:34, Heb 11:7). This Jews had been looking for deliverance by the Messiah, but they repeatedly failed to understand that their greatest need was for spiritual deliverance found only in Jesus.

**Salvation** is a broader term in Greek than we often think of in English. Other concepts that are inherent in **soteria** include restoration to a state of safety, soundness, health and well being as well as deliverance from danger of destruction resulting in a state of preservation. One of my favorite uses of soteria is by Paul who describes the glorious Messianic deliverance at the end of this present evil age - "Do this (love Ro 13:10), knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now **salvation** is nearer to us than when we believed.(Ro 13:11+). Are you a sleepy saint? Paul would say "Wake up!" redeem the short time left in this age! (Eph 5:16+).

Other than Jn 4:22, it is surprising that the only Gospel writer to use soteria is Luke. Here are all his uses of soteria in his Gospel and in Acts - Lk. 1:69; Lk. 1:71; Lk. 1:77; Lk. 19:9; Acts 4:12; Acts 7:25; Acts 13:26; Acts 13:47; Acts 16:17; Acts 27:34.

**William Barclay** (who himself may not have been saved! See fascinating article [The Enigmatic William Barclay](#)) writes that "In classical Greek **soteria** means 'deliverance' or 'preservation'. It can be used for a man's safe return to his own home or his own country after an absence and a journey. It can mean a 'guarantee of safety' or a 'security against danger'. In the papyri by far the commonest meaning of soteria is 'bodily health'. For instance, a member of the family writes home, 'Write me a letter about your soteria,' or, as we would say, 'Let me know how you are.' ([New Testament Words](#))

**For** (gar) - **A term of explanation.** What is Peter explaining to the Sanhedrin? This must have been a "tough pill for them to swallow!"

## IN CHRIST ALONE IS HOPE

**There is no other name under heaven** - In other words there is no other name like this in the entire world. Not Confucius. Not Buddha. Not Mohammed. Every other name is absolutely excluded. This verse is "[intolerant](#)" of pretenders, regardless of their name or claim!

Worship Him in spirit and truth:

- Play Robin Mark's [Be Unto Your Name](#).
- [No Other Name - Hillsong](#)

**Related Resources:**

- [Inclusivism vs. exclusivism - what does the Bible say?](#)
- [Is Jesus the only way?](#)
- [What is the way of salvation?](#)
- [With all of the different religions, how can I know which one is correct?](#)
- [Is Jesus really the only way to Heaven?](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said "I am the way and the truth and the life" \(John 14:6\)?](#)
- [Just how narrow is the narrow gate?](#)

- [Why did God make salvation such a narrow path?](#)
- [Why is being a good person not enough to get you into heaven?](#)

**That has been given among men** - We again see God's magnificent grace, His unmerited favor. Peter emphasizes this is a gift **given** to sinful mankind, a gift **given** to a godless world that otherwise has no hope of eternal life. The verb **has been given** is in the perfect tense (and passive = "divine passive" = God the Great Giver) indicating that the **Name** has been given at a point in time and having been given it remains permanently the means of salvation. Indeed, it will remain throughout eternity!

**Barnes on given** - The Lord Jesus is thus uniformly represented as given, or appointed by God for this great purpose, John 3:16, 17:4, 1 Corinthians 3:5, Galatians 1:4, 2:20, Ephesians 1:22, 5:25; 1 Timothy 2:6, Romans 5:15-18, 6:23 and hence Christ is called the "unspeakable gift" of God, 2 Corinthians 9:15. (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

**Among men** recalls a similar declaration in Acts 2:39+ that "the promise is for you and your children (Jews) and for all who are far off (Gentiles)."

**By which we must be saved** - Peter uses the pronoun "**we**" thus joining the two apostles to their opponents, in a sense appealing to them. **We** signifies they all have the same need for salvation.

As someone has well said "The Name of **Jesus** is profanity to the sinner but heaven's password to the saint." Hallelujah!

**Must be saved** - "By which it is fit or proper that we should be saved." If one is to be saved from eternal death to eternal life, it **MUST** be by this way, by this Name. Note the passage does not say "will be saved," or "might be saved," but **MUST BE SAVED**. The verb for **must** is **dei** which speaks of an obligation, an absolute necessity, the logical necessity. As **Lenski** says it is "an absolute fact of necessity on which hangs eternal salvation or eternal destruction. Since salvation is possible only in connection with Jesus, all who desire to be saved **must** embrace His Name."

**Horton** adds a note on the verb **must** - **Must** (Gk. **dei**) is an emphatic word indicating compelling necessity. If we do not find salvation through the name (Person) of Jesus, we shall never find it. Nowhere in the entire world is there another Savior—there never has been and never will be. (Acts: A Logion Press Commentary)

**Albert Barnes** - To show the failure of all other schemes of religion was the great design of the first part of the Epistle to the Romans. By a labored argument Paul there shows Romans 1 that the Gentiles had failed in their attempt to justify themselves; and in Romans 2, Romans 3, that the same thing was true also of the Jews. If both these schemes failed, then there was need of some other plan; and that plan was that of salvation by Jesus Christ. (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

There is no skirting around the Name of Jesus. There is no entrance into the Kingdom of God and the presence of the Father but through the "Door" of the Name Jesus Who clearly declared...

"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, **he will be saved**, and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9)

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6)

Jesus' made these exclusive, "narrow minded" (but open hearted) claims as He warned his Jews at the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount

"**Enter** through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Mt 7:13-14+, cf Pr 14:12)

In one passage Jesus "doubly warned" His Jewish hearers

"Therefore I said to **you that you will die in your sins**; for unless you believe that I am He, **you will die in your sins**." (Jn 8:24)

Jesus could not have stated it more clearly that He is the only Name by which lost men must be saved and yet the lost world sees it as narrow minded. And actually they are correct! Their problem is that they love their sin way too much! Jesus explained their "spiritual pathological condition"

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed (THERE IT IS! THEY DO NOT WANT THEIR SINS EXPOSED!). "But (BLESSED, MERCY-FILLED TERM OF CONTRAST!) he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." (John 3:19-21)

The apostle **John** spoke of the exclusivity of Jesus in his first epistle...

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the **Son of God** does not have the life. (1 Jn 5:12)

**Paul** described the exclusivity of the Gospel this way

For there is one God, and one Mediator (One Who intervenes between two parties to resolve a conflict) also between God and men, **the Man Christ Jesus**, (1 Timothy 2:5)

**Saved** is the verb **sozo** (see [previous note](#)), which Peter had used to describe the lame man's healing in Acts 4:9. Peter uses the same verb **sozo**, to deftly move from the irrefutable evidence of a beggar's physical healing, to the greater miracle of spiritual healing found only in the Name that brought about the physical healing. His logic could not have been more "air tight!"

Luke has already used **sozo** twice in the context of spiritual salvation...

Acts 2:40+ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "**Be saved** (aorist imperative = "Don't Delay! Don't wait until tomorrow for tomorrow may be too late!") from this perverse generation!"

Acts 2:47+ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who **were being** (present tense, passive voice = Salvation is an "*inside*" job wrought by an "*outside*" Power!) **saved**.

Compare other uses of **sozo** - Acts 11:14, 15:11, 16:30, 31

The first use of **sozo** in the entire NT clearly links the **Name Jesus** with spiritual salvation. Matthew recorded the angel's conversation with Joseph "She (Mary) will bear a Son; and you shall call His **name Jesus**, for it is He who will **save** (**sozo**) His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21) In Mt 1:21 **sozo** is equated with deliverance from sins (guilt and power of). Jesus' Name ([Iesous](#)) is a transliteration of Joshua meaning "Jehovah is salvation".

**Boice** is right when he says "'Oh, how the world hates such statements! If you want to be laughed at, scorned, hated, even persecuted, testify to the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ."

**A T Robertson** - It is amazing to see Peter speaking thus to the Sanhedrin and proclaiming the necessity of salvation (*dei sōthēnai*) in the name of Jesus Christ and in no other. If this was true then, it is true today. There is no second (*heteron*) name to go beside that of Jesus in India, China, Japan, or America. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**David Guzik** says "If someone wishes to believe that all are saved or that there are many roads to heaven or that one can take the best of all faiths and blend them into one; fine. Believe so and bear the consequences; but please do not claim this is the teaching of the Bible."

**F F Bruce** -- If the rulers persisted in their repudiation of Jesus, no such deliverance could be hoped for from any other quarter or by the power of any other name . . . The course of duty and wisdom for the rulers was therefore clear; if they refused it and persisted in their present attitude, they would involve their nation as well as themselves in destruction.

**John MacArthur** aptly sums up this great passage writing "The [exclusivism](#) of Christianity goes against the grain of our religiously [pluralistic](#) society. A chapel built at the North Pole in February 1959 by the men of Operation Deep Freeze 4 typifies the prevalent attitude today toward religious belief. The structure contained an altar, over which was hung a picture of Jesus, a crucifix, a star of David, and a lotus leaf (representing the Buddha). On the wall of the chapel was an inscription that read "Now it can be said that the earth turns on the point of faith." Christians preach an exclusive Christ in an inclusive age. Because of that, we are often accused of being [narrow-minded](#), even intolerant. Many paths, it is said, lead to the top of the mountain of religious enlightenment. How dare we insist that ours is the only one? In reality, however, there are only two religious paths: the broad way of works salvation leading to destruction, and the narrow way of faith in the only Savior leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13-14+). Religious people are on either one or the other. Sadly, the Sanhedrin and all who followed them were on the broad road to hell." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

Of course the exclusivity of Acts 4:12 always raises questions - what about infants who die? what about the native who never heard the Name?, what about OT people who never heard the Name of Jesus?, etc See the resources below.

**Related Resources:**

- [What happens to babies and young children when they die?](#)

- [What does the Bible say about the evangelization of children?](#)
  - [Do the souls of aborted babies go to heaven?](#)
  - [What happens to those who have never heard about Jesus?](#)
  - [Can a person be saved through general revelation?](#)
  - [How were people saved before Jesus died for our sins?](#)
- 

## Ian Paisley - The Where Gospel

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."  
Acts 4:10

### Wherein

"Neither is there salvation in any other"

Salvation is in Christ and Christ alone. It is not in the church, in the sacraments, in good works nor in the creed. It is in the living Person of the Son of God alone.

### Wherefore

"for there is none other name under heaven given among men"

Wherefore?

1. Because there is none other name. Jesus means Saviour.
2. Because under heaven you will find none other.
3. Because none other is given. He is the only Saviour.

### Whereby

"we must be saved"

Salvation is not only in Christ but by Christ. He is not only the Life but He is the way to Life. If you are not saved in Him through Him and by Him you will be forever lost. (A Text a Day Keeps the Devil Away)

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Josh McClellan: Are there really many roads to God – the question of religious pluralism -- Commonly asked questions:

- 1) What if someone is sincere in their belief? Would God really send them to hell?
  - 2) Isn't it arrogant for one group to claim that they have the right answer?
  - 3) Is there anything right in other religions?
  - 4) If only one religion is right, why are there so many religions?
  - 5) What about all of the people who never did or never will hear about Jesus? <http://joshmcclellan.wordpress.com/2009/01/03/are-there-really-many-roads-to-god-thequestion-of-religious-pluralism/>
- 

Paul Apple has examples of well known individuals who were confronted with questions about the exclusivity of the Gospel...

## Exclusivity of the Gospel -- Look at waffling statements regarding that exclusivity –

### 1) Larry King interview with Joel Osteen:

KING: But don't you think if people don't believe as you believe, they're somehow condemned?

OSTEEN: You know, I think that happens in our society. But I try not to do that. I tell people all the time, preached a couple Sundays about it. I'm for everybody. You may not agree with me, but to me it's not my job to try to straighten everybody out. The Gospel is called the good news. My message is a message of hope, that's God's [message] for you. You can live a good life no matter what's happened to you. And so I don't know. I know there is condemnation, but I don't feel that's my place. . . . [Later in the interview]

KING: What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

OSTEEN: You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know . . .

KING: If you believe you have to believe in Christ? They're wrong, aren't they?

OSTEEN: Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.

## 2) President George W. Bush – interviewed by prominent news anchor:

News Anchor: Do Christians and non-Christians, do Muslims go to heaven in your mind?

Bush: Yes they do. We have different routes of getting there. . . I don't get to decide who goes to heaven . . .

## 3) President Obama:

President Obama's brand of Christianity leaves enough leeway to cause confusion and concern among evangelicals.

"My particular set of beliefs may not be perfectly consistent with the beliefs of other Christians," Obama told Newsweek. "There's the belief, certainly in some quarters, that if people haven't embraced Jesus Christ as their personal savior, they're going to hell."

In a discussion with Franklin Graham, Mr. Obama explained,

"I do not believe that my mother, who never formally embraced Christianity as far as I know, went to hell." <http://www.standingforgod.com>

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**ONLY ONE WAY** - Many people react negatively to the claim that salvation is found in Christ alone ("There is salvation in no one else!"). "How narrow-minded, exclusive, and arrogant!" is the common charge leveled against Christianity. But two facts are worth remembering: First, this is not something the church arbitrarily decided; it is the specific teaching of Jesus himself (John 14:6). Second, rather than reacting to the phrase, "in no one else," people would be better served to focus on the wonderful promise, "There is salvation." That is the good news of the gospel! God has provided a way for sinners to be forgiven and granted entrance into eternal life! To be sure, it is a narrow way (Luke 13:24), but it is a way nonetheless. If your cruise ship is sinking, it is foolish to remain on deck criticizing the emergency evacuation plan. The wiser course of action is to take a seat in the nearest lifeboat! (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

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## Paul Apple - Tactics of the Enemy:

1) **Threatening the Preachers** -- example of Peter and John we will study today

## 2) Killing the Missionaries

Karen Watson was one of our young missionaries to Iraq. On March 15, 2004, she was killed by unknown assailants. Later an envelope was found that said, "Open in case of death." Inside was a letter that said in part: "Dear Pastor Phil and Pastor Roger, You should only be opening this in the event of death. When God calls there are no regrets. I tried to share my heart with you as much as possible, my heart for the nations. I wasn't called to a place; I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory my reward,. . . The missionary heart: Cares more than some think is wise; Risks more than some think is safe; Dreams more than some think is practical; Expects more than some think is possible. I was called not to comfort or to success but to obedience. . . There is no Joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him. I love you two and my church family. In His care, Salaam, Karen."

## 3) Burning the Bibles

a. We are familiar with the fact that the English Reformer William Tyndale was burned at the stake for his labours in seeking to provide a faithful translation of the Scriptures in the English language. In fact, Rome persecuted the translation and circulation of the Scriptures in all the countries of the European Reformation. The persecution was particularly fierce, however, in England and Scotland. The threat of being put to death as a heretic did not extend merely to translating the Scriptures into the English language, but also even to reading or possessing such a translation or any part of it. As Tyndale translated and published portions of Scripture in English it was eagerly taken up and read. Although many thousands of copies of Tyndale's translation were printed, so fierce was the persecution that only one complete copy of the first edition has survived the systematic destruction ordered by the Romanist clerics. Tyndale knew that the Roman Catholic authorities would go far beyond destroying the printed copies of his translation: 'In burning the New Testament, they did none other thing than I looked for; no more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall so be. Nevertheless in translating the New Testament I did my duty and so do I now...'

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When asked about his impression of "born-again Christians," George Brown, a Presbyterian real estate seller, has this to say: I am not a born-again Christian and don't know any to my knowledge. Christians have talked with me several times but they came across sort of narrow-minded. It made me feel like they were condescending and wouldn't recognize other people's beliefs....In many ways I consider myself a Christian, just not a born-again one. I've already been born once. Why would I want to be born again? I think that too many Christians will not believe that there are other religious faiths in the world. To me that's the greatest shortcoming of the Christian church.



Christians should be something we often are not: humble. D.T. Niles: "Evangelism is one beggar telling another where to find bread."

An illustration from concept of law. 1) Some laws are determined by society - stop lights. 2) Other laws cannot be determined by society - law of gravity. 3) Spiritual laws are inherent, like gravity. a) God has revealed himself to us through Jesus. b) Christ's death is the only way our sins can be paid for.

Out of thousands of religions in world, how can Christians say they are only way to heaven? We are not the only ones - Muslims do as well.

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## Today's The Day

Read: Acts 4:1-14

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

During a television interview, a comedian was asked, "What do you intend to say when you meet your Maker?" The comedian, assuming possible rejection by God and reflecting today's mindset, quipped, "I'll simply ask for a second opinion!"

There was a time when the opinion of an expert in any field was taken as correct and final. But today we often seek the advice of many professionals until we find the one we think is best. This has given us many valuable benefits. But when we are looking for answers about our eternal destiny, only one opinion matters. God has the final answer.

In Acts 4:12, Peter boldly declared that Jesus is the only name given by God through which we can be saved. We stand condemned before a just and holy God because of our sin. But the good news is that His love has found a way to save us. He sent His Son Jesus Christ to take our place of punishment. We need only to acknowledge our sinfulness, ask for His forgiveness, and trust Him to save us. There's simply no other way to heaven than through Jesus and His sacrificial death on the cross.

What will you say when you meet your Maker? If you're unsure, settle it now—for it will be too late then.

It's foolish to say "tomorrow" when God says "today."

By Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## The Only One Who Saves

Read: Acts 4:1-12

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. —Romans 10:13

A book in my library describes a marshal in Napoleon's army who was completely devoted to the emperor. One day the marshal was mortally wounded in battle. As he lay dying in his tent, he called for Napoleon, who soon came.

The officer thought the emperor could save his life. But Napoleon just shook his head and turned away. The book describes the tragic scene: "As the dying man felt the cold, merciless hand of death drawing him irresistibly behind the curtain of the unseen world, he was still heard to shriek out, 'Save me, Napoleon! Save me!'" In the hour of death, that soldier discovered that even Napoleon could not rescue him.

Similarly, when a person seeks deliverance from spiritual death, he finds that no human being has the power to save—no minister of the gospel, no priest, not even those who are great prayer warriors. Only Jesus can save a soul. The Bible says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Have you asked Jesus to save you? If not, do it now! He always answers those who plead for His mercy and put their trust in Him. He is the only One who saves.

There is no other name on earth  
By whom salvation's given  
Save Jesus Christ the Lamb of God,  
God's precious gift from heaven. —Stairs

Christ believed is salvation received.

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## Supermarket Religion

Read: Acts 4:5-12

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

It's amazing how many brands of breakfast cereal are offered by a typical American supermarket. And regardless of the countless ads that extol the virtues of one cereal over another, most brands are comparably nutritious and hunger-satisfying.

Is the salvation of our souls like that? In the supermarket of religions, aren't all beliefs and dogmas spiritually nourishing and true?

Absolutely not! But that's the common conclusion of many people—including some so-called Bible scholars. One theologian who clings to such a radically wrong view of Scripture wrote, "If 'saved' means being united and reconciled with God, then Acts 4:12 is palpably false. There are many authentic roads to God, and no religion holds the franchise for illumination."

The writer's insistence is an outright denial of God's Word, which tells us that Christ's sacrifice for sin is the only way we can gain a right relationship with God. Salvation is available through faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6), and it is absolutely free to anyone who accepts it by faith.

Finding spiritual truth is not like shopping for cereal. There's only one right choice. Make sure you, and those around you, know the difference.

Sincerity is no substitute for truth.

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## Mention the Name

Read: Acts 4:5-20

I am in the Father, and . . . the Father is in me. John 14:10

A church group invited a speaker to address their meeting. "Talk about God," the group leader told him, "but leave out Jesus."

"Why?" the man asked, taken aback.

"Well," the leader explained, "some of our prominent members feel uncomfortable with Jesus. Just use God and we'll be fine."

Accepting such instructions, however, was a problem for the speaker who said later, "Without Jesus, I have no message."

Something similar was asked of followers of Jesus in the days of the early church. Local religious leaders conferred together to warn the disciples not to speak about Jesus (Acts 4:17). But the disciples knew better. "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard," they said (v. 20).

To claim to believe in God and not in His Son Jesus Christ is a contradiction in terms. In John 10:30, Jesus clearly describes the unique relationship between Himself and God: "I and the Father are one"—thus establishing His deity. That is why He could say, "You believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Paul knew that Jesus is the very nature of God and equal with God (Phil. 2:6).

We need not shy away from the name Jesus, for "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus, You are God. Thank You for showing Yourself to us in the Bible and in our lives. You have done so much for us. Help us to share with others what we know of You and have experienced of You.

The name of Jesus is at the heart of our faith and our hope.

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## No Other Name

Read: Isaiah 9:1-7

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

The angel announced to Joseph, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21).

The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Joshua, which is a contraction of two words, Jehovah and Hoshea, which means "God the Savior" or "Savior God."

This is His name. This is the name which is above every name, and the name of the only One who can save us. No one can take His place or approach God without Him.

We respect the names of the patriarchs of the Bible and the godly men and women of more recent history, but everyone will one day bow before Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11). Even His own mother acknowledged her need of a Savior (Lk. 1:47). Jesus alone is the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Yes, we honor godly men and women of the Bible. And we give due respect to those who throughout history have faithfully lived for Christ and proclaimed the gospel. But we are not to worship them or pray to them. Jesus alone is the One whose name means "Savior." He is the Son of God, of whom Isaiah proclaimed, "His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6).

My heart is stirred whene'er I think of Jesus,  
That blessed Name which sets the captive free;  
The only Name through which I find salvation;  
No name on earth has meant so much to me. —Eliason  
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For time and eternity, Jesus is all we need.

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## **A Person Is The Pathway**

Read: John 14:1-6

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

The pilot of a military plane was forced to parachute into a jungle in southeast Asia. How could he possibly find his way out? A local man saw what had happened and came to the pilot's rescue, slashing through the tangled underbrush. The frightened pilot cried out, "Where's the road? Where's the way out?" The rescuer shouted back, "No road! I'm the way! Follow me!" The pilot trusted the man, who led him through the jungle to safety.

Some people have a difficult time accepting similar words spoken by the Lord Jesus. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Critics call this teaching intolerant and divisive. But because the Son of God said it, and the Word of God records it, it is true no matter how much it is challenged. Faith in Jesus is the only way to eternal fellowship with God.

The pathway to God is not found by following a creed, developing moral character, or attending church. It's found by trusting Jesus to forgive our sin and reconcile us to the Father. When we open our hearts to the crucified and risen Savior, we are on the only pathway that will bring us home to God.

Not all roads lead to God,  
As many people claim;  
There's only one true way—  
Christ Jesus is His name. —Sper

No one can bypass Jesus and get to heaven.

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## **Two Ways To God?**

Read: John 14:1-6

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. —John 14:6

In the marketplace of ideas, all vendors have an equal right to sell what they believe. But that doesn't mean all their ideas are

equally right.

Christians proclaim that Jesus is the only way to God not because they are bigots but because they believe it is true. They take at face value His claim that He alone is the true and living way to God.

Many people shrug off the claims of Jesus as the only Savior of the world by saying, "Well, that's all fine and good, but you have your way to God and I have mine." Jesus stood such thinking on its head when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6).

If Jesus' claims are true, they are true for everyone. If they are false, the sooner we are proved wrong and put on the right road the better. As C. S. Lewis put it, "Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

There are no two ways about it. Jesus doesn't ask for our vote as the most appealing candidate for Savior of the world. He simply states His lordship of the universe and demands our allegiance. Does He have yours?

#### THINKING IT OVER

What did Peter say about Jesus in Acts 4:12?

What did John the Baptist say about Jesus? (Jn. 1:29).

What did Jesus say about Himself? (Jn. 14:6).

Christ is the only door into heaven.

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#### Running For Nothing

Read: Romans 4:4-17

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

As my friend Roger Weber started the 2006 Chicago Marathon, he noticed something on the ground. It was a runner's chip—the device each runner puts on his or her shoe to record progress at various timing stations during the race. Apparently, one poor runner would be traversing the next 26.2 miles on foot with nothing to show for it.

Officially, that runner did not run the race. There would be no record of his participation. Even if he had finished the race in record time, it wouldn't have mattered. The folks who organize the race set the rules, and no matter how well someone runs, if the officials say the runner doesn't qualify, that's the way it is.

In one sense, that's also the way it is with all of us. We can run what appears to be a good race by doing good things for others and obeying lots of rules. But when we arrive at the final checkpoint—heaven—and haven't made sure our name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life by putting our faith in Jesus as our Savior, we're disqualified to enter.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Are you trusting in Jesus? If not, you're running for nothing.

It's not what I achieve that qualifies,  
It matters not if I gain wealth or fame;  
The only thing I must be certain of  
Is "Have I put my trust in Jesus' name?" —Hess

If we could earn our salvation, Christ would not have died to provide it.

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#### Nowhere Tickets

Read: John 14:1-6

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

We kept getting tickets to nowhere. We had finished a missions trip to Jamaica and were trying to get home. However, our airline was having problems, and no matter what our tickets said, we couldn't leave Montego Bay. Over and over we heard, "Your flight has been canceled." Even though we had purchased our tickets in good faith, the airline could not back up its promise to transport us to the US. We had to stay an extra day before boarding a plane that could take us home.

Imagine thinking that you are headed for heaven, but discovering that your ticket is no good. It can happen. If you trust the wrong plan, you will get to the gate of eternity but be denied entrance into heaven to live with God forever.

The apostle Peter said there is salvation in no one else but Jesus (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). The only ticket to heaven goes to those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross as payment for their sin.

Some offer other ways. But those tickets are worthless. To make sure you're going to heaven, trust Jesus. He's the only way.

Lord, I know I'm a sinner and cannot save myself. I need You as my Savior. Thank You for dying in my place and rising again. I believe in You. Please forgive my sin. I want to live with You in heaven someday.

Jesus took my place on the cross and gave me a place in heaven.

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### **The Wrong Stuff**

Read: John 14:1-6

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

It was a simple task, but I was in over my head. One of the items on the grocery list was soy. Problem was, I didn't know what kind of soy my wife, Sue, had in mind when she made the list. After searching the aisles and asking the advice of a worker who was stacking soup cans, I grabbed a bottle of soy sauce, placed it in the cart, and went on my way.

Only after I unloaded my bags at home did I discover that Sue didn't want soy sauce. She wanted soy milk for our granddaughter Eliana. I was sincere in my search. I even asked for help and confidently pulled my selection off the shelf. But it didn't do me (or Eliana) any good. I had the wrong stuff.

Sadly, some people are walking through the grocery store of life with "heaven" on their list, but they are not getting what they need. Despite their sincerity and the intended help of others, they grab something that won't get them to heaven because they find a "different gospel" (2 Cor. 11:4).

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). And Peter said, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Trust Jesus. Don't settle for the wrong gospel.

Not all roads lead to God,  
As many people claim;  
There's only one true way—  
Christ Jesus is His name. —Sper

Christ is the only door into heaven.

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### **Straight To Heaven**

Read: John 3:1-8

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name . . . by which we must be saved. —Acts 4:12

An old spiritual warns, "Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain't goin' there." Since heaven is God's dwelling place where His presence and glory are manifested in all their splendor, He has the sovereign right to determine who will be admitted and under what conditions. Any other beliefs about the how and why of admission into heaven are sadly mistaken.

Take, for example, the confidence expressed by a well-known actress. Questioned about her faith, she replied, "I pray. I read the

Bible. It's the most beautiful book ever written. I should go to heaven; otherwise it's not nice. I haven't done anything wrong. My conscience is very clean. My soul is as white as those orchids over there, and I should go straight, straight to heaven."

God alone determines who goes straight to heaven. In the Bible, God's holy Word, He tells us that only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior will be admitted. The apostle Peter said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Self-judgment regarding the purity of one's soul and one's heaven-deserving character is not the criterion. Only God's Word gives us the standard for admission.

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,  
There's no other way but this;  
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,  
If the way of the cross I miss. —Pounds

Christ believed is salvation received and heaven gained.

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### **None Other Name - Biblical Illustrator**

A few persons were collected round a blind man, who had taken his station on a bridge in the City Road, and was reading from an embossed Bible. Receiving from the passers-by of their carnal things, he was ministering to them spiritual things. A gentleman on his way home from the City was led by curiosity to the outskirts of the crowd. Just then the poor man, who was reading from Acts 4., lost his place, and, while trying to find it with his fingers, kept repeating the last clause he had read, "None other name, — None other name, — None..." Some of the people smiled at the blind man's embarrassment, but the gentleman went on his way musing. He had lately become convinced that he was a sinner, and had been trying in many ways to obtain peace of mind. But religious exercises, good resolutions, altered habits, all were ineffectual to relieve his conscience of its load, and enable him to rejoice in God. The words he had heard from the blind man, however, rang their solemn music to his soul — "None other name." When he reached his home and retired to rest, the words, like evening chimes from village towers nestling among the trees, were still heard — "None other name — None other name." And when he awoke, in more joyful measure, like matin bell saluting the morn, the strain continued, "None other name — None other name." The music entered his soul, and he awoke to new life. "I see it all; I see it all! I have been trying to be saved by my own works — my repentance, my prayers, my reformation. I see my mistake. It is Jesus who alone can save me. To Him I will look. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name — none other name — none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

A young French nobleman, a particular friend of Napoleon III., becoming unaccountably gloomy in mind, and threatened with insanity, was urged by the Emperor to apply for advice and treatment to the celebrated Dr. Forbes Winslow. He came to London, and the great doctor, after careful questioning, discovered the character of his disease. He was tormented with a thought — and the thought was "Eternity! where shall I spend it?" This haunted him day and night. Dr. Winslow told him he could not help him. He had sought in the wrong quarter for his cure. "Is there no hope, then!" exclaimed the nobleman in despair. "Yes; listen to me, and I will tell you how I was helped and healed" said Dr. Winslow. "When I was younger I had your complaint; and I tried every resource but the right one. At last I carried my case to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and He gave me health and peace. Go thou, and do likewise." The nobleman was astonished, but he stayed while the doctor read to him the portions of Scripture that had been blessed to himself, and after prayer, light and comfort came to him. The new medicine had cured him.

It is not long since that a prominent business man, when closely pressed by his pastor, who had lately come to the church, replied with a call force which was meant to put an end to further pertinacity: "I am interested in all religious matters; I am always glad to see the ministers when they call; but I have in the years past thought the subject over long and carefully, and I have come to the decision deliberately that I have no personal need of Jesus Christ as a Saviour in the sense you preach." Only two weeks from this interview, the same man was suddenly prostrated with disease; the illness was of such a character as to forbid his conversing with any one, and the interdict from speaking was continued until he was within an hour of death. A solemn moment was that in which a question was put to him, intimating he might talk now if he could — nothing would harm him. The last thing, and the only thing, he said was in a melancholy and frightened whisper, "Who will carry me over the river?" (C. S. Robinson, D. D.)

Standing opposite Fort William, a missionary heard the Mussulmans and Chinamen saying, "There are very many gates into Fort William — there is an hospital gate, a water, gate, and others. Now, Sahib, it is just the same in regard to heaven. Chinamen get in at one gate, Mussulmans in at another, and Hindoos in at another!" "Yes," the missionary said, "that is true; but there is a sentinel at every gate, and every sentinel has the same watchword, and you cannot get into it without that watchword." There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

"You have been a good child to your parents," said the venerable George III. to his daughter, the Princess Amelia; "we have nothing for which to reproach you; but I need not tell you that it is not of yourself alone that you can be saved, and that your acceptance with God must depend on your faith and trust in the merits of the Redeemer." "I know it," replied the dying princess, with gentle resignation, "and I could not wish for a better trust."

**Acts 4:13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.**

KJV Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

- **they were uneducated and untrained men** Acts 2:7-12; Mt 4:18-22; 11:25; John 7:15,49; 1 Cor 1:27
- **they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus** Mt 26:57,58,71,73; Luke 22:52-54,56-60; John 18:16,17; 19:26
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SPIRIT FILLED CONFIDENT SPEECH IS AMAZING

**A T Robertson** says the Greek word for **boldness** means literally "telling it all!" He adds "Actually Peter had turned the table on the Sanhedrin and had arraigned them before the bar of God."

**Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men** - While I have nothing against attending seminary, it has always amazed me that many of the men God has greatly used never had any formal training (e.g., C H Spurgeon, A W Tozer, etc). Peter and John were the antithesis of hesitancy or equivocation. Despite the danger they refused to disguise their doctrine! May their tribe increase! Amen!

The question arises as to how they knew they were uneducated and untrained? Their Galilean accent? Their attire? The fact that they don't mention the rabbinical "seminary" they attended? We cannot say for sure, but we can say their assessment was correct. As Paul would later write

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh (LIKE THESE "WISE" SANHEDRINISTS), not many mighty, not many noble (LIKE THESE ARISTOCRATIC, RICH SADDUCEES); 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. (1 Cor 1:26-29)

**Observed** (present tense - continually seeing)(2334)([theoreo](#) from [theaomai](#) = look at closely, attentively, contemplatively cp **theoros** = a spectator) usually refers to physical sight but can also refer to perception and understanding. It means to gaze with interest and purpose, to carefully examine with emphasis on attention to details. To behold intensely or attentively. Our English word *scrutinize* conveys this sense, for it means to examine closely and minutely.

Peter and John were "ready and willing" to make their convictions known in public without fear of repercussions. Their Spirit enabled boldness staggered their enemies. The Sanhedrin must have recognized that the manner of these two apostles was reminiscent of the manner of their Master, Who had been bold and fearless when He had been brought before their illegal trial on unjust charges. Indeed, the Sanhedrin recognized what the officers sent by the Pharisees (Jn 7:32) to seize Jesus recognized, replying when they returned to the Pharisees without Jesus "**Never did a man speak the way this Man speaks.**" (Jn 7:46) The Spirit of Jesus was speaking through Peter and John.

**Understood** (2638)([katalambano](#)) means to grasp or seize strongly (**kata** - intensifies **lambano** - to hold) or lay hold of (of a boy seized by a demon - Mk 9:18), but in this passage takes on the figurative sense of to "seize with one's mind," to comprehend or to grasp mentally (cf similar uses in Eph 3:18, Acts 10:34, Acts 25:25).

**Robertson** suggests "The rulers recalled Peter and John from having seen them often with Jesus, probably during the temple teaching, etc." (ED: Or at the trial of Jesus at the house of Caiaphas - cf Mt 26:57, 58).

**Uneducated** (62) (**agrammatos** from **a** = without + **gramma** = a letter, then learning) literally is "**unlettered**" or unable to write (write

= grapho). It is used only here in the NT and is not found in the Septuagint. In the present context the "learned" Jewish leaders saw Peter and John as unversed in the learning of the Jewish schools. What they missed was that these men had been to the most prestigious "seminary" in the history of the world, for they had been trained for 3 years, day and night, by the Rabbi Jesus! **Vine** adds that in the Greek secular writings the word **agrammatos** occurred "very frequently in a formula used by one who signs for another who cannot write, which suggests that the rulers, elders and scribes regarded the Apostles as unlettered." This may have been the sense intended by the Sanhedrin, but 7 books in the New Testament by Peter and John clearly counter the thought that they could not write! Another meaning of **agrammatos** in classic literature was used of speaking and meant one was "inarticulate." I hardly think that is apropos in the case of Peter as we see the fruit of 5000 plus souls as a result of his first two sermons. Sadly, Luke records no fruit from Peter's third message, but we will have to wait for heaven to see if any of the hearts of the members of the Sanhedrin were pricked to the point of producing repentance and faith in Jesus Christ the Nazarene.

**Vincent** on **agrammatos** - With special reference to Rabbinic culture, the absence of which was conspicuous in Peter's address.

**Robertson** on **agrammatos** - Unlettered men without technical training in the professional rabbinical schools of Hillel or Shammai. Jesus himself was so regarded (John 7:15, "not having learned letters").

**NET Note - Uneducated** does not mean "illiterate," that is, unable to read or write. Among Jews in NT times there was almost universal literacy, especially as the result of widespread synagogue schools. The term refers to the fact that Peter and John had no formal rabbinic training and thus, in the view of their accusers, were not qualified to expound the law or teach publicly. The objection is like Acts 2:7.

### **No Formal Theological Education No Professional Training**

**Untrained** (2399) (**idiotes** from **idios** = one's own) means literally one in private life, one who lives in private in contrast to those who are engaged in public life or in public office. We would say these are "non-specialists." They are private citizens in contrast to a public officials. And in this context, they are laity as opposed to professional clergy. A common man as opposed either to a man of rank or education (1 Cor. 14:16). It meant uninstructed, unskilled in (1 Cor. 14:23, 24).

**Vine** says **idiotes** is "primarily "a private person" in contrast to a state official, hence, "a person without professional knowledge, unskilled, uneducated, unlearned," is translated "unlearned" in 1 Cor. 14:16, 23, 24, of those who have no knowledge....While **agrammatoi** ("unlearned") may refer to their being unacquainted with rabbinical learning, **idiotai** would signify "laymen," in contrast with the religious officials." Note that although our English word "idiot" is derived from **idiotes**, unlike the meaning of this English word, the Greek word never signifies one who is deficient in natural capacity for understanding. There is one use of **idiotes** in the Lxx of Pr 6:8 but there is no obvious corresponding Hebrew word.

**Vincent** on **idiotes** -- Originally, one in a *private* station, as opposed to one in office or in public affairs. Therefore one without professional knowledge, a layman; thence, generally, *ignorant, ill-informed*; sometimes plebeian, *common*.

**Gilbrant** - Jewish rabbis employed **idiōtēs** as a loanword in the form of *hedyot* (a common man). It became a term of disparagement applied to those common, uneducated people who did not know or study the Law. But in respect to God, everyone was *hedyot*! (Ibid)

**Idiotes** - 5x in 5v - ungifted(1), ungifted man(1), ungifted men(1), unskilled(1), untrained(1). - Acts 4:13; 1 Co. 14:16; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:24; 2 Co. 11:6 = "unskilled in speech"

**Barnes** - As this class of persons is commonly also supposed to be less learned, talented, and refined than those in office, it comes to denote those who are rude and illiterate. The idea intended to be conveyed here is, that these men had not had opportunities of education, (comp. Matthew 4:18-21,) and had not been accustomed to public speaking, and hence they were surprised at their boldness. This same character is uniformly attributed to the early preachers of Christianity. Comp. 1 Corinthians 1:27, Matthew 11:25. The Galileans were regarded by the Jews as particularly rude and uncultivated, Matthew 26:73, Mark 14:70. (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

These two "apples" (Peter and John) did not fall very far from the tree so to speak Jesus elicited a similar reaction from the "elite" John recording "The Jews then were astonished, saying, "**How has this man become learned, having never been educated?**" (John 7:15) Jesus pointed them back to the ultimate authority and empowering and enlightening of His Heavenly Father (Matt. 7:28-29; Luke 20:19-26)

**Paul Apple** - laymen or unprofessional; common, ordinary folks – nothing special in the way of brilliance and debating skill. We have same prejudice against laymen in Christian circles today – people want to protect their turf; Remember it is God who gives out



the credentials and the enablement and the giftedness; Seminaries have their role but we don't want the lack of a degree to be a disqualification for effectively developing and using your spiritual gift. (Amen!)

**Confidence** (boldness) ([3954](#))([parrhesia](#) from **pás** = all + **rhesis** = speech, act of speaking) is literally all speech or speaking all things and thereby conveys the idea of freedom to say all. The basic idea is free and fearless confidence. It is that attitude of openness that stems from freedom and lack of fear. Greeks used **parrhesia** of those with the right to speak openly in the assembly. Ultimately this quality of **confidence** was not Peter's (nor our) natural response to persecution but that which is energized by the indwelling Spirit, emboldening (Spirit filled) believers to openly declare (with great conviction) all that He leads them to speak (cf Jn 12:49, 16:12, Lk 21:12-15).

**Parrhesia** in Acts - Acts 2:29; Acts 4:13; Acts 4:29; Acts 4:31; Acts 28:31

This same word **parrhesia** is used by the apostle Paul in an amazing prayer request he gave to the saints at Ephesus (if he requested it, so should we beloved! If you have an accountability partner ask him to begin to pray this for you and you will do likewise for him. And then wait on God and watch what He will do.)

And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with **boldness** ([parrhesia](#)) the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak **boldly** ([parrhesiazomai](#) verb form of [parrhesia](#)), as I ought to speak. (Eph 6:19-20+)

**They were amazed** -They wondered. They marvelled. **Amazed** is [thaumazo](#) (used of the reaction to Jesus in Lk 20:26) in the imperfect tense (over and over = they began to marvel and kept it up) indicating they continued to be astonished, marveling at this lame man now miraculously cured. **Thaumazo** describes the human response when confronted by divine revelation in some form (Mt 9.33) and denotes incredulous surprise.

**Steven Cole** - The boldness of Peter and John reminded the council of the boldness of Jesus Christ, who also was not trained in their schools. What a wonderful compliment, for people to recognize that we are like Jesus because we have been with Him!...if we're going to be like Jesus, we will be bold witnesses who confront religious hypocrisy and false doctrine. We won't be mean or rude. We will have the fruit of the Spirit, including kindness and gentleness. But we will have spent enough time with Jesus to learn from Him the importance of speaking out when God's truth is being compromised. We will fear God more than we fear social customs or what others think of us. (**ED**: See what happens when we fear men! Pr 29:25).

**Horton** - Jesus had spoken with authority; and now His disciples, trained by Him, spoke with that same authority. Jesus had done miracles as signs; now His disciples were doing the same. Their use of the name of Jesus was not just repeating a formula. (Acts: A Logion Press Commentary)

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Courageous Christianity**— Because the Christian faith is supernatural, we do not need to be clever to understand it or put it into practice. This is the remarkable thing. You may call it the paradox of the Christian message. Here we have the profoundest truth in the world about everything to do with men and women, life, living, death, the cosmos, and God. Yet this truth is never arrived at as the result of intellectual effort. . . So being a Christian does not depend upon us, but entirely upon God and His power and what He has done in the person of His only begotten, dearly beloved Son. You see God at work in these disciples. Look at the way they could stand and reason before this great council and confute them.

**And began to recognize them as having been with Jesus** - Peter was in the courtyard of the high priest Caiaphas, and it was there that he denied His lord three times (Mt 26:57,58,71,73). Peter's miracle was similar to many miracles Jesus performed. Peter's bold declaration sounded like what they had heard from his Master.

**Barnes** adds "They had not been trained in their schools, and their boldness could not be attributed to the arts of rhetoric, but was the native, ingenuous, and manly exhibition of deep conviction of the truth of what they spoke; and that conviction could have been obtained only by their having been with him, and having been satisfied that he was the Messiah. Such conviction is of far more value in preaching than all the mere teachings of the schools; and without such a conviction, all preaching will be frigid, hypocritical, and useless." (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament - [see his notes for 5 qualities that are conducive to successful preaching ministry](#))

Would it be that all God's people were so obvious (so like Jesus) that the lost world would **recognize us as having been with Jesus** (e.g., as in a morning quiet time as we meet privately and personally with Him)!

Beloved, you can mark it down, when we have been with Jesus at least a remnant of those we encounter will be attracted by our boldness. Paul however gives us a proper perspective so that we are not surprised by those who are not attracted by our boldness...

But thanks be to God, Who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. 15 **For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; 16 to the one an aroma from death to death, to the**

**other an aroma from life to life.** And who is adequate for these things (ANSWER = 2 Cor 3:5-6!)? (2 Cor 2:14-16)

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**Illustration** In the Old Testament, when the Israelites were being led by Moses, Moses would go spend time with God in this tent called the tabernacle, and when he would come out, his face would be glowing. (Ex 34:29-30, 33-) You could tell that Moses had spent time with God, he glowed in the dark! Can people see the glow from your time spent WITH Jesus?

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### **Ordinary People**

Read: Acts 4:1-21

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. — Acts 4:13

Bestselling novelist Arthur Hailey (1920-2004) once said of his characters, “I don’t think I really invented anybody. I have drawn on real life.” When readers open a book by the British author, they encounter ordinary people whom the writer has placed in extraordinary situations.

In Acts 4 we find ordinary people, including the fishermen Peter and John, whom God placed in unexpected situations as witnesses to the reality of the risen Christ. These men, who had fled when Jesus was arrested, were now boldly facing threats and punishment for telling others about Him.

Even the authorities who opposed these followers of Jesus were astonished “when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men . . . . And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (v.13).

Most of us are ordinary people in a real life of work, relationships, and everyday circumstances. Our opportunities to demonstrate the reality of Christ may sometimes come disguised as difficulties, as they did for the disciples in Acts.

As ordinary people, we can have an extraordinary impact for Christ if we will trust the Author of our circumstances and rely on the Holy Spirit’s power.

Just what do Christians look like?

What sets their lives apart?

They’re ordinary people

Who love God from the heart. —D. De Haan

God is looking for ordinary people to do extraordinary work.

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### **Without A Bumper Sticker**

Read: Acts 4:5-22

They saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . . And they realized that they had been with Jesus. —Acts 4:13

While driving in rush hour traffic one day, I found myself behind a car with a bumper sticker. It had a yellow smiley face on it with these words: Smile—Jesus Loves You.

Suddenly another car squeezed in front of the “smiley” car, forcing the driver to hit the brakes. With that, he shook his fist angrily, displaying anything but a smiley face. I felt ashamed, until I remembered my own impatience as a driver. The incident reminded me that our actions and reactions, more than the display of a sticker on our car, show whether we know the Lord Jesus.

Acts 4 tells us that Peter and John faced opposition from local rulers, elders, and scribes as they proclaimed the good news of Christ. But their reaction caused their opponents to start thinking. Even though Peter and John were not highly educated, the people marveled at their bold witness and realized that these two men had been with Jesus. There was no need for a bumper sticker on the apostles’ donkey—their words and deeds said it all.

Do you feel too untrained or timid to be a witness for God? If you’ll spend time getting to know Jesus intimately, He’ll empower you to impress others with Himself. You’ll have boldness—without a bumper sticker.

For me 'twas not the truth you taught,

To you so clear, to me so dim;  
But when you came to me, you brought  
A deeper sense of Him. —Clelland

Actions speak louder than bumper stickers.

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## The Source Of Impact

Read: Acts 4:1-13

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. —Acts 4:13

The Nobel Prize is awarded annually to people in a variety of fields who have made an extraordinary impact. Leaders in economics, physics, literature, medicine, and peace are recognized for their contributions. When a person is acknowledged with a Nobel Prize, it is the ultimate affirmation of years of training, effort, education, and sacrifice in pursuit of excellence—investments that are the source of their impact.

We might wish to make a significant impact spiritually in our world, but we wonder, What is the source of spiritual and ministry influence? If we want to make an extraordinary impact for Jesus Christ, what must we invest in?

Christ's first followers were impacted from spending time with Jesus. Israel's religious leaders recognized this. Acts 4:13 tells us, "When [the leaders] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."

Training and education are valuable in the service of the Savior, but nothing can replace time spent in His presence. He is the source of whatever spiritual impact we might have on our world. How much time have you been spending with Jesus—your source of impact?

In the secret of His presence How my soul delights to hide! Oh, how precious are the lessons Which I learn at Jesus' side! —Goreh

To master this life, spend time with the Master.

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## The Tree Frog

Read: Acts 4:5-13

They saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . . And they realized that they had been with Jesus. —Acts 4:13

One summer as my wife and I sat on our porch, we were serenaded by a tree frog who had taken up residence in the dense vine climbing a nearby tree. We finally located him, but not until after a painstaking search, because his coloring blended in perfectly with the vine leaves. As we watched him, we remembered a little chameleon we had seen during a visit to Florida. Like the frog, it took on the color of its surroundings.

People often take on the "color" of their environment too. They can become like the people with whom they associate, whether good or bad.

In our Bible reading today, the religious leaders "saw the boldness of Peter and John" and "realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The disciples had become like Jesus because they had spent time with Him, listened to Him teach, walked and talked with Him, and followed His example.

We too will take on the character of Jesus when we spend time in fellowship with Him, listen to the Holy Spirit speak to us through the Word, obey His teachings, and walk and talk with Him throughout the day.

I wonder, can people tell that we have been spending time with Jesus?

Be like Jesus, this my song,  
In the home and in the throng;  
Be like Jesus, all day long!  
I would be like Jesus. —Rowe

The more time we spend with Christ, the more we become like Christ.

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## Passionate Boldness

Read: Acts 4:5-13

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, . . . they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. —Acts 4:13

A young man was preaching to the passersby in Hounslow, on the outskirts of London, England. Most ignored him, a few ridiculed, and several stopped to listen. But regardless of the reaction of the people, he was undeterred. With a strong voice and clear resolve, he poured out his heart—not with the words of an angry prophet, but with deep concern for the men and women on that street. His eyes, facial expressions, and tone of voice revealed an attitude of compassion, not condemnation. In it all, he boldly shared the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 4, when the church was still new, Peter and John also boldly addressed the people of their generation. The response of the leaders of their day? “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (v.13). That boldness was not the fruit of ministerial training but of much time spent in the presence of the Master. As a result, they had become passionate about what concerned Christ—the eternal destiny of men and women.

That same passionate boldness was on the face of the young man in Hounslow. Do people see it in us?

Will you be bold in your witness By giving lost sinners God's Word? Jesus will honor your service, And sinners will surely be stirred.  
—Bosch

A Christian is an ambassador who speaks for the King of kings.

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**Spurgeon - Communication with Christ the Source of Pulpit Power** - It is related that one of his hearers once asked, "How is it that Mr. Bramwell always has something that is new to tell us when he preaches?" "Why," said the person interrogated, "you see Brother Bramwell lives so near the gates of heaven that he hears a great many things that we don't get near enough to hear anything about."

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## Christ's People -- Imitators of Him C. H. Spurgeon.

**I. WHAT A BELIEVER SHOULD BE** — a striking likeness of Christ. You have read lives of Christ beautifully and eloquently written, but the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. A Christian should imitate Christ in —

**1. His boldness.** This is a virtue nowadays called impudence, but the grace is equally valuable by whatever name it may be called. Christ dealt out honest truth; He never knew the fear of man; He stood out God's chosen, careless of man's esteem. Be like Christ in this. Have none of the time-serving religion of the present day, which only flourishes in a hot-bed atmosphere, a religion which is only to be perceived in good company. No; if ye are the servants of God, be like Jesus Christ; never blush to own your religion; your profession will never disgrace you — take care you never disgrace that.

**2. His loveliness.** The one virtue of boldness will never make you like Christ. There have been some who, by carrying their courage to excess, have been caricatures of Christ and not portraits. Let courage be the brass; let love be the gold. Let us mix the two together, so shall we produce a rich Corinthian metal, fit to be manufactured into the beautiful gate of the temple. The man who is bold may accomplish wonders. John Knox did much, but he might have done more if he had had a little love. Luther was a conqueror — still, if while "he had the fortiter in re he had been also suaviter in modo, he might have done even more good than he did. So, while we too are bold, let us ever imitate the loving Jesus.

**3. His humility.** In England a sovereign will not speak to a shilling, and a shilling will not notice a sixpence, and a sixpence will sneer at a penny. But it should not be so with Christians. We ought to forget caste, degree, and rank, when we come into Christ's church. Recollect, Christian, who your Master was — a man of the poor.

#### 4. His holiness.

### II. WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THIS?

For there is an idea in the world that persons ought to be very religious on a Sunday, but that it does not matter what they are on a Monday. Is there a time when the warrior may unbuckle his armour, and become like other men? No; at all times and in every place let the Christian be what he professes to be. I remember talking with a person who said, "I do not like visitors who come to my house and introduce religion; I think we ought to have religion when we go to the house of God, but not in the drawing-room." I suggested that there would be a great deal of work for the upholsterers in that case. "How is that?" was the question. "Why," I replied, "we should need to have beds fitted up in all our places of worship, for surely we need religion to die with, and consequently every one would want to die there." Aye, we all need the consolations of God at last; but how can we expect to enjoy them unless we obey the precepts of religion during life? Imitate Christ —

**1. In public.** Most of us live in some sort of publicity. The eagle-eyed, argus-eyed world observes everything we do; and sharp critics are upon us. Let us live the life of Christ in public. Let us exhibit our Master, and not ourselves — so that we can say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth "in me."

**2. In the Church.** How many there are like Diotrephes, seeking pre-eminence, instead of remembering that there all men are equal — alike brethren. Let your fellow-members say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

**3. In your houses.** Rowland Hill once said he would not believe a man to be a true Christian, if his wife, his children, the servants, and even the dog and cat were not the better for it.

**4. In secret.** When no eye seeth you except the eye of God, then be ye like Jesus Christ. Remember His secret devotion — how, after laboriously preaching the whole day, He stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from His God. Take care of your secret life.

### III. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THIS?

**1. For their own sakes.** For their honesty's sake, their credit's sake, their happiness' sake; let them imitate Christ.

**2. For religion's sake.** The professor who has not lived up to his profession; the man who eaters the fold, being nought but a wolf in sheep's clothing — such men injure the gospel more than the laughing infidel or the sneering critic.

**3. For Christ's sake.** "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Be like Christ, since gratitude demands obedience; so shall the world know that ye have been with Jesus.

### IV. HOW HE CAN BE SO.

1. You must know Christ as your Redeemer before you can follow Him as your Exemplar.

**2. You must study Christ's character.** There is a wondrous power about that, for the more you regard it the more you will be conformed to it. I view myself in the glass, I go away, and forget what I was. I behold Christ, and I become like Christ.

3. "But," say you, "we have done that, and we have proceeded but little farther." Then correct your poor copy every day. At night recount all the actions of the twenty-four hours, scrupulously putting them under review. When I have proof sheets sent to me of any of my writings, I have to make the corrections in the margin. I might read them over fifty times, and the printers would still put in the errors if I did not mark them.

**4. Seek more of the Spirit of God.** Take the cold iron, and attempt to weld it if you can into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on the anvil, seize the blacksmith's hammer with all your might; let blow after blow fall upon it, and you shall have done nothing. But put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable, then lay it on the anvil, and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may fashion it into any form you may desire. So take your heart, put it into the furnace; there let it be molten, and after that it can be turned like wax to the seal, and fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ. Conclusion: To be like Christ is to enter heaven;

but to be unlike Christ is to descend to hell. Likes shall be gathered together at last, tares with tares, wheat with wheat.

## Acts 4:14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.

KJV Acts 4:14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

- **seeing the man who had been healed standing with them** Acts 4:10; 3:8-12
- **they had nothing to say in reply** Acts 4:16,21; 19:36
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### "THE MAN WHO PREACHED WITH FEET"

Indeed the beggar's healed feet spoke clearly and poignantly, pointing to the Name of Jesus as his Healer! A good lesson for all of us, that every "lame thing" Jesus heals in us should bring glory to His Name. Amen?

**And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them**- The Sanhedrinists backs were against the wall so to speak. They were trapped in an impossible situation. **Lenski** adds "All of this was too much. They were **checkmated**." **MacArthur** adds "Peter's convincing defense that he was, in fact, leading people to God, not away from Him, was unanswerable." (Ibid)

Had this healed beggar been imprisoned with them and been standing before the Sanhedrin during the entire proceeding? Had he been "subpoenaed" as a witness? We cannot state with certainty. But he is before their eyes now. They were fully aware that he had been a cripple at the Beautiful Gate for many years. The fact that he was standing was living proof of the miracle. And by extension proof that there was power in the Name of Jesus and that most importantly there was power for spiritual salvation in His Name.

**Boice**: It is hard to miss that Luke used this word "**standing**" intentionally, for emphasis, and perhaps for irony. He could have said merely, "They could see the man who had been healed with them." But this was a man who previously couldn't stand. And there is this too. The Greek word for "resurrection" is anastasis. The basic part of anastasis, **stasis**, is the word for "**standing**." To the Greek mind resurrected people were people who were standing up, as opposed to dead people, who were lying down. So there was a sense in which this "**resurrected**" man was a symbol of the very gospel Peter and the others were proclaiming.

**Seeing** (present tense)( [991](#))(**blepo**) basically means to have sight, to see, to look at, then to observe, to discern, to perceive with the eye, and frequently implies special contemplation (e.g., often in the sense of "keep your eyes open". **Blepo** especially stresses the thought of the person who sees. Imagine the thoughts coursing through the minds of the Sanhedrin! It is fascinating that Luke used this same verb used to describe Peter and John when they "**fixed his gaze on**" on the lame man (Acts 3:4), a look which resulted in healing!

Luke's uses of **blepo** in Acts - Acts 1:9; Acts 1:11; Acts 2:33; Acts 3:4; Acts 4:14; Acts 8:6; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:9; Acts 12:9; Acts 13:11; Acts 13:40; Acts 27:12; Acts 28:26

**Healed** (perfect tense speaks of permanence)([2323](#))(**therapeuo** > English "therapeutic") means primarily to care for, to wait upon, minister but here of course means to heal, to cure, often used of the effect of Jesus' miracles (Mt. 4:24; 12:10; Mark 1:34; Luke 6:7; 10:9).

**Longenecker**: But even the miraculous is not self-authenticating apart from openness of heart and mind; and the Sadducees' preoccupation with protecting their vested interests shut them off from really seeing the miracle that occurred. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**They had nothing to say in reply** - The irrefutable, mute testimony of the lame man made them mute! As **Robertson** says "Imperfect again, they kept on having nothing to say against it. The lame man was standing there before their eyes as proof of what Peter had said!"

**Reply** ([471](#))(**anteipon** from **anti** = against + **épō** = to say) to **gainsay**, contradict means to speak against (only twice - Lk 21:15, Acts 4:14). In a sense Acts 4:14 is a fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic promise to His disciples that "I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or **refute (anteipon)**." (Lk 21:15+)

**Toussaint**: The apostles were thus experiencing what Christ had promised (Matt. 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15).

## Acts 4:15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another,

KJV Acts 4:15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

- **they had ordered them to leave the Council** Acts 5:34-42; 26:30-32
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SANHEDRIN "STUMPED"

**But when they had ordered them to leave the Council** - What else could they do?

**Ordered** (Commanded) (2753)([keleuo](#)) means to set in motion, urge on. In the NT, used generally with the meaning of to command, order something to be done. Imperfect active, repeatedly ordered. **Louw-Nida** - to state with force and/or authority what others must do—'to order, to command.'

**Council** (supreme court, the Sanhedrin)(4892)([sunedrion](#)) was the highest legal, legislative, and judicial body among the Jews. Luke's uses in Acts will describe the Jewish high courts treatment not only of Peter and John, but later Stephen and then Paul. The Council was an [inveterate](#) enemy of Jesus, His disciples and the Gospel - Acts 4:15; Acts 5:21; Acts 5:27; Acts 5:34; Acts 5:41; Acts 6:12; Acts 6:15; Acts 22:30; Acts 23:1; Acts 23:6; Acts 23:15; Acts 23:20; Acts 23:28; Acts 24:20

**They began to confer with one another** - The imperfect tense pictures them conferring, one with another and another, over and over. This clearly reflected the fact that they were stumped as we might say, or even better that they were "trumped" by the Truth of the Gospel and the resurrection of Jesus proclaimed by these men. As **Robertson** says "With Peter and John and the lame man outside, they began to compare (sun, ballō) notes and take stock of their predicament." Indeed, predicament is a perfect description for it describes a situation from which extrication is difficult, especially an unpleasant or trying one. These religious leaders are figuratively and to some degree literally between the proverbial "Rock (Christ) and a hard place (what to do with His ambassadors proclaiming His message)!" (Origin of "[rock and a hard place](#).")

**Confer** (4820)([sumballo](#) from **sun** = together + **ballo** = throw, cast) literally means to throw together and then "to converse, to carry on a discussion," or "to consider carefully and draw conclusions" about a certain matter. Other meanings include "to dispute" or "quarrel" with someone, even to the point of engaging in a fight. It can even mean "to offer help" to someone. Of Mary pondering the things in her heart, giving them careful thought, think about seriously (Lk 2:19). To have a conference to talk something over (as here in Acts 4:15). To converse with someone (Acts 17:18). To meet or fall in with (Acts 20:14) and in a hostile sense (as meeting in battle) (Lk 14:31). To be of assistance, give assistance, help (Acts 18:28).

**Sumballo** - 6x in 6v - confer(1), conversing(1), helped(1), meet(1), met(1), pondering(1). Lk. 2:19; Lk. 14:31; Acts 4:15; Acts 17:18; Acts 18:27; Acts 20:14. And three uses in Septuagint 2 Chr. 25:19; Isa. 46:6; Jer. 43:3

## Acts 4:16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

KJV Acts 4:16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

- **saying, "What shall we do with these men?"** John 11:47,48; 12:18
- **the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all** Acts 3:9,10; Daniel 8:5,8; Mt 27:16
- **And we cannot deny it.** Acts 6:10; Luke 6:10,11; 21:15
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Saying, "What shall we do with these men?"** - They are [stumped!](#) [Dumbfounded!](#) On [the horns of a dilemma](#) as the next clause explains.

**For** (gar) - Term of explanation. They explain why they are caught in a [dilemma](#).

**The fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem-** This is interesting

because the next verse states they need to limit the spread. **All who live in Jerusalem** were already aware of the miracle! How frustrating this must have been for the Sanhedrin for they had eliminated Jesus (at least that's what they thought!) and yet His influence was still with them and even worse was now spreading!

**Noteworthy** (see also [gnostos](#) in Acts 4:10) = **gnostos** is an adjective describing something clearly recognizable, incontrovertible, something remarkable. Gnostos describes the undeniable miraculous healing which points to the divine Source, which Peter has clearly identified as Jesus. Gnostos is used by Paul to point out that "that which is **known** (gnostos) about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them." (Ro 1:19+). So just as God's general revelation was a "sign" pointing to God, so too His special revelation (in this case the "miraculous sign") was a sign pointing to Jesus, so that as Paul says "they are without excuse." (Ro 1:20+). The members of the Sanhedrin are "without excuse" and in great danger, for denial of the Light of the world, will result in failure to receive further light and will bring them into the place of eternal darkness.

**Miracle** (miraculous sign - used 3x in this chapter - Acts 4:16, 22, 30)([4592](#))([semeion](#) from **sema** = sign) a sign is something that serves as a pointer to aid perception or insight. In the NT a miraculous sign speaks of a token which has behind it a particular message to be conveyed. In other words, in John's Gospel (where semeion is most concentrated) the apostle recorded certain miracles not for the wonder they produced, but because of the message they taught (Jn 20:31). A sign directs attention away from its unusual nature (in this case the lame man) to the meaning and the significance it points to, in this case Jesus. Here in Acts 3-4 the miraculous sign spoke loudly and clearly of visible proof of divine authority and power. Semeion describes a miracle whose purpose is that of attesting the claims of the one performing the miracle to be true, in Acts 3-4 attesting to the power of the Name of Jesus (His Name speaking of His presence and His person)

Luke's uses of **semeion** in Acts -

Acts 2:19; Acts 2:22; Acts 2:43; Acts 4:16; Acts 4:22; Acts 4:30; Acts 5:12; Acts 6:8; Acts 7:36; Acts 8:6; Acts 8:13; Acts 14:3; Acts 15:12

**And we cannot deny it** - Literally they "are absolutely **not** (ou) **able** ([dunamai](#)).<sup>720</sup>" They would love to deny it but they cannot deny it. They had seen this same man for years unable to walk and now he was walking.

**Deny** ([720](#))([arneomai](#)) is the same verb Peter has used twice in his sermon in Acts 3 (Acts 3:13, 14) accusing the Jewish listeners (who had congregated around them because of the miraculous healing) of **disowning** Jesus and delivering Him to be crucified. As Jesus Himself declared it is dangerous to one's destiny to deny Him (see Mt 10:33)! The irony is that these "religious" men who denied the Name, cannot deny the miracle wrought by that Name! How often we hear someone say "Well, if I could just see Jesus perform miracle, I would believe in Him then." That is very unlikely! Miracles do not save. Jesus Alone saves. The religious men who even taught the Word of God, were steadfastly hard-hearted and denied that Jesus was the Savior and Redeemer of Israel and the world. In other words, they believed the miracle, but did not believe the Gospel!

**Acts 4:17 "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this Name."**

KJV Acts 4:17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

- **But so that it will not spread any further among the people** Acts 5:39; Ps 2:1-4; Daniel 2:34,35; Ro 10:16-18; 15:18-22; 1 Th 1:8
- **let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name** Acts 4:21,29,30; 5:24,28,40; 2 Chr 25:15,16; Isa 30:8-11; Jer 20:1-3; Jer 29:25-32; 38:4; Amos 2:12; 7:12-17; Micah 2:6,7; Mt 27:64; John 11:47,48; 1 Th 2:15,16
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **SANHEDRIN TRIES TO GIVE A "GAG ORDER"**

**But so that it will not spread any further among the people**- The miracle of the lame man's healing had already spread to **all who live in Jerusalem** so they sought to "cut their losses" supposedly by impeding the spread throughout the entire land of Israel. The Sanhedrin were in a sense making it "illegal" to preach the Gospel.

**Paul Apple** points out that the situation is "Different if employer warns you against taking work time to distract people and to witness excessively in a way that cuts into your productivity at your job."



**Will not spread** ([dianemo](#) - only here in NT) speaks of a report that will not be spread abroad, circulated, or told everywhere.

**Let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this Name**- They must have been cognizant of the fact that there were 5000+ other disciples in the city that could spread the truth about the miracle performed in the Name of Jesus. If they "cut the head of the snake" so to speak, they must have reasoned this would quieten the other disciples. Of course, in both accounts (the apostles and the disciples) they failed to recognize or understand it was not the power of the men, but the great power of God through His Spirit that would enable the disciples to speak boldly, even in the face of threats against their lives! This spread of the fearless proclamation of the Name which began in Jerusalem was not curtailed by their warnings, but continued to spread throughout the known world and down through the centuries which explains why "[Foxe's Book of Martyrs](#)" ([info](#)) has so many accounts of men and women who died for the sake of the Name above all names! Those martyrs did not heed the warning from the organized religious powers (analogous to the Sanhedrin) not to speak the Name of Jesus and they paid for their boldness with their lives. We will encounter the first "seed" of the martyr Stephen in Acts 7.

**Warn** ([546](#))(**apeilo** from **apeile** = a threat; Lxx - Pr 13:8) means to threaten, to state one's intention to take hostile action against someone in retribution for something done or not done. The root noun **apeile** describes exactly what the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus did "breathing **threats** and murder against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9:1).

**Apeilo** is used 4x in the Septuagint - Ge 27:42, Nu 23:19, Isa 66:14, Nah 1:4 (of God rebuking the sea).

**Peter** has the only other NT use of **apeilo**

And while being reviled, He (JESUS) did not revile in return; while suffering, He **uttered no threats**, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; (1 Peter 2:23+)

Luke's record shows that Peter practiced what he preached in his first letter, following in the steps of His Lord (cf 1 Pe 2:21+) and not casting threats back in the face of the Sanhedrin.

**In this Name** - Notice how here they avoid speaking the Name "Jesus!" This reminds me of America where seldom do we hear the specific Name of "Jesus" unless it is used as a curse word.

**Robertson** observes that "They will not say "Jesus," but make a slur at "this Name," contemptuous use of houtos, though they apparently do mention the name "Jesus" in Acts 4:18." (**Ed**: It is possible they actually say His Name but this could also be Luke's addition.)

**Acts 4:18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.**

KJV Acts 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

- **And when they had summoned them** Acts 5:40
- **They commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus** Acts 1:8; 5:20; Luke 24:46-48
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THREATENING THEM NOT TO PREACH!

**And when they had summoned them** - Luke does not tell us where they were. Were they just outside the Council hall or were they in jail cells? Probably the former as the Sanhedrin undoubtedly wanted to make quick work of the disturbance caused by these men and the Name! The sooner the better!

**They commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus**- This passage is similar to the next chapter which shows that the persecution is escalating. Luke records "They (Acts 5:17, 18+) took his advice ([Gamaliel](#) - Acts 5:34-39+); and after calling the apostles in, **they flogged them** (THIS IS NEW) and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them." (Acts 5:40+).

**Commanded** ([3853](#))(**paraggello** from **para** = beside, alongside, near by, at the side of + **aggello** = to announce) means to hand on or pass on an announcement from one to another who is at one's side, such as to what must be done, usually with the idea of a command or charge. **Paraggello** often was used in the context of a military command and demanded that the subordinate obey the order from the superior (2Ti 4:1-[note](#)) and required unhesitating and unqualified obedience.

**NET Note on in the Name of Jesus** - Once again, the "name" reflects the person. The Person of Jesus and His authority is the "troubling" topic that, as far as the Jewish leadership is concerned, needs controlling.

**F. F. Bruce** makes an interesting observation regarding what the Sanhedrin DID NOT SAY - It is particularly striking that neither on this nor on any subsequent occasion (so far as our information goes) did the Sanhedrin take any serious action to disprove the apostles' central affirmation—the resurrection of Jesus. Had it seemed possible to refute them on this point, how readily would the Sanhedrin have seized the opportunity! Had they succeeded, how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed! (*The Book of the Acts* [Eerdmans], p. 103).

**Illustration** - I think of Eugene, the missionary in Guatemala we've been praying for who was falsely arrested and has been in jail for the last four months. The Prosecuting Attorney had sent men inside the prison to catch him doing anything wrong. Instead, they were transformed by this man "who thought of himself last on every occasion". They were kind enough to keep record of the conversions for us--260. Eugene is being set free!

**Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;**

KJV Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

- **Whether it is right in the sight of God** 2 Cor 4:2; Eph 6:1; 1 Ti 2:3
- **to give heed to you rather than to God** Acts 5:29; Ex 1:17; 1 Kings 12:30; 14:16; 21:11; 22:14; 2 Kings 16:15; 2 Chr 26:16-20; Daniel 3:18; 6:10; Hosea 5:11; Amos 7:16; Micah 6:16; Mt 22:21; Hebrews 11:23; Rev 13:3-10; 14:9-12
- **you be the judge** Ps 58:1; John 7:24; 1 Cor 10:15; James 2:4
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## APOSTLES APPEAL TO THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

**But** - Term of contrast. What's Luke contrasting? The Sanhedrin's order with the apostles' response.

**Peter and John answered and said to them** - As far as we know, Peter and John are still filled with the Spirit and their answer reflects that filling.

**Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge** - The sense of **give heed** is not just to hear ([akouo](#)), but to hear with a desire to obey what is heard. In Acts 5:29 Peter and the apostles make it clear "We must obey God rather than men."

**Paul Apple** - Don't make this appeal lightly; if there is a way to comply with the orders of the government without compromising our obedience to God, we need to comply – no matter how painful or uncomfortable or undesirable – this is a very unique circumstance where Civil Disobedience is not only allowed but Required.

**Longenecker**: But where that established authority stood in opposition to God's authority, thus becoming in effect demonic, the early believers knew where their priorities lay and judged all religious forms and functions from a Christocentric perspective. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Christians are commanded to "be in subjection to the governing authorities" (Ro 13:1) and to "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority," (1 Peter 2:13), with this one exception. God's commands take priority, but they should be His commands, not our extensions of those commands.

Note that if disobedience is required, then one must be prepared to suffer the consequences. For example, one is reminded of the three Hebrew boys who paid a price for disobeying King Nebuchadnezzar...

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. 17 "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and

Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire. (Da 3:16-20+; See also Daniel's disobedience that got him thrown into the lion's den - Da 6:10-23+)

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## Whom Do You Fear?

Read: Acts 4:1-22

We ought to obey God rather than men. —Acts 5:29

A soldier was standing at attention during a parade drill when he waved to one of the spectators. The drill instructor went over to the young man and growled, "Soldier, don't ever do that again!" But as his company marched past the reviewing stand the young man waved a second time. When the troops got back to the barracks, the drill instructor barreled in and barked at the soldier, "I told you not to wave! Aren't you afraid of me?" "Yes sir," the private replied, "but you don't know my mother!"

Peter and John had upset the religious elite in Jerusalem. The city's power brokers were disturbed by the message the two men preached and the miracles they performed. They had to be stopped. Peter and John were arrested and thrown into jail. They had every reason to be afraid. Yet, the next day they stood up to their accusers with great courage. "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge," they boldly said (Acts 4:19). They feared God more than they feared their persecutors.

If we are tempted to be quiet when we should speak up for Christ, we must remember that we can speak and act with conviction because we know our God. His authority outranks all others. He is the One we need to please.

Will you be bold in your witness

By giving lost sinners God's Word?

Jesus will honor your service,

And sinners will surely be stirred. —Bosch

When you fear God, you have nothing else to fear.

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### Acts 4:20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

KJV Acts 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

NLT Acts 4:20 We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."

CSB Acts 4:20 for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

NRS Acts 4:20 for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard."

- **we cannot stop speaking** Acts 2:4,32; 17:16,17; 18:5; Nu 22:38; 23:20; 2 Samuel 23:2; Job 32:18-20; Jer 1:7,17-19; 4:19; 6:11; 20:9; Ezek 3:11,14-21; Micah 3:8; 1 Cor 9:16,17
- **about what we have seen and heard** Acts 1:8,22; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41; 22:15; Luke 1:2; Hebrews 2:3,4; 1 John 1:1-3
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For** ([gar](#)) - Term of explanation. Peter explains why they must heed God, not men.

**We cannot stop speaking** - Literally "we are absolutely **not** able (dunamai) **not** to speak." The **NET Note** adds that the use of a "**double negative**", which cancels out in English, is **emphatic** in Greek. The force is captured somewhat by the English translation "**it is impossible for us not to speak**" although this is slightly awkward."

**Warren Wiersbe** - All of us need to follow Peter's example and make our decisions on the basis of "Is it right?" and not "Is it popular?" or "Is it safe?" However, we must be sure that we have the clear teaching of the Word of God on our side before we take a stand against the authority of the government. Peter knew what the Lord had commanded the believers to do (Acts 1:8), and he was going to obey Him at any cost. (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**About what we have seen and heard** - To speak of what they had seen and heard is an excellent description of a witness. A witness tells what they have seen and heard. The apostles are simply obeying their Lord Who had said

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8+)

**Robertson** - This is defiance of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities that was justified, for the temple authorities stepped in between the conscience and God. Peter and John were willing to pay the price of this defiance with their lives. This is the courage of martyrs through all the ages.

**Testimony of Martin Luther** who was ordered by the Roman Catholic Church to cease preaching a gospel of salvation by grace alone by faith alone but needed to add a works component to that message. Luther responded...

"I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen. "

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**C H Spurgeon** Acts 4:20 "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

1976 What said John Bunyan after he had lain in prison many years simply for preaching the gospel? The magistrates said, "John, we will let you out, but you must promise not to preach again. There are the regular clergymen of the country; what have you, as a tinker, to do with preaching?"

John Bunyan did not say, "Well now, I can see that this preaching is a bad thing. It has got me into prison, and I have had hard work to sell enough laces to keep my wife and that poor blind child of mine. I had better get out of this place and stick to tinkering."

No, he did not talk like that, but he said to the magistrates, "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the grace of God." And when they told him that they would not let him out unless he promised not to preach, he bravely answered, "If I lie in jail till the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never conceal the truth which God has taught me. "

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**Boldness** -

#### **I. COMMANDED —**

1. Against God's enemies (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:6, 9, 18),
2. To keep God's law (Joshua 1:7, 23. 6; 1 Chronicles 22:13).
3. In testifying for Christ (Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:10).
4. In reproving sin (Isaiah 58:1; Micah 3:8).

#### **II. THE SOURCE OF —**

1. Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 7:19).
2. Grace in Christ (2 Timothy 2:1).
3. Distrust of self (2 Corinthians 12:10).
4. Righteousness (Proverbs 28:1).
5. Faith in Christ (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19).
6. Trust in God (Isaiah 50:7).
7. Fear of God (Acts 5:29).
8. Faithfulness to God (1 Timothy 3:13).
9. Prayer (ver. 29; Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16).

#### **III. REASONS FOR.**

1. God only to be feared (Isaiah 8:12-14; Isaiah 51:12, 13; Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 10:31; Hebrews 12:28, 29).
2. Those who trust in God are safe (Proverbs 29:25).
3. God is with His servants (Isaiah 41:10).
4. God can deliver (Daniel 3:17; Jeremiah 1:8).
5. The Lord delivereth (Psalm 34:7).
6. Right requires (ver. 19).
7. God will reward (Revelation 2:10). (S. S. Times.)

**Acts 4:21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;**

KJV Acts 4:21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

- **When they had threatened them further** Acts 4:17; 5:40
- **finding no basis on which to punish them** Acts 5:26; Mt 21:46; 26:5; Luke 19:47,48; 20:6,19; 22:2
- **because they were all glorifying God for what had happened** Acts 3:6-9; Mt 9:33; 15:31; Luke 5:26; 13:17; John 12:18,19
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FRUSTRATED PERSECUTORS

**When they had threatened them further** - As the old saying goes, they were "all bark and no bite." As Acts moves on of course they begin to add "bite" to their "bark," (e.g., Acts 5:40) but not yet at this point. They took no action to back up their threatening words. Luke does not elaborate on the specific nature of the threats but undoubtedly their threats included imprisonment and even death, for we soon see Spirit filled, emboldened Stephen stoned to death for **Threatened** (4324)(**prosapeileo** from **pros** = toward, beside, in addition to + **apeileo** = to threaten) means to threaten "in addition to" or to threaten further indicating that these are threats piled up on previous threats. **Gilbrant - Pros** adds strength, direction, and a sense of impact to the word **apeileo**. Thus the rendering of **prosapeileo** gives an impression of impact and further action, i.e., "to menace or threaten further." (Ibid)

One of Satan's most effective tools against followers of Jesus is to create or incite fear, which is exactly what threats are calculated to do in the hearts of believers. In some of His last words, Jesus warned His disciples, but balanced the warning with an exhortation and an encouragement.

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33)

**They let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them)**- No punishment, because no crime! Their hands were tied politically. As explained below it is not because they did not want to punish them.

**Punish** (2849)(**kolazo** from **kolos** = abridged, shortened, dwarf, "mutilated") means literally to cut short, to lop, to prune or to trim (such as trees). The figurative use conveys the idea of to impede, to curtail, to punish, to chastise or keep in line. The sense of punishing probably comes by way of trimming, i.e., cutting off what is superfluous. Punishment is designed to cut off what is bad or disorderly. It may be, however, that the idea of punishment is originally identical with that of maiming. It is often used of the punishment of slaves. Vincent adds "Originally, to *curtail* or *dock*; to *prune* as trees: thence to *check*, *keep in bounds*, *punish*."

**On account of the people** - It is so sad that the Sanhedrin feared men but did not fear God! They proved the truth of the proverb which teaches "**The fear of man brings a snare** ([moqesh](#)), But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted." (Pr 29:25)

**Because** ([hoti](#)) - Term of explanation

**They were all glorifying God for what had happened** - In Acts 4:16 the miracle of the healing of the lame man (**what had happened**) was apparent to **ALL** who live in Jerusalem. And here they are **ALL** glorifying God. Clearly Peter and John had done an excellent job at "getting out of the way" so to speak, so that any praise that came from the people did not focus on them but on the God Who Alone was **worthy** to receive all praise, glory and honor (cf Rev 5:12+). When praise comes my way, do I also do a good job of directing it to the only One worthy of receiving it? That can be a challenge sometimes (if I am being honest)!

**Glorifying** (1392)(**doxazo** from **doxa** = glory) has a secular meaning of to think, suppose, be of opinion, but generally is not used in this sense in Scripture. Instead **doxazo** means to praise, honor or magnify. The Sanhedrin had sought to shut down the spread of the news about the miraculous healing in the Name of Jesus and to their great frustration not only did that not happen, but the people were attributing the miracle to the power of God and by association were in essence connecting it with the deity of Jesus!

**There is a lesson in this section for all of us who tend to be timid testifiers (most of us)**-- while there will be opposition to the witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that testimony cannot be silenced because ultimately it is not us (we are simply mouthpieces) who are speaking but is the supernatural power of God, for as Paul said "the Gospel is the power ([dunamis](#)) of God for salvation to everyone who believes." (Ro 1:16+).

## Acts 4:22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

KJV Acts 4:22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

- **the man was more than forty years old** Acts 3:2; 9:33; Mt 9:20; Luke 13:11; John 5:5; 9:1
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### NO DENYING THE MIRACLE

For ([gar](#)) - Term of explanation. What is Luke explaining?

**The man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed**- What is the point? This recalls Luke's description of the man in chapter 3...

And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. (Acts 3:2)

Notice (1) lame from birth (2) lame for 40 years (3) every day at the Beautiful gate. And you can rest assured that everyone who frequented the Temple knew this man by sight. The picture of the "before" and "after" was unmistakable.

**Miracle** (miraculous sign - 3x Acts 4:16, 22, 30)([4592](#))(see preceding discussion of [semeion](#))

**Healing** ([2393](#))(**iasis** from **iaomai** = to heal) describes the process or act of healing, of giving a cure, a mode of healing or a remedy. In the present context Luke seems to be emphasizing the physical healing, the lame man's deliverance from physical affliction and now made whole, and restored to bodily health. Three times in the NT - In Luke 13:32 Jesus states He is the One Who is able to "perform cures." And so Jesus is the Healer not only on earth (Lk 13:32), but now in Heaven as Jehovah Rapha (Acts 4:30). **iasis** is used in the great Messianic passage Malachi 4:2 "But for you who fear My name, the **Sun of righteousness** will rise with **healing** (Heb = marpe; Lxx = **iasis**) in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."

**iasis** - 3x in 3v in the NT - Lk 13:32, Acts 4:22, Acts 4:30.

**iasis** - 17v in the Septuagint - Job 18:14; Ps. 38:3; Ps. 38:7; Prov. 3:8; Prov. 3:22; Prov. 4:22; Prov. 15:4; Prov. 16:24; Prov. 29:1; Isa. 19:22; Jer. 8:15; Jer. 8:22; Jer. 14:19; Ezek. 30:21; Nah. 3:19; Zech. 10:2; Mal. 4:2

**iasis** has some great and practical uses in Proverbs - Turning away from evil "will be **healing** to your body And refreshment to your bones." (Pr 3:8) "For they (words and sayings - Pr 4:20) are life to those who find them And **health** to all their body." (Pr 4:22) "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and **healing** to the bones. " (Pr 16:24) "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond **remedy** (healing)." (Pr 29:1).

**Gilbrant** - The Septuagint employs **iasis** to translate several Hebrew words meaning "a healing from diseases or plagues." This literal usage, however, is overshadowed by its figurative use. Figuratively **iasis** is a healing from sin or a cure from some spiritual plight. God alone dispenses healing, as He is the sovereign Lord who shows the need for the cure (see Isaiah 19:22). However, literal and figurative uses often fuse, for ancient man could not separate evil from sickness, thus making physical healing a cleansing from the influences of sin (see Psalm 38:3 [LXX 37:3]). Even in Sirach 38:13ff., where **iasis** is used literally—"There is a time when success lies in the hand of the physician, for they too will pray for the Lord that he should grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life"—the author cannot resist connecting sickness with sin. He continues by saying, "He who sins, may he fall into the care of a physician" (RSV).....Although in every instance the healings are literal in nature, it becomes evident through the ministry of Jesus and His apostles that they extend beyond the mere physical aspect into the spiritual realm. (The Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Had been performed** -

**Acts 4:23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.**

KJV Acts 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and

elders had said unto them.

- **they went to their own companions** Acts 1:13,14; 2:44-46; 12:11,12; 16:40; Ps 16:3; 42:4; 119:63; Pr 13:20; Mal 3:16; 2 Cor 6:14-17
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST "MISSIONARY CONFERENCE"

**When they had been released** - Here the leaders simply set them free, but while the same verb is used to release them in Acts 5:40, they flogged them before they **released them**.

**Released** (630)([apoluo](#) from **apó** = marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association, separation +**luo** = loose) is used often of sending a person or a group away from someone (Mt 14:15, 22, 23, 32, etc). **Apoluo** frequently has the sense of to let loose from or to release (as from under arrest or from another's custody), as in this passage. **Apoluo** was used in secular Greco-Roman writings of discharge from the military, of release from jail. **Apoluo** is used of the release of Barabbas in Acts 3:13.

Luke's uses of **apoluo** in Acts -

Acts 3:13; Acts 4:21; Acts 4:23; Acts 5:40; Acts 13:3; Acts 15:30; Acts 15:33; Acts 16:35; Acts 16:36; Acts 17:9; Acts 19:41; Acts 23:22; Acts 26:32; Acts 28:18; Acts 28:25

**They went to their own companions** - **NET Note** explains that "In context this phrase (**to their own**) is most likely a reference to other believers rather than simply their own families and/or homes, since the group appears to act with one accord in the prayer that follows in Acts 4:24. At the literary level, this phrase suggests how Jews were now splitting into two camps, pro-Jesus and anti-Jesus."

**Robertson on their own** - **Their own** people as in Jn 1:11; Jn 13:1; Acts 24:23; 1 Ti 5:8; Titus 3:14, not merely the apostles (all the disciples). In spite of Peter's courageous defiance he and John told the brotherhood all that had been said by the Sanhedrin. They had real apprehension of the outcome. (Ibid)

**John Phillips** explains that "Peter and John now related to the whole body of believers the experience of the last few hours-the arrest and arraignment and, above all, the arrogance of the Sanhedrin. The battle lines were now clearly drawn. Perhaps the infant church expected nothing less, but probably the believers had hoped that the whole nation would now repent and receive Christ. It was not to be. In the new fellowship of the Body of Christ if one member rejoiced all rejoiced, so the lame man was received with open arms; if one member suffered all suffered, so the bullying of Peter and John became the bullying of all. It was God's first sovereign move to begin separating the church from Judaism, though of course the first Jewish believers had no inkling of that." ([Exploring Acts](#))

**And reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them** - Some missionary reports are "edited" so as to be more "positive" and not frighten the hearers. Peter and John were not of that mindset! They were not apostolic "spin doctors!" And so the apostles held nothing back for fear of inciting fear in the disciples. They were "realists" and gave them a "blow by blow" description of the inception of persecution for the sake of the Name of Jesus. Remember that the leaders "commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the Name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18) and they are already in a sense teaching, because they are teaching the powerful lesson that persecution is guaranteed for those who stand up for the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**Reported** (announced) (518)([apaggello](#) from **apó** = from + **aggello** = tell, declare from **aggelos** = messenger, one who speaks in place of one who has sent him) means to bring a message from any person or place. To announce openly. **Apaggello** is the carrying of tidings or messages from the authentic source.

**Illustration** - Back in the 1500s there was a Scottish Reformer whose name was John Knox. He went to Geneva, Switzerland to study with John Calvin. He particularly consulted with him on matters pertaining to opposing government given over to idolatrous religion. In 1559 he went back to Scotland and boldly declared that the Catholic Mass was idolatry and that all Catholic churches and monasteries should be closed. The queen of Scotland had Knox arrested for treason but the court acquitted him. It was said of John Knox that "He feared God so much that he never feared the face of any man." John Knox had the same commitment to truth that the early church had. He was in the same mold as the Apostles Peter and John. (David Thompson)

**A. W. Tozer** once remarked, "To be right with God has often meant to be in trouble with men."

Tradition records that at the Nicene Council, not more than a dozen of the 318 delegates had not lost an eye or a hand or did not limp upon a leg shrunk in its sinews by the burning iron of torture.

**Paul Apple** sees 3 missionary activities associated with persecution...Each introduced by a short connective clause that gives the reason or occasion for that activity:

- Acts 4:23 "And when they had been released," leads to **Missionary Playback**
- Acts 4:24 "And when they heard this," leads to **Missionary Prayer**
- Acts 4:31 "And when they had prayed," leads to **Missionary Power**

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We need to learn to accept one another, even when someone hurts your feelings. One of the greatest tactics that Satan uses to make us ineffective as a church is to get us upset with each other for the silliest reasons. *Illustration*

There once was an oyster whose story I tell,  
Who found that sand had got under his shell,  
Just one little grain, but it gave him much pain,  
For oysters have feelings although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate the working of Fate,  
Which had led him to such a deplorable state?  
Did he curse out the government, call for an election?  
No; as he lay on the shelf he said to himself

"If I cannot remove it, I'll try to improve it."  
So the years rolled by as the years always do,  
And he came to his ultimate destiny--stew.  
And this small grain of sand which had bothered him so,  
Was a beautiful pearl, all richly aglow.

Now this tale has a moral--for isn't it grand  
What an oyster can do with a morsel of sand;  
What couldn't we do if we'd only begin  
With all of the things that get under our skin.

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**Acts 4:24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM,**

KJV Acts 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

- **And when they heard this** Acts 16:25; Ps 55:16-18; 62:5-8; 69:29,30; 109:29-31; Jer 20:13; Luke 6:11,12; 2 Cor 1:8-11; 1 Th 5:16-18; 2 Ti 4:17,18
- **O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH** 2 Kings 19:15,19; Neh 9:6; Ps 146:5; Isa 51:12; Jer 10:10-12; 32:17
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE UPON HEARING THE THREATS**

This next section is one of the great prayers in the Word of God and could be aptly entitled "Persecution Prompts Prayer." Persecution bound the members closer to one another and they were thereby able to lift up a unified concert of prayer.

**Paul Apple** adds "Notice their response: not wringing their hands in anxiety; not spending time speculating what course of action they should take or how would things play out."

As **R A Torrey** once said "Pray for great things, expect great things, work for great things, but above all—*pray*."

**And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord** - "With one mind, one purpose, by common consent - Acts 1:14; 2:46; 5:12" (Apple) The church heard the threats and their first response was to pray! Prayer was their "holy reflex!" They lifted their voices in united prayer. Don't miss that phrase **with one accord**. A concert of prayer with not one voice "off key!" It was a



harmony of symphonic prayer to God. It was many voices, many hearts, but words ascending as one voice, because of their oneness in Christ wrought by the Spirit of Christ. What a prayer meeting it must have been!

**Stanley Toussaint** points out that "Three movements may be discerned in this prayer of the early church: (1) God is sovereign (Acts 4:24). (2) God's plan includes believers' facing opposition against the Messiah (Acts 4:25-28). (3) Because of these things they petitioned God to grant them boldness to preach (Acts 4:29-30)."

As **David Thompson** says "Prayer is an important part of having victory in the church. Prayer is an important part of surviving various threats and intimidations. Prayer is an important part of having God's Word boldly proclaimed in great power. God does powerful things with a church that prays. We need people to pray and take prayer seriously. This prayer is amazing. It is one of the most dramatic prayers you will ever read in the Scriptures and it shows us how the early church prayed. The actual prayer takes about sixty-five seconds to pray. But when this prayer is over, the power of God is dramatically unleashed. The main emphasis of the prayer is acknowledging the truth of the sovereignty of God."

**MacArthur** - A primary benefit of persecution is that it results in greater solidarity. Persecuted believers naturally draw together for mutual support. Acts 4:32-35 describes the unity that resulted from this initial outbreak of opposition. Perhaps one reason for the disunity in today's church is the lack of external pressure. And the false unity being attempted through compromise and indifference toward true doctrine only compounds the problem by moving the church ever further from the true unity that comes out of confrontation by the truth. If we confronted the world system more aggressively, the resulting opposition would drive us closer together and enrich our mutual dependence. That real unity marked the early believers. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Wiersbe** adds that "Division in the church always hinders prayer and robs the church of spiritual power."

Notice their **pattern of prayer in response to persecution** - Acts 4:24 begins with praise for God's **omnipotence**. Acts 4:25-28 praises God for His **omniscience** (prophecy then fulfillment of Psalm 2). Acts 4:29-30 are specific prayer requests for boldness in view of the real threats against their Lord, against their leaders and against their witness as the Body of Christ. And not only did they ask for courage but for confirmation that the hand of God was with them ("heal and signs and wonders" - Acts 4:29). (See multiple resources on the Hand of the Lord.)

**One accord** (3661) (**homothumadon/homothymadon** from a combination of **homos** = same + **thumos/thymos** = temperament or mind) means with one mind, unity of mind, with one purpose, with unanimous consent, of one accord. In a word it means together. One lexicon says **homothumadon** means "to be of one soul." It speaks of an action agreed upon unanimously (with one impulse) or by common consent.

**Luke** has 10/11 NT uses of **homothumadon** all in Acts (Ro 15:6 is the other use) - Acts 1:14; Acts 2:46; Acts 4:24; Acts 5:12; Acts 7:57; Acts 8:6; Acts 12:20; Acts 15:25; Acts 18:12; Acts 19:29

**Robertson** comments that "A concert of voices as already seen by the word in Acts 1:14; Acts 2:46 and later in Acts 5:12; Acts 7:57; Acts 15:25. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Marshall** says that "The prayer itself reflects the use of the Old Testament, not merely Psalm 2, which is explicitly quoted, but also the prayer of Hezekiah in Isaiah 37:16–20 which has supplied the general pattern and suggested some of the phraseology....As it stands, the prayer indicates that the early church turned to God in time of persecution, found comfort in the fact that he knew beforehand what would happen, and claimed strength to carry on its witness." (TNTC-Acts)

I love **John Stott's** remark "that before the people came to any petition, they filled their minds with thoughts of the divine sovereignty." (What a great pattern for our prayers! Do you begin your prayer time with focus on His sovereignty, His majesty, His power, etc?)

**J Vernon McGee** - Peter and John have been released and have returned to the church, and they give their report. Here we have recorded a great meeting of the early church. I do not believe the spiritual condition of the church has ever again been on such a high level. We find the key to this in their prayer. It is more than a prayer; it is a song of praise. "Lord, Thou art God. Lord, You are the Creator." Friend, I am afraid the church is not sure of that today. The Lord is God. Are you sure that the Lord Jesus is God? Are you? That is most important. The church is not sure today. The church is fumbling; it has lost its power. The church is always talking of methods, always trying this gimmick and that gimmick to attract people. The church in suburbia and the church in downtown are little more than religious clubs. The church is not a powerhouse anymore. (Thru the Bible)

The phrase **MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM** is in all caps signifying it is a direct quotation from the Old Testament.

Exodus 20:11 "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them

and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Psalm 146:6 ("The LORD his God" - Ps 146:5) **Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them**; Who keeps faith forever;

Isa 37:16 "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. **You have made heaven and earth.**

Neh 9:6 You have **made the heavens**, The heaven of heavens with all their host, **The earth** and all that is on it, **The seas and all that is in them**

**Constable** points out that "The opening reference to God's creative power in the disciples' prayer (v. 24) has many parallels in other Old Testament prayers (e.g., Ex. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 146:6; Isa. 42:5; cf. Acts 14:15; 17:24). **This was a common and appropriate way to approach God in prayer, especially when a request for the exercise of that power followed, as it did here** (cf. 2 Ki 19:15-19; Isa. 37:15-20)."

It is worthy noting that even in the face of persecution on the horizon, the prayer of the young church was primarily praise rather than petition. Is this our usual pattern of prayer, or are our prayers heavy on petition and light on praise? Notice also they did not petition God to remove the pressure but to give them power to proclaim the Gospel in the face of persecution.

**Phillips** comments that "They praised God for being what He is; omnipotent, the Creator of the universe. That helped put things into perspective. The Sanhedrin had power; God had almighty power. The Sanhedrin could threaten, but it could not go one step beyond the permissive will of a God who can create suns and stars, seas and shores. We have a God who holds in His hand all the forces of nature, all the factors of space, matter, and time, all the possibilities and eventualities in the universe. The threats of the Sanhedrin seemed rather weak compared with that—rather like a two-year-old with a plastic toy hammer threatening the village blacksmith." ([Exploring Acts](#))

## OUR SOVEREIGN "DESPOT"

In English the word **despot** often has a negative connotation - "a ruler or other person who holds absolute power, typically one who exercises it in a cruel or oppressive way" (Oxford Dictionary). But context is always king in interpretation and clearly in this context **despotes** is used to exalt God's sovereign power as the Creator, Sustainer and Protector of His servant children. If He is in full control of the universe, He is in full control of every persecution, affliction, or trial of His precious children! Do you believe that is true dear suffering, tried saint?

**And said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM-** As described below, the church prayed to God as the **despotes** acknowledging God's supreme power. The Jewish religious rulers who had given them a mandate not to preach the Name of Jesus were the most powerful Jewish force in all of Israel. So the saints go directly to the One Who is the most powerful force in the universe, their Master, the One in control of EVERYTHING! So at the outset of their prayer, they acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God, including His sovereignty over the threats from the Jewish leaders! The point is that the early church had absolute confidence in the absolute power of their God! They recognized that He was greater than any power that could come against them. Do we pray like this when we experience intimidation, threats, etc, against us because of the Name of Jesus?

**Paul Apple** points out the "Importance of maintaining Biblical view of Origins --**Creation** – look at how evolution drains passages like this of their force and application." (See [How do beliefs about creation impact the rest of theology? How does creationism vs. evolution impact how a person views the world?](#))

**Bob Deffinbaugh** writes that "Jeremiah chapter 32 contains a rather striking parallel to our text. Here Jeremiah is thrown into jail by Zedekiah, king of Judah, for prophesying that Jerusalem and Israel would fall to the Babylonians. The people of Israel were instructed not to resist this (32:1-6). In response to all that happened, Jeremiah prayed, beginning with these words: '**Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,**'" (Jeremiah 32:17). The key phrase, based on the fact that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth is this: "**Nothing is too difficult for Thee.**" To Jeremiah and to the other Old Testament saints who found assurance in the fact that God is the Creator, the bottom line was simply that **He who could create all things could also control them.** Here he was predicting the downfall of Jerusalem, just as the apostles would do centuries later. And just as the king was persecuting Jeremiah, so the political and religious authorities were persecuting the apostles. And just as Jeremiah prayed to the Creator of the heavens and the earth, so did the early church. (Bolding added)

[Bob Deffinbaugh](#) - Here are a few references to **God as the Creator** for your consideration and

study: Genesis 1:26; 2:4; 5:1-2; 6:6; 7:4; 14:19,22; Exodus 20:11; 30:17; Deuteronomy 4:32-40; 5:8; 32:6; 2 Kings 19:45; 2 Chronicles 2:12; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 74:17; 89; 104:14, 24, 30; 115:15; 124:8; 134:3; 135:7; 139:13, 15; 146:6; 148:5; Proverbs 8:26; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 13:13; 27:11; 37:16; 40:18-31; 41:20; 42:5-13; 43:1-7, 15; 44:24; 45:4-18; 48:7; 54:5, 16; 57:16, 19; 65:17-18; 66:22; Jeremiah 10:11-12; 27:5; 31:22; 32:2, 17; 51:15; Ezekiel 28:15; Amos 4:13; Habakkuk 3:6; Malachi 2:10; Acts 14:15; 17:24, 26; Revelation 4:11; 14:7.

**Lord** (1203)(**despotes** > English = despot) means one who possesses undisputed ownership and absolute, unrestricted authority, so that the Greeks refused the title to any but the gods. Despot was a term used of a slave owner and describe a person whose power was beyond challenge! The **despotes** was one who has legal control and authority over persons, such as slaves. In the N T **despotes** and **kurios** are used interchangeably of God, and of masters of servants. In Greek culture and terminology, **servant** and **despôtēs** went together. The English word **despot** often congers up a negative image of one who exercises power tyrannically, harshly or abusively, but the Biblical uses do not convey such a connotation. Luke's only other use of despotes is to describe Simeon who after seeing the Messiah declared "Now **Lord**, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word." (Lk 2:29+)

Note that three times the saints use **despotes** when prayerfully entreating the Sovereign God (Lk 2:29+; Acts 4:24; Rev 6:10<sub>±</sub>)

**Despotes** - 10x in 10v in NT - Lk. 2:29+; Acts 4:24; 1 Ti 6:1; 1 Ti 6:2; 2 Ti 2:21; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18; 2 Pet 2:1; Jude 1:4; Rev 6:10)

**G Campbell Morgan** on **despotes** - Of course we have come to associate everything that is iniquitous with the word "**despot**"; but, as a matter of fact, it simply means absolute ruler; it indicates final sovereignty. Later, in the prayer they used the other and commoner word (**kurios** in Acts 4:29), but it opened with a title that indicated their attitude toward God and their conviction concerning Him. The first thought suggested is that of their belief in the sovereignty of God, and they illustrated the meaning of this form of address by saying "Thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is." They were confining them selves for illustration to the things nearest to them, to the very material world which the Sadducees said was everything. The Sadducees denied the existence of any thing beyond that which was patent and self-evident; the heaven, that is, as a firmament with all its mystery; the solid earth; and the sea; these were the sum-total of the things which the Sadducee accepted or believed in. Now these men said, "O Lord, Thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea." Evidently, therefore, to them God was more than all. This was the subcon scious conviction that underlay the prayer of these men. Prayer always begins there. No man ever prays unless he has this conception of God, as being more than the sum-total of the things of which he is conscious in his philosophy and in his science. Underlying this prayer, therefore, -which issued in boldness, was this conviction of the absolute sovereignty of God.

## Acts 4:25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?'

KJV Acts 4:25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

- **who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant** Acts 1:16; 2:30
- **WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?** Ps 2:1-6
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PRAYING THE WORD OF GOD

Notice how their prayer begins with the "**God of Creation**" in Acts 4:24 and is followed with the "**God of Revelation**" in this passage.

**Who by the Holy Spirit**- The Spirit's role in the inspiration of the Scripture, in this case the words of Psalm 2, a clearly Messianic psalm. And so in their prayer, they acknowledge that God's Spirit inspired the written Word. The Spirit is the "Inspirer" and the prophet is the "Instrument."

As **David Thompson** explains "If a church is going to see God do powerful things, it must acknowledge the Scriptures are inspired by God and they are literal. It has been said that "prayer is us talking to God and the Scriptures is God talking to us." When we carefully and prayerfully study the Scriptures, and when we pray consistent with the inspired Scriptures, we may expect to see God do powerful things."

**Wiersbe** on praying God's Word - Their praying was based solidly on the Word of God, in this case, Psalm 2. The Word of God and prayer must always go together (John 15:7). In His Word, God speaks to us and tells us what He wants to do. In prayer, we speak to Him and make ourselves available to accomplish His will. True prayer is not telling God what to do, but asking God to do His will in us and through us (1 John 5:14-15). It means getting God's will done on earth, not man's will done in heaven. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Dynamic Acts).

*Through the mouth of our father David Your servant* - Same word "**Servant**" describes Jesus in Acts 4:27 and is in keeping with OT passages describing David - ( Sa 3:18; 1 Ki 11:34; Ps. 89:3, 20. The Holy Spirit, the Inspirer, spoke **through the mouth of...David**, the instrument. As Peter later explained "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but **men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**" (2 Pe 1:21+)

We saw a similar description of **divine inspiration** in Acts 1:16+...

"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which **the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David** concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

#### Related Resources:

- [What is verbal plenary inspiration?](#)
- [What are the different theories of biblical inspiration?](#)
- [How does the translation process impact the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Bible?](#)
- [Is there proof for the inspiration of the Bible?](#)
- [What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?](#)
- [Who wrote the Bible?](#)
- [Does the inerrancy of the Bible only apply to the original manuscripts?](#)
- [Textual criticism - what is it?](#)

**Servant** (3816)(**pais**; English - pedo- as in pediatrics, pedobaptism) is translated most often as servant but can also refer to young children. Regarding the uses of pais for servant or slave **BDAG** writes this describes "one who is committed in total obedience to another." It is surprising that there are no other NT uses outside of the Gospels and Acts. Nevertheless, the concept of a slave as totally committed to the obedience of another, especially God, is portrayed in the noun **doulos**, which is first used by these new believers in Acts 4:29 to describe their relationship of God. I wonder how many modern believers see themselves as a **doulos** of God? What difference would it make in our lives if we really understood what this meant? (See comments on Acts 4:29).

(1) in reference to age it refers to a child, either boy (Mt 2:16 = "slew all the **male children**"; Mt 17:18; 21:15; Mk 9:21; Lk 2:43 = "the **boy** Jesus"; Lk 9:42; Acts 20:12) or girl (Lk 8:51, 54). **BDAG** adds in this meaning **pais** "normally below the age of puberty, w. focus on age rather than social status."

(2) When **pais** refers to descent, one's own immediate offspring = son, daughter, child (Jn 4.51);

(3) **Pais** can refer to social position = servant (Mt 8:6, 8, 13 = My **servant** is lying paralyzed", slave "boy"; Lk 7.7 = my **servant** will be healed.); as a servant in a ruler's household (Mt 14.2); of "the **children** who were crying out in the Temple and saying "Hosanna to the Son of David." (Mt 21:15)

(4) Of Jesus as the Father's "**Servant**", the Suffering Servant (Mt 12:18, Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). David (Lk 1:69) and Israel (Lk 1:54) also described as God's servants (see below). Believers in Jesus are sons and daughters of God and therefore servants following the example of Jesus.

"BEHOLD, MY **SERVANT** WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. (Mt 12:18, Mt 12:18-21 is quoted from Isa 42:1-4)

**Comment** - Regarding Jesus as the **Servant** of God see the discussion of "**Jesus the Servant Dignified by God**" which discusses the quotes from Isaiah 42:1 and Isaiah 52:13 (Behold, My **Servant** will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.)

**Servant of God** = minister or ambassador of God, called and beloved of God, sent by Him to perform any service, e.g., of **David** ( Lu 1:69; Acts 4:25); of **Israel** (Lk 1:54 [cf. Isa 41:8, 9; 44:1, 2; 45:4), of Jesus the Messiah (Mt 12:18 allusion to Isa 42:1; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30; Isa 49:6; 50:10; 52:13); Of Caleb in Nu 14:24.

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek **pais** is a term which defines human relationships. In relation to family it means "son" or "daughter." In relation to age it means "child" in contrast to adolescent or adult. Xenophon, for example, speaks of separate housing quarters for

young boys (pais), adolescents, and mature men (Cyropaedia 1.2.4). In relation to social position pais means "servant" or "slave." The Hebrew word which is usually translated by pais in the Septuagint is 'evedh. This term refers to a servant or slave. It comes from the verb 'avadh which means "to work." When used in relation to God 'evedh speaks of humility before God. A servant of God is obedient. Thus the Lord declares in Isaiah 52:13, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Pais** - 25x in 24v - boy(4), child(1), children(1), girl's(1), male children(1), men(1), servant(12), servants(2), slaves\*(1), son(1).

Matt. 2:16; Matt. 8:6; Matt. 8:8; Matt. 8:13; Matt. 12:18; Matt. 14:2; Matt. 17:18; Matt. 21:15; Lk. 1:54; Lk. 1:69; Lk. 2:43; Lk. 7:7; Lk. 8:51; Lk. 8:54; Lk. 9:42; Lk. 12:45; Lk. 15:26; Jn. 4:51; Acts 3:13; Acts 3:26; Acts 4:25; Acts 4:27; Acts 4:30; Acts 20:12

**Pais** - over 450x in the Septuagint so only Genesis listed -

Ge 9:25-27; 12:16; 14:15; 18:3,5,7,17; 19:2,19; 20:8,14; 21:25; 22:3,5,19; 24:2,5,9-10,14,17,28,34-35,52-53,57,59,61,65-66; 26:15,18-19,25,32; 30:43; 32:5-6,11,17,19,21; 33:5,8,14; 34:12; 39:14,17,19; 40:20; 41:10,12,37-38; 42:10-11,13; 43:18,28; 44:7,9-10,16-19,21,23-24,27,30-33; 46:34; 47:3-4,19,21,25; 50:2,7

## FUTILITY OF OPPOSITION TO GOD'S PLAN

**WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?**- Why do they quote this OT messianic psalm? The disciples identified with the Psalmist in their present situation in which the "kings of the earth" were opposing their witness (Psalm 2:2), just as they had opposed their Lord. As **MacArthur** says "They derived further comfort from the knowledge that such opposition had been foreseen in the Old Testament."

**Life Application Bible Commentary** - The believers saw the Jewish leaders' opposition to Jesus (and to them, his appointed representatives) as fulfilling this ancient prophecy. What irony that the Jewish rulers themselves took the place of the raging Gentile nations and became the object of the church's mission.

**ESV Study Bible** note - For the Gentiles to rebel against the heir of David is to rebel against the Lord who installed him; it is also to cut themselves off from their only hope of knowing the one true God. In Acts 4:25-26, the early Christians saw the persecution they faced as the same kind of foolish rebellion.

**Marshall** writes that "The unspoken thought is quite clearly that it is futile for men to scheme against a God who not only created the whole universe but also foresaw their scheming....The actual quotation is from Psalm 2:1f.; Ps 2:7 of the same Psalm is cited elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; cf. the echoes of Ps 2:9 in Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15)." (TNTC-Acts)

## SNORTING THROUGH THEIR NOSE AT GOD

**Rage** (5433)(**phruasso**) includes not only anger but opposition, both verbal and nonverbal. It is one of those words that gives a great word picture as it means to make a noise such as snorting, prancing, stamping the ground, neighing, putting on lofty airs, to be tumultuous, noisy, fierce, to rage (WHAT A VIVID PICTURE OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD!). **Vincent** adds "Originally, to *neigh* or *snort* like a horse. Of men, to give one's self haughty airs, and to act and speak insolently. Philo describes a proud man as "walking on tiptoe, and bridling (φρουαττ μενος), with neck erect like a horse." **Vine** is similar - primarily used of "the snorting, neighing and prancing of horses;" hence, metaphorically, of "the haughtiness and insolence of men." The only other Biblical use is in the Septuagint of Psalm 2:1 "Why are the nations in an **uproar** (Heb = **ragash** = to be in tumult, commotion; Lxx = phruasso)."

**Devise** (imagine) ( 3191)(**meletao** from melete = care) means to to practice, to continue to perform certain activities with care. It means to give careful thought to (meditate upon) which is the primary sense in 1 Ti 4:15. **Meletao** is used in a negative sense here in Acts 4:25 where it is used with the adjective **kenos** which together mean to think vain thoughts or to conspire in vain.

**Paul Apple** - Why do we arrogantly think we can oppose God and His plan of salvation? Why do we try to run our lives without submitting to His rule? Why do we think that our rebellion will go unchecked? Why do we rage and waste our life in futile pursuits? The end game is no surprise – God has revealed to us what will take place in the future. We have already seen the fulfillment of the prophecies relating to the first coming of Christ.

**Futile** (2756) (**kenos**) means empty, without content, without result. When kenos is used figuratively as in this passage, it refers to things that are without basis, content, or truth.

While the saints did not quote the entire psalm in their prayer, reading the rest of this great Messianic Psalm is a comforting reminder of the fact that regardless of the persecution and suffering we might endure for the cause of Christ, God wins, the Gospel wins, and God's Messiah will reign...

“Let us tear their (GOD'S) fetters apart (THE RAGING RULERS) And cast away their cords from us!” 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. 5 Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” (cf Isaiah 2:1-4) 7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me (MESSIAH), ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’” (Rev 19:15+) 10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11 Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. **How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!** (Psalm 2:3-12)

**Wiersbe:** Psalm 2 describes the revolt of the nations against the Lord and His Christ. The psalm originally grew out of the crowning of a new king in Israel, perhaps David, but its ultimate message points to the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Whenever a new king was enthroned, the vassal rulers around were required to come and submit to him, but some of them refused to do this. God only laughed at their revolt, for He knew that they could never stand up against His King.

## Acts 4:26 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

KJV Acts 4:26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

- **kings of the earth** Ps 83:2-8; Joel 3:9-14; Rev 17:12-14,17; Rev 19:16-21
- **Against the Lord and His Christ** Rev 11:15; 12:10
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE KINGS AND RULERS CRUCIFY JESUS

**THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER**- What is the early church saying as they quote Psalm 2 in their prayer? They interpret Psalm 2 as related to the crucifixion and acknowledge that the Gentiles (Romans), the people (Jewish laity), kings and rulers (including religious rulers like the high priests Caiaphas and Annas) were involved in crime against the Messiah. However, the final fulfillment of Psalm 2 awaits the final rebellion of kings and rulers against the Messiah which will take place at the end of this present age and is described in the Revelation of John. For example, John records

“The ten horns which you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as **kings** with the beast for one hour. 13 “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. 14 “**These will wage war against the Lamb**, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.” (Rev 17:12-14+)

And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of **kings** and the flesh of **commanders** and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” 19 And I saw **the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army**. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their

flesh. (Rev 19:16-21<sup>±</sup>)

**MacArthur** comments "They had witnessed the initial fulfillment of that prophecy in the **city** of Jerusalem. The final fulfillment is presented in Revelation 17:9-14 and sets the stage for His second coming revealed in Revelation 19:11-21. (Ibid)

**Phillips** has a very insightful comment regarding the early church's used of Psalm 2 - "We (THE MODERN DAY CHURCH) would see its final fulfillment at Armageddon; the infant church saw its initial fulfillment at Calvary. Calvary and Armageddon are two critical phases of the world's planned opposition to Christ. They represent the world's attitude to His two comings. The first time He came, He came in weakness, and God allowed men to do their worst to His Beloved. The next time He will come for war, in all the power of His might. The first time His glory was veiled; the next time it will be displayed in dazzling splendor. The first time they shed His blood; the next time He will shed theirs. Both times the world's opposition is organized, official, and determined." ([Exploring Acts](#))

**The kings of earth** - In the context of Jesus' crucifixion, the kings would include **Herod the tetrarch** (Mt 14:1, Lk 23:8-12+).

**The rulers** - The **rulers** (of the people) describes the members of the Sanhedrin.

Pilate summoned the chief priests and the **rulers** and the people...35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." (Lk 23:13, 35+)

The chief priests and our **rulers** delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. (Lk 24:20+)

**Rulers** (official) ([758](#))([archon](#) from present participle of **archo** = to rule) describes one who has eminence in a ruling capacity, referring to earthly figures (Mt 20:25) such as rulers as here in (Acts 4:26), and later used of Moses (Acts 7:27, 35). It is a mysterious irony that in God's sovereign plan He allowed (in fact He predestined) these earthly **rulers** to take their stand against Jesus Who is "**the ruler of the kings of the earth**" (Rev 1:5<sup>±</sup>) Luke has already used **archon** two times in this chapter Acts 4:5<sup>±</sup> and Acts 4:8<sup>±</sup>.

Luke's uses of **archon** in Acts - Acts 3:17; Acts 4:5; Acts 4:8; Acts 4:26; Acts 7:27; Acts 7:35; Acts 13:27; Acts 14:5; Acts 16:19; Acts 23:5;

**Took their stand** is first in the Greek sentence for emphasis! These various groups presented themselves with hostile intent against Jesus.

**Took stand** ([3936](#))([paristemi](#) from **para** = near, beside + **histemi** = place, set) literally means to place or set beside or near and hence to place at someone's disposal. As **Barnes** says the verb "commonly means, to present one's self, or to stand forth, for the purpose of aiding, counselling, etc. But here it means that they *rose*, or *presented themselves*, to **evince** their opposition. They stood opposed to the Messiah, and offered resistance to Him." In fact, they crucified Him!

It is interesting that the verb **paristemi** while in the present context conveys the picture of the ruler's opposition to Jesus also has another meaning of surrendering or yielding up, which is in fact what Jesus did as He voluntarily gave Himself to the power of these evil kings and rulers. What kind of love is this?

**AGAINST THE LORD** ([kurios](#)) **AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST** - Against Jehovah and against His Anointed, His Messiah. The point is that when they opposed Jesus, they opposed His Father (Jn 10:29, cf Jn 5:17, 8:19, 49) Note the appearance of the "Trinity" in Acts 4:25 (Holy Spirit) and Acts 4:26 (Father and Son).

**Against** is **kata** which **Louw-Nida** says is "a marker of opposition, with the possible implication of antagonism—'against, in opposition to, in conflict with.'" (cf "fleshly lusts" waging war **against** the believer's soul - 1 Pe 2:11, God "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees **against** us" - Col 2:14; "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil **against** you because of Me." - Mt 5:11; "they brought charges to the governor **against** Paul." - Acts 24:1; "If God is for us, who is **against** us?" - Ro 8:31)

**His Christ** - Christ is **Christos** from **chrrio** which means to anoint. Jesus is God's anointed One (Acts 10:37, 38). Luke plays off the Name **Christ** in Acts 4:27 describing the "holy Servant Jesus, Whom You **anointed** (**chrrio**)."

See Uteley's discussion of [Anointing in the Bible](#).

Don't miss the implication of the passages that they quote in this prayer. They are acknowledging that Messiah experienced opposition, so as His followers they should not be surprised that Peter and John experienced opposition. And furthermore they should understand that opposition to Christ would be the lot of all who followed Christ. And in the following verses they express in prayer the truth that while Jesus was opposed, this opposition had been predestined by the hand of the sovereign God (the "despotes," the One with absolute power and authority). While they do not specifically state it, it is clear that the opposition which

brought about their Lord's death and burial was followed by His resurrection, so that His persecution had purpose. Likewise, they could be assured that their persecution would have purpose in God's sovereign plan of redemption. It would not simply be persecution for persecution's sake. It would not be wasted. And based on this realization, this truth prompts them to cry out for power to witness boldly, realizing that the "kings and rulers" will stand against them, just as they had stood against Jesus.

**Bob Utley on the OT quotations** - In Acts Luke records several OT quotes as they relate to the gospel.

1. Joel 2:1–5 in Acts 2:16
2. Psalm 16:8–11 in Acts 2:25
3. Isaiah 52:12–53:12 in Acts 3:18
4. Deut. 18:15–20 in Acts 3:22
5. Gen. 12:3; 22:18 in Acts 3:25
6. Psalm 118:22 in Acts 4:11
7. Psalm 2:1–2 in Acts 4:25–26

Christianity is not something new, but the fulfillment of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17–48).

**Acts 4:27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,**

KJV Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

- **For truly** Mt 26:3; Luke 22:1; 23:1,8-12
- **against Your holy servant Jesus** Acts 4:30; 2:27; 3:14; Job 14:4; 15:14; 25:4; Luke 1:35; Hebrews 7:26
- **whom You anointed** Acts 10:38; Ps 2:2,6; Ps 45:7; Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18; John 10:36
- **both Herod** Mt 2:13-16; Luke 13:31-33; 23:7-12
- **Pontius Pilate** Acts 3:13; Mt 27:2,11-36; Mark 15:1-28; Luke 18:31-33; 23:13-38; John 19:1-24,34
- **along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel** Acts Isa 49:7; 53:3; Zechariah 11:7,8; Mt 20:18,19; 21:28; 23:37; 26:3,4,59-68; Mt 27:25,40-43; Mark 10:33; 14:1,2,43-65; 15:1-3,31; Luke 9:22; Luke 20:13-19; 22:2-6,47-52,63-71; 23:1-5; John 1:11; 18:1-14,19-24; John 18:28-40; 19:15
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE INITIAL FULFILLMENT OF PSALM 2

**For** (gar) - **Term of explanation.** Those praying are elaborating on those who took their stand against the Lord and His Messiah, against God the Father and God the Son. And so the old saying is true - [the enemy of my enemy is my friend](#).

**Truly** (225)([aletheia](#)) is used with the conjunction **epi** in this verse is literally "upon truth" and means "in reality truly, certainly" (Mk. 12:14; Mk. 12:32; Lk. 4:25; Lk. 20:21; Lk. 22:59; Acts 4:27; Acts 10:34). It adds emphasis to what they are saying, that it was a real or actual event.

**In this city** - The holy city of Jerusalem where the Holy One of God was crucified.

**There were gathered together against Your holy** ([hagios](#)) **servant Jesus** ([lesous](#)) - This was a concerted effort by individuals and groups who did not even like each other! So great was their hatred of Jesus and His message that these enemies began united as "friends" on this one occasion.

**Gathered** (4863)([sunago](#)) means assembled, convened, gathered together.

**Against** is **epi** which **Louw-Nida** says is "a marker of opposition in a judicial or quasijudicial context." (E.g., Mt 26:55 = "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would **against** [epi] a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me.")

**Servant** (3816)(see preceding discussion of [pais](#))

Like Peter had done in Acts 3:13 and Acts 3:26, the disciples identify Jesus as the God's **Servant**, using an unusual word for **servant** (not the familiar [doulos](#) as Paul refers to himself in Titus 1:1 "a servant [doulos] of God"). The word Peter uses is the



Greek noun **pais** which is used 25 times in the NT with about 8 uses referring to children and 15 uses referring to a servant and in secular Greek referred to an especially intimate and trusted servant. **Pais** describes several different servants - **David** (Lk 1:69; Acts 4:25; Lxx - 2 Sa 7:5, 8, 19, 20, 21, 25), **Israel** (Lk 1:54) but most importantly **Jesus** the Messiah. The KJV actually translates Acts 3:13 as "His Son Jesus," which is not bad because Jesus is the "Servant Son" (so both translation of **pais** would apply to Him. Most modern versions prefer to translate it as "Servant Jesus.") What would have made Peter's use of **pais** so interesting to his Jewish audience was the fact that there are at least two well-known uses in Isaiah in which he speaks prophetically of the Messiah as God's **Servant**, and in both passages, **servant** is translated **pais**.

**Whom You anointed - Anointed** (5548) is the verb **chrío** the root verb of **Christos** in Acts 4:26. (See also [Messiah - Anointed One](#)) In the OT, priests, kings and prophets were anointed and the Messiah is all three!

**Both Herod and Pontius Pilate - The Kings and Rulers** about which David had prophesied in Psalm 2:2! "Herod Antipas, who was a king of the Jews, mocked Jesus; Pontius Pilate, a Gentile ruler, murdered Jesus. Herod scorned Him because he was angry; Pilate sentenced Him because he was afraid. The motive for rejecting Christ is different, the result is the same." (Phillips [Exploring Acts](#))

**Along with the Gentiles** ([ethnos](#)) and the **peoples of Israel** - Notice that this verse allows for no element of anti-Semitism regarding the death of Christ on the Cross. The point this passage makes is that Gentiles and Jews are ALL guilty. You and I are guilty of putting Christ on the Cross! The Jews and Herod and Pontius Pilate just happened to be the immediate "instruments" God used to bring about His predestined purpose (Acts 4:28).

**Marshall** makes a salient point regarding the inclusion of the phrase **the peoples of Israel** - The inclusion of Israel among the foes of the Messiah marks the beginning of the Christian understanding that insofar as the people of Israel reject the Messiah they cease to be the Lord's people and can be ranked with unbelieving Gentiles.

**Acts 4:28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.**

KJV Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

- **to do whatever Your hand** Acts 2:23; 3:18; 13:27-29; Genesis 50:20; Ps 76:10; Mt 26:24,54; Luke 22:22; Luke 24:44-46; 1 Peter 2:7,8
- **Your purpose predestined to occur** Job 12:13; Pr 21:30; Isa 5:19; 28:29; 40:13; 46:10; 53:10; Eph 1:11; Hebrews 6:17
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GOD'S SOVEREIGN PLAN FROM ALL ETERNITY**

These believers are acknowledging that although kings and rulers came against Jesus, God had long before planned and allowed these events to occur. In so doing they are praising God for His **omniscience**.

**To do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur** - While Acts 4:27 describes man's responsibility for the Crucifixion of Messiah, this verse teaches that the Crucifixion was God's sovereign purpose for His Anointed. Ultimately God is in complete control, even when men seem to be "winning."

**Furneaux** comments that here the disciples "rise above sight and seem to see the Hand which 'shapes men's ends, rough hew them how they will.'"

**Constable** (quoting Neil) says the praying disciples "see in this beginning of persecution the continued fulfilment [sic] of Scripture which had been evident in the Passion of Jesus."

**Your hand** - Speaks of God's power to order all things as He sees fit. [He's Got the Whole World in His Hands!](#) Do you really believe He's got you in His hands? Every trial? Every affliction? Every persecution? Yes, all are in His hands! So let the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus! (Php 4:7+)

**Marshall** comments that "the thought is of **God's mighty hand** which carried out what His will ordained, and this will include not only the plotting of His enemies, which He allowed, but also their frustration and defeat. In view of all this, the church could now bring its own situation before the Lord, confident that this too was under His control. (Acts 4:29)" (TNTC-Acts)

**Related Resource:**

- Multiple resources on the Hand of the Lord

**Purpose (plan)** (1012)(**boule**) when used of man expresses a decision, a purpose or a plan which is the result of inner deliberation. **Boule** is that which has been purposed and planned. **Boule** referring to God is a strong term, indicating His fixed intention, His purpose. That which is His purpose stands utterly fixed and cannot be changed by any action of others. And what was His purpose? To provide a satisfactory substitutionary sacrifice so that sinful men might be redeemed from sin and eternal death and receive righteousness and eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus, God's Sacrificial Lamb (Jn 1:29).

As **Phillips** ([Exploring Acts](#)) says "God turned that horrible scaffold upon which men murdered their Maker into a stage upon which He demonstrated the wonder of His saving grace. God converted that gallows into a means of grace, so that the cross that meant a horrible death to Jesus now means life everlasting to us. Well might we sing with George Bennard (see [history of this hymn](#)):

In the old rugged cross  
 Stained with blood so divine,  
 A wondrous attraction I see;  
 For 'twas on that old cross  
 Jesus suffered and died  
 To pardon and sanctify me  
 ([Play this hymn](#))  
 ([Another vocal](#))

As **MacArthur** says "God is the supreme Historian Who wrote all history before it ever began. Having done their worst, they merely succeeded in fulfilling God's eternal plan (cf. Acts 2:23). As the psalmist expressed it, "The wrath of man shall praise Thee" (Ps. 76:10). (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Bob Utley** - Even before creation God had His plan of redemption (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Acts 2:13; 3:18; 13:29). These enemies of Christ only performed that which God wanted them to perform. Jesus came to die (cf. Mark 10:45)

**Predestined** (4309)(**proorizo** from **pró** = before + **horízo** = determine boundary or limit<-> English word *horizon* - God's boundary between heaven and earth) literally means to designate before, to mark out beforehand, to set the the limits or boundaries in advance of any place or thing. When used of persons, **proorizo** means to put limitations upon that person thus conveys the idea of to determine his destiny. Though **proorizo** meant simply to plan in advance, in the New Testament it attracted a special meaning. Here the idea is a divine decree of God, whereby He determined in advance that something should happen.

**Proorizo** reminds us that God is the supreme historian who wrote all history before it ever began and it is therefore not surprising that proorizo is used only of God in the NT.

Note that the Scripture **never** uses **predestination** to mean that God has predestined certain people to eternal condemnation. A person is condemned because he or she refuses to trust Christ. Stated another way the truth of predestination applies only to saved people. Peter explains the heart of the Father...

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (see note [2 Peter 3:9](#))

**Proorizo** - 6x - Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29; Rom. 8:30; 1 Co. 2:7; Eph. 1:5; Eph. 1:11

**J D Watson** on **prohorizo** - So, just as the horizon marks a limit between what we can and can't see, God has placed us within a certain limit, a certain "horizon." He has put us in a place where we can see and comprehend many things but where many other things are hidden from our sight and understanding, many things that are beyond our horizon. Further, even if we walk closer to the horizon, and understand things we never understood before, a new horizon appears. We will never understand it all this side of heaven. This word graphically demonstrates that God has marked out something for each of His elect; He has marked out a destiny. Much of that destiny is hidden from us; it is beyond the horizon. But, praise be to God, he reveals more of it with each new step we take toward it. What is that destiny? What is that purpose? While we don't know it all, we do know some of it. The primary purpose in God's predestination is "that [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), that is, that Christ might be made preeminent. Scripture reveals that the firstborn always had preeminence. God's ultimate object, therefore, is to glorify His Son. Further, Ephesians 1:5 likewise tells us that God predestined us to adoption (see Jan. 2), making us Christ's brethren. Think of it! Each of us is either a brother or sister to our dear Savior. Then in Ephesians 1:11 we read that we are predestined to an inheritance, that is, spiritual riches, in Christ. That is our destiny. So, we would submit that no controversy is warranted. Predestination is simply God's marking out a destiny befitting His foreknown people. (A Word for the Day)

Acts 4:29 "And now, Lord, **take note** of their threats, and **grant** that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

KJV Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

- **And now, Lord, take note of their threats** Acts 4:17,18,21; Isa 37:17-20; 63:15; Lam 3:50; 5:1; Da 9:18
- **grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence** Acts 4:13,31; 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 20:26,27; 26:26; 28:31; Isa 58:1; Ezek 2:6; Micah 3:8; Eph 6:18-20; Php 1:14; 1 Th 2:2; 2 Ti 1:7,8; 4:17
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A PRAYER FOR FEARLESS BOLDNESS

**And now** - There is a sense of urgency, but not fear. The phrase **and now** speaks of this present situation in which they found themselves. As Robertson phrases it "And as to the now things (the present situation). Only in the Acts in the N.T. (Acts 5:38; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:32; Acts 27:22."

**NET Note** - The request is not for a stop to persecution or revenge on the opponents, but for boldness (great courage) to carry out the mission of proclaiming the message of what God is doing through Jesus.

**Lord** ([kurios](#)) **take note of their threats...grant** - They are speaking to Jesus as if He were present. He is! They were asking Him - Pay attention. Look upon. Consider. Note that while **take note** and **grant** are both **imperatives**, prayer is **never a demand**, but is rather a petition to someone who has the superior power and authority to grant the request.

**Take note** (aorist imperative)([1896](#))([epeidon](#) or [ephorao](#) from [epi](#) = upon + [horao](#) = to look upon) means to fix one's gaze upon, to look at with concern, to regard. To look upon with favor (as childless Elizabeth declared when God took notice and gave her a child - Lk 1:25+). The first use in the Septuagint is Ge 4:4 where "the LORD **had regard** (Heb = shaah - gaze; Lxx = epeidon) for Abel and his offering." Hagar in desperate straits testified "You are the God Who **sees** (Heb = raah ; Lxx = eidon) me." (Ge 16:13NET). And again in the context of adversity/affliction, in Ex 2:25 "God **saw** (Heb = raah ; Lxx = eidon) the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them." In Ps 138:6 Jehovah "**regards** (Heb = raah ; Lxx = eidon) the lowly." And so you can see that this word is often associated with God's awareness of the state of those who are destitute or humble.

Here the apostles beseech God to fix His eyes on the **threats** from the Sanhedrin. It is interesting that they did not say remove the threats. Their desire was that their Father Who is sovereign over everything (including threats) was watching and that assurance was enough for them.

**Epidon** - 25x in 25v in the Septuagint - Ge 4:4; Gen. 16:13; Ex 2:25; 1 Chr. 17:17; Job 21:16; Job 22:12; Job 28:24; Job 34:23; Ps. 5:3; Ps. 22:17; Ps. 31:7; Ps. 35:17; Ps. 54:7; Ps. 92:11; Ps. 112:8; Ps. 113:6; Ps. 118:7; Ps. 138:6; Jer. 48:19; Ezek. 9:9; Obad. 1:12; Obad. 1:13; Mic. 4:11; Mic. 7:10; Zech. 9:1

This petition by the church reminds us of King Hezekiah's cry when threatened by the Assyrians...

"Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God.(Isa. 37:17)

**Threats** ([547](#))([apeile](#)) is a warning that something unpleasant is imminent. Used 3x in the NT - Acts 4:29 (KJV also has use in Acts 4:21); Acts 9:1 of Saul's murderous threats against the young Church, Christ's Body; Eph. 6:9 describing masters not issuing threats against their servants (employees).

**Apeile** - 9x in 9v - Job 23:6; Pr 13:8 ("**rebuke**"); Pr 17:10 ("**rebuke**"); Pr 19:12 ("king's **wrath**"); Pr 20:2 ("terror of a king"); Isa. 50:2; Isa. 54:9; Hab. 3:12; Zech. 9:14. **Gilbrant** comments "With a mere "threat" God dried up the sea (Isaiah 50:2). The poor man is at peace because he "hears no threat against his life" (Proverbs 13:8)." (Ibid)

**Phillips Brooks** said we should "Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks." (Yes, Lord! Amen!)

**Guzik** - This request is consumed with God's cause and glory, not the comfort and advancement of the disciples. They ask for things that will lead to *more* confrontation, not less. ([Commentary](#))

**Grant** - There is a sense of urgency in their use of the aorist imperative. It is not in the sense of commanding God, but "Please do it

now!" is the idea.

**That Your bond-servants** - Not "your apostles," but "**your bond-servants**," your "doulos," - those who recognize that they are not their own but have been bought with a price and whose purpose is to bring glory to Jesus (cf 1 Cor 6:19-20+), those who have no will of their own, but those whose will is encompassed in the will of their Master. Earlier in addressing God as despotes they had acknowledged Him as their Master, the One Who held authority and power over their lives.

**Bond-servants** (1401)(**doulos** from **deō** = to bind) ([Click](#) additional notes on **doulos**) was an individual bound to another in servitude and conveys the idea of the slave's close, binding ties with his master, belonging to him, obligated to and desiring to do his will and in a permanent relation of servitude. A bond-servant is one who is surrendered wholly to another's will and thus devoted to another to the disregard of their own personal interest. In sum, the will of the **doulos** is consumed in the will of the master. It is amazing that these men and women as "baby" believers readily acknowledged that they were **bond-servants** of God! They were saying in essence "Not our will be done, but Thine!" Oh my! What a difference it would make in our churches and our daily lives if we truly, willingly, gratefully acknowledged that we were not our own but belonged to Jesus (Titus 2:14+), as His **possession** (1 Pe 2:9+) having been **redeemed** (lutroo) and **purchased** ([agorazo](#)) by His precious blood (Rev 5:9+, 1 Pe 1:18-19+) off of the slave block where we were slaves to our old master **Sin**!

**May speak Your Word** (see "message" = [logos](#)) **with all confidence** (boldness, fearlessness - see [parrhesia](#)) - Literally, the Greek text reads "with all boldness to go on speaking (present tense) Your Word." **Speak** ([laleo](#)) is in the present tense - they are praying for continual boldness! In context, **Your Word** is refers to "Your Gospel," the Good News found only in the Name of Jesus.

This is fascinating -- Peter and John have exhibited amazing supernatural boldness before the intimidating semi-circle of Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13) and the church still senses the need to pray for boldness! While they are not praying for filling by the Spirit per se, there is a sense in which they are somehow praying for His Presence and power and/or their perception and possession of His enablement for boldness. What a prayer to imitate! God grant us grace to do so! Amen!

Peter and John's prayer reminds us of Paul's prayer (while in prison for the "Word," the Gospel) request to the saints at Ephesus (see [preceding note on Paul's prayer](#) in Eph 6:19-20).

**Robertson** comments that "Peter and John had defied the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:20+, but all the same and **all the more** they pray for courage in deed to live up to their brave words. A wholesome lesson."

**J Vernon McGee** - I am moved by this. This was a great prayer and praise service. They all were in one accord. Probably they did not all pray at one time, but they were certainly "amen"ing the one who led in prayer. Notice that they did not pray for the persecution to cease. They prayed for the courage to endure it! They asked for power and for boldness to speak. That early church was something different, friend, from the church of our day. (Thru the Bible)

**Acts 4:30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the Name of Your holy servant Jesus."**

KJV Acts 4:30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

- **while You extend Your hand to heal** Ex 6:6; Dt 4:34; Jer 15:15; 20:11,12; Luke 9:54-56; 22:49-51
- **signs and wonders take place** Acts 2:22,43; 5:12,15,16; 6:8; 9:34,35,40-42
- **Name of Your holy servant Jesus** Acts 4:10,27; 3:6,16
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DIVINE CONFIRMATION HEALING, SIGNS, WONDERS**

We have already discussed the controversial topic of miraculous healing in the comments on Acts 3, so we will not repeat that discussion. That said, I found the following comment on Acts 4:30 by John Phillips to be very wise and balanced

The apostolic gift included the gift of healing and the gift of miracles. Those sign gifts were especially relevant when the church was still in its infancy, when its testimony was primarily to the Jews, and when it needed such special accrediting from on high. So in the very early days the sign gifts were much in evidence. As time wore on, even in the apostolic age, they became much less prominent. By the end of the apostolic age, with the

witness of the church fully established and with the New Testament Scriptures complete, the sign gifts seem to have disappeared. That does not mean, of course, that God no longer heals in answer to prayer or that God no longer works miracles when His people seek His face. Such an assertion would be foolish, for God is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor is His arm shortened that it cannot save. It is not that healing and miracles have ceased; it is that the gift of healing and the gift of performing miracles has ceased; the sign gifts have ceased. Miracles and healings continue, though now, for the most part, they are of a spiritual rather than of a physical nature. ([Exploring Acts](#))

**John Stott** - As [Alexander](#) pointed out, 'their demand is not now for miracles of vengeance or destruction, such as fire from heaven (Lk 9:54), but for miracles of mercy'. Moreover, the word and the signs would go together, the signs and wonders confirming the word proclaimed with boldness.

**While You extend Your hand to heal** - This is an [anthropomorphism](#) figuratively describing [Jehovah Rapha's](#): healing touch, even as Jesus demonstrated during His time on earth (Mt 8:3 = leprosy cleansed, Mt 8:15 = fever left; Mt 9:29, 20:34 = blind eyes opened; Mt 17:6 = touch and fear departs; etc).

The amazing truth is that in Acts 4:28 **God's hand** was extended to crucify His Son, but here **His hand** is extended to heal the sick (not just physically sick but spiritually sick). Jesus' death over death and hell opened wide the gates of spiritual healing from heaven. (See Multiple resources on the Hand of the Lord)

**Extend** (stretch) ([1614](#)) ([ekteino](#) from **e k** = out + **teino** = to stretch) means stretch out literally, as a gesture with one's hand stretched out. Jesus' stretched His hands out "toward His disciples" (Mt 12:49), to Peter drowning (Mt 14:31), to the leper (Mk 1:41, Mt 8:3, Lk 5:13).

**Robertson** - Luke's favorite idiom, "In the stretching out (articular present active infinitive) the hand as to thee" (accusative of general reference), the second allusion to God's "hand" in this prayer (Acts 4:28).

**To heal** ([2393](#))(see preceding discussion of [iasis](#)).

**Guzik** - It is a snare to long to be used to do miraculous things. It is often rooted in the pride that wants everyone to see just how greatly God can use *me*. I should be delighted in the power of God, not because He has used *me* to display it. ([Commentary](#))

**And signs and wonders take place through the Name of Your holy servant Jesus** - The power is Jesus, His Name representing His Person, power and authority. Such radical supernatural evidence was necessary to confirm to the Jews the truth of the Gospel message which was so radically different from what they had heard all their lives in the synagogues!

**Robertson** - They ask for a visible sign or proof that God has heard this prayer for courage to be faithful even unto death.

**Signs** (miraculous signs - 3x Acts 4:16, 22, 30)([4592](#))(see preceding discussion of [semeion](#))

**Wonders** ([5059](#))([teras](#)) are similar to signs but appeal to the senses, being recognized as a phenomenon that needs to be explained. Something strange, exceptional, causing the beholder to marvel.

**John Stott** has some excellent comments on whether **signs and wonders** are meant to be "everyday" occurrences today - Certainly the thrust of the Bible is that miracles clustered round the principal organs of revelation at fresh epochs of revelation, particularly Moses the lawgiver, the new prophetic witness spearheaded by Elijah and Elisha, the Messianic ministry of Jesus, and the apostles, so that Paul referred to his miracles as '**the things that mark an apostle**'. (2 Cor 12:12) **There may well be situation in which miracles are appropriate today, for example, on the frontiers of mission and in an atmosphere of pervasive unbelief which calls for a power encounter between Christ and Antichrist. But Scripture itself suggests that these will be special cases, rather than 'a part of daily life'....** If, then, we take Scripture as our guide, we will avoid opposite extremes. We will neither describe miracles as 'never happening', nor as 'everyday occurrences', neither as 'impossible' nor as 'normal'. Instead, we will be entirely open to the God who works both through nature and through miracle. And when a healing miracle is claimed, we will expect it to resemble those in the Gospels and the Acts and so to be the instantaneous and complete cure of an organic condition, without the use of medical or surgical means, inviting investigation and persuading even unbelievers. For so it was with the congenital cripple. Peter took his miraculous healing as the text of both his sermon to the crowd and his speech to the Council. Word and sign together bore testimony to the uniquely powerful name of Jesus. The healing of the cripple's body was a vivid dramatization of the apostolic message of salvation. (The Message of Acts).

**Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the Word of God with boldness.**

KJV Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

- **And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken** Acts 2:2; 16:25,26
- **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** Acts 2:4
- **and began to speak** Acts 4:29; Isa 65:24; Mt 18:19,20; 21:22; John 14:12; 15:7,16; 16:23,24; James 1:5
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A HOLY LOT OF SHAKING GOING ON

I realize this dates me, but there was a secular song in 1957 entitled "**Whole Lot of Shaking Going On.**" But in this verse the **shaking** is not produced by man but by God signifying His presence and power. While our God is not likely to shake our room while we are praying, we need to remember that He is still the omnipotent God Who desires to answer the petitions and pleas of His children, especially when we ask Him for holy boldness to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken**- The first result of the prayer was shaking of the place. The number of disciples is uncertain, because the word for "**place**" is topos which can signify a room (? upper room of Acts 1:13+). In any event, it was a supernatural sign of divine presence. It was as if God was saying "I am present and I will answer your prayer." Perhaps the recounting of the imprisonment and Sanhedrin experience of Peter and John had "shaken" some of the disciples, but this divine shaking would have countered any human shaking.

**Pierson** - The presence of the Holy Spirit was so wonderfully manifested that even dead walls felt the power of the Spirit of life – matter responded to spirit.

**Guzik** - This earthquake is recorded in Acts 4:31. Someone pointed out that the significant 1994 Northridge earthquake happened at 4:31 in the morning. This means nothing; we can regard it as simply a curious coincidence, especially because there is nothing particularly inspired about the chapter and verse divisions of modern translations.

**Was shaken** (4531)(**saleuo** from **salos** = wave) means to cause to move to and fro, cause to waver or totter, make to rock. To shake or agitate as by winds or storms. It refers to unexpected and disastrous shaking, of what would be thought to be stable, e.g. earth or sky shake. Here in Acts 4:31 the prayer meeting was literally shaken by the power of God! **Saleuo** describes the effects of the earthquake that occurred while Paul and Silas were in jail at Philippi, the earthquake opening the jail cells, which in turn resulted in the jailer and his family's salvation (Acts 16:26-32+). **Saleuo** described a ship at anchor slipping its mooring in the midst of a heavy wind. The "**seismographic**" movement indicated that God was in their midst. In the OT shaking was one of the signs of a "theophany" (a "God sighting" so to speak) as shown by uses of this verb saleuo in the Septuagint renderings of Exodus 19:18 and Isa 6:4+.

It is interesting that there were signs of the Spirit's presence in Acts 2:3-4+, and here again the shaking is an indication of the Spirit's presence. Of course, this is not **normative**, nor to be expected when we pray and/or we are filled with the Spirit.

**They were all filled with the Holy Spirit** ([See comments on filled with Spirit](#) in Acts 4:8) - This is actually the third time for Peter! It is notable that the effect of the filling was not to cause them to speak in other languages, but to speak boldly. As noted, being filled with the Spirit is manifest in one's speech. Of course as Jesus said out of the mouth comes that which fills the heart, so it should not surprise us if the Spirit of Jesus fills our heart, our speech is much more likely to be Christ-like and God pleasing! Can I ask you (as I look in the mirror) how's your speech been this past week?

**Guzik** - The idea that we are "Spirit filled" only at an experience known as the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" is wrong, though there may be a wonderful and first yielding to the Spirit's power. We must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, and make our "immersion" in Him a constant experience.

**Filled** (4092)(**pimplemi** from the obsolete **pláō** = to fill) to fill, to make full, to complete. The passive voice is "divine passive," indicating the filling is not from themselves but from God, His Spirit. And remember that they are not getting more of the Spirit. He is getting more of them (so to speak). And to be filled with the Spirit, is to be controlled by His supernatural power. They (and we) did not just need a little "help" (implying they could get the spiritual ball rolling, so to speak) but they (like we) need His enablement, His desire and power (Php 2:13+), to work out their salvation in fear and trembling (and not trembling before men but before God in reverential awe and wonder).

- Filled with fear Lu 5:26
- Filled with rage Lu 6:11

- Full of sour wine Jn 19:29
- Filled with the Holy Spirit Acts 2:4
- Filled with wonder & amazement Acts 3:10
- Filled with the Holy Spirit Acts 4:8,31. 9:17, Acts 13:9
- Filled with jealousy Acts 13:45
- Filled with confusion Acts 19:29

**And began to speak the Word of God with boldness** - Imperfect tense means over and over, again and again they were speaking the **Word of God**, in context referring to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And even in the face of Peter and John's persecution for speaking the Word of God and the Name of Jesus, the Spirit supernaturally enabled these believers to be bold rather than fearful that they might also be persecuted.

While some of the uses of **Word of God** may not necessarily be synonymous with the Gospel, several appear to be synonyms. Read the texts and decide for yourself. **Word of God** in Acts = Acts 4:31 Acts 6:2 Acts 6:7 Acts 8:14 Acts 11:1 Acts 13:5 Acts 13:7 Acts 13:44 Acts 13:46 Acts 17:13 Acts 18:11

The disciples had just prayed in Acts 4:29 that they might "**speak Your Word with all confidence.**" And God immediately answered their prayer, giving them filling and boldness to speak His Word. The modern church would do well to frequently pray a similar prayer. Has your church ever prayed this prayer?

**Boldness** (3954) (see previous discussion of [parrhesia](#), "all speech"). This chapter introducing the first **persecution** of the church, prepares for the persecution with a repeated emphasis on Spirit wrought **boldness** (Acts 4:13, Acts 4:29, Acts 4:31). Do you speak the Word of God in boldness? Are you filled with the Spirit? Boldness in this context is a gift of God, empowered by God. That is the kind of boldness the church needs today! We need [Spirit filled churches](#).

**Illustration:** I read that in a certain cotton factory, the management had sign posted everywhere that said, "If you get your threads tangled, Send for the Boss." There was a new worker who got her threads tangled, so she tried to untangle the threads herself. But the more she tried to untangle them, she only made the problem worse. Then when she recognized she couldn't handle the problem, she sent for boss. So, he came in and looked at her tangled threads and asked her why she didn't send for him when her threads first got tangled? She said she had done her best to untangle them herself. But he told her, "No you didn't. Because doing your best was sending for me." Many times we get our Threads Tangled. We can't handle our Problems. The more we try to unknot our tangles, the knottier they get. We just can't handle Our Problems! No matter how small the problem is, we can't handle it; all we can do is mess it up. That's why the Lord says "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." Whenever a problem comes up, Send For the Boss! Are we tuned in to the Report of God's saving activity through His servants? Are we dedicated to praying for the spread of the gospel? Are we speaking the Word of God with power and confidence and boldness?

**God Answers Prayer Specifically** - Shortly after Dallas Theological Seminary was founded in 1924, it almost came to the point of bankruptcy. All the creditors were going to foreclose at noon on a particular day. That morning they met in the president's office for prayer that God would provide. In that prayer meeting was a man by the name of Harry Ironside. When it was his turn to pray, he said, "Lord, we know that the cattle on a thousand hills are Thine. Please sell some of them and send us the money." While they were praying a tall Texan stepped up to the business office and said, "I just sold two carloads of cattle in Ft. Worth. I've been trying to make a business deal but it fell through and I feel compelled to give the money to the seminary. I don't know if you need it or not, but here's the check!" The secretary took the check and knowing how critical things were financially, went to the door of the prayer meeting and timidly tapped. When she finally got a response, the president took the check out of her hand. It was exactly the amount of the debt! When he looked at the name, he recognized the cattleman and turning to Dr. Ironside said, "Harry, God sold the cattle!"

## When People Pray

Read: Acts 4:23-31

When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken. —Acts 4:31

Peter and John were in danger. The religious leaders in Jerusalem opposing the gospel had warned them to cease their missionary efforts (Acts 4:18). When the apostles reported this to the other believers, they immediately held a prayer meeting.

What happened next is thrilling. The believers first praised God. Then they asked for boldness that they might continue the work. The results were dramatic. The house shook, and the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. They boldly witnessed, enjoyed

spiritual unity, and gave unselfishly to those in need (vv.31-37).

I've never felt a building shake at a prayer meeting, but I have seen God's power at work. When I've tried to help repair a broken marriage or a divided church, I've asked those involved to pray. Sometimes they refused. Other times, though, they mumbled carefully worded prayers. Those meetings failed.

But occasionally someone would pray in earnest. Almost immediately the atmosphere would change. Confession and forgiveness soon replaced charges and countercharges.

When we pray sincerely, praising God and seeking His glory, great things happen. Prayer must always come from the heart.

Dissension's fuse is easy to ignite—  
It fuels our anger, yet it dims the light;  
Help us, we pray, to humbly seek Your Name,  
And in pride's place restore the Spirit's flame. —TLG

Sincere intercession is the key to God's intervention.

By Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 4:32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.**

KJV Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

- **And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul** Acts 1:14; 2:1; 5:12; 2 Chr 30:12; Jer 32:39; Ezek 11:19,20; John 17:11,21-23; Ro 12:5; 15:5,6; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12-14; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:2-6; Php 1:27; Php 2:1,2; 1 Peter 3:8
- **not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own** Acts 2:44-46; 1 Chr 29:14-16; Luke 16:10-12; 1 Peter 4:11
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SPIRIT WROUGHT CORPORATE CONSCIOUSNESS

**Marshall** comments that "The sequel to the previous story (Acts 4:23-31) begins at Acts 5:12. The temporal gap between the two incidents involving the arrest of the apostles for preaching is neatly filled by the account of another event from these early days of the church. We are given a further summary of the inner life of the church and a contrast is drawn between the attitudes of Joseph Barnabas and Ananias and his wife to the practice of sharing property for the sake of the poor. "

It is interesting that in Acts 2 after filling with the Spirit Luke described the life in the Body of Christ (Acts 2:42-47) and we again see the same pattern as Luke proceeds to describe the Body life in Acts 4:32-37 (and then the negative aspect in Acts 5:1-11 as Satan attacks). Notice ALL in Acts 4:32 and Acts 2:44 and they were united in Acts 4:32 compared with Acts 2:42, 44.

**Congregation** is **plethos** which literally means "a great number" (fullness, magnitude) which emphasizes the rapid growth of the infant church. It was young but growing. And as we shall soon see, with growth comes "growing pains," and in Acts 5 Luke mentions two by the names of Ananias and Sapphira.

As Dr McGee said "This (oneness) did not last very long. Carnality came into the church very soon."

**And the congregation of those who believed** (**pisteuo**) - The **congregation** does not yet appear mixed with tares, but consisted of **those who believed**. What a wonderful time to be a believer. Notice that their belief brought forth recognizable fruit, attesting to the reality of their conversion. What a beautiful example of Christian fellowship, based on oneness of heart and soul wrought by the a common Spirit and founded on their faith in a common Lord, Jesus Christ the Nazarene, "For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and **we were all made to drink of one Spirit.**" (1 Cor 12:13) This oneness was what Jesus had prayed for asking His Father "**that they may all be one**; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." ( Jn 17:21)



**John Piper** defines **belief** in Jesus as follows - "It's to be satisfied with all that God is for you in Christ." This is his favorite definition of saving faith. He goes on to observe that the "Two of the effects of believing in Jesus are that the heart is **loosened** in relationship to things and **tightened** in its relationship to people....Being a Christian means being changed from the inside out so that you fall in love with people and fall out of love with things." (Bolding added). ([Be Like Barnabas Not Like Ananias](#))

**G Campbell Morgan** says "those that believed" " were those who had yielded them selves to the Lordship of Jesus,. to obedience to His teaching."

**Morgan** adds that "The power of this fellowship is revealed in the words: " The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul." It does not matter for the moment whether these believers sold their houses and land, or not. That is not the important thing. Do not begin with the selling of a house, and the selling of land; begin with the fact that "they that believed were of one heart and soul."

**Were of one heart and soul** (cf Acts 1:14+) - Why were they of one heart and soul? Because they believed in one Lord and had one Spirit indwelling each of them. In Acts 4:24 they were homothumadon, on one mind, one accord, which is synonymous with "one heart and soul," which ultimately is a result of the Spirit filling all of them were "one body and one Spirit." (Eph 4:4).

How did they have **one heart**? 2 Chr 30:12 gives us a "clue" - **The hand of God** was also on Judah to **give them one heart** to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD." And in a promise to Israel (which will be fulfilled in last days) we read "**I will give them one heart** and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them." (Jer 32:39) So ultimately they were of one heart and soul because God had enabled this spiritual synergy.

**Robertson on heart and soul** - It is not possible to make sharp distinction between heart and soul here (see Mark 12:30), only that there was harmony in thought and affection. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

Boice adds "This unity is not conformity, where everybody is exactly alike. It is not organizational, where everyone must be forced into the same denomination. The worst times in the history of the church have been when everyone has been part of one large organization. It is not that kind of a unity."

**Morgan on one heart and soul** - The two phrases are not carelessly selected. "**One heart**," reveals the emotional and inspirational centre; " One soul," reveals the new life as dynamic. This company of people, having believed in Him, submitted to His Lordship, being loyal thereto, were of one heart. They were moved by one great impulse, one love. mastered them; they had one outlook, one inward consciousness, one inspirational motive. But more, infinitely more, they were of **one soul**. The word soul here is the word that indicates life; it is not the high word which means spirit, but the word which refers to life as a force, as a dynamic. We can never have the flowers and the fruits of the garden of the Lord unless we have the roots; and we shall never be able to reproduce in any community, in any nation, all the fair and gracious beauty of this condition, save as we can realize anew the one heart and the one life of that early company of first disciples.

## **A WILLINGNESS TO SHARE POSSESSIONS**

Their oneness of **heart and soul** was reflected by love in action manifest in a tangible way through their sharing of finances. Because they were one in spirit, they regarded people as more important than things. Does that describe your fellowship dear pastor? Or is the accumulation of things greater priority than caring for the saints?

**And not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own - Not one** is more emphatically "not even one." The NET translates it "no one said that any of his possessions was his own." The NLT has "And they felt that what they owned was not their own." They lived their spiritual lives like a family and here we see the church's first effort at financing ministry, an effort that was voluntary not mandatory, an effort motivated by love and concern, not government or social equality! Do not mistake what Luke is describing. He is describing the display of Christian charity among the close knit body. It was charity which was voluntarily practiced by Spirit filled believers. While their practice was admirable, most commentators suggest that it was not normative. However, practically speaking this pattern in the first church (while not normative) is a wonderful example of how the church can (and often does) function today in supplying the needs of other believers in distress. The point is that all Spirit filled believers should be ready and willing to share as needed, but that this does not entail turning all one's possessions over to the church leaders. The desired, ideal objective is to eliminate need in the body of believers.

**Morgan** - If we cannot understand what that means, we must go to some of the apostolic writings, and listen to their descriptions of what the Church ought to be. If one member suffers, all the members talk about it, and attempt to be sympathetic, and decide to make a collection. That is not the idea at all. That is what we do to-day! This is it: "Whether one member suffereth all the members suffer with it ; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." That is corporate consciousness.

**Guzik - All things in common:** It isn't accurate to see this as an early form of communism. Communism is *not koinonia*. "Communism says, 'What is yours is mine; I'll take it.' *Koinonia* says, 'What is mine is yours, I'll share it.'" (LaSor)

**But all things were common property to them** - The word **common** property is **koinos** which reflected their oneness in the Spirit. This does not teach that the believers had no personal property because clearly they did (Acts 5:4+). What this says is that the believers with property were willing to sell some of what they had if some of the poorer brethren had need. "Their generosity sprang not from coercive legislation (as modern **Socialism, Marxism**) but from a true union of hearts made possible by regeneration." (Homer Kent).

**Common property** (2839) (**koinos**) refers to that which is common to everybody. The **NET Note** however points out that this was "not a reflection of political philosophy, but of the extent of their spontaneous commitment to one another. Such a response does not have the function of a command, but is reflective of an attitude that Luke commends as evidence of their identification with one another."

**Morgan** - These people lived in the conviction of the supremacy of the spiritual over the material. The very life of the Spirit in them made the question of property a secondary question. We may call them improvident. That is the word of the world, and I am not sure that it is not the word of the flesh and the devil also. These people were so mastered by the spiritual power that possessed them, so driven in this fresh and fragrant dawn of the Church's life by the reality of the eternal and the spiritual, that they held with light hands the things of the world. All material property was subservient to spiritual purpose, and so they said that nothing they had was their own. Then observe carefully that there was no compulsion, neither rules, nor regulations, nor pledges! The multiplication of pledges is always a sign of the decadence of the Church's life. There was a great spiritual impulse, but there was no compulsion other than that these men were not compelled to give up anything; everything was voluntary. The distribution was apostolic, and according as every man had need. The movement was purely voluntary, wholly and absolutely spiritual, the answer of external activities to the inward dynamic. One heart, the emotional center; one life, spiritual dynamic; one activity, all things belonging to all.

Horton - None of them said, "What I have is mine and I am afraid I might need it myself." Instead, they felt a love and responsibility for each other that made them want to share everything. God was supplying their needs and they believed He would continue to provide. The same attitude that sprang up after they were first filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost still prevailed (Acts 2:44-45). Again, there was no compulsion. Their sharing was simply an expression of their love and their unity of mind and heart in the one body of Christ (cf. Gal. 6:10). (Acts: A Logion Press Commentary)

**Bob Deffinbaugh** - Now I know that some have said this was a form of **communism**, but surely that is not what Luke has described to us. First of all, there is no compulsory collection of goods and money from anyone. This is most clear in Peter's words to Ananias and Sapphira: "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?" (Acts 5:4a). The land belonged to Ananias and Sapphira. They could do with it what they wished. They did not have to sell the land, or to give any part of the proceeds to be used for the poor. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that of deception, lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). Second, the text does not say that everyone sold everything they had and pooled it all together. It says that no one made selfish use of his right of ownership. I want you to see that actual ownership did not change except in the case of property that was sold. Luke said, "... not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own ..." (Acts 4:32). Property still belonged to its owner, but the owner did not claim exclusive rights to his property. This was because the congregation was 'of one heart and soul.' There was such love and concern for one another that whatever anyone had that someone else needed was his to use. To put this into more modern terms, the slave owner might loan his Cadillac to his Christian slave to take the children to school or to go shopping. One individual might loan his rototiller to his Christian neighbor who did not own one. The man with a large house would volunteer to host a large gathering of Christians that could not fit comfortably into another house. Someone who had an extra room might make it available for visiting Christians to stay in. Material blessings, then, are not simply for us to enjoy, but for us to share with others who are in need; they are a tangible means of expressing Christian love and unity to believers and to demonstrate the life-transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ([The New Testament Church—Its Finances](#))

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As newsman Clarence W. Hall followed American troops through Okinawa in 1945, he and his jeep driver came upon a small town that stood out as a beautiful example of a Christian community. He wrote, "We had seen other Okinawan villages, ... down at the heels and despairing; by contrast, this one shone like a diamond in a dung heap. Everywhere we were greeted by smiles and dignified bows. Proudly the old men showed us their spotless homes, their terraced fields, ... their storehouses and granaries, their prized sugar mill."

Hall saw no jails and no drunkenness, and divorce was unknown. He learned an American missionary had come there thirty years earlier. While he was in the village, he had led two elderly townspeople to Christ and left them with a Japanese Bible. These new believers studied the Scriptures and started leading their fellow villagers to Jesus. Hall's jeep driver said he was amazed at the difference between this village and the others around it. He remarked, "So this is what comes out of only a Bible and a couple of old

guys who wanted to live like Jesus."

The great power of God's Word leads to salvation through faith in Christ, creating a "special people," a community of believers who love one another, exhort one another, and serve God together. We need to pray that our churches will be an example of God's power to a watching world. —H. V. Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**The world at its worst needs the church at its best.**

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### **Will Work For Friends**

Read: Acts 4:32-37

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked. —Acts 4:34

Six friends have formed a home-repair club in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They meet one Saturday each month at one of their homes to work on projects that cannot be tackled alone. Having helped one another for 20 years, they say they're now bonded together like one big family. A similar group has formed in Snohomish, Washington. Their motto is: "Will Work For Friends."

The concern of these groups for their friends reminds me of the early church (Acts 4:32-37). During this time of great persecution of believers, they especially needed the support of one another. Some people voluntarily sold their lands or houses and brought the proceeds to the apostles, and "they distributed to each as anyone had need" (v.35). They were of "one heart" and "had all things in common" (v.32).

As followers of Christ today, we too need the spiritual support and encouragement of one another. We may be struggling with a decision about how to serve the Lord, or concerned about a problem at work, or unsure of how to discipline a rebellious child. These are good opportunities to enlist the advice and prayer of fellow Christians.

Through love, let's serve one another—physically and spiritually—in the family of God (Gal. 5:13).

Be not weary in your serving;

Do your best for those in need;

Kindnesses will be rewarded

By the Lord who prompts the deed. —Anon.

Christians stand strong when they stand together.

By Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**WHO WILL DO THE WORK?** Those who believed were of one heart and one soul. --Acts 4:32

The following letter, which speaks for itself, was circulated in a large congregation.

Dear Friend:

- Our church membership... 1400
- Nonresident members... 75
- Balance left to do the work... 1325
- Elderly who've done their share... 25
- Balance left to do the work... 1300
- Sick and shut-ins... 25
- Balance left to do the work... 1275
- Members who do not give... 350
- Christmas and Easters members... 300
- Balance to do the work...
- Members who are overworked... 300
- Balance left to do the work... 325
- Members with alibis... 200
- Balance left to do the work... 125
- Members too busy with other things.123
- Balance left to do the work... 2

Just you and me, friend, and you had better get busy, because it's too much for me!

The historian Luke said the members of the first-century church were of one mind, they cared for each other, and God was working among them. He will work in our church too if we will let His Spirit work through us. -H W Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The church is made up of just two kinds of folk;  
No matter how you and I view it --  
The ones who just talk about what should be done,  
And those who get busy and do it.  
– Anon

**Illustration** - Sometime ago Denalyn, Max Lucado's wife, bought a monkey. He writes, "I didn't want a monkey in our house, so I objected. "Where is he going to eat?" I asked. "At our table." "Where is he going to sleep?" I inquired. "In our bed." "What about the odor?" I demanded. "I got used to you; I guess the monkey can too." Unity doesn't begin in examining others but in examining self. Unity begins, not in demanding that others change, but in admitting that we aren't so perfect ourselves.

**Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.**

KJV Acts 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

- **with great power the apostles were giving testimony** Acts 4:30; 1:8,22; 2:32,33; 3:15,16; 5:12-16; Mark 16:20; Luke 24:48,49; Ro 15:18,19; 1 Th 1:5; Hebrews 2:4
- **abundant grace was upon them all** Acts 2:47; Luke 2:52; John 1:16
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## APOSTOLIC WITNESSES OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

**And with great (megas) power** - The word **power** is [dunamis](#) (in fact [dunamis](#) that was **great**) which describes the inherent ability within the apostles, a supernatural power provided by the Spirit, which allowed them to accomplish supernaturally what they could not accomplish naturally. This is a clear answer to their prayer in Acts 4:30.

**Guzik** - This is both the result and the root of the attitude in the previous verse. Acts 4:32 shows they put God first, people second, and material things a distant third.

**The apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**- They were giving (imperfect tense - again and again) witness that Jesus was alive! It does not say it here but clearly the great power manifested itself in great boldness as the gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The apostles had clearly heard and heeded their Lord's exhortation to be His witnesses ([martus/martys](#)) in the power ([dunamis](#)) of His Spirit (Acts 1:8+) The apostles preached NOT a dead Jesus, but an ALIVE Savior.

The preaching of the **resurrection** was a repeated theme in Acts - Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37. And keep in mind this doctrine was especially offensive to the religious leaders, especially the Sadducees who did not accept this doctrine. Nevertheless, the apostles did not "soften" the message and compromise the truth of the Gospel! As pointed the Gospel must first "offend" the sinner, exposing their need, before it can "mend" the sinner.

**Resurrection** (386)([anastasis](#) from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = to cause to stand) literally means "to stand again" or "to cause to stand again" and most NT uses refer to a physical body rising from the dead or coming back to life after having once died.

Here are Luke's 11 uses of **anastasis** in Acts - Acts 1:22; Acts 2:31; Acts 4:2; Acts 4:33; Acts 17:18; Acts 17:32; Acts 23:6; Acts 23:8; Acts 24:15; Acts 24:21; Acts 26:23

**Robertson** - They kept on **giving** (imperfect tense) their witness with power after the answer to their prayer (Acts 4:31).

**Were giving** (not the usual word for giving) (591)([apodidomi](#) from **apó** = from + **didomi** = give and so to "give off" from one's self)

literally means to give back, "as something which they were in duty bound to give.

**Apodidomi** means to give back or pay back which implies a debt and conveys the idea of an obligation and responsibility for something that is not optional. While the apostle Paul used a different word, he expressed the same idea in Romans writing "**I am under obligation** (to give out the Gospel - Ro 1:16+) both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." (Ro 1:14+)

**Testimony** (3142)(**marturion/martyrion** source of English "**martyr**") means evidence, proof. The content of what a witness tells. **Marturion** is the declaration of facts which confirms or makes something known, providing evidence to certify the truthfulness in this case of the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. A person can only testify to what he himself has seen or heard or experienced and the apostles had personally seen and heard and experienced the resurrected Lord Jesus.

Note the repetition of the adjective **megas** which gives us our English equivalent **mega** which means that which is extremely good, great, excellent, impressive, successful, of the highest level of rank or importance

**And abundant** (great = **megas**) **grace was upon them all** - What a *great* verse this is like a set of *great* "divine bookends" -- on one side *great* power and on the other side *great* grace. And the apostles in between like open books saying "Read me!" Oh, for grace indeed to live between these two supernatural "bookends!" Amen!

**Grace** (favor) (5485)(**charis**) is not only unmerited favor but transforming power provided by the Father in Heaven through His Son (Ro 5:1, 2+, Ro 5:17+) and dispensed in abundance by His Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29+). The giving of their testimonies was done with divine power.

**Upon them all** - This suggests **mega grace** was not just on the apostles but on all the disciples of Christ.

**Utley** says "**Abundant grace**, like abundant living (cf. John 10:10) has little to do with material things. Notice this abundance was upon all of them, not just the leaders, the possessors of certain gifts, or those of a certain socio-economic level."

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The famous author G.K. Chesterton was a devout believer. One day he was standing on a London street corner when a newspaper reporter approached him. The reporter said, "Sir, I understand that you recently became a Christian. May I ask you one question?" "Certainly," replied Chesterton. "If the risen Christ suddenly appeared at this very moment and stood behind you, what would you do?" Chesterton looked the reporter squarely in the eye and said, "He is."

**Acts 4:34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales**

KJV Acts 4:34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

- **For there was not a needy person among them** Deut 2:7; Ps 34:9,10; Luke 22:35; 1 Th 4:12
- **for all who were owners of land or houses** Acts 4:37; 2:45; 5:1-3; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33; 16:9; 1 Ti 6:19; James 1:27
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **A SENSE OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE ANOTHER**

**For** (**gar**) - Term of explanation. What is Luke explaining in this context? Interesting! The "mega grace" of Acts 4:33 not only enabled powerful preaching but also supernatural community among the believers. They were living epistles, living out passages like James 1:27+...

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

**There was not a needy person among them** - **Not** in Greek is absolutely **not** (**oude**). Why not? Because of the mega grace on all the disciples, rich and poor, resulting in a oneness of heart and soul which stimulated the "haves" to assist the "have nots," so that there were no "have nots" in the "First Church of Jerusalem."

**Utley** - This is not communism, but love in action.

**John Calvin** - We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative. In those days the believers gave abundantly of what was their own; we in our day are content not just jealously to retain what we possess, but callously to rob others.... They sold their own possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme. At that time love made each man's own possessions common property for those in need; in our day such is the inhumanity of many, that they begrudge to the poor a common dwelling upon earth, the common use of water, air and sky.

**Needy** (1729)(**endees**) only here in the NT meaning deficient in, lacking, in want, destitute, indigent, poor.

**Endees** is used 23x in the Lxx -

Deut. 15:4 = "However, there will be no **poor** among you"; Deut. 15:4; Deut. 15:7; Deut. 15:11; Deut. 24:14; Job 30:4; Prov. 3:27; Prov. 7:7; Prov. 9:4; Prov. 9:13; Prov. 9:16; Prov. 11:12; Prov. 11:16; Prov. 12:11; Prov. 13:25; Prov. 15:21; Prov. 18:2; Prov. 21:17; Prov. 24:30; Prov. 27:7; Prov. 28:16; Isa. 41:17; Ezek. 4:17

#### Related Resources:

- ISBE article on the [Poor](#).
- [What does the Bible say about giving to the poor?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about being poor?](#)

**Guzik** - Later the Apostle Paul taught regarding who should be helped and how they should be helped. Paul's directions were that:

- The church must discern who the truly needy are (1 Timothy 5:3).
- If one can work to support himself, he is not truly needy and must provide for his own needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:11).
- If family can support a needy person, the church should not support them (1 Timothy 5:3-4).
- Those who are supported by the church must make some return to the church body (1 Timothy 5:5, 10).
- It is right for the church to examine moral conduct before giving support (1 Timothy 5:9-13).
- The support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living (1 Timothy 6:8).

**For** ([gar](#)) - Term of explanation. What is Luke explaining? This is easy to observe, but go ahead and do it as it helps this become a habit on other passages which are not so easy to "unravel."

**Proceeds** - Literally, "the prices of the things being sold"

**All who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales**- This description parallels Acts 4:32 where "all things were common property to them." From time to time they would sell property as needs arose.

Note that there is no identical practice described for caring for the needs of the poor in the rest of the NT. Of course, the church still has a duty to care for its own (Act 11:28, 29, 1 Ti 5:3-16).

**Robertson on sell them and bring** - Present active participle (sold) and imperfect active indicative (bring). Selling they brought from time to time, as there was occasion by reason of need. Hence the wants were kept supplied. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Sold** (4097)([piprasko](#) from **perao** = to cross, to transport to a distant land) means literally to sell, and is used figuratively of one "sold into bondage to sin" picturing sin as "possessing" the individual, thus a "slave to **Sin**!" (Woe!) (Ro 7:14+)

Christians have long been known for their caring. By the fourth century, the churches in Rome were feeding an estimated 20,000 poor people each week. The church at that time presented to the world a visible alternative to the prevailing social order.

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**Illustration** - When candy manufacturer John S. Huyler started out in business, he took Jacob's pledge: "...of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:22). Going to the bank, he opened a special account which he initialed "M.P." Into that fund he regularly entered a proportionate amount of his income. When anyone asked what the strange label meant, they were told that it stood for "My Partner." As he kept God uppermost in his mind in all his transactions, his industry grew at a phenomenal rate, and each week the "Lord's treasury" received increasingly large sums. His gifts to worthy causes and private individuals amazed his business associates. These contributions were always accompanied with the request that the donor should not receive any thanks or glory for his actions. He asked each recipient to offer praise to God alone, for he said, "After all, the money isn't mine; it's the Lord's!"

Martin Luther astutely observed, "There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, mind and the purse."

**Acts 4:35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.**

KJV Acts 4:35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

- **lay them at the apostles' feet** Acts 3:6; 5:2; 6:1-6; 2 Cor 8:20,21
- **they would be distributed to each as any had need** Acts 2:45; 6:1
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DISTRIBUTION OF PROCEEDS TO THE POOR

**And lay - Lay** is in the imperfect tense depicting this action as occurring over and over, again and again.

**Them at the apostles' feet** (again in Acts 5:2) - Under their authority. Not as tribute, but so that these Spirit filled leaders with wisdom and discernment might fairly and equitably distribute the proceeds to the poor. What a contrast these first apostles were to those serpentine tel-evangelists today (some of whom even claim apostleship) who request money in exchange for prayer cloths! See [What is a prayer cloth?](#) And above all dear brother or sister in Christ, be a Berean! (Acts 17:11+)

**Marshall** comments that the apostles in addition to preaching "also had the additional burden of dealing with the common fund of the church; and, while at first this may not have been too heavy a task, it was not long before new arrangements were needed (Acts 6:1-6)."

**Utley** - This is a cultural idiom of giving something to another. They laid their goods and money at the Apostles' feet because they had laid their lives at Jesus' feet.

**And they would be distributed to each as any had need - Distributed** is in the imperfect tense picturing the apostles as distributing some of the proceeds from the sales to one, some to another, etc, etc. Over and over. Again and again. It must have been a beautiful time in the Body of Christ when all the parts of the Body were "in good shape" so to speak.

**Distributed** (1239)(**diadidomi** from **dia** = transition, dispersion + **didomi** = to give) literally is to deliver through and means to give out, assign, distribute, dispense, allot, give out especially hand to hand in succession, "apportion among various parties" (BDAG).

**Diadidomi** - 4x in 4v - distribute(1), distributed(2), distributes(1). - Lk. 11:22; Lk. 18:22; Jn. 6:11; Acts 4:35. Only 2x in Lxx = Ge 49:27, Josh 13:6.

**Utley on as each had need** - There is an interesting comment in Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard's Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, pp. 451-453, that Marx's manifesto contains two quotes from Acts: 1. "from each according to his ability"—Acts 11:29 2. "to each according to his need" - Acts 4:35 ([SEE WIKIPEDIA](#)). The hermeneutical problem is that modern people try to use the Bible to support that which the Bible itself never addressed or realized. The Bible cannot mean to us what it never meant to the original author or hearer. We can apply the text in different ways to our cultural and existential situation, but our application must be inseparably linked to the original author's intended meaning. Every biblical text has only one meaning, but many applications or significances.

**Need** (5532)(**chreia** from **chraomai** = to use, make use of or **chreos** = a debt) means a necessity, what is needed or the occasion of need. This same noun is used in Acts 2:45+ "they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have **need** (**chreia**)." In Acts 6:3 chreia is used to describe the selection of Spirit filled men who could be put in charge of the necessary task (the "need") of serving tables (Acts 6:2).

Luke's uses of **chreia** -

Lk. 5:31; Lk. 9:11; Lk. 10:42; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 19:31; Lk. 19:34; Lk. 22:71; Acts 2:45; Acts 4:35; Acts 6:3; Acts 20:34; Acts 28:10

While the pattern of this first church is not described again in Acts or the epistles, the general idea of brother helping brother is repeated several times...

1 John 3:16-18+ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for

the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

James 2:15+ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

Galatians 6:9+ And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

### Acts 4:36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

KJV Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

- **Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles** Acts 11:22-25,30; 12:25; 13:1; 15:2,12,37; 1 Cor 9:6; Galatians 2:1,9,13
- **Son of Encouragement** Mark 3:17
- **of Cyprian birth** Acts 11:19,20; 15:39; 21:16
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### BARNABAS "NICK NAMED" SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT

**Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth** - This is the only time Barnabas is referred to as **Joseph**. Remember the Temple and records of the lineage of the families had not been destroyed, so one could still identify their tribe of origin. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD it would only be by word of mouth passed down. I don't know any Jews today who can state their tribe of origin. As an aside Barnabas being a Levite (priestly tribe) is evidence that not all those connected with the Temple were enemies of the Gospel!

Note the interesting detail that **Barnabas** was a **Levite**, one of the tribes that received no land allotments in the Old Testament (cf Nu 18:20, Dt 10:9). Presumably the Mosaic regulations were not being strictly applied by this time in the New Testament.

See Bob Utley's [special topic on Barnabas](#).

**Cyprian** ([Kuprios](#)) is a Cypriot, an inhabitant of Cyprus. It is translated Cyprian(1), Cyprus(2) and used 3 times in Acts 4:36; Acts 11:20; Acts 21:16.

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Cyprus](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Cyprus](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Cyprus](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Cyprus](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Cyprus](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Cyprus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Cyprus](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Cyprus](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Cyprus](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Cyprus](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Cyprus](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Cyprus](#)



- [Cyprus](#) in Wikipedia

**Who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement)-** The **apostles** gave **Joseph** the **nickname** of **Barnabas**. He was not only generous with his goods, but also with his encouragement. Oh, for a church full of "Barnabases"!

Luke describes **Barnabas** as "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." (Acts 11:24). One of Barnabas' most strategic actions was to introduce Paul to the leery disciples as a legitimate believer in Jesus on Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion (Acts 9:27). Barnabas was Paul's companion on the First Missionary journey which began on **Cyprus** (Acts 13:4-6).

**Barnabas** "brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch, and they labored together for two years with great success (Acts 11:22, 25, 30; 12:25; 13:1, 2, 7, 43, 46, 50; 14:12, 14, 20; 1 Cor. 9:6). They attended together the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:2, 12, 22, 25, 35-37, 39; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13)." (Zodhiates)

**Barnabas** (921) (**barnabas**) is transliterated (this origin is suggested but is not absolutely certain) from the Aramaic **bar** (denoting "son") and **nebiy** (denoting prophet) so strictly speaking his name meant "son of prophet." The Jews used the phrase **son of...** to denote a person's basic character or characteristics. E.g., James and John were called "**sons of Thunder**" (Mk 3:17 - referring to their impulsive and impetuous character as see in Mk 9:38, 10:35-45, Lk 9:54), Judas is a "**son of perdition**" (Jn 17:12), in Judges 19:22KJV we read of the "**sons of Belial**" men characterized by evil or worthlessness. **Barnabas** by contrast was a "son" characterized by his encouraging spirit. Every body needs a few of these "Barnabas types" of men in their midst! Are you one? Let's get even more practical -- Is there anyone that this very moment the Holy Spirit is urging you to encourage **today** by a visit, a call, a text, a hand-written (old-fashioned) note? Then follow through in obedience and be a Barnabas to that person today! You will experience the joy of being one of God's sons (daughters) of encouragement!

Study the 27 uses of **Barnabas** in the New Testament - [see below](#) (remember you can click the Scripture link and select "Read more" to examine the context and get a more accurate sense of the use of his name in that passage) Here is the "cliff notes" version indicating that Barnabas certainly lived up to his [moniker](#)...

Acts 9:27 But **Barnabas** took hold of him (**SAUL/PAUL**) and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

Acts 11:22 The news about them (see Acts 11:19-21) reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent **Barnabas** off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord (**SPEAKING TO THE NEW BELIEVERS**, Acts 11:21)

Acts 15:37 **Barnabas** wanted to take John (**JOHN MARK WHO HAD EARLIER DESERTED PAUL AND BARNABAS** - Acts 13:13), called Mark, along with them also. (Mark apparently was restored for Paul mentions him in the last chapter of his last letter - 2 Ti 4:11+ - LESSON - WE CAN NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPACT A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT MIGHT HAVE ON THE SUBSEQUENT LIFE AND MINISTRY OF A BROTHER OR SISTER IN CHRIST, ESPECIALLY IF THEY ARE IN NEED OF SUCH A WORD...AND MOST OF US ARE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER. BE READY TO BE A BARNABAS BY BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT AND READY TO DISCERN A "SINKING SAINT"!)

#### Related Resources:

- [What can we learn from the life of Barnabas?](#)
- [Barnabas](#) - Whyte's Dictionary of Bible Characters - nice discussion
- [Barnabas](#) - Fausset Bible Dictionary
- [Barnabas](#) - Bob Utley

**Encouragement** (3874) (**paraklesis** from **parakaléo** = beseech <> **pará** = side of + **kaléo** = call) refers to calling to one's side or one's aid which can be for the purpose of providing solace, comfort, consolation, exhortation, encouragement. Encouraging is more along the lines of exhortation. Teaching instructs, but exhortation is to help believers live out their obedience to that instruction. **Encouragement** in English is from **en** = in + **corage** from Latin **cor** = heart. It describes the act of inspiring one with confidence and/or hope, filling with strength, and suggests that the raising of one's confidence is accomplished especially through an external agency.

The most encouraging thing you can do is direct people to God. Are You A Courage Giver? So often when we say, "She is such an

encouragement," we mean, "She makes me feel good." True biblical encouragement goes much further than that. It means putting courage into another person. All of us need people in our lives who will instill courage so we can walk faithfully with our God.

**Robertson** - His name was Joseph and he is mentioned as one illustration of those in Acts 4:34 who selling brought the money. The apostles gave him the nickname Barnabas by which later he was known because of this noble deed. This fact argues that all did not actually sell, but were ready to do so if needed. Possibly Joseph had a larger estate than some others also. The meaning of the nickname is given by Luke as "son of consolation or exhortation" (huios paraklēseōs). Doubtless his gifts as a preacher lay along this same line. Rackham thinks that the apostles gave him this name when he was recognized as a prophet. In Acts 11:23 the very word *parekalei* (exhorted) is used of Barnabas up at Antioch. He is the type of preacher described by Paul in 1 Cor. 14:3. Encouragement is the chief idea in *paraklēsis* though exhortation, comfort, consolation are used to render it (Acts 9:31; Acts 13:15; Acts 15:31). See also Acts 16:9; Acts 20:12. It is not necessary to think that the apostles coined the name Barnabas for Joseph which originally may have come from Barnebous (Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, pp. 308-10), son of Nebo, or even the Hebrew Bar Nebi (son of a prophet). But, whatever the origin, the popular use is given by Luke. He was even called apostle along with Paul (Acts 14:14) in the broad sense of that word. (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*)

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Barnabas](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Barnabas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Barnabas](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Barnabas](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Barnabas](#)

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**Illustration** - An example of a modern "Barnabas" was Dr. Henrietta Mears. She was born in 1890 in Fargo, North Dakota, and when the doctors told her that her worsening eyesight would have her blind by 30, she didn't listen to them, and instead went to college. A couple of years into college, she fell in love with a man who did not share her faith in Christ. She wanted to be married and have children, but ended up breaking her engagement when she surrendered her desires to serve the Lord. She taught high school chemistry for a few years, and then in 1928 became Director of Christian Education at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. In her first three years, Sunday School attendance went from 400 to 4,000. She took over teaching the College group and began training and discipling Christian leaders. Through her direct influence, more than 400 young men and women went into full-time Christian service, including Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ), Richard Halverson (former Chaplain to the Senate), and Dr. Paul Carlson (martyred missionary in Africa). She founded the Gospel Light Curriculum company to publish her Bible Studies, and started a retreat center in the mountains, Forest Home. It was Henrietta Mears who helped a young Billy Graham at a Forest Home retreat. At a crisis point in his faith, she encouraged him to trust in the Lord and believe in the Bible.

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#### The Gift of Encouragement

Read: Acts 4:32–37; 9:26–27

Joseph . . . whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:36–37

An old Merle Haggard song, "If We Make It Through December," tells the story of a man laid off from his factory job with no money to buy Christmas gifts for his little girl. Although December is supposed to be a happy time of year, his life seems dark and cold.

Discouragement is not unique to December, but it can be amplified then. Our expectations may be higher, our sadness deeper. A little encouragement can go a long way.

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of encouragement. May we encourage others as they have encouraged us.

Joseph, a man from Cyprus, was among the early followers of Jesus. The apostles called him Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." We meet him in Acts 4:36–37 when he sold a piece of property and donated the money to help other believers in need.

Later, we read that the disciples were afraid of Saul (Acts 9:26). "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles" (v. 27). Saul, later called Paul, had formerly been trying to kill the believers, but Barnabas defended him as a man transformed by Christ.

All around us are people longing to be encouraged. A timely word, a phone call, or a prayer can bolster their faith in Jesus.

The generosity and support of Barnabas demonstrate what it means to be a son or daughter of encouragement. That may be the greatest gift we can give to others this Christmas.

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of encouragement. May we encourage others as they have encouraged us.

Encouragement may be the greatest gift we give this Christmas.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**What can we learn from the life of Barnabas?** - In the book of Acts, we find a Levite from Cyprus named Joses (Acts 4:36), whom the apostles called Barnabas. That nickname, translated "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36-37) or "Son of Exhortation" was probably given to him because of his inclination to serve others (Acts 4:36-37, 9:27) and his willingness to do whatever church leaders needed (Acts 11:25-30). He is referred to as a "good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith." Through his ministry, "a great number of people were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:24). Paul uses Barnabas as an example of one with a proper perspective on money and property. When he sold his land, he brought the proceeds to the apostles and laid it at their feet (Acts 4:36-37). As the early church began to grow, in spite of Herod's persecution, Barnabas was called by the Holy Spirit to go with Paul on a missionary journey. Barnabas' cousin, John Mark, served him and Paul as their assistant (Acts 13:5). During that first missions trip, for an unspecified reason, John Mark left them and did not complete the journey (Acts 13:13). However, Barnabas continued with Paul and was with him when Paul's ministry was redirected to reaching the Gentiles with the gospel (Acts 13:42-52). The only negative mention of Barnabas in Scripture is in reference to an incident in which Peter's hypocrisy influenced other Jews (including Barnabas) to shun some Gentiles at dinner (Galatians 2:13). After that first trip, Paul and Barnabas began planning their next journey. Barnabas wanted to take his cousin, but Paul refused, and a rift grew between them to the point that they parted company (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas, true to his nickname, took John Mark and spent time discipling him. That ministry was so effective that, years later, Paul specifically asked for John Mark to come to him, as Mark had matured to the point of becoming helpful to Paul in his ministry (2 Timothy 4:11). Like Barnabas, as Christians we are called to be encouragers, particularly of those who are weak in the faith or struggling. Acts 11:23 depicts Barnabas as a man who was delighted to see others exhibiting the grace of God in their lives, exhorting and encouraging them to remain faithful. In the same way, we should look for opportunities to praise those who bring glory and honor to God through lives that reflect their faith. In addition, Barnabas is an example of a generous spirit when it comes to giving sacrificially to the work of the Lord.

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#### **Barnabas - 27 uses in the NT**

(Acts 4:36) Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

(Acts 9:27) But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

(Acts 11:22) The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

(Acts 11:30) And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

(Acts 12:25) And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

(Acts 13:1) Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

(Acts 13:2) While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(Acts 13:7) who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

(Acts 13:43) Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

(Acts 13:46) Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the

Gentiles.

(Acts 13:50) But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

(Acts 14:12) And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

(Acts 14:14) But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out

(Acts 14:20) But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.

(Acts 15:2) And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

(Acts 15:12) All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

(Acts 15:22) Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

(Acts 15:25) it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

(Acts 15:35) But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

(Acts 15:36) After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

(Acts 15:37) Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

(Acts 15:39) And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

(1 Corinthians 9:6) Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

(Galatians 2:1) Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

(Galatians 2:9) and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

(Galatians 2:13) The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

(Colossians 4:10) Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);

#### **Acts 4:37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**

KJV Acts 4:37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- **sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.** Acts 34,35; 5:1,2; Mt 19:29
- [Acts 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **THE POSITIVE EXAMPLE OF GENEROSITY**

Acts 5:1-11 opens with the contrasting example of Ananias and Sapphira, both negative examples of generosity.

**And who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet-** Barnabas is a living example of "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Barnabas laid it at the apostles' feet but because the couple in Acts 5 did not follow suit, their bodies ended up dead at the apostles' feet!

**Utley on a tract of land** - This is not the usual word for a piece of land. It may possibly refer to a burial plot. Chapter 5 shows the potential for abuse in this method of financing ministry (e.g. jealousy, lying, and death).

**J Vernon McGee** does not [mince](#) words commenting that "This kind of living could be carried out for a short while because of the

spiritual condition of the church. It is nonsense to say that we should put this into effect today. If we tried it, we would have utter chaos. Why? Because there must first be the same high spiritual level, and we don't have that today. Let us be honest and face up to it. We need to come into a closer relationship to the person of Jesus Christ."

**William Barclay** - IN this new paragraph (Acts 4:32-37), there is a sudden change which is typical of Christianity. Immediately before this, all things were moving in the most exalted atmosphere. There were great thoughts of God; there were prayers for the Holy Spirit; there were quotations from the Old Testament that were full of praise. Now, without warning, the narrative changes to the most practical things. However much these early Christians had their moments on the heights, they never forgot that someone did not have enough and that everyone must help. Prayer was supremely important; the witness of words was supremely important; but the culmination was love of the Christian community. Two things are to be noted about them. (1) They had an intense sense of responsibility for each other. (2) This awoke in them a real desire to share all they had. We must note one thing above all—this sharing was not the result of legislation; it was utterly spontaneous. It is not when the law compels us to share but when the heart moves us to share that society is really Christian.