

Acts 4 (Part 1) :1-22 • There is salvation in no one else

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Acts chapter 4, you'll remember that in the last chapter, when we were last in this study, Peter and John were attending prayer at the temple in Jerusalem. They came upon a crippled man who had been crippled from birth, who was begging for money as people came into the temple, and some pretty cool things happened.

We'll refresh our memory here in just a second, but let's pray first, shall we? Just open our hearts to the Lord.

Father, we just had such a lovely time of worship together and now we just really pray that your Word would penetrate our hearts and speak to us in the ways that we need most. I am so thankful, my Father, that you know everybody here, you know, all the people, you know, all their needs, all their concerns, all their issues. And you know, Lord, how best to minister this Word.

And so I ask you, Father, to do just that. Minister your Word according to the specific needs of each person. I thank you for that, Lord.

Thank you for knowing each person intimately and just, we really pray that our hearts would be open and receptive. And we ask you to do this work in us in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

In the last chapter when Peter and John were confronted with this crippled man, they sought to get his attention. He thought he was going to get some money from them and Peter said something that was pretty incredible. Let me put this up on the screen just so we can review it together. It says Peter said,

Acts 3:6-8 (ESV)

...Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

...Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

We talked about what this must have been like for the people that were gathering for prayer to see this man who they had seen for whoever knows how long. We know that he was over 40.

He'd probably been begging there for years. They knew this guy and they knew him to be a man crippled from birth. And here he is jumping around, and leaping, and running, and he's praising God. Thank you, God!. He running. And this was, I'm sure, caused no small commotion as the people all came together to figure out what was going on.

We talked last time in our study that this was not only an opportunity for God to show mercy to a man who had been crippled ever since he was born, but it was also an opportunity to be able to share the good news, and the power behind this healing. And that's what Peter and John were able to do.

Peter gave a wonderful message that was geared primarily for a Jewish audience. But we pick up chapter 4 right where that leaves off. And it says, *"And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, (notice these next two words) ² greatly annoyed (people are still greatly annoyed, by the way, when we talk about Jesus, it says) because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."* (ESV)

And the reason they didn't like that is because the Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection. They only accepted the first 5 Books of the Old Testament and they rejected the idea of any sort of a resurrection after death. Now, the Pharisees did believe in a resurrection, but not the Sadducees. And so they were very annoyed at the fact that the disciples were referring to the resurrection.

And it goes on, and it says in verse 3, *"And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening."* I want you to pause there for just a moment, and I want you to consider what we've just read, because it's so easy to read it and just move on. But it says, *"they arrested them."* I'm not going to ask for a show of hands if you've ever been arrested. You're welcome. Some of you might be very quick. I saw a couple of hands,

back there, but anyway. It's a fairly unsettling sort of a scenario to go through. But we understand that people do get arrested from time to time, and it's usually because they've done something wrong.

But these guys, are arrested and put in jail because a man who was born crippled is now walking. That's basically it. And they're put in jail. We think to ourselves, wait a minute, jail, that's reserved for people who've committed a crime. What have they done?

Well, obviously. This is not an act of justice. This is something quite the opposite. And the reason that man's justice goes astray from time to time and is flawed is because man is flawed. And we get used to it.

In fact, we recognize the flawed justice system or the justice of man to such a degree that we even..., the word justice begins to even lose its meaning to some degree. We hear it, our justice system, and we know that it is very imperfect. And the problem with that is that we become so accustomed to thinking in terms of a flawed sense of justice that when we hear that God is just, we're not really sure how to relate to it.

The fact of the matter is, the Bible tells us God is just and what that means is, He is perfect in justice. That means there's no flaws in His justice. All right. You hear me say that, right? And you know that I'm assuming you probably know that the Bible says that. God is just, right?

But we still don't know how to relate to it because when we think of situations that would require justice beyond our understanding we're still wondering how God's going to pull it off. I get this question, frankly, all the time, and it comes in a lot of different flavors.

For example, how is God going to judge people who have never heard the gospel? I hear that one a lot. Or how is God going to judge people who don't have the mental faculties to be able to grapple with the gospel message? Good question, actually.

Here's another very popular one. How is God going to judge children who die in their infancy or before any sort of an age of accountability, how's God going to deal with that? Good questions. But the reason we asked the questions is because we are so accustomed to seeing justice that is so much less than what it ought to be. That when we hear about or even talk about God's justice, we're really not prepared to understand what it really means.

The answer to the question of how God is going to judge individuals who we can't figure out, how He might..., like those who haven't heard the gospel, those who are mentally deficient, or those who perhaps die in infancy, is, He will do it perfectly. He will do it without flaw.

Now I know that may not be a satisfying answer because we really can't relate to that idea. We have never really seen perfect justice. But there comes a point where we simply have to trust what the Word of God says.

No one is ever going to stand up on the judgment day and say, wait a minute, that wasn't fair. And that's not just because God is almighty and there's nobody that can speak up to Him and get away with it. No, the reason no one is ever going to say that is because His justice will always be perfect without flaw, without concern. And we will all say on that day, yes, and amen.

And it's just like Abraham said. You remember when Abraham was having that conversation with the Lord? He had just been told that Sodom and Gomorrah were about to go up in smoke. But he knew that his nephew lived there, and so he began to intercede on behalf of any who might be righteous. And he said this to the Lord, will not the judge of all the earth do right? (Genesis 18:25)

You see, Abraham knew and understood that God's justice was perfect. It could not go wrong, even though from our perspective, it may appear that way. God is perfect in justice.

So it goes on here in verse 4, if you look with me in your Bible, it says, *“But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*

Now, the first word in that verse is, but, because the last thing we read is that Peter and John were taken off, arrested, and put in jail, but!. In other words, in contrast to that, or even despite that, people were getting saved. People were coming to know Jesus Christ as their Savior, despite the fact that Peter and John were arrested.

Verse 5, *“On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?””* And by the way, this is commonly referred to as, an open door. All right. When you get asked that sort of a question, it's like, oh man, let me tell you. All right.

Now it goes on and I want you to notice what verse 8 begins with. It says, *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ...”* Now before we read what Peter said, I want to just emphasize something that we started talking about at the beginning of our study in Acts, and that is, the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit to empower believers is just replete through the Book of Acts. You see this over and over again.

Now it says, *“Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit,”* began to speak. Now you might be thinking, Oh, well, this is just referring to the fact that Peter had been filled with the Holy Spirit. We know that he received the filling of the Holy Spirit back in Acts chapter 2, when they were all together and the Holy Spirit came upon them and so forth. But that's not what Luke is saying to you or to me.

Because the Greek tense of this word filled is present tense. This is not past tense. It is not translated, then Peter, who **had been** filled with the Holy Spirit, said. No, it is, Peter who **is now** filled, present tense, again, afresh and anew, with the Holy Spirit, began to speak.

Because one of the things we brought out is that this filling of the Holy Spirit, not to be confused with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling happens when we get saved. The filling of the Holy Spirit happens as often as we need. And this is a time of need.

Because Peter needs boldness, he needs wisdom, he needs insight, and so the Holy Spirit fills him anew and afresh that he might speak and give testimony about the person of Jesus Christ. This is very important that we see this.

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

This is a pretty bold statement on Peter's part. Remember, this is the Sanhedrin. This is the group of people who turned Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified and they had the power to do that again. And so this is a dangerous situation that they are in currently, but I want you to see the boldness of Peter's remarks.

Did you notice there in verse 10, he says, *“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, ...”* We're

so used to hearing the word Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And you know what the word, Christ, means, I assume.

It is the Greek version of the Hebrew word, Messiah, or Mashiach, as it's pronounced in the Hebrew. But he is saying Jesus Messiah. Now, that is super significant to the men to whom he is speaking.

These are Jews who all their lives have read scriptures about the coming of Messiah, the awaited-anointed one, which is what Messiah means.

And he's telling them in no uncertain terms, he came and you crucified him. The Messiah came, Jesus Messiah, and you killed Him. So he's not beaten around the bush in this little talk he's having with these guys.

He goes on in verse 11. This is incredible. He says, *"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone."* Notice Peter refers to the Jewish leadership as, *"the builders."* They've been given that task by God of building up the kingdom of God, but they rejected, he says, *"the cornerstone."*

What's he talking about? Well, this is something that is talked about a lot in scripture, and it is referenced first in the Book of Psalms, and that's essentially what he's referring to. Let me put this Psalm up on the screen for you, so we can see it together. It goes like this,

Psalm 118:19-23 (ESV)

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

What a powerful passage. This is a wonderful passage, but in order to really understand the essence of it, we need to understand a little bit more about how ancient buildings were constructed because we don't construct things that way today.

Today, when we're building a foundation for a new building, a new structure, we dig down into the dirt and we put up forms, wooden forms, that we call a stem wall and then we fill that with concrete and that becomes the foundation. Either that or just a flat foundation of concrete, such as in this building. But that is the way we build, that's the way we establish a foundation today.

Well it wasn't that way back in ancient times. They would build buildings with stones, and the stones would be the whole building, but the lower part of that, obviously, was the foundation, and it was very important to get the foundation right, just like it is today.

If you have a bad foundation, things don't work very well. Doors don't close, windows won't open and close, and you get cracks in your ceiling because the foundation is bad. So it's very important to get a good foundation, a solid foundation.

Well, they would have something they referred to as the cornerstone. These were chiseled out of rock, in a quarry, brought to the building site, and then the cornerstone was chosen to be the one stone that would mark the direction for all of the stones that would come after it. It was, if you will, the plumb line. We have levels and things like that today. We even have lasers that we can shoot across an area and make sure things are completely level. Well, they would establish that level, that plumb line, with the cornerstone. And it literally became that guideline for the building of the entire building.

Now, Jesus, Peter is telling the Sanhedrin, is that cornerstone upon which the building of God is erected and he says, you rejected Him. You are the builders, and you saw the cornerstone, and you rejected Him.

Now, Isaiah also wrote about the cornerstone. Let me put this on the screen as well from Isaiah chapter 28. It says,

Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)

...therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation..."

...therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation..."

God says, I'm the one who puts the cornerstone in place. I'm the one who builds the foundation and it is a precious cornerstone that is being built.

Now, the New Testament writers also build upon this same idea, no pun intended, from Ephesians chapter 2. Look at this. Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus about Jesus, and he's saying that,

Ephesians 2:17-22 (ESV)

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off (that's referring to the Gentiles) and peace to those who were near. (that's referring to the Jews) For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Now, Paul enlarges on this whole idea of this building. And he tells us, not only is Jesus the cornerstone, but now he tells us what the building is made of. It's you. It's you. It's you who believe, who have put your faith in Jesus Christ.

You are being fashioned, shaped. Might I even say chiseled? Into the very shape that God wants you to be as you are being built together, and as you together form this holy temple in the Lord, this place that God dwells by His Spirit. This is pretty powerful stuff, you guys. Jesus is our cornerstone.

And Peter is the one who brings it up here to the Sanhedrin, but when he wrote his own epistle, much later, he spoke also of Jesus as the cornerstone. Let me show you this on the screen from 1 Peter chapter 2. It says,

1 Peter 2:4-9 (ESV)

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

It goes on to say,

1 Peter 2:4-9 (ESV)

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, (in other words, reject the cornerstone) "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

What do we learn here about the cornerstone? He is a promise for those who believe, and He is a warning for those who refuse to believe. For us, He is the corner of the building, He is the foundation of our lives. We can easily say that. Jesus, you are my foundation. Right? But for those who reject Him, what is He? He's a stumbling stone. He's a rock of offense, because Jesus is offensive.

Yeah, we live in a culture today. I mean, people are offended by everything. It seems like just every time you turn around, somebody is being offended. They're pulling down some statue here or saying you can't do this or that, or we're going to strike that word because it's offensive. We're not going to use, male and female anymore, that's offensive. Good grief.

Let me tell you something. Jesus is truly offensive. You know why? Because He comes to us and He says, you can't be saved without Me. You can't do it on your own. You can try. You can try to be a good person, but you will never attain heaven by simply being a good person. You have to trust in Me and what I did for you on the cross. That's the only way you can be saved.

Well, you know what? That's offensive to some people. How dare you? How dare you say that to me? That I'm not good enough? Is that what you're saying to me? I'm not good enough? Yep. That's what I'm saying.

That's what Jesus is saying, right? He's telling us we're not good enough and we need Him, right? Hey, that's the rock of offense, you guys, because we live in this world where we want to be good enough. We want to believe we're good enough. Sorry.

The gospel message is you're not good enough and you never will be. But here's the good news. Jesus is good and He came and He bore your penalty on the cross. And if you will confess your sin and receive Him as your Savior, you will be forgiven and saved. That's it. There's the gospel, right?

And gospel means good news. But as we've said many times, in order to receive the good news, you've got to get past the bad news. And the bad news is you can't do it yourself. And it's so important to understand that.

Jesus himself quoted these passages related to the cornerstone. He spoke of Himself as the cornerstone. Let me show you this. Recorded in Matthew chapter 21, it says,

Matthew 21:42-44 (ESV)

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’"? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

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"? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

You can see both the promise and the warning, can't you?

Then Peter, in verse 12, goes on to make one of the most incredible statements. Look with me in your Bible. He says, *"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."* Oh, Peter, you've done it now. You've done it now. This is it. This is the offense part.

When we go around, we Christians, we go around telling people, there's only one way, and it's Jesus. And that's what Peter's saying here, there's salvation in no one else.

Nope, not Buddha, not Hare Krishna. None of these other, reverend Sung Myung Moon or any of these other yahoos that have come along and said they're somebody, they can't save you.

Only Jesus can save you. You know what? There's a lot of people that are really uncomfortable, and I'm talking about Christians now. There are Christians who are uncomfortable with the level of exclusivity that the gospel actually proclaims. Because, we've learned the longer we live, that exclusivity, it is frowned upon by people because people refer to it as being narrow.

You Christians are narrow, aren't you? I don't know about that, but I'll tell you the gospel's narrow. Jesus said the way to life is narrow, hard, and few people find it. The way to destruction, oh, that one's easy. A lot of people go that way.

So yeah, there's a narrowness to the gospel, but there are Christians who struggle with that narrowness, that exclusivity, and they struggle telling people it's Jesus and Jesus alone. He's the only one that can save.

Do you know I was raised in a home where that was not taught? We went to church every Sunday, but I was taught in the doctrine of universalism. And that doctrine teaches that we are all universally saved by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, regardless of what we believe. Yeah, that's what I was taught as a child.

And I grew up, started reading the Bible, and I found out that wasn't consistent with what the Bible says. I found out that to those who received Him to those who believed on His name. He gave the right to become children of God, John chapter 1.

And so this whole idea that there is this exclusivity in the gospel is a challenging statement, but it's one that that Peter is giving here to the Sanhedrin because he heard Jesus saying the same thing.

Let me put this on the screen, just a reminder from John 14.

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

End of conversation. And that is difficult. And it is offensive. And it is hard for people to grasp because they don't they don't want it to be exclusive. They want it to be inclusive. It doesn't really, if you just believe in God.

Listen, James tells us the demons believe in God and they shudder because they know they are under judgment. So believe in God? I believe in God. Big deal. The demons believe in God. Have you received Jesus as your Savior? That's the question.

Because Jesus Himself said, no one comes to the Father except by Me. He did not say, I am **a** way. He said, I am **the** way. He didn't say, I am **a** truth. He said, I am **the** truth. Exclusivity. And He did not say, I am **a** life. He said, I am **the** life. Let's keep reading.

Verse 13, *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. (in less than 24 hours, they went from annoyed, to astonished) And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."* These guys are just everyday fishermen. Although what they're saying here doesn't sound like a fisherman would talk. It's incredible wisdom.

He goes on, verse 14, *"But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition."*¹⁵ *But when they had commanded*

them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶ saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people,...”

We don't want this people getting healed stuff. We got to nip this stuff in the bud right here and now. This jumping around, leaping around, and praising God, this is unseemly. You can see that I'm being sarcastic, right? Yeah. Right?

Wouldn't you think that they would say, Well, it's obvious, we've seen a miracle here. This is a miracle. This is true. We can't deny it. This guy's been sitting here begging for years and now he's jumping around, praising God and saying, I've been healed. I think we ought to accept what they say and believe that Jesus truly is the Messiah, the one who came to pay for our sins on the cross.

Well, it just seems logical, right? You're faced with a miracle. But what do they say? Oh, we've got to stop this. I mean, we've got to put the hammer down on this thing. This is, it stops here and right here.

Anyway, it says in verse 17, *“But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.”* Good luck with that guys.

Verse 18, *“So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.”* Now people, give me your attention for a minute because this is important. You need to understand who just gave this command to them. This is the Sanhedrin. This is the ruling council of Israel. This would be something akin to our Supreme Court, if you will.

And even though Israel right now is living under Roman occupation, because Rome conquered them and they're under military law, they have allowed the Sanhedrin to continue to function, to deal with issues among the Jews. Okay? And the Jews believed very strongly in the role of the Sanhedrin and what they stood for.

And so it would be the most natural thing in the world for Peter and John to hear the Sanhedrin say to them, stop it! You may no longer speak in this Name. And for them to say, we hear you, we will comply. That would be completely natural. But that is not what they say.

Verse 19, *“But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”*

Now guys, these are two very important verses, and they're important for you to know and to understand what they say, because what Peter and John are saying to the Sanhedrin is an overarching principle for all time, for believers today as well. And it essentially means this.

Whenever an authority structure of man seeks to contradict or subvert that which has been given as a command by God through His Word, you and I are free to say, no thank you. I have to answer to a higher authority. Okay? This is what we refer to as civil disobedience.

But please understand, brothers and sisters in Jesus, this is not rebellion. This is obedience. This is obedience to God above the tyranny of man. Because when man in his arrogance attempts to subvert what God has laid out, we have the right to say, I answer to a higher authority. Okay.

Now this messes with some people's minds because there's a lot of Christians who've read through the Book of Romans and they know that they get toward the end of Romans chapter 13 and verse one where Paul says, we are to obey the governing authorities. In fact, he goes on to say anyone who disobeys the governing authorities, which have been established by God, is actually in rebellion against God.

Now, those are very strong words in the Book of Romans. And it tells us, as believers, that we do have a responsibility to obey the governing authorities. We should be, as Christians, the most lawful people on the face of the earth.

The one exception is if the government or any authority comes along and attempts to get you and me to do something that is contrary to what we've been given in the Word of God. Okay? But it is never done in a spirit of rebellion. We don't thumb our nose.

You can even see here, Peter and John are very respectfully speaking to the Sanhedrin. They don't thumb their nose at these guys and say, oh yeah, well, who are you or anything like that?

They say listen, you're men who claim to know God so we're going to hit this one back to you. You decide whether it is proper or right to obey God or man. Because the fact is, we have another commandment that has been given to us by

God the Son, and that is to proclaim His Name. We call it the Great Commission. It's recorded for us in the 28th chapter of Matthew, where Jesus said, go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Now, that's a commandment. That's a commission that's been given to all of us, and we're to carry it out. And if the governments of man say, you can't do that here, well, then we have a decision to make. Are we willing to stay and obey God or are we going to run? This all came to a very interesting crescendo during the pandemic, didn't it?

The pandemic hit and none of us were happy about it when the government came along and said, okay, we're going to take two weeks and we're going to just shelter in place for two weeks to flatten the curve. Remember that language to flatten the curve? Well, two weeks, turned into two years, but that's another story.

And, here at Calvary Chapel, we closed for a few weeks. We thought, well, it's reasonable. Well, it got unreasonable after a while and most of us figured that out. But there were a lot of believers who struggled with this one because they said, wait a minute, we are to be obedient to the governing authorities, says it very clearly in Romans chapter 13.

And others cited the Word of God from, for example, Hebrews, chapter 10, that said that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, which is the habit of some, but we are to encourage one another. And so they said we have a biblical mandate to meet as the body of Christ, as we see fit. And others even pointed to some elements of the Constitution that back that up, but that's not my argument.

My argument is the Word of God. The point is, this became a real division point in the body of Christ. And a lot of churches closed and never reopened. Never, ever reopened. It was an interesting dynamic. There was a lot of shaking of the tree, as it were, and a lot of dead branches fell out. But it's interesting to think, isn't it? What would we do if it happened again? What would we do as the body of Christ if that sort of a thing happened again?

Let's continue reading here. Let's finish this up. It says in verse 23, *“When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it,...*” They all decided to write to their representatives and complain. Well, that's not what it says, does it? Here, just let me look here again. No, they actually didn't write any letters to their representatives. You know what they did do?

“...they lifted their voices together to God...” I got to tell you something. That thrills me. It does. “...they lifted their voices together to God and (they) said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,’²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, ‘‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, (that word anointed is the same as Christ or Messiah) both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (again, present tense) and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

They were told, stop it and yet they continued, but they continued. And how did they do it? With boldness? Let me ask you a question. We're going to close with this. Why do you think they prayed for boldness? I mean, just kind of curious.

I think it's because some of them were scared because the situation was not without danger. Going against the Sanhedrin was a dangerous thing to do. Okay? So there's danger involved here. You don't just say to the Sanhedrin sorry guys, we're going to have to pass. You just don't do that without consequences.

And so they get together, they talk about it, they pray. And they say, God, fill us with boldness so we might speak the Word of God boldly. And what does God do? He pours out His Holy Spirit, anew and afresh, on the believers, assembled together, and it says they spoke the Word of God boldly. I love that.

The Apostle Paul spoke very similar words when he wrote to the church in Ephesus, and we'll close with this. Up on the screen.

Ephesians 6:18-20 (ESV)

... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

... praying at all times (he said) in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth (look at this) boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

We need boldness. Right? Let's stand together. If you need prayer, we would love to pray with you. Just come on up front after we're done, we'd be happy to lift up whatever is on your heart in prayer.

Father God, so much for giving us time here today to worship you, to praise, to adore you, and then to dig into your Word and to see what it says and to apply it to our lives.

And Lord, we remember that it's not just hearing the Word that is important, it's applying it. So we pray that you would speak to us, continue to speak to us through this week and just remind us of the things that we've talked about here today in the Scripture. That we might walk with you in fellowship and boldness, serving the Lord with a whole heart, just being willing to be your vessel.

We thank you and praise you. And I just thank you, Father God, for anybody here today who is just really embracing the gospel for the first time.

I pray my Father God that you'd fill them with your Holy Spirit. Speak to them. Transform their lives as they trust in you as the only way to heaven.

We commit our hearts to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King and all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.