

The Audacity to Respond

The Holy Spirit Empowers Peter & John to Respond to an Unfair Situation

The Empowered Church Series (Acts) - Part 6

Acts 4:1-22

Feb 11-12, 2023

Introduction

- **The Responsibility of Christians** – Our life is not our own. It's been bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your...MOUTH
 - **The importance of representing Christ** – we are Christians every day, not just on our good days, or during our 'work hours'. Everything we say and do reflects on Jesus.
 - **The sobering responsibility of words** – Words have the power to build up or tear down. The key with a Christian is that we are using Christ's lips to do so.
 - **Be very cautious with opinions** – there are some personalities in this room that think that they are justified in saying things because, 'they are just being honest'. Or, 'it's just my opinion.' But the very concept of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit living in you means something different.

We Don't Get to SAY Whatever we WANT

- **Recap & Context – Last Time**
 - **Miracle** - Peter and John going to the Temple, heal a paralyzed guy.
 - **Peter's Sermon**
 - **Convicting a Crowd** - Huge crowd gathers and Peter's preaching Jesus Christ to them, about how they killed the Messiah
 - **Repent** - Repent and turn from your sins to be saved!
 - **Jewish Messiah** - You are the Jews, the precious children of God – of all people on earth, you should be the ones who lifted up the Messiah!

Lesson

- **Whack-a-Mole**
 - **Peter & John are Arrested but the Church Grows**
 - **Acts 4:1-4** – *“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests¹ and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*
 - **Who are the bad guys here?**
 - **Priests** – I believe this is a reference to the high-priestly family and the influential leaders of the temple. It's a broad term.

¹ “The chief priests included the high priest and the principal temple officers (J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, E.T. [London, 1969], pp. 160–81), together with ex-high priests and members of the leading priestly families from which the high priest was regularly drawn at this period (see Schürer II, pp. 232–36).” New International Commentary of the New Testament, F.F. Bruce.

- **Captain of the Temple²** – He was like a more influential and powerful head of security. He led the security team, but himself was part of the high priestly family and was more spiritual in nature. He had a lot of influence and power (next to the High Priest).
- **Sadducees³** – This was the religious group that the high priestly family belonged. They believed in ‘just the Torah’, not all the rabbinic additions that the Pharisees added in. What that meant was that they were both stricter in one sense and less in another. They were stricter to adhere to the original writing, but less strict because they didn’t have all the additional laws added in by the Pharisees. By this time, they were a bit more religious royalty than religious teachers (unlike the Pharisees who were the opposite). They were the power players.
- **Are they really bad guys?** – depends on who you ask. Depends on how you look at it. I mean, ...**they are US.** They are serving God, in their mind. They are trying to get rid of heretics, in their mind. They are trying to keep order in the church, in their mind. They are trying to keep doctrine pure, in their mind. Isn’t that usually the list of reasons that you have caused trouble in your church history? Don’t you feel justified in ‘shutting own that thing?’ Yup, they did too. So, are they right? They think they are. Were you right? You still think you were. But who truly knows? God. Remember, it’s less important of a question to ask whether God is on our side and far more important to ask the question whether we are on HIS side.
- **Why were they ‘greatly annoyed’?** – it says that they were greatly annoyed because Peter and John were teaching the resurrection of the dead specifically in how it relates to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why was this so offensive or irritating?
 - **A Doctrinal Problem** – it’s important to note that although we don’t know much about the doctrinal view of the Sadducees (there are no historical documents about it), we do know a couple things that they were really passionate about and one of those is the doctrine of resurrection. They were against it. They didn’t believe in bodily resurrection. I don’t know what they thought the other option was, but they didn’t like that one. They knew that the Pharisee party

² “The “captain of the temple,” the commander of the temple police, was responsible for maintaining order in the temple courts, and he may have had misgivings lest the obstruction caused by so large a crowd might lead to a riot. ...The captain (στρατηγός) of the temple is referred to in rabbinical literature as the *sāgān*, or sometimes as *’iš har habbayit* (“the man of the temple mount”). He belonged to one of the chief-priestly families, and in the temple he ranked next to the high priest. The temple guard which he commanded was a picked body of Levites. Cf. 5:24, 26.” New International Commentary of the New Testament, F.F. Bruce.

³ “It is noteworthy that the Sadducees—the party to which the chief-priestly families belonged—are specially mentioned in this regard. They objected on principle to the doctrine of resurrection in itself, considering it to be a Pharisaic innovation, and they were greatly annoyed because the two apostles, by their insistence on the fact of Jesus’ resurrection, were so publicly and cogently maintaining that doctrine... The name “Sadducees” is most probably derived from the personal name Zadok, but from which Zadok is not known. An association with the priestly family of Zadok is unlikely, because they first appear in history after the removal of the Zadokites from the high-priesthood, and as supporters of the high-priestly dynasty of the Hasmonaeans. All the high priests from the reign of Herod to the outbreak of the war against Rome in A.D. 66 belonged to their party. As the continued enjoyment of the high-priestly prerogatives and indeed the political existence of the Jews as a nation depended on Roman goodwill during those years, the Sadducees collaborated as far as possible with the Roman authorities, and opposed religious or nationalist aspirations which might incur their wrath. There is no surviving evidence from the Sadducees themselves about their theology. What is recorded deals mainly with the points on which they differed from the Pharisees (see p. 114, 51, on 5:34). They rejected the “oral law” or “tradition of the elders” which the Pharisees maintained, holding that the written law should be preserved and applied without modification. Perhaps it was for this reason that they were reputed to be more severe in judgment than the Pharisees. They dismissed as innovations the Pharisaic belief in angelic and demonic hierarchies, together with the hope of bodily resurrection (see 23:8). See Josephus, BJ 2.164–66; Ant. 13.171, 298; 18.16–17; also Schürer II, pp. 404–14.” NICNT

taught the resurrection of the dead and they always debated it. They didn't need more leaders in town purporting that other position.

- **An Influence Problem** – They already got rid of Jesus of Nazareth. This is the group that did that. They were hoping that, that heretic's movement would be shut down after His public and humiliating execution, but here we are with a whole movement rising on their hands. If this continues, who knows how big the movement is going to get and it's going to get out of control.
 - **The Two-Sided Coin of Assuming Control Tactics** – it's easy to say that the authorities were threatened because they were afraid of losing power. I imagine, sometimes that is true in life. But it's not always true. My concern is that usually the comment is made by those who want power, or those who don't have power. Although it's likely those are the ones who would point it out, if it were true, in moments of honesty you would see it confessed more. In this situation, I don't think it was about feeling threatened per se, as much as it was being angry and annoyed. They didn't want a heretical movement to take hold. It wasn't about a power struggle (the Christians didn't have any power to struggle with), although maybe that was an internal subconscious element. I just don't like when people who do something wrong hide behind the excuse that the authorities are just threatened by losing power. It's a red herring too many times.
- **Peter & John were arrested and put in 'custody' overnight** – It says that it was late and the temple team didn't have time to handle it right then so they arrested them and put them in "temple jail" until they could assess it in the morning.
 - **The Arrest**—Proclaiming Jesus sometimes has consequences in this life for believers. I am clear that one day, if the tides turn during my lifetime, in America, that I may be jailed for what I believe and teach. It's not to the point yet and seems to be quite a distance away, but we never know, some things can change very quickly. But I need to realize that being a spokesman for Jesus, publicly and loudly would put me on a key hit list of those who would want to silence Christians. But that's my job. That's my identity. That's me. I'm a Christian. That may be how it has to go. Are you clear on that?
 - **This kind of feels like Disneyland jail...** imagine if we had one here at Bridgeway.
- **Many Got Saved** – it says they heard the word and believed. What a beautiful way of describing the transformation that happens when someone is converted/rescued/saved/healed, etc.
 - **5,000 in the church or in that group?**⁴ – it doesn't seem clear to me (I don't read Greek grammar well) whether it's saying that another 5,000 men added on to the original 3120, or if another 1880 men joined so that the group was about 5,000 total. I have always assumed that it was 5,000 total but I can't say for sure. Either way, that's a HUGE revival and a massive crowd.
 - **The Kingdom Clash at the front lines** – the good and bad in ministry environments. This is how it really goes. There are testimonies of great things and there is mess and bad things that happened in the same environment. Think about revivals in history. There are some life-changing stories that we are

⁴ "...it had the effect of adding a large number to the three thousand who believed on the day of Pentecost. The number of men alone, says Luke, now totaled some five thousand... Men as distinct from women and children: ἀνδρῶν, not ἀνθρώπων (cf. Matt. 14:21)." NICNT

proud of, and there was some weird stuff we try to keep quiet. Think about super Charismatic and Pentecostal movements. There are some great things, and some messed up things. And that's how ministry works. You have a leader who changes the lives of hundreds of thousands only to have a moral failure and you find out he was not a great guy all along. What do you do with that? You realize that God works through fallible, broken, regular people. You glorify the Lord for the great stuff and pin the bad stuff on the Enemy and on broken people like you.

- **Spiritual Showdown**

- **The Jewish Leaders Hold Council & Question Peter & John**

- **Acts 4:5-10** – “On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together⁵ 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 [in a grammatically snotty way], “By what power or by what name did you⁶ do this?” ⁸ Then Peter, filled⁷ with the Holy Spirit, said to them,⁸ “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 crucified⁹, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you¹⁰ well.”

- **New bad guys get involved:** It's likely, although not certain, that they convened the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was kind of like the Supreme Court of the Jews. It was the highest regulating body of the Jews. It was made up of various leaders, the high priests family, all the temple leaders, etc. It originally had 70 members. It was disbanded and redesigned after the fall of the Temple in AD70 (About 40 years after this story). They could make things happen. If we look back, it was this council that determined all the stuff against Jesus.¹¹ Some were for Him and some

⁵ “The next morning the Sanhedrin, met (probably in a building immediately to the west of the temple precincts¹³), and the chief-priestly, Sadducean, element in its membership was especially well represented... The Sanhedrin (a Hebrew and Aramaic loanword from Gk. συνέδριον, the word translated “court” in v. 15 below) was the senate and supreme court of the Jewish nation. In the NT it is also called the πρεσβυτέριον “body of elders” (22:5; Luke 22:66) and γερουσία, “senate” (5:21); Josephus also refers to it as the βουλή, “council” (BJ 2.331, 336; 5.532; Ant. 20.11). The Mishnah calls it the Sanhedrin, the great Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin of the seventy-one, the great law-court. It comprised the high priest, who presided over it by virtue of his office, and seventy other members. It first appears in history in the Hellenistic period (c. 200 B.C.) as the body which regulated the internal affairs of the nation (Josephus, Ant. 12.142); it maintained this role until the revolt of A.D. 66. (It should not be confused with the later Sanhedrin of scholars which regulated the religious law of Israel after the war of A.D. 66–73, under Yohanan ben Zakkai as its first president.) The Sanhedrin at this time included a majority of members from the Sadducean party, supporting the chief-priestly interests, and a powerful minority from the Pharisaic party, to which most of the scribes or professional.” NICNT

⁶ “There is an implication of scorn in the emphatic “you” (ὁμεῖς) of v. 7, coming as it does at the end of the sentence.” NICNT

⁷ “Gk. πλησθεῖς πνεύματος ἁγίου, “filled with (the) Holy Spirit.” A distinction should be made between this use of the aorist participle passive, denoting a special moment of inspiration, and the use of the adjective πλήρης (“full”) to denote the abiding character of a Spirit-filled person (like Stephen in 6:5).” NICNT

⁸ “For such an occasion as this the apostles had already received instructions from their Master: “Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict” (Luke 21:14–15). They now proved the truth of this assurance.” NICNT

⁹ “Of the responsibility of the men whom Peter was now addressing there could be no doubt; it was they who had handed Jesus over to Pilate, Caiaphas bearing the chief responsibility. (It is to Caiaphas that reference is probably made in Jesus’ words to Pilate in John 19:11, “he who delivered me to you has the greater sin.”).” NICNT

¹⁰ “The former cripple was present in court with them: either he had been locked up with them overnight, as being partly responsible for the commotion in Solomon’s Colonnade, or else he had been summoned as a witness.” NICNT

¹¹ “Not many weeks had passed since these two men had taken a part in the arrest and condemnation of Jesus. If they hoped that they had got rid of him, their hope was short-lived; it looked now as if they were going to have as much trouble on his account as they had had before his death.” NICNT

were against Him, but the majority won and they ordered Him to be handed over to the Roman authorities to be crucified.

- **scribes** – who are these guys?¹² – They are the experts in the Torah. In a culture that bases their way of life around the books of Moses (Torah – 1st 5 books of the

¹² *Scribes in Postexilic Times.* With the restoration under Ezra-Nehemiah, the term scribe begins to be associated more narrowly with those who gathered together, studied, and interpreted the Torah (Jewish Law). They became in essence a separate profession of teachers (although unpaid), able to preserve accurately the Law of Moses and interpret it to meet conditions in postexilic times. In this initial period, Ezra himself appears as the ideal scribe, “learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel” (Ezr 7:11) because he had “set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances to Israel” (v.10). In Ecclesiasticus 38:24, 33, and 39:1–11, the scribe is portrayed as one who, because of his diligent study of the Law, the prophets, and writings (38:34; 39:1), is able to penetrate the hidden meanings of texts (39:2, 3) and thus is able to serve as judge and counsel for the affairs of the people and state (38:33; 39:4–8). Because of his absolutely invaluable place in a society governed by the Torah, the scribe is worthy of praise and veneration throughout succeeding generations (39:9). By the 2nd century BC, the scribes were a fairly distinct class in Jewish society. They appear as such during the Maccabean wars, acting as a negotiating body with the rival Syrians (1 Mc 7:12). It is also significant that from this time forward, the history of the scribe in Jewish life is closely linked with the rise of the Pharisees. Although there were apparently some scribes affiliated with the rival Sadducean party, the lay party of the Pharisees with its absolute devotion to the Law (including the oral law) became the primary religio-political affiliation for the scribes (see the close connection in the NT, Mt 5:20; 12:38; 15:1; Mk 7:5; Lk 6:7). *Training and Status Within the Community.* The training of scribes initially occurred within priestly family-based guilds which guaranteed the regulation and perpetuation of this now vital responsibility (1 Chr 2:55). Later, scribal training in the Law became open to members of all classes, with the eventual result, by Jesus’ time, of scribes from nonpriestly families being far more numerous and influential. Training in the Law began at an early age under the personal supervision of a teacher (rabbi), who instructed in all matters of the Law and its interpretation for present needs. Because the written Law of Moses could not possibly speak directly to conditions in postexilic times, the oral interpretation and application of the written law to meet such current needs was a significant contribution by the scribes. Such “oral law” promulgated by them was regarded as equal to the written and equally binding for those desiring to please God (see Mk 7:6–13). This important function, lying at the very heart of Jewish life, accounts for the participation of the scribes in the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, in order to make legal decisions in keeping with the Law, obviously needed the presence of those most knowledgeable about the minutest details of the Torah and the principles governing its application to new circumstances. The scribes, consequently, were the only members outside the aristocratic high priests and elders to be represented in this Jewish supreme court (Mt 26:57; Mk 14:43, 53; Lk 22:66; Acts 23:9). Being the authoritative instructors of the Law both within the temple (Lk 2:46) and within the various synagogues of Judea and Galilee (Lk 5:17), as well as prominent members of the Sanhedrin, the scribes were greatly respected within the Jewish community. They wore special robes (Mk 12:38) with memorial fringes (Mt 23:5) at the bottom, pencases possibly from the girdle (Ez 9:2), and phylacteries or “prayer boxes” hanging from the arms (Mt 23:5). Such attire made their presence obvious and occasioned the rising or bowing of the common people when they passed (Mk 12:38). They were addressed with respect as “rabbi” or “master” (Mt 23:7) and were given the place of honor at worship as well as at social affairs (Mt 23:2; Mk 12:39; Lk 20:46). Indeed, the high regard the Jews held for their scribes is testified by the fact that such teachers of the Law were buried alongside the purported tombs of the patriarchs and prophets. *Jesus and the Scribes.* The scribes appear predominantly in the ministry of Jesus as those concerned with the circumspectness of legal observance. Luke refers to the scribes as “lawyers,” describing their chief function as interpreters of the Jewish Law in a way readily comprehensible to his gentile audience. It is often found, therefore, that the scribes were critical members of Jesus’ audience, accusing him of violating the Law on numerous occasions: in forgiving sins (Mt 9:1–3; Lk 5:17–26), in breaking their notion of sabbath observance through work (Lk 6:1, 2) and healing (Lk 6:6–11), in not following their accepted ceremonial washings (Mk 7:2–5), and in ignoring their practice of fasting (Lk 5:33–39). Not surprisingly, they especially disapproved of Jesus’ practice of mixing with the unclean and outcasts of Jewish society (Mk 2:16, 17; Lk 15:1, 2). In a similar light, they are not unfrequently found posing questions concerning the Law for the purpose of tricking Jesus (Mk 7:1; 12:28, 35; Lk 11:53; Jn 8:3). In a similar fashion, they demanded that Jesus make his identity clear (Mt 12:38) and reveal the source of his authority to perform miracles (Mk 3:22; Lk 20:1–4). Although there is evidence that a minority of the scribes accepted Jesus (Mt 8:19; 13:52; Mk 12:32; Jn 3:1), their primary attitude toward Jesus was one of hostility. As previously suggested, this was partly due to Jesus’ differing expression of fidelity to the Mosaic law and his openness toward the outcasts. It was also partly due to the rising popularity of Jesus among the people, which posed a threat to their own authority (Mt 7:29) and to the safety of the city (21:15; Mk 11:18). Certainly another major contributing factor of their opposition to Jesus was his open exposure of their hypocrisy and corruption. In his rebukes of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus openly accused them of catering to public approval (Mt 23:5–7; Mk 12:38, 39; Lk 11:43) and, while appearing outwardly correct and holy, being inwardly utterly corrupt (Mt 23:25–28; Lk 11:39–41). Jesus also attacked the principle of oral law promulgated by the scribes, which they demanded the people to follow. Jesus charged that the oral law was a “heavy burden” which led the people astray and which the scribes themselves did not even bother to follow (Mt 23:2–4, 13–22; Lk 11:46). While emphasizing the minor points of the Law, the scribes were also guilty of ignoring the weightier concerns of justice, mercy, and faith (Mt 23:23, 24; Mk 12:40; Lk 11:42). Furthermore, contrary to being the descendants of the prophets, as the scribes held themselves to be, the scribes, Jesus claimed, would have killed the prophets if they had lived in their day (Mt 23:29–36; Lk 20:9–19). Those hoping to see the kingdom of heaven would, Jesus suggested, have to surpass this kind of “righteousness” practiced by the scribes (Mt 5:20). It is not surprising to find, therefore, the scribes anxious to get rid of Jesus (Mk 14:1; Lk 11:53). His more flexible interpretation of the Law posed a clear threat to their position and authority within the community. The scribes joined forces with their normal opponents (the high priesthood) to engineer Jesus’ arrest (Mk 14:43). When Jesus appeared before them and the rest of the Sanhedrin, they worked with the other leaders to construct a case against him worthy of death (Mt 26:57–66). When taking Jesus before Herod, they stood by and shouted their accusations with the others (Lk 23:10). Finally, they participated with other members of the Sanhedrin in mocking Jesus on the cross, demanding that Jesus save himself by coming down from the cross to “inspire their faith” (Mt 27:41–43). Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the scribes continued with the other elements of the Sanhedrin to oppose the early Christian church, and brought about Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 6:12–14).” Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible

Bible, the Law) they were really important and influential. They would be referred to at times with the title ‘teacher’ or ‘rabbi’. They were also called Lawyers.

- **Who is Annas the high priest?**¹³ – He’s the high priest emeritus. He is the former high priest who served for 9 years in that spot until he was removed, but he still held tons of influence and power. His sons and sons in law took over for him and so the whole family was very influential.
- **Who is Caiaphas?**¹⁴ – Joseph Caiaphas, current reigning high priest (and therefore President of the Sanhedrin Council). Annas’s son-in-law. He held the term of high priest for a long 18 years.
- **Who is “temple” John?**¹⁵ – it’s likely that this is one of Anna’s sons, actually the one who would later take over after Caiaphas was deposed.
- **Who is Alexander?** – there’s no information on this dude.
- **What’s a high priestly family?** – It’s the high priest, his sons, his father in law, etc. Remember, a high priest is a ‘born into thing’, it’s not by merit. So if there’s a high priest, then his sons are priests by genetics.
- **The Question Shifts** – notice that the reason they put them in prison initially was that they were teaching/preaching the resurrection of Christ and of the dead. But now they have another question in the morning: By what power or name did you do this healing? Why is that the question they lead with?
 - **Miracle Assumed; Source Questioned** – interestingly they can’t deny that a miracle occurred. Something supernatural healed this guy. The question for them is where did the power come from? Who are these guys, Peter and John, representing? IF they are alleging that there is a competing power to God, then the Temple officials have an easy answer: Get rid of them immediately and harshly. IF they are alleging that they are following Yahweh, things get more complicated because they it’s a debate about what the true God wants. They want to know right off the bat how deep this problem is going to get.
- **Peter’s Response** – Peter always has something to say but this time it’s a Holy Spirit prompted message.
 - **Filled with the Holy Spirit response** – The Bible highlights that Peter’s response was not his own but was the Holy Spirit speaking through him. This is amazing! It’s what Jesus told them would happen. It’s what Jesus referred to as happening when Peter called him the Christ. It’s what we have the beautiful opportunity to have happen today. The Holy Spirit fills our minds with things to say. We are just normally thinking and talking but what comes to mind is shockingly powerful and insightful. We’d like to think that it came from us and that we are more brilliant than we ever knew, but that’s not true. It’s one of the

¹³ “Annas or Ananus (Heb. *Hānān*), son of Sethi, was appointed to the high-priesthood by P. Sulpicius Quirinius, legate of Syria, in A.D. 6, and held the office for nine years. Even after his deposition he continued to exercise great influence: five of his sons, one son-in-law (Caiaphas), and one grandson became high priest for shorter or longer periods during the following half-century. His personal authority is reflected in the part he plays in the trial narrative of the Fourth Gospel (John 18:13–24). He is called “the high priest” here in the sense of ex-high priest (or, as we might say, high priest emeritus). In Luke 3:2 he is coupled with Caiaphas (reigning high priest at the time) in a chronological note: “in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas” (ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα).” NICNT

¹⁴ “Caiaphas was the surname of Joseph (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35, 95), son-in-law to Annas according to John 18:13. He was appointed high priest by Valerius Gratus, prefect of Judaea, in A.D. 18 and held the office for the remarkably long term of eighteen years, which included the ten years of Pilate’s administration. He was deposed at last by L. Vitellius (who as legate of Syria visited Judaea at the time of Pilate’s recall in A.D. 36) and replaced by Jonathan, son of Annas.” NICNT

¹⁵ “If the Western reading “Jonathan” (instead of “John”) be followed in v. 6, the reference might be to Jonathan, son of Annas, who eventually succeeded Caiaphas in the high-priesthood.” NICNT

ways that God speaks through us. This is what preachers and teachers should seek so that the pulpit is not filled with opinions but with the Word of God.

- **Prayer Priming** – I think that a good idea is to pray about our responses before we give them. The Holy Spirit can operate without that but it's an honoring things to do. If you get a tough question, especially about Jesus, whisper a prayer in your mind asking God to speak through you, before you respond. It can change everything. It's what I do when I get an apologetic question.
- **IF you are asking about the GOOD DEED we just did, healing this guy** – Peter wants to be clear that it's always a good thing when someone is healed. Why are they sweating him for doing something kind? Why did they attack Jesus for doing something kind? Aren't we all on the same team of helping our brothers and sisters around here? Of course Peter knows that it's a deeper problem than that, but he wants it to be publicly known that all they did was heal a guy and talk about Jesus. Obviously the healing part isn't the big deal, but it does lend evidence that their message might be right too.
- **Let's be real clear: it was ALL JESUS!** – The Holy Spirit had a couple things that He wanted to say and wasn't going to hold back. The first was to shout...It was all about Jesus. The healing wasn't these two guys, it was Jesus. Salvation isn't random, it's Jesus. Everything is about Jesus!
- **Let's also be clear that YOU KILLED HIM** – The Holy Spirit was firing conviction. He wanted it to be clear, especially to this group that actually had a hand in killing Christ, that they were the ones who killed the Messiah. No ifs, ands, or buts.
- **Let's also be clear that HE RESURRECTED** – No thanks to this group, Jesus resurrected and is alive and active today. That means you will need to answer to Him. He is not dead and gone like you were hoping. He is never more alive than right now. You are not off the hook.
- **Why do they say, He was resurrected by God?** – we tend to look back at the Bible with modern understanding after thousands of years of sorting things out. We know the Trinity (to some degree) and we believe that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity equal to the Father. The group talking right now doesn't know any of that, other than Peter & John knowing that Jesus was the Son of God (which they didn't get into here). They are telling the Jewish leaders, who allegedly serve God, that it was actually the God that they serve who did all of this and affirmed Jesus Christ by resurrection. Peter and John aren't teaching a different power source, they are teaching one and the same as the temple leaders are claiming. That means we have a bit of a problem about who is tracking best with God.
- **An Ace Up His Sleeve**
 - **Peter Preaches to the Council with Proof on His Side**
 - **Acts 4:11-14** – *“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders¹⁶, which has become the cornerstone [like the Psalmist says in Psalm 118:22]. ¹² And there*

¹⁶ *“Builders” appears in rabbinical literature as a figure of speech for teachers of the law. In the Qumran texts “the builders of the wall” are leaders of a religious community, whether of the true one (as in CD 4.12, applying Mic. 7:11) or a false one (as in CD 4.19, with reference to the*

is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized¹⁷ that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.”

- **While we are on the subject (taking the opportunity)** – Peter just keeps driving. He starts preaching about Christ. Clearly this was the last thing that the temple leaders wanted. They wanted them to answer the question and shut up but Peter’s not having it. He’s using the opportunity before him to preach the gospel.
- **Why the Weird Cornerstone Analogy?** – it seems rather random for Peter to use some odd rock analogies. Was it? Not at all. It was a well-known Psalm, he was quoting, one that almost everyone agreed was a Messianic prophecy, one of the earliest. A few people thought that the cornerstone was Israel itself with the builders being the Jewish leaders, but many think although that may be true, the main Cornerstone of the Jews was the Messiah Himself to come.
- **What the Analogy Means¹⁸** - The original Psalm is talking about God protecting and ultimately reviving and lifting up His chosen people, the nation of Israel. What everyone else had written off, was going to be lifted high. Since that time (which was 1,000 years prior), the Jewish leaders deemed it a Messianic prophecy. So, Peter grabs a Messianic prophecy and shows how this group was literally a part of that fulfillment and it was Jesus! Ironically rabbis even referred to ‘builders’ as teachers of the law (Jewish leaders), which makes it a specific prophecy of the Messiah being rejected by the Jewish leaders, which is exactly what happened and who THEY WERE!
- **There is no other Savior** – Peter is going ALL-IN on Jesus. He is throwing down the gauntlet. There is NO other name, no person, no savior other than Jesus. He is the ONLY way to salvation.
 - **Why is Jesus the ONLY way?** – What’s intriguing in today’s modern viewpoint is that Christianity’s claim that Jesus is the only way is seen as restricting and elitist. It seems that there are multiple options and Christians just want their way to be right. But that’s not true. Jesus is the only way because He’s the only savior that showed up to deal with sin. No other religion claims this. Many don’t claim a Messiah is needed, but if sin is a true problem, and it is, then you need a real Messiah and he’s the one God gave us.
 - **Why it’s not elitism** – it’s not elitist, it’s just THE solution. If the house was burning down and there was a door out, it’s not elitist to tell people to go out the door, it’s practical. Jesus is THE way, the only way, not in the sense that He’s the best of options, but He’s literally the ONLY shot we have.

rickety wall of Ezek. 13:10–16). In the present context, when once the rejected stone had been identified as Jesus, the “builders” who rejected it were bound to be interpreted as the Jewish authorities. Ps. 118:22 thus became “one of the sheet-anchors of early Christian teaching” (E. G. Selwyn, First Peter, p.269).” NICNT

¹⁷ “Gk. ἐπεγίνωσκον -- they directed special attention to this fact as an important piece of relevant evidence. If the compound ἐπιγινώσκω is to be distinguished from the simple γινώσκω, it may be by a certain decisive quality.” NICNT

¹⁸ he bases his argument on a well-known Old Testament text. “The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner” (Ps. 118:22) is one of the earliest messianic testimonies. It was so used (by implication) by Jesus himself, as the conclusion of the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:10–11). In the original Old Testament context the rejected stone is perhaps Israel, despised by the nations but chosen by God for the accomplishment of his purpose. But, as so often in the New Testament, God’s purpose for Israel finds its fulfillment in the single-handed work of Christ. Both here and in later Christian use of this “testimony,” the “builders” are interpreted as the rulers of the Jewish nation, who failed to acknowledge Jesus as the divinely sent deliverer; but the Stone which they disregarded has now received from God the place of highest distinction: Jesus now sits enthroned at God’s right hand.” NICNT

- **What Impacted the Temple Leaders Most** – the Bible says the temple leaders, who do this for a living, every day, were ASTONISHED! Why? What caught them off guard and captured their attention so much?
 - **The Boldness** – why was this a big deal? Why couldn't they just be passionate about their views? Lots of people are, right? Ahhh, but it was the way that they were talking ABOUT what they were talking about. It was the combo that freaked them out. These regular guys were acting like they were on the same level of education and authority in the things of God. Nobody challenged this group like that unless they had the skills to back it up.
 - **They were normal: Uneducated, common men**¹⁹ – what does this mean and why was that so stunning? It means that Peter and John were clearly not trained in either the universities nor the rabbinic schools and yet here we have Peter throwing down Messianic prophecies and using Scripture like a pro. Clearly it was the Holy Spirit speaking through him, as Jesus Christ promised that He would (Lk 21:14-15).
 - **The Glory Temperature Through Mankind** – the more gifted and talented we are, the less glory God tends to receive. People are more mesmerized by the person and assume it's inherent in the person and not look through or behind the person to the true source of the power, which is God.
 - **It's Tricky for God to Raise up Human Leaders** – we are a messy and convoluted bunch. For every David, who was messy in his own regard, there are 10 trainwreck-Sauls. For every soft-hearted and committed Daniel, there are a thousand scandal-ridden leaders. God ONLY works with broken people. God ONLY works with fallible leaders. He could do it Himself and purify the process but that's not the point, the point is God wants to let us partner with Him, as broken and messed up as we are. The more we obey and submit the more fun He will have and the more glory that rises.
 - **They recognized that they had been with Jesus** – this is perhaps one of the most beautiful compliments anyone can ever receive. They were simply reacting and responding but to those who have ears to hear, this is what we long to hear. We are indwelt, anointed, and empowered by the God of heaven. What a joy! Nothing else could account for what the temple leaders were experiencing at this moment. There was no human explanation for what happened or what was happening. Jesus blew them away with the same ability to talk at a high level of spirituality and theology without being educated in the traditional schools (John 7:15)
- **Seeing the Healed Man (Proof), they had nothing to say in opposition** – And this is why sometimes we need Power Evangelism to impact the world today. Sometimes we need some kingdom power to demonstrate that we are not just talking another opinion among millions. Sometimes the world needs to be confronted with the reality of heaven. Sometimes God gets to flex.

¹⁹ This is the force in the present context of ἀγράμματοι ... καὶ ἰδιῶται. In papyri the former word appears with the sense "illiterate"; here it means rather "uneducated" in respect of rabbinical training. As for ἰδιώτης, which means "private person" in ordinary Greek, it is interesting to note that it appears as a loanword in postbiblical Hebrew and Aramaic (*heddyôt*) with the meaning "commoner," "layman," "unskilled." Here it implies that Peter and John, far from being professional exponents of scripture, were laymen -- '*ammê hA'Areš*' ("people of the land") in the rabbinical sense of that phrase, denoting the rank and file of the Jewish population who could not be expected to know or practise the details of the oral law (cf. John 7:49). The wonder was that they showed such mastery of biblical argument." NICNT

- **Good Luck with That**
 - **The Council Makes a Plan to Shut the Church Down**
 - **Acts 4:15-22** – *“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, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.”*
 - **Sidebar Convo** – The temple leaders have them escorted out of the room for a moment so they can talk about what’s happening.
 - **What are we going to do with these guys?** – They are literally confused. It was not like they had a simple answer and were just trying to get the other guys of the council on board.
 - **The Miracle was Legit** – everyone saw it. It was super public. No one, not even us, can deny it. Remember, they believe in miracles. The Old Testament is full of miracles. Their history is based on miracles. The question is not, do miracles happen, but who’s causing the miracles and are they legit?
 - **But we have a problem: it’s gonna spread** – what’s going to spread? The fact that these guys were empowered by God to heal a man and that means that others are going to put confidence and trust in the message they are teaching, which is not okay with us.
 - **We have to shut them down** – regardless of whether the miracle is legit, we don’t agree with the message and we need them to stop talking. So, let’s agree to shut these guys down with our authority.
- **God Rather Than Man**
 - **P&J Civilly Disobey and Are Punished for It**
 - **Acts 4:18-22** – *“So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 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.^{20”} ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.”*
 - **They “charged” them not to speak or teaching in the name of Jesus** – what does ‘charging’ mean? How can they demand this? They are the bosses and big dogs of Jewish culture. They can shame people and shut them down. They can literally have people beaten if they want through the temple guard. They actually had a lot of power.
 - **Notice what they didn’t do²¹** – they didn’t argue that Jesus’ body wasn’t gone, nor did they refute that Jesus was resurrected. They could have

²⁰ “Peter and John had probably never heard of Socrates, and had certainly never read Plato’s Apology, but they gave the same kind of answer as Socrates gave when he was offered his release on condition that he give up the pursuit and discussion of truth and wisdom: “I shall obey God rather than you.”... Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 29D (for Socrates “the god” might be a more appropriate rendering of τῷ θεῷ than “God”). Cf. 5:29 below.” NICNT

²¹ “It is particularly striking that neither on this nor on any subsequent occasion did the authorities take any serious action to disprove the apostles’ central affirmation—the resurrection of Jesus. Had it seemed possible to refute them on this point, how eagerly would the opportunity have been seized! Had their refutation on this point been achieved, how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed! It is plain that the apostles spoke of a bodily resurrection when they said that Jesus had been raised from the dead; it is equally plain that the

embarrassed the disciples if they had proof and shut things down publicly, but they didn't.

- **Peter's Response** – again, Peter HAS to say something (praise the Lord).
 - **Think about what you are telling us** – Peter challenges them to reflect on what they are saying. Peter is saying that it was God that told them to do it and now the temple leaders are telling them not to do what God told them to do. Are they sure they want to defy God?
 - **As for Us** – Peter concludes that sentence by saying, 'as y'all think about that, I know what we are going to do.' We will follow God. We will follow what God has asked of us. You can go to Him and sort that out, but we know our marching orders and we can't do otherwise. This is legit, we've seen it and know it and have to talk about it. Can you really blame us? Wouldn't you do the same thing?
 - **When a Christian can pull the Civil Disobedience card** – It's a very common front and defense mechanism for someone who is doing something wrong, to claim that they are on the right side and use God as a defense: I'm just doing what God told me to do, those other people are against God. But many times that's not true. Not everyone dislikes you because you are a Christian. Sometimes they dislike you because you aren't a nice or good person. Don't use God as a shield. It's critical that we look at this story as the Bible lays it out. Peter and John were arrested and held in custody for preaching Jesus Christ and resurrection. They were not jailed for arguing their political views. They weren't jailed because they didn't want to follow government mandates out of preference or personal opinion. They were jailed specifically because of the gospel. That's where the civil disobedience card can be played cleanly. We need to be very cautious playing it any other time. There may be some times to do so, but it better be rare.
 - **They further threatened them** – with what? What are their threats? What can they do? If you see prior in the section, "*They "charged" them not to speak or teaching in the name of Jesus,*" you'll see this group has a lot of power to harm the apostles both socially and physically. It's a legit threat.
 - **The Inability to Punish** – they wanted to beat the guys to instill fear and dominate them into submission, but they couldn't. Everyone had already seen the miracle and heard the message, so if they do that, the word is going to get out that the temple leaders MAY have gone against what God was doing. Lots of people were moved (from 2000-5000+) by this whole experience, personally, passionately (enough to change the course of their lives), and if they caught word that the temple leaders were shutting it down, they could have a small mutiny on their hands (and we know what Rome thinks of that).
 - **The Paralyzed Guy was 40+ years old**²² – why is this important? Again, we address the issue of 'more difficult versus less difficult' miracles for God to accomplish, in our minds. It's a fallacy but we believe that some things are

authorities understood them in this sense. The body of Jesus had vanished so completely that all the resources at their command could not produce it. The disappearance of his body, to be sure, was far from proving his resurrection, but the production of his body would have effectively disproved it. Now the apostles' claim that Jesus was alive had received public confirmation by the miracle of healing performed in his name. It was, for the Sanhedrin, a disturbing situation." NICNT

²² "the cripple who had been cured was over forty years old: he had reached an age at which such cures, especially for a congenital defect, simply do not occur." NICNT

difficult for God, and some are not. The Jews believed that someone who was born that way and lived that way for 40+ years wouldn't or couldn't be healed. They were proved wrong.

Conclusion

- **We don't get to say whatever we want** – Our goal is to talk FOR Jesus. All the time.
 - **We must respond with and in the Holy Spirit** – We can either partner with the Holy Spirit in our responses or we can be embarrassed by His correction to us and through us.
- **We Are His Witnesses All the Time** – not just on *business hours*. We don't get to say whatever we want. We drag His name into it.
- **Are we willing to pay the cost for Christ?** Legally? Civilly?
 - **Are we paying the price for the right thing?** – are we claiming persecution where there is none? Are we playing the victim? Or are we truly standing in a loving way for the right things of God and suffering?