

Peter and John had been on their way into the temple when the Spirit prompted Peter to call on the name of Jesus to heal a crippled beggar they had often seen at the Beautiful Gate. This man who was born with a congenital defect that left him crippled was suddenly walking and leaping and praising God and clinging to them in the temple. This drew a huge crowd who had seen the man for many years begging at the gate. They were in awe that he could suddenly use his legs and even leap up and down as he praised God. Peter then preached his second public sermon that declared Jesus to be Messiah and Savior. He declared that it was through the power and authority (the name) of Jesus that the man was made whole.

*<sup>1</sup> And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup> greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* Acts 4:1-2 The church had been meeting in the temple, which no doubt annoyed the priests. The Jewish leaders had made sure that Jesus was humiliated by crucifixion, but that didn't stop Jesus' followers. Instead, they claimed He rose from the dead and were growing in number. As long as Jesus' followers stayed a minority and were not making too many more converts, the rulers of the Jews were hoping the movement would die out on its own. After all, the leader was crucified. But now, all who were worshiping in the temple were awestruck by the healing of the crippled beggar. What probably pushed the priests to taking action was that Peter was using messianic titles in reference to Jesus and declared it was through faith in His name that made the man perfectly well (Acts 3:14-16).

The priests, captain of the temple, and Sadducees felt they had to take action. The captain of the temple was second in charge of the temple grounds under the high priest. He had a group of priests under him who were trained in warfare so that they could maintain order in the temple area. In the first Jewish revolt, the captain of the guard was the general in charge of the Jewish resistance to Rome. The Sadducees joined them because they didn't believe in an afterlife. They did not want Jesus' followers proclaiming that Jesus rose from death (Matthew 22:23). That contradicted their teaching.

*<sup>3</sup> And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.* Acts 4:2 Jesus warned the disciples before His death that this day would come. He had told them that, *<sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.* John 16:2 Standing up for truth will eventually put us in conflict with the world. Remember that until this time they had favor with all the people (Acts 2:47). When the enemy of our souls begins losing ground, he will inspire those who don't know the Lord to feel threatened by Jesus' followers. You can't explain this in any natural way. Peter had said the rulers did it in ignorance (Acts 3:17). He wasn't blaming them or asking for action against them. He put the blame on us all. The response wasn't to want attack the priests, it was to repent and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The followers of Jesus were still worshiping in the temple and most likely tithing and following all Jewish customs, so why

**Commented [PW1]: Acts 3:14-16 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,  
<sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

<sup>16</sup> And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

**Commented [PW2]: Matthew 22:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question,

**Commented [PW3]: Acts 2:47 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**Commented [PW4]: Acts 3:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

the anger? It is spiritual in nature, and the same is true around the world today. Why do Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and animists, think that they need to kill Christians? Christians obey the laws, are kind and generous, and want to help those in need. Why does our culture look down on Christians as ignorant and harmful to society? Christian scientists started nearly every branch of science. We are the ones that start hospitals and began universities. We are there to help when natural disasters hit. We are the ones who feed and clothe the poor, so why all the animosity towards us? It is a spiritual war!

*<sup>4</sup> But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.* Acts 4:4 The gates of hell will not prevail against us (Matthew 16:18) The recent Voice of the Martyrs publication was on North Korea. The darkness and oppression there is almost unmatched in history. You can be shot on the spot for possessing the Bible. Labor camps will work those suspected of believing in Jesus to a long slow death. But in the midst of all that darkness and threats people still come to Christ and are then willing to share His love until they are caught and killed. People are finding the saving grace of Christ around the world in the darkest places.

The church had grown to thousands of men plus women and children in two events plus those the Lord had been adding daily (Acts 2:47). Satan did his worst, having Jesus crucified, threatening the disciples with the same, but still the church grew with giant leaps. Observing history, Tertullian said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. There are more Muslims and Jews coming to faith today than at any time in history, but more martyrs as well. Cut ten of us down and a hundred be born again!

*<sup>5</sup> On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup> with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.* Acts 4:5-6 The rulers are called the Sanhedrin, Israel's ruling group of 70 men. Elders would include those on the Sanhedrin and those over local synagogues. Scribes were somewhat like lawyers regarding Biblical law. Those who had served as high priest in the past were still known by the title. At the time the ruling high priest was Caiaphas. He had insisted that Jesus must die to save the nation from an uprising and being crushed by Rome (John 11:49-50). They thought that threat was growing in spite of having Jesus crucified.

*<sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"* Acts 4:7 They probably knew the story of Peter betraying Jesus in Caiaphas courtyard (Matthew 26:69-75). I would guess that they thought Peter and John were intimidated by the assembly of the notable men of the nation. If so, they were wrong! That doesn't take into account the power of the Holy Spirit. This question they asked was the perfect opening for Peter to proclaim the Gospel. "What power or whose authority caused this man to be healed?" They knew he was teaching and healed in the name of Jesus. They just thought he might be afraid to declare it before them. Surprise!

*<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of*

**Commented [PW5]: Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

**Commented [PW6]: Acts 2:47 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**Commented [PW7]: John 11:49-50 (ESV)**

<sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all.

<sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."

**Commented [PW8]: Matthew 26:69-75 (ESV)**

<sup>69</sup> Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."

<sup>70</sup> But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean."

<sup>71</sup> And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

<sup>72</sup> And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."

<sup>73</sup> After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you."

<sup>74</sup> Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed.

<sup>75</sup> And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

*Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.* Acts 4:8-10 The one they thought was intimidated, intimidated them. The Holy Spirit emboldened Peter to do what he had been afraid to do before, confront the Jewish leadership about the power and authority of the Messiah Jesus. But Peter didn't stop there. Just as he had said in his two sermons, he now repeated before these esteemed men, *"whom you crucified."* Some of these leaders had paid the Roman soldiers who had guarded the tomb to lie about what had happened (Matthew 28:12-13). The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth (John 14:17), so Peter declared, *"whom God raised from the dead!"* "It was this man whom you despised, crucified, and God raised that made this man well."

That was enough to put Peter's name on a hit list, but the Spirit isn't done driving the point home. He is about to quote a verse (Psalm 118:22) that Jesus quoted to some of the same leaders (Matthew 21:42). Would they remember? Would they consider the truth of Scripture? We'll see later in Acts that some of them did (Acts 6:7). <sup>11</sup> *This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.* Acts 4:11 The builders are the leaders. In rabbinic tradition that meant the scribes. They rejected the cornerstone of God's kingdom, Jesus. Jews sang this psalm at a feast of Israel. They knew the passage well, but they never let it speak to their hearts. When Jesus quoted the verse it only made them angry (Matthew 21:46). Now He has risen and a man crippled from birth is made whole. Will they listen now?

The Spirit is still not finished driving home the truth, for then Peter put the crescendo in his proclamation by saying, <sup>12</sup> *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Acts 4:12 That was as offensive then as it is now. You mean, I can't be good enough for God? That is exactly what he meant. You mean all roads don't lead to God? Absolutely! If they did, God did not answer Jesus' prayer, "If there is some other way, let this cup pass from me." (Matthew 26:39) Only a sinless man could willingly take on our sins and die in our place. God, who is just and holy, provided a way, the only way, at the greatest possible cost to Himself. This is how we know the love of God, Jesus laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16).

But what about the native who never heard? If they seek God's mercy for salvation and are repentant, Jesus made a way. There is the catch. We don't want to have to confess that we can't do it on our own. That is what is wrong with every other way. They all depend on works which only exemplifies man's pride. The way of Jesus is repentance. It is humbling. It is surrender. He is God's only provision for our sins. Saying all roads lead to God is intellectual suicide for they all claim exclusivity. God's way is not our goodness, but rather the goodness and sacrifice of Jesus. This truth of Jesus being our only means of spiritual salvation is the driving force of evangelism and missions. The relief we see on a new believer's face, knowing their sins are forgiven and they are accepted by God is its own reward. And if we truly believe this, then won't we look for every opportunity to tell others of this wonderful truth? Jesus paid it all! He is offering forgiveness to those who accept what He did for us when He paid our sin debt on the cross (Titus 3:5).

**Commented [PW9]: Matthew 28:12-13 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers  
<sup>13</sup> and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"

**Commented [PW10]: John 14:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

**Commented [PW11]: Psalm 118:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

**Commented [PW12]: Matthew 21:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

**Commented [PW13]: Acts 6:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

**Commented [PW14]: Matthew 21:46 (ESV)**

<sup>46</sup> And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

**Commented [PW15]: Matthew 26:39 (ESV)**

<sup>39</sup> And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

**Commented [PW16]: 1 John 3:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

**Commented [PW17]: Titus 3:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>13</sup> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13 They knew there had been a total transformation in the men from Galilee who had been hiding from the authorities after Jesus was crucified (John 20:19). What a change in Peter! That's the power of the Holy Spirit in us! Uneducated means they had not studied under an approved rabbi. Galileans went to Bet Sefir, from the age of five or six until their bar-mitzvah at age twelve or thirteen. They learned the Torah and to read and write under the tutelage of the local synagogue ruler. Jesus' disciples then went on to a trade instead of studying further. What the rulers noted was that these men were laborers, fishermen and the like. How could they give such a powerful defense? Who taught them to speak like this? They recognized that they had been under Jesus' instruction. It was the Spirit speaking through Peter. It was the Spirit who gave Him the words just as Jesus had predicted (Luke 12:11-12).

The same inspiration and ability is ours through the Holy Spirit. If you have been with Jesus, if you have been listening to Him, reading the Gospels, it will be obvious that you have been with Jesus. Have you? Spending time learning from Him changes you. He renews our minds (Romans 12:2). He transforms our personalities so that the fruits of the Spirit are evident in our words and actions. His life should be flowing through us (Galatians 2:20).

<sup>14</sup> But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. Acts 4:14 I can just see this man who is eager to start leaping again and go on praising God. You can be sure this man was now under the teaching of the disciples and a part of the thousands who were together as one in Jerusalem. Just see him with an ear to ear grin looking at Peter as he delivered the truth to the rulers. What can the rulers say? They can't deny it happened, for too many people witnessed it.

<sup>15</sup> But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, <sup>16</sup> saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." Acts 4:15-16 These leaders are part politician. They want to hold on to the approval of the people, and if they act too harshly, they may endanger their own positions. This miracle was a sign that the prophet Isaiah had predicted.

<sup>17</sup> But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name. <sup>18</sup> So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:17-18 Did they really believe this would slow down the movement? I think it was all they could do, and they were just hoping somehow it would die down. A relationship with Jesus is contagious. When people see the change in you they are drawn to Him.

<sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, <sup>20</sup> for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19-20 This was as bold as the first part of Peter's testimony, for the Sanhedrin was the final arbitrator of the Law. Peter was saying they failed to act

**Commented [PW18]: John 20:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

**Commented [PW19]: Luke 12:11-12 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,

<sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

**Commented [PW20]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Commented [PW21]: Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

according to God's will. That's like telling our Supreme Court that they don't understand the constitution. In the Jewish culture, to be a false witness is to speak contrary to what you have seen and heard. Peter was saying the disciples must be honest witnesses. It is contrary to Scripture to act otherwise (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 19:18; Proverbs 6:19). Peter's answer was a wise one because it appealed to the Law which the Sanhedrin was supposed to uphold.

Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The rulers ordered them not to do that. They may as well have asked the sun not to come up tomorrow morning. It's going to happen! It's Jesus' command and God's will. Everyone needs to know. And besides, in a town where news is from word of mouth, anyone who wasn't in the temple is going to find out that day. The whole nation will know in a week.

We are faced with the same decisions. The culture says we must believe this and not say that. Don't say Jesus is the only way to God. But we can't help it. He saved us and helped us off our path to destruction. How can we keep that a secret? When it comes to obeying God or man, we must obey God! (Acts 5:29)

*<sup>21</sup> And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup> For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.*

Acts 4:21-22 The rulers would have preferred to execute Peter and John and been done with them, but all the people were praising God. Public opinion was too important to these leaders. After all, the man had been lame from birth and was 40 years old! This miracle was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 35:6). The people knew it was a sign from God to show that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The church grew, but that means the animosity toward them will grow too. Eventually it will come to a war against this growing group of Jesus' followers. Genuine spiritual movements are always resisted by the status quo. The enemy of our souls will try to use fear to keep people from coming to faith (2 Timothy 1:7), but that only serves to weed out those who would pretend to believe and testifies to the world of the conviction of those who do believe.

#### Questions

- 1 What miracle had just taken place?
- 2 Who was upset and why?
- 3 Why do people hate Christians?
- 4 Why was Peter so bold?
- 5 By what means is anyone saved?
- 6 Why do people not want to accept grace?
- 7 What should people see in Christians?
- 8 What did the rulers want to do? Why couldn't they?
- 9 When authorities contradict God, whom must we obey?
- 10 Who sows fear and why?

**Commented [PW22]: Exodus 20:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

**Commented [PW23]: Deuteronomy 19:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely,

**Commented [PW24]: Proverbs 6:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

**Commented [PW25]: Mark 16:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

**Commented [PW26]: Acts 1:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

**Commented [PW27]: Acts 5:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

**Commented [PW28]: Isaiah 35:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

**Commented [PW29]: 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.