

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

08.09.2026 | We Cannot Stop Speaking | Acts 4:1–31 | Dr. Clark Fobes, Associate Pastor

And if you have a Bible, you can start to open that up to the book of Acts, chapter 4 is where we'll be. If you don't have a Bible, you can get one in the pew in front of you. And as you can probably tell, as we've been talking about, even if you're new this Sunday, we are in a series in the book of Acts, seeing how the gospel goes to the ends of the earth. We're starting this first portion in just Acts, chapters 1 through 8. And then we'll take a break to do a short evangelism series in the fall, which I think will complement well what we've been learning. And then eventually that will lead us into our Advent series. And I'm sure we'll come back to the book of Acts at some point later. But as we've been seeing in the book of Acts, we've been seeing the beginnings of the church in the New Testament through the promptings and empowering of the Holy Spirit. And this passage draws off last week's passage in Acts, chapter 3, where we saw this healing of a crippled man and how Peter preached and healed this man and did a good work and preached this gospel that saves while also demonstrating it in a physical way.

And so in this passage now, we get to a point where the apostles start to have the very first opposition to their faith, to the church, and ultimately to the gospel, something that we'll see repeated throughout this book. But I think another-- something that we'll focus on here, another way to think about the title of this sermon is, what is faithful witness in the face of opposition as we see this first story of that? So with that, we're going to read almost the entirety of Acts, chapter 4, starting in verse 1. "And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000. On the next day, the rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and John and Alexander and all who are of the high priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we're being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 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 Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 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. 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. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. When they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 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. 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. So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 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, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. 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. For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old. When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed. For truly in the city they 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, to do whatever your hands and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continue to speak the word of God with boldness. This is the word of the Lord.

You know, most of us, we won't face opposition the way these apostles did. In fact, as I mentioned, they'll continue to face opposition in increasing measure throughout the book of Acts. We'll see that as we go on through Acts chapter 8 and further on with Paul in Acts chapter 13 and beyond. Most of us will not be put on trial for our faith living here in the West, especially in America. But I think most of us can probably recall moments where we were faced with some sort of opposing view, or maybe even just a moment where someone asked us something about our faith that caught us off guard or made us question whether in our own fear or what we perceived how we should respond. You know, reading this, whenever I think about evangelism and witness in the face of opposition, it reminds me of a story when I honestly failed to be a faithful witness in what I perceived to be maybe not opposition, but just a bit of a strange encounter. It was one Easter Sunday many years ago. I had gathered with my-- I was a youth pastor at the time-- I gathered with my youth leaders. We were going to have an Easter dinner together after church. And I decided on that Sunday that I was going to order burritos for everyone. And so I ordered 22 burritos, because there were 22 of us, and went down to the taco shop, forgetting that this particular Easter fell on 4-20, April 20th. That doesn't mean anything to you. That's fine. Just-- but if you're familiar with San Francisco, you know 4-20 is also a beloved holiday that's celebrated widely other than Easter. And as I was a-- I was single-handedly by myself picking up 22 burritos at a place that was a favorite place to eat on 4-20, there were a group of guys that were obviously enjoying the holiday that looked at me and said, yo, burritos, dude. And maybe because I was just so taken back in the moment, I was thrown off guard. And I-- in that split second, I felt this immediate conversation with the Holy Spirit. What do I do in this situation? How do I respond? I remember literally engaging with the Holy Spirit. Now, there's a lot of things I could have said. I could have said, well, actually, I'm celebrating Easter, and I'm getting burritos for Easter. What about you? Would have known their answer to that. I could have said, I'm having a party with some church friends on the ultimate high. What about you? I don't know. There's

so many ways I could have taken the conversation. But maybe because it was Easter Sunday, I was a pastor, I was tired, Easter Sunday is long for us. Maybe it was because I had to deliver these 22 burritos to people waiting at my house. I just ignored that voice of the Spirit, turned to these guys, and responded with, yup. (Laughter) And now there's a group of guys who, if they're sober enough to remember my face, associate it with 420 and burritos and nothing else. Now, that wasn't a moment of opposition, but it was a moment I can recall that the Spirit was prompting me to say something. And just because of my own fear or my own discomfort or whatever it was, I intentionally pushed that voice of the Spirit out. And I think a lot of us can think of moments like that where we have faced some sort of opposition or fear and we may not feel like we were faithful witnesses in that moment.

And this is why I love Acts chapter 4. I know we joke at our church that I always have to wrestle with the really hard passages. I preached on Jesus descending to the dead and Judas' gut spilling out everywhere. But this is one of those passages that I genuinely enjoyed studying and it was just a joy for me to look through. Because in this passage, we get a clear example from the apostles Peter and John. What does faithful witness in the face of opposition look like? How can we listen to these promptings of the Holy Spirit? As even we just sang the filling of the Spirit. We see that throughout the book of Acts, but especially here in Acts chapter 4. There's multiple moments where the Spirit fills the believers. How can we learn from their example so that we might be faithful witnesses here in the 21st century in San Francisco?

And the first thing that Acts calls us to remember is that faithful witness prompts opposition. It's something that we can easily get lost because we're not used to opposition and persecution in America. But I think it's something that for us living in San Francisco, it's something we're maybe more inclined to and more aware of than in other cities in our nation. Opposition and persecution, they're not necessarily central themes in the book of Acts, but they are recurring ones. Just one chapter later, we're going to see another story that's very similar to this where the apostles are arrested. They spend a night in jail. They're charged not to speak. And then they go on speaking anyways. See, whenever God's people are faithful to witness, to the mission God gives them, or even simply to following Jesus faithfully in a broken world, opposition seems to follow almost naturally. Luke tells us that these Jewish leaders were annoyed with these apostles. You look back at verse 2. So they were greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Now, Christians can be annoying in society. Christians can be annoying for a variety of reasons, from in-house fighting to denominational issues, to arguing over political issues, or simply just arguing over things like Harry Potter. But that's not why the Jewish leaders are annoyed of the apostles here. They're annoyed precisely because they're teaching and proclaiming faithfully the name of Jesus. Not in a way that's power-grabbing or try to privilege themselves. See, I think

Christians in America tend to be annoying because the way Christians respond in those moments is often with some sort of privilege or entitlement for our rights in society. But actually what Peter and John do is they directly oppose and attack the political powers that be. They confront them for their power not to gain it for themselves, but because of the power that they were holding over the people. There's a prominent New Testament scholar by the name of Craig Keener who wrote a four-volume opus on the Book of Acts. If you're ever interested in reading a 3,000-page commentary on the Book of Acts, go pick it up. But one of the things that he notes is that their confrontation of these Jewish leaders is a direct confrontation of the power they held. Because even in the healing of the crippled man, they were upending the social order that kept things orderly for the temple and in Jewish society. This crippled man was not allowed to reenter Jewish society because he was imperfect. And in that healing, he had now been drawn back in to God's kingdom.

He's showing, Peter's showing through this healing and now through this confrontation that Jesus actually came to upend and turn over social order, that the last would be first, that the least would be prominent in his kingdom. And I think that's something that calls us to remember that when we are living faithfully in the world, as Pastor Ben mentioned at the very beginning of this series, we should never seek to attach ourselves to any prominence or power in the world. The job of Christ and his kingdom is always to oppose the powers that be, any powers that oppose his own king and kingdom. And the Jewish leaders, they arrest them and they're annoyed because they're threatening the very order of life by preaching a gospel that upends all of society and brings a gospel of suffering and death to get to life.

I think this is understood too. We see that this description of how this young church was rapidly growing in light of the Jerusalem population. We're told that the number of men came to about 5,000. Now there's a number of ways we can interpret that. We don't know if that means there were 5,000 more added to the church this day after Pentecost, which would make it about 7,000. We don't know if that means it's just 3,000 more, so it's 5,000 in total. We also aren't really sure if this is only the men being counted or if that's a generic term for all men and women, but we know at least there's 5,000. At the lowest number, 5,000 people coming to faith at this point. Now best estimates for the Jerusalem population at the time and around 30, the 30s AD, placed Jerusalem's population of around 55,000 to 60,000 people. So Christianity hitting 5,000 would have quickly made this new religion, this new tribe about 10% of the Jewish population.

Now in the light of the entire Roman Empire, that was a million plus, that was nothing. You could see why the Roman Empire didn't really care about Jesus in this revolution he came. But for an isolated and vulnerable Jewish population already, oppressed and opposed by Rome, trying to struggle and survive in a Roman Empire, hold on to their Jewish identity in the epicenter of Judaism, the capital of Jerusalem, this would have been a direct threat against everything they held in their social order, their sense of stability. See, faithful witness prompts opposition when it's faithful to the gospel because it always threatens the powers that be. There was a group in our church that went through a book club, a cohort through a book called Political Gospel by New Testament scholar Patrick Shriver. And something he says in that book is that the gospel is inherently political. We preach a message of an alternate king with his own kingdom, with his own social order, and his own citizens to be faithful to him, not Caesar or any other powers. And so swearing allegiance to Christ means denying at least swearing allegiance under Christ, below him, any other earthly kingdom that we have. I think this is also most clearly seen in the Beatitudes. Because in the Beatitudes, Jesus is establishing what his new kingdom is and who his people are called to be. And then at the very end of that, he says twice that the blessed, those who are blessed, will face persecution. So he's setting up an expectation for us that if we seek to follow Jesus in this world, because we belong to a different political kingdom, this different gospel, we will always be at odds with the kingdoms of this world, which means opposition will almost always, if not always follow faithfully witnessing for Christ. See, perhaps the very first thing we need to understand when we choose to follow Jesus is that sometime persecution, at some point in our lives, persecution will follow and we have to be ready for it.

This reminds me of a moment when I was sitting in one of my doctoral seminars with a professor of evangelism. And he was sharing this story about he was talking with an Iranian pastor about how do they train new believers? How do they train and disciple new believers when they come to faith? And the Iranian asked him, "What do you guys do to train new believers?" And this professor, he said, "Well, we take them through the book of John, because it's a simple book to understand. You clearly understand who Jesus is. It's a good thing. We're going to have a Christmas market and celebration at the end of the year where we're going to give out gospels of John." It's a very good book to understand who Jesus was. And then he turns to the Iranian pastor, expecting something similar and asks, "Well, what do you do?"

What do you do when someone first comes to faith? How do you train them? What book do you go through?" And he didn't expect the answer the Iranian pastor said. He said, "We take them through the book of Revelation." This professor was like, "What? You teach them eschatology and end times and all that? Why Revelation?" To which this Iranian pastor, I'll never forget it, he said, "Because when Iranians come to Christ, they need to be prepared for the suffering that will come. And they need to know the end of the story and that it will be worth it."

Such a radically different way of thinking about discipleship between us and the American church and the global church. I think this is something that we need a correction on in American evangelicalism because we don't often expect persecution. Even when we face opposition of any sort, our answer is usually to demand our rights or run to our leaders to fight our battles, to speak out and demand some privilege in society as we see happening even in these moments, these political moments right now. See, Christian nationalism is a direct response to Christianity being marginalized and trying to reinstate Christian principles in society. But I think, unfortunately, it misses the point that Christians should never expect to have prominence in society. Faithful witness almost always prompts opposition. And again, Christians can face opposition for a variety of reasons, but if we're trying to be faithful witnesses, we should actually expect opposition to come because Jesus himself said, "If the world hated me, it will hate you too."

Which leads us to the next point because faithful witness in the face of opposition is a product of being with Jesus. See, if Jesus said that the world will hate me, it will also hate you, and faithful witness just comes out of being with Jesus, that means we should expect opposition. But it also means that more than any other skill, education, personality trait, gifting, the greatest way to prepare us for a life of witness is to simply be with Jesus. This is something we see in verse 13 of Acts chapter 4, something the religious leaders notice themselves. They say, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men, they were astonished and they recognized they had been with Jesus." This is maybe my favorite moment in the entire book of Acts. There's so much irony and comedy, but also encouragement in these exchanges between Peter and these Jewish leaders. We're told they're astonished at them. This word could be kind of an amazement or it could also be a disturbing astonished. They were disturbed at their boldness and that they were with Jesus, so much so that they have nothing to say.

Luke tells us why they're so dumbfounded too because he says that they were uneducated common men. Now the word for common men here is the word idiotite, from which we get another word in our English language. It was meant to convey someone who was completely ignorant when it came to some matters. Now it could be that they were saying that they're ignorant in spiritual and religious matters. They're not Jewish leaders. They're not scribes. They're not priests by any measure in Judaism. And yet here they are confronting these Jewish leaders with their very own scriptures in Psalm 118. Jesus is the cornerstone whom you reject it. But there's also more nuance here because as New Testament scholar Keener again notices, Craig Keener, that's this word for idiotite was often referred to the rhetoric skill that was common of their day. It's used actually of Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 when he says that even though people accuse him of being an idiotite, unskilled in rhetoric, he still proclaims a gospel. And so possibly they're saying that they're untrained in religious matters. Maybe they're saying they're untrained in rhetoric. Either way, they're astonished. They're disturbed at the level of boldness to speak out about this Jesus.

And I think this is an encouragement and a reminder for us that to be a faithful witness doesn't mean you have to go to seminary. Doesn't mean you need formal theological training. You don't have to be gifted in public speaking. Those things can help, but our confidence in being witnesses comes simply from sitting at the feet of our good rabbi Jesus. It could also mean that what they're calling out for Peter and John is that they were not leaders, positions of power. They weren't political figures trained to do this. And yet regardless, if you are a person in authority or not, you're in a lowly place, whether you're an extrovert or an introvert, you're charismatic or socially awkward, all that matters is that you've been with Jesus. That's the greatest qualifying factor of being a faithful witness amidst opposition. And so the best thing that we can do to prepare ourselves for a life of following Jesus and being his witnesses is to simply be with Jesus so that we might also become like him. See, being with Jesus is not just spending time in devotion with him, enjoying a cup of coffee with some prayer time and devotions in the morning. It's also let Jesus transform us in how he wants us to be. It's about becoming like Jesus as well.

And I think here's something that's even more fascinating for me when I read this. How did the Jewish leaders know that Peter and John were with Jesus? The way that that word is described in Greek, it's in the imperfect tense, which means

that they began to recognize that they were with Jesus. After they saw their boldness, it clicked for them, "Oh, these were the guys that were with Jesus." How would they have known that? How would they know or how would that boldness have caused them to realize that they were with Jesus? Well, I think it's because Luke gives us some details here about who was present at this trial. You look at verse 6 again, we're told that Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John and Alexander, and all who are of the high priestly family were present. John and Alexander are common names. We haven't heard these in this particular form of Jewish leaders. But Annas and Caiaphas should be familiar to us. Almost every single gospel writer mentions these two names as the high priests who were present at another trial that was held by knights, which Peter was at. See, these were the high priests who were questioning Jesus when Peter was sitting around the fire at that same trial right outside the gates. And instead of boldly speaking up for Jesus, what did he do? He denied Jesus. See, I think Luke tells us this because these high priests would have recognized these were the very same men that cowered in fear at Jesus' trial because people recognized them. You were the ones with Jesus, weren't you? No, we never were. And yet now they see them and recognize them again. Oh my gosh, these are the same guys that fled and denied Jesus. And yet here they are in the midst of this trial publicly, boldly proclaiming Christ to us.

I mean, one amazing thing that even these non-Christian Jewish opposition leaders recognize the change and transform lives of these apostles. See, our most powerful witness is that we are with Jesus in such a way that he changes and transforms us. A change and transform life is one of the greatest way we demonstrate the power and truth of the gospel because it shows that there's a gospel that radically changes lives, but it's also something we radically believe in enough that we would allow it to change us. See, faithful witness is a product of genuine, joyful, transforming faith in Christ. Maybe the biggest mic drop in all of church history comes when the Jewish leaders try to silence Peter. Look how he responds in verse 19. Peter and John answered, "Whether it is right in the side of God to listen to you rather than to God, you can judge, but we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." The way the Greek is phrased there is literally, we can't not speak of what we've seen and heard. There's an emphasis there with a double negative because what we have seen in Christ, heard from him, has so radically transformed us that you can't keep us silent even if you tried.

See, witness and mission a result of a heart that's joyfully convinced of the beauty of Christ in the gospel. Or put another way, we are natural evangelists for that which we worship. Just think about it. This is true in all of life. The greatest way to convince anyone of anything is through your own joy in that thing. You don't have to try to evangelize for something you find worthy of worship. You love. You simply want to share it. You can't not tell someone about it. It's why we post what we post on social media because we think there's something that's so worth sharing that we have to post it. It's why sometimes if I don't post anything in social media for a while, I begin to question, maybe my life doesn't have anything we're sharing. It's too boring to share anything. But think about all the things that you enjoy in life that you're most excited to talk about. Probably there are those things you take the most joy in. And so you see what same comes to Jesus in being witnesses. You don't have to try to share when you find something lovely. You just do. The motivation for mission is not duty, but delight and delight in what God has done for us in Christ. And the more we delight in God, in the gospel, in how Jesus transforms us, the more we will bear witness to his goodness and boldly proclaim the name of Jesus. That's our third point here. Faithful witness speaks with boldness.

Now, I think we have to nuance this because we love talking in Western culture, especially in America. We talk a lot about things. We people make their whole lives based on talking on podcasts and talking shows, talk shows. Talking, there is a type of talking and speaking that I think can be counterintuitive to witness in evangelism. This word for the annoyance that the Jewish leaders had at the Apostles was conveying their annoyance at what they were saying, not how they were saying it or their obnoxious tone or the repetitiveness of it. But there's another time in the book of Acts, the same word for annoyance is used in that way. It actually comes up in Acts chapter 16 when Paul is in Philippi and there's a slave girl that repetitively, obnoxiously, constantly follows them around saying the same thing over and over. This is what we see in Acts 16 verse 17 and 18. She followed Paul and us crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation."

Let's just stop there. If you are Paul, you might think, "Wow, we have a walking talking. You know, we have our own evangelism pamphlet following us around. It's free marketing. This is great. We don't have to do anything." But notice what Paul does, verse 18, "And this she kept doing for many days, Paul having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her. And it came out of that girl the very day."

There was an annoyance there because of the repetitiveness, the nature of it. We don't know entirely why Paul was so annoyed at someone simply proclaiming the gospel. And yet we do know it was something that he had to correct. See, sometimes Christians, we can hear this call to boldness and think, "All right, we just got to just preach the gospel constantly and visily. And it doesn't matter what people think. We just jabber away wherever we go, one message with one tone." Speaking is not all that we see happen even in this passage. This bold speech of the Apostles accompanies good deeds. Remember, the believers have just done this good deed of healing this crippled man. And while it does incur some opposition for them, it also protects them from any further punishment. If you notice that, if you look again at chapter 4, verse 21, Luke tells us, "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."

This good deed shielded them from further punishments or further consequences of their boldness in speech. See, good deeds always, most of the time, if not always, act as a vehicle by which our faithful witness and our bold speaking is received. And it can even protect us in the event of opposition. You know, this is something that I experienced in my own time of living overseas on the mission fields. I remember serving in a restricted nation in East Asia and talking with some of my co-workers. We would often hear stories about people that were kicked out of our country and sent back home. Almost always, the people that were kicked out and sent back home are the ones that came in guns blazing, gung ho to preach the gospel and just preached it boldly. And you think, wow, that's so courageous, but their time in that country was short-lived.

The ones that had the most longevity in that country, and arguably the most long-term fruits, are the ones that took the time to build some relational trust with local people, even local leaders. They were the ones who even local government officials had favor. Remember one friend even said, oh, yeah, we were talking to him, asking him in another part of our country, you know, how's your ministry doing? She has to worry about the government officials. He was like, oh, they know I'm a Christian. They know I'm here for, but they see the good that we do, and so they don't bother us. See, good deeds are a vehicle by which bold witness is received, and so it should even cause us to consider if we're only speaking boldly with ever acting kindly or goodly, as Tim we already told us way back when, are we actually being faithful witnesses? Again, I think this is maybe a course correction we need as Western Christian conservatives, maybe out of a fear of committing the extremism of the social gospel that came earlier in the 20th century, we've swung to the other extreme of a disembodied gospel. People often quote the often false attributed quote of St. Francis of Assisi, who says, "Preach the gospel always, use words if necessary." People often point to that and say, well, you have to use words to show the gospel. But I think unfortunately, maybe out of a knee-jerk reaction, many conservatives have swung to the other extreme and misquoted the Apostle Paul, and they'll say now, "Preach the gospel always, use words if necessary."

See, both of these are extremes that miss the holistic point of the gospel that bold speech often builds on the deeds that precede it. But as we see this in context, this is a holistic picture, witness does require boldly speaking up. Because if all we do are good deeds, but we never attribute them to the name of Jesus, then we never actually fully witness to the gospel. That's precisely why these apostles are arrested, because they attribute the good deed that was good in that society towards this name of Jesus. So it should also pose us a question, where maybe have we spent the time cultivating relationships, doing good, and now it's just time to speak up. We're waiting to speak is actually hurting our witness more than helping at this point. You know, even the way that Peter mentions this good deed is quite bold. I love the nuance here. Once we begin to understand it, you look at verse 9 again, says there's great irony here says, "If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and 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 well before you."

Peter gives us very poignant statement to them. Are we on trial for a good deed we did? Well, if so, this was done in the name of Jesus, who you killed, by the way. But also beneath the surface, we miss something in the high honor shame culture here. The word that Peter uses for good deed is a very specific word only used a few times in the New Testament. There is a more generic term for good deeds, simply good works, it's used all throughout the Bible about just doing good for people. This specific word though referred to the benevolence that a benefactor in society would do for someone lesser, less fortunate, a benefactor who had means, some power, some money, and they would help someone out. And in their honor shame society, when that act of benevolence was done, the proper response was to honor the benefactor and give thanks. It was to give gratitude to them. So when Peter uses this word against them in the trial, he's actually

taking this honor shame concept and throwing it back in their face. He's saying, you know, we did this benevolent acts and instead of honoring us, you're now putting us on trial. Peter could have gone on with this. He could have claimed more rights. He could have said, used, done the very American way of like, how dare you do this to us? But instead he uses this as an opportunity to turn it into pointing to Jesus, the true benefactor, where he says, well, let me tell you then the true one you should honor and give gratitude to is the name of Jesus, the only one by which salvation comes. I mean, he's literally posing it before the Jewish leaders saying that if you want to really honor this benevolence, confess faith in Christ and be saved. He turns it around in such a way that boldly but very winsomely and wisely proclaims the gospel that leads to their own astonishment at this boldness.

See the shock of the Jewish leaders at this boldness was not just that they were being bold for a guy that they once denied, but they were doing it in such a way that was even even confronting their own dishonor in a way where he was actually dishonoring the people who should have given honor to the name of Jesus. There's a shock disturbance. Remember disturbing shock by these Jewish leaders for these unlearned men because they were speaking to them with such audacity. You know, we miss this in our very low honor shamed society. We miss just how appalling this is, but let me help paint a picture for you. If you're maybe if you're from an Asian household, you'll understand this. Imagine if if you are from an Asian household or high honor shame households or maybe not just picture it. It would be like if you're in an argument with your mom and your mom saying you've done all these things to shame me. How dare you do these things? I carried you in my belly for nine months and this is how you treat me. It's one of my mom's favorite comebacks at me. And instead of deferring say yes, mother, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You're the parents. You know, I honor you. You point a finger back in her face. You say well, you made me like this. I am this way because of you.

That's essentially what Peter's saying. He's saying you crucified this man. This Jesus whom you murdered you rejected completely throwing things back in their face. See boldness. Sometimes it means simply speaking the name of Jesus. Other times it means confronting those powers with a poignant way to point out sin. There are a lot of different ways to be bold for the gospel. I think maybe even just in our city boldness for Christ means standing firm on the historic claims of Christianity. Something that's not popular in our city to say like Peter. There's no other name by which we can be saved by the name of Jesus. There's a good order and design in the way God created us that we need to submit to. See simply by staying true that a historic claims of the gospel we can have a bold witness and we'll learn more about these ways that we can discern how to be bold in our culture as we get to that evangelism series. But that boldness will often prompt opposition as we spoke and when that happens, those are times that we may be prone to weariness to question to wonder how do we continue to go on from here, which is why I love that the passage doesn't end here. It doesn't simply end on praising Peter for his boldness and leave us in a place where we think gosh, I'm not like Peter. I'm not bold enough.

But it goes on to show the disciples prayer. Because faithful witness is sustained by prayer. That's our last points. Now, I got to give a caveat. We don't have a whole lot of time to get into all the details of this prayer, but we will be having a worship and prayer night at the end of the month on Friday, August 28th, I believe whatever that last Friday is where this will be the basis. This text will be the basis of that prayer night. So if you want to hear more about how we can pray towards faithful witness like the Apostles in Acts chapter 4, really would hope you would join us for that. But prayer sustains us in our faithful witness because it reminds us that God is ultimately the one who's sovereign. You know, it's fascinating that these Apostles starts the prayer with attributing just sovereignty to the Lord. They say sovereign Lord who made heaven and earth and everything in them. And then he goes down further to verse 27, truly in the city that were gathered together against your Holy servant Jesus whom you anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel to do whatever your hand and your plan have predestined to take place.

See in their prayer, they're not just telling God something God already knows about himself. They're reminding themselves the truth of who God is. That even as we face opposition, nothing has happened outside of your hands or your plan. See in their prayers, they're remembering and comforting themselves that even this opposition and persecution was part of God's plan. Even the fact that some people will oppose God in our witness is part all under God's control. And prayer is the means by which we can even remove any internal obstacles when it comes to our witness by being comforted in God's sovereign hands. You know, as I mentioned the very beginning, I think so often it's our own fears and self rationalizing that may be a bigger hindrance to our witness than the actual opposition we perceive or we face. We self rationalize that well, if I share this, how will they respond? If I say something wrong, will I do more harm

than good for the gospel? People don't really want to hear that they don't have the time. And so we self silence, but in this prayer, they're reminding themselves that there will come opposition.

And our job is not to produce fruitfulness, but to be steadfast in faithfulness to the witness God has called us into. Prayer also sustains us by keeping us focused on the mission at hand. Look at verse 29. And now Lord look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your Holy servant, Jesus. They don't just pray that God would save people. We often do that. We say, can you pray for my family members and my friends pray that they would be saved and it's good to pray for that because we know ultimately it's the hand of God that saves not us. But I love that half of their prayer includes them to continue to be strengthened by God in the spirit with more boldness while he continues to go before them to act and move miraculously.

So there's this combination in their prayer that they expect God to move miraculously, but they also expect to respond boldly when the time comes. It reminds me of a time in me and my wife's lives where we had probably a lot more free time without kids, but where this was just more present upon us this way to evangelize and be witnesses and something that we need to I think all remember whatever stage of life we're in. But just to commend my wife for a little bit, she'll hate that I'm doing this, but shaking her head right now. You know, I remember she was just saying, you know, if I'm convinced that Jesus is worth sharing and I want opportunities to pray for that, I'm just going to pray on my commute for opportunities to share and faithfully almost every day she would pray on her commute. Just give me opportunities to share and give me the words speak when they come and without fail, God would almost always answer that prayer. He give her opportunities to share and she would boldly say what the spirit led her to say.

See, I think faithfulness in witness boldness. It can even just start by praying for opportunities and praying even if we don't know where to start. God just help me to be faithful when the opportunities come. I don't know what that will look like. I don't even know if I have it in me, but give me the strength to be bold when you move and work in people's hearts so that I can respond the way you want me to. You know, God gives us this call to be his faithful witnesses to the ends of the earth, but I think often there's a another self silencing we do and that's how can we be witnesses if we're imperfect people? Maybe we struggle with this joy that Peter and John had. We don't feel that same urgency that we can't not speak of Jesus. Maybe we don't feel that same life transformation that the Jewish apparently saw in Peter and we struggle and wonder how can I be faithful in witnessing when it's hard for me to even be faithful in fighting sin following Jesus in small ways.

This is where I think the good news of the gospel comes in because our witness is not predicated or based upon our performance, but God's provision in his grace, you know, even through our imperfections those can be moments that God can work for his witness so that in our shortcomings in our failures in our clumsy fumbblings and imperfect moments in our lives, God can show the far greater provision and beauty of Christ that how even in our own sin, we need a savior that goes beyond and above its and the more we understand that truth of the gospel that God would love us so much that not only would he save us but deem us valuable to his most important task in the world of saving others that though he could do it himself, he chooses to use imperfect broken people that there's such an honor and value that God places upon each and every one of us in this life. The more we understand that the more the grace of God will work its joy and transformation in us to be his faithful witnesses to the ends of the earth.