



## Summary

This powerful exploration of Acts chapter 4 takes us into the heart of early church persecution and reveals a timeless truth: when confronted with opposition to the gospel, Satan's only weapon is to tell us to shut up. The Sanhedrin, representing the highest religious authority in Judaism, had just witnessed an undeniable miracle—a man lame for over forty years instantly healed through Peter and John. Yet their response wasn't wonder or repentance, but intimidation and threats. What we discover is profoundly encouraging: despite all their worldly power, all they could do was command silence. They couldn't undo the miracle, couldn't refute the testimony, couldn't stop the 5,000 who had already believed. This reveals something critical about spiritual warfare in our own lives. When we face pressure to remain silent about Jesus—whether from family, coworkers, or culture—we're experiencing the same feckless opposition Peter and John faced. The Holy Spirit empowered them with boldness to declare that there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved, and He offers us that same courage. Their immediate response after release is equally instructive: they ran to the body of Christ, not to celebrate their own bravery, but to rejoice together in what God had accomplished. This reminds us that we were never meant to walk as lone ranger Christians. The fresh filling of the Holy Spirit they received—causing the very building to shake—demonstrates that God continually renews our spiritual strength when we've been poured out in faithful service. We serve a God who is bigger than any opposition we face, and His word equips us completely for every good work.





## Points

Title: Boldness in the Face of Opposition: The Early Church's Witness

Sermon Summary: This sermon examines Acts chapter 4, focusing on Peter and John's appearance before the Sanhedrin following the healing of a lame man and the salvation of 5,000 people. The message emphasizes how the religious authorities, despite their power, could only threaten the apostles to stop speaking about Jesus—Satan's only weapon being to silence witnesses. The sermon highlights that Spirit-filled believers possess boldness (*parresia*) to speak truth to power, recognizing that the Holy Spirit empowers their witness rather than their own abilities. The early church's response demonstrates the importance of gathering with fellow believers for encouragement and prayer, seeking fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit to continue boldly proclaiming the gospel. The message challenges modern believers to maintain the same courage in witnessing, trusting that God who created heaven and earth is bigger than any opposition they face, and to actively participate in the local body of Christ rather than remaining isolated or peripheral in their faith community.

Key Points:

- The Sanhedrin's only response to the apostles' witness was to threaten them into silence—the same tactic Satan always employs
- Peter and John recognized that obeying God supersedes obeying human authority, demonstrating biblical civil disobedience
- The Holy Spirit gives believers the words to speak in moments of persecution and intimidation—we don't need to prepare elaborate defenses
- The healing of the lame man (over 40 years old, lame from birth) was a "notable miracle" that the authorities could not deny
- Approximately 5,000 men believed and were saved through Peter's gospel message
- The early believers immediately sought fellowship with other Christians after their trial, demonstrating the vital importance of the body of Christ
- Their corporate prayer acknowledged God as Creator, quoted Scripture (Psalm 2), and requested boldness to continue speaking
- The place was shaken and they received a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit—believers need repeated fillings as they are "poured out" in ministry
- All Scripture is God-breathed (plenary inspiration) and sufficient for all of life's needs
- The importance of physical presence in church gatherings rather than watching remotely or staying in overflow areas



## Scripture Reference

- Acts 4:1-31 (primary focus on verse 17)
- Acts 3:7-9, 12-13 (healing of the lame man and Peter's message)
- Matthew 10:18, 28; Matthew 5:11-16; Matthew 21:14-15
- 1 John 4:2-3 (spirit of antichrist)
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 (early church creed about resurrection)
- Psalm 2:1-4; Psalm 22; Psalm 118:22
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (inspiration of Scripture)
- Isaiah 53
- Daniel 9 (prophecy of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem)
- John 16 (Holy Spirit's role in conviction)
- Luke 11 (asking for the Holy Spirit)

## Stories:

- The healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate who had been unable to walk for over 40 years, who immediately stood, walked, and leaped for joy
- Peter and John's arrest and overnight imprisonment, followed by their trial before the Sanhedrin
- The 5,000 who came to faith after witnessing the miracle and hearing Peter's gospel message
- The tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom at Jesus' death, requiring emergency reconstruction by the priests
- Reference to over 500 witnesses who saw the resurrected Christ at once (from the early church creed)
- Peter's eventual crucifixion upside down and John's preservation in boiling oil before exile to Patmos
- Historical reference to Nazi Germany's "Final Solution" illustrating that even hardened soldiers struggled with guilt when committing atrocities
- Personal observations about believers who watch services online or stay in overflow rooms rather than gathering in the sanctuary

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## Scripture

### **Scripture References from the Sermon**

#### **Directly Cited or Read:**

Acts 4:17 - Main text for the sermon  
Acts 3:12-13 - Peter's message about healing the lame man  
Acts 4:1-4 - Arrest of Peter and John; 5,000 believers added  
Acts 4:11-12 - "No other name under heaven"  
Acts 4:13-22 - Sanhedrin's response and Peter's boldness  
Acts 4:23-31 - Prayer of the early church and fresh filling  
Matthew 21:14-15 - Healing in the temple; chief priests indignant  
Psalm 118:22 - The stone the builders rejected  
1 Corinthians 15:3-7 - Early creed about Christ's resurrection  
Matthew 10:18-20 - Brought before governors and kings  
Matthew 10:28 - Fear Him who can destroy soul and body  
1 John 4:2-3 - Spirit of antichrist  
Matthew 5:11-16 - Blessed are the persecuted; salt and light  
John 17 - Jesus' prayer for unity (alluded to)  
Psalm 2:1-4 - Why do the nations rage?  
2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is God-breathed  
Luke 11 - Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit (alluded to)

#### **Referenced by Context:**

Acts 3:7-9 - Healing of the lame man  
Daniel 9 - Prophecy of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem  
John 16 - Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, judgment  
Psalm 22 - Prophecy of crucifixion  
Isaiah 53 - Suffering servant prophecy

#### **Themes Without Specific Citations:**

##### **For the theme of persecution and boldness in witness:**

Acts 5:29 - "We must obey God rather than men"  
2 Corinthians 4:8-9 - Persecuted but not forsaken

##### **For the theme of the Holy Spirit empowering witness:**

Acts 1:8 - Power when the Holy Spirit comes  
John 14:26 - Holy Spirit will teach you all things

##### **For the theme of corporate prayer and unity:**

Acts 2:42-47 - Early church devoted to fellowship and prayer  
Ephesians 4:3-6 - Unity of the Spirit

##### **For the theme of fresh filling with the Holy Spirit:**

Ephesians 5:18 - Be filled with the Spirit (present continuous tense)



## Quotes

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

Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

When you are brought before governors and kings, do not worry about how or what you should speak, for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

All scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Sanhedrin was always trying to hold back a tidal wave of emerging faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The best weapon they've got in their arsenal is to tell them to shut up about Jesus. That's all they've got going for them.

In this world, among people, the only support we will ever find spiritually is in the body of Christ. I have never known a Lone Ranger Christian who was fruitful in their walk with Jesus.





## Discussion Questions

How does the Sanhedrin's only weapon against Peter and John - telling them to shut up about Jesus - mirror the tactics Satan uses to silence believers today in their own contexts?

In what ways does the creed found in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, which emerged just months after Jesus' resurrection, serve as evidence for the reliability of the resurrection account, especially considering the 500 witnesses mentioned?

When Peter asks the Sanhedrin whether it is right to listen to them more than to God, what does this teach us about civil disobedience and the proper response when human authority conflicts with divine command?

How does Jesus' promise in Matthew 10:19-20 that the Holy Spirit will give us words to speak in moments of persecution free us from anxiety about witnessing, and have you experienced this in your own life?

What does it reveal about the body of Christ that Peter and John immediately sought out fellow believers after their release rather than going home, and how does this challenge the concept of being a Lone Ranger Christian?

The believers prayed for boldness to continue speaking rather than for protection from threats - what does this priority reveal about the mission of the church and how we should approach opposition?

How does recognizing that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17) impact the way we approach the Bible compared to seeking wisdom from self-help books or other sources?

What does it mean that the believers acknowledged in their prayer that Herod, Pilate, and others did only what God's hand and purpose determined beforehand, and how does this understanding of God's sovereignty comfort us in persecution?

The passage describes being poured out and needing fresh filling with the Holy Spirit - what spiritual practices or circumstances in your life lead to being poured out, and how do you seek fresh filling?

When the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking God's word with boldness, what does this dramatic demonstration teach us about God's response to unified, faith-filled prayer?



## Small Group Guide: Standing Bold in the Face of Opposition

*Based on Acts 4:17 and the Early Church's Courage*

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### **Opening Prayer**

*Begin your time together by asking God to fill you afresh with His Holy Spirit, just as He did for the early believers. Pray for boldness to speak His word and wisdom to apply these truths to your lives.*

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### **Ice Breaker**

*Share a time when you felt intimidated or pressured to remain silent about your faith. How did you respond?*

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### **Key Scripture Passages**

- Acts 4:1-31 (primary passage)
  - Matthew 10:18, 28
  - 1 John 4:2-3
  - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
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### **Sermon Summary**

*The Sanhedrin thought they had eliminated their "Jesus problem" by crucifying Him, but 50 days later, His followers were performing miracles and preaching boldly in His name. When Peter and John healed a lame man and preached the gospel (resulting in 5,000 conversions), the religious leaders could only respond with threats: "Shut up about Jesus." This remains Satan's only strategy today. The early church's response teaches us about bold witness, the power of community, and reliance on fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit.*

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## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text

1. *The Sanhedrin's Dilemma (Acts 4:13-17)*
  - Why were the religious leaders so frustrated with Peter and John?
  - What does it reveal about the power of authentic transformation that "they could say nothing against it" (v. 14)?
  - How is the command to "shut up about Jesus" still Satan's primary weapon today?
2. *Civil Disobedience in God's Word (Acts 4:19-20)*
  - Peter and John said, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge." When is it appropriate for Christians to disobey human authority?
  - What's the difference between being rebellious and being faithfully obedient to God?
3. *The Spirit of Antichrist (1 John 4:2-3)*
  - The sermon identified the Sanhedrin's opposition as the "spirit of antichrist." How do you recognize this spirit in today's culture?
  - In what ways does our culture pressure Christians to be silent about Jesus?

### Personal Reflection

4. *Your Own Boldness*
  - On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your current boldness in sharing your faith? What factors influence that rating?
  - The sermon mentioned that Satan's tactic is simply to tell us to "shut up." When have you felt that pressure most acutely?
5. *Fresh Fillings of the Holy Spirit*
  - The passage shows Peter being filled with the Holy Spirit multiple times. Why do you think we need "fresh fillings" rather than just one experience?
  - What does it mean practically to be "poured out" in ministry or life circumstances?
  - How do we ask for and receive fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit?
6. *The Power of Community (Acts 4:23-31)*
  - Why did Peter and John immediately go to other believers after their release?
  - How does being part of a local body of Christ empower our witness?
  - The sermon stated, "I have never known a Lone Ranger Christian who was fruitful in their walk with Jesus." Do you agree? Why or why not?

### Application and Action

7. *Speaking What We've Seen and Heard*
  - Peter and John said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (v. 20). What have you personally seen and heard about Jesus?
  - Who in your life needs to hear your testimony this week?



8. *Prayer Like the Early Church*
    - *The believers' prayer in verses 24-30 contains several elements:*
      - *Acknowledging God as Creator*
      - *Recognizing Scripture's fulfillment*
      - *Asking for boldness (not safety)*
      - *Requesting signs and wonders*
  9. *How does this prayer differ from typical prayers you hear or pray? What can we learn from their approach?*
  10. *The EC Challenge*
    - *The pastor challenged those who hide in the overflow room to be present in the sanctuary. More broadly, where might you be "hiding out" from full engagement with the body of Christ?*
    - *What fears or preferences keep you from being fully present in corporate worship?*
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## **Key Takeaways**

1. *Satan's only strategy is to silence our witness - His power is limited to intimidation and threats to make us "shut up about Jesus."*
  2. *God empowers what He commands - When we face opposition for speaking about Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives us the words we need in that moment (Matthew 10:19-20).*
  3. *The Sanhedrin had all the earthly power but were actually powerless - Those who oppose God's work may appear intimidating but are ultimately ineffective against God's purposes.*
  4. *Community is essential - We need the body of Christ for encouragement, accountability, prayer support, and shared joy in what God is doing.*
  5. *Fresh fillings are necessary - As we pour ourselves out in ministry and witness, we need continual renewal by the Holy Spirit.*
  6. *All Scripture is God-breathed and sufficient - We don't need to look outside God's Word for life guidance; Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor.*
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## **Practical Applications**

### **This Week's Challenge:**

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice:

#### *Option 1: Bold Witness*

- *Identify one person God has placed in your life who needs to hear about Jesus*
- *Pray daily for an opportunity and for boldness*
- *Share what you've "seen and heard" about Jesus with that person*

#### *Option 2: Prayer Partnership*

- *Find a prayer partner in the group*



- Commit to praying together (in person or by phone) at least once this week
- Use Acts 4:24-30 as a model, asking specifically for boldness to speak God's word

#### Option 3: Scripture Memorization

- Memorize Acts 4:12: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- Practice sharing this truth with someone this week

#### Option 4: Fresh Filling

- Set aside time each day this week to ask God for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit
- Journal about areas where you feel "poured out" and need renewal
- Be specific in asking for boldness in witness

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### Closing Prayer Prompts

Pray together as a group, incorporating these elements:

1. Acknowledge God as Creator - Praise Him for His power over all circumstances
2. Confess areas of fear or silence - Where have we failed to speak boldly?
3. Ask for fresh filling - Request the Holy Spirit's power for witness
4. Pray for boldness - Specifically ask for courage to speak, not just for comfortable circumstances
5. Pray for signs and wonders - Ask God to confirm His word with demonstrations of power
6. Pray for specific people - Name individuals who need to hear the gospel

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### For Next Week

Prepare by reading: Acts 4:32-5:11 (The unity of believers and the account of Ananias and Sapphira)

Reflection question: How does the radical generosity and unity of the early church challenge your own life and priorities?

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### Leader Notes

- Encourage vulnerability - Create a safe space for people to admit fears and failures in witnessing
- Celebrate victories - Take time to hear testimonies of boldness from the previous week
- Don't skip prayer - The early church's response was immediate prayer; model this in your group
- Watch the time - You may not get through all questions; focus on those most relevant to your group
- Follow up - Check in on commitments made during the week between meetings



## Daily Devotional

### **5-Day Devotional: Speaking Boldly in the Power of the Spirit**

#### **Day 1: The Courage to Speak**

Reading: Acts 4:1-22

Devotional: Peter and John stood before the most intimidating religious court in Judaism, yet they spoke with remarkable boldness. What was their secret? They had been with Jesus. The Sanhedrin recognized this immediately. Your witness doesn't depend on education, eloquence, or social standing—it depends on your relationship with Christ. The same Holy Spirit who empowered Peter and John lives in you. When faced with opportunities to share your faith, remember that Satan's only strategy is to silence you. He whispers, "Shut up. Don't say anything." But the Spirit within you is greater. Today, ask yourself: What fears keep me silent about Jesus? Surrender those fears to God and ask for fresh boldness.

#### **Day 2: The Spirit Gives the Words**

Reading: Matthew 10:16-20

Devotional: Jesus promised His disciples they wouldn't need to rehearse their defense when brought before authorities. The Spirit would give them the words in that very hour. This doesn't mean we shouldn't study Scripture or prepare our hearts, but it does mean we can trust God's timing and provision. Peter and John didn't spend the night in prison crafting the perfect apologetic—they rested in God's promise. When the moment came, the Holy Spirit spoke through them with convicting power. You don't need to have all the answers before you share Christ. You simply need availability. The Holy Spirit knows exactly what each person needs to hear. Trust Him to speak through you, whether the words are gentle or confrontational, comforting or challenging.

#### **Day 3: Together We Stand**

Reading: Acts 4:23-31

Devotional: After their release, Peter and John didn't go home—they rushed to fellow believers. They needed the encouragement, love, and prayer of the body of Christ. No Lone Ranger Christian bears lasting fruit. We were designed for community, for mutual strengthening and shared celebration. Notice what happened when they gathered: they prayed together, quoted Scripture together, and were filled with the Spirit together. The place was literally shaken by God's power. When you face spiritual opposition or experience God's faithfulness, don't isolate yourself. Run to your church family. Share your testimony. Pray together. The body of Christ isn't optional—it's essential. Your presence encourages others, and their presence strengthens you for the battles ahead.



## **Day 4: God's Word in Our Prayers**

Reading: Psalm 2

Devotional: The early believers didn't just pray their feelings—they prayed God's Word back to Him. When threatened by the Sanhedrin, they immediately recalled Psalm 2, recognizing that Scripture was being fulfilled in their very lives. This is powerful prayer: acknowledging God as Creator, recognizing His sovereignty, and declaring His promises. When you pray Scripture, you align your heart with God's revealed will. You move beyond your limited perspective into His eternal purposes. The believers saw that kings and rulers were gathering against Christ, just as David prophesied, yet God sits in heaven and laughs at their futile plans. Today, let Scripture shape your prayers. Find a promise, a psalm, or a truth that speaks to your situation, and pray it back to God with faith.

## **Day 5: Fresh Fillings for New Challenges**

Reading: Luke 11:5-13; Acts 4:31

Devotional: Peter had already been filled with the Spirit at Pentecost. He'd been filled when he preached to the five thousand. Yet here he needed a fresh filling. Why? Because he'd been poured out. Ministry, witness, and spiritual warfare drain us. We cannot operate on yesterday's anointing for today's battles. Jesus taught that our heavenly Father delights to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The early church prayed for boldness and fresh power—and God shook the building and filled them again. Don't rely on past spiritual experiences. Each day presents new opportunities and challenges requiring fresh dependence on God. Ask Him today for a fresh filling of His Spirit. Surrender your emptiness and receive His fullness to speak His word with boldness.

