

# Growth of the Church

by Steve Gallagher

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*Steve Gallagher's sermon explores the miraculous growth of the early church and the challenges faced by the disciples as they spread the Gospel.*

**Duration:** 51:33

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:19, Acts 3:6, Acts 4:13, Acts 4:29, Acts 4:31

**Topics:** "Church Growth", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Acts 3 and 4, highlighting the growth of the early church, the boldness and courage of Peter and John in the face of opposition from the religious leaders, and the power of the Holy Spirit at work. It emphasizes the importance of speaking the truth fearlessly, seeking God's authority, and praying for boldness to preach the Word despite threats and challenges.

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## Transcript

Okay, praise the Lord. We're going to go over Acts 3 and most of 4 this morning. Why don't we open in a word of prayer.

Lord, we do desire your guidance, your thoughts on the events of that day 2,000 years ago. Lord, we ask you to shine your light on the things that happened that day and what came out of that and so on. Make it real to us, Lord.

Help us to comprehend the reality of what it was like in those early days of the church. Just transport us back there, Holy Spirit. I pray and help us to shake off for a few minutes this 21st century post-modern church version of Christianity that we have grown up in.

This worldly apostate church environment that is practically all we've known. Lord, help us to look beyond that. The preconceived notions that we've developed over the years and all the different filters that have been imposed on us that have caused us to read into scripture things that are not there.

Because of the things we've been taught by men who are not being led by the Holy Spirit. Help us to rise above it, Lord, I pray. I pray for your anointing, Holy Spirit, to share about these chapters and these events.

In Jesus' name, amen. Okay, we're going to look at the growth of the church this morning. I want to begin by just touching upon Chapter 2, what we talked about last week.

Of course, it was the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of what came from that. These 120 disciples filled with the Holy Ghost and fire, and the environment in that early church that came forth from there, that we see in the end of Chapter 2, verses 42-47, that description of what life was like. It must have been heaven on earth.

The unity, the passion for the things of God, the atmosphere charged with the Spirit of God. That's the way it was. Now, what we're going to be covering here in a few minutes happened sometime after that.

I don't know if it was weeks or months, probably not beyond months, I don't guess. But it was in those early days, one way or another. And as exciting as it was, think about what it must have been like for the disciples.

These 11 men, really, and Matthias added in, who had walked with Jesus and gone through all the events of Calvary, and then the 50 days, and all of that, and then the outpouring, and then 3,000 believers added to their small little group. That's exciting, but it created all kinds of problems, even if they were good problems. And imagine trying to organize, and disciple, and lead 3,000 Jews.

I mean, just that in and of itself. If you've ever been to Israel, you know what a challenge that would be. But, you know, these are brand new believers.

And their entire lives, they've been indoctrinated into a system, this pharisaical system of ritualism, and scrutinizing all the little aspects of the law, and all these added-on-to things. This is all they've known. Just like you and I have been shaped and molded by the American church, far more so them, in the sense that they didn't even have the light that you and I have.

They were raised in this system, this religious system, with these religious-minded men who were whited sepulchers, according to Jesus. So, they had a lot of baggage that they had to work their way through, just like the disciples did. You know, it was only, what, a few weeks or months, whatever, before that the disciples were still thinking that the kingdom of God coming meant that Israel was going to rise to power, and all of that, overthrow Rome, and that kind of thinking.

You know, so look at what the disciples had to go through. Even after three years of living, and walking with Jesus, and hearing his teachings, and all of it, these people are expected to turn on a dime, their attitudes. So, you can imagine that the challenge was overwhelming for the disciples.

And the reason I'm saying all of that is that must have made up kind of the focus of the disciples during those following months after Pentecost. That was their focus, is to disciple the people they have to work with right now. You know, they had their hands full with that.

But when the Lord thought it was time to move forward again, then he started unfolding things again. And that's what we're gonna see in this story that we find in Acts 3 and 4. Now, there must have been hundreds of anecdotes Luke could have chosen to represent what life was like in those days. I mean, can you imagine all the healings that must have happened, and all the miraculous events, and powerful things that occurred that have been lost to us, that we don't know about.

But he chose this one, and I could understand why he chose this situation to highlight what was going on in the church. First of all, we do have a healing, a miracle occurred through two of the disciples, healing this lame man. And then, on the heels of that, Peter preaching another sermon.

And as we will find out later, 2,000 more people added to the church that day. And then, after all of that, on the heels of that, then comes the opposition from the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders. And as far as we know, this is the first sign of real opposition to the church.

So, it's easy to see why Luke chose this vignette to show what was going on. So, one of the first things we see as the kingdom of God is starting to unfold now, there in Palestine, one of the first things we see is the power of God manifested. Praise the Lord.

Now, I'm going to read a lot here this morning, and I decided at the last minute that I'm going to read it out of the Living Bible. And most of you here understand why I like to use the Living Bible at times. But for those who don't understand why, let me just say a couple things real quick.

The Living Bible is a paraphrase, and so it should always be read alongside a literal translation, okay? You know, but I want to say something. Kenneth Taylor, the man who developed the Living Bible, I can tell by reading this Bible that this was a godly man who understood what it meant to walk with the Lord and hear from the Lord. The way he expresses things, because he's not held in check by the literal translation, and he's free to express what actually happened.

And we'll see it in the first verse. The perfect example of how he has the freedom to say what actually happened, and not be confined to the actual words, you know? But you should always keep a literal translation like the New King James or NAS or whatever alongside, because there are occasions, you know, he's just a man, and there are occasions he says things, eh, not quite right there, Kenneth, and I'll have to talk to him later when I get up there. But he really mostly, the Living Bible's a good paraphrase.

So let's get into this story. Chapter three, verse one. Peter and John went to the temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock daily prayer meeting.

Now, does your translation say it like that? I bet it doesn't, does it? But that's exactly the situation, you know? That is what was happening. It says the ninth hour to pray. Well, that was one of the three times of established prayer that was going on at that time amongst the Jews.

And so, you know, he's putting it in modern terms that we can understand, but he nailed it, he got it exactly right, which is what I appreciate about that. But I wanna talk just for a minute before I move on. I wanna make an important point that this brings out here.

This was the temple. And the, well, prayer meeting may not have been exactly the way it was. But whoever the leadership were, were the Jewish religious leaders, right? It was the same religious leaders who had opposed everything Jesus did.

And yet, the disciples are still going to their setting and involving themselves in their meetings and so on. And it shows how slow the disciples were to break away from Judaism. They didn't think in terms of Christianity being, oh, we're starting a whole new religion, you know, and one day it's gonna be one of the great religions of the world.

They didn't think like that. They were seeing it as a fulfillment of all that God had promised to the Jews. They saw it as an advancement of Judaism.

They weren't thinking of Christianity being something completely different and separate, which would occur later, because for the most part, the Jews refused it. But that isn't how they were seeing things. The

apostles were advancing through this with great caution.

You know, they were moving forward cautiously and prayerfully. And the good thing about moving that way is you don't tend to make terrible mistakes. You can get too cautious at times, and that can be another problem.

But anyway, they were moving forward cautiously. They wanted the Lord to show them how to proceed as they went. But another thing about this that really kind of dawned on me as I was thinking about this is that these were the disciples.

They've been with Jesus for three years. And yet, you know, if you ever struggle with feeling like, you know, you can't find the Lord's will, or what am I supposed to be doing? God, why don't you speak more clearly to me? Why don't you tell me what I'm supposed to do? These are the disciples. They've just been through Pentecost.

They have walked with Jesus for three years, and they're in a complete fog. They can't even figure out how to proceed forward with what God has given them to do. So just understand that that's the way it's supposed to be.

You know, it's not some strange thing that it seems like God doesn't speak clearly. It's part of the package deal. Okay, let's continue reading verse two.

As they approached the temple, they saw a man lame from birth carried along the street and laid beside the temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, as was his custom every day. Now, let me just say one thing about this before I move on. This man had been lame from birth.

He was at least 40 years old, as we'll see in a minute. For 40 years, he's been lame. Now, how many times did Jesus sweep through Jerusalem healing people? You know, just however many months before, this man was at that gate for years.

I guarantee you. I don't know if he could never quite get to the right place at the right time because he had to be carried everywhere. And he no doubt heard about this great healer from Galilee, you know.

And I'm sure he wanted to be healed before this, but it never happened. And I believe it never happened because God didn't want it to happen. God has his timing for everything.

But think of how disappointed, how devastated maybe when he heard that the healer had been crucified and all his hopes were gone. So, here he is back to the old way, you know, just hopelessly begging for handouts and so on. And something wonderful is about to happen that he didn't expect.

Let's continue reading. Verse 3, as Peter and John were passing by, he asked them for some money. They looked at him intently and then Peter said, look here.

The lame man looked at him eagerly expecting a gift. But Peter said, we don't have any money for you, but I'll give you something else. I command you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.

All right. Now, this is one of those times where I wish that he would have stayed more literal because actually the NAS says it much better, probably the King James or the New King James also. In that, in the NAS, he says, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you.

And that's the literal translation. And it really brings forth a couple of points that I'll just touch on briefly. What I have, I give.

That is, that is almost a summation of the Christian life. That first of all, you can only give what you have. And if you've only allowed God to deal with you on a superficial level, that is all you will ever have to give out to other people.

But if you've allowed God to dig deep, then you are going to be able to mine riches that come from the depths of the kingdom of God. And so in this case, it's a healing. But that same principle holds true across the board with Christianity, and especially spiritual life and spiritual knowledge.

But also, that we should be giving. There's a time and a place to be at the feet of Jesus. And God knows when and how to send us forth.

And we have to be careful about that, that we don't jump the gun or do a lot of self-will or something. We have to be careful. But when God tells us that it's time to give out, whether that means to get in a setting to where you are really giving out.

Or doing it where you're at in your present circumstances. That doesn't matter, in a sense. It's more the attitude of being willing to give what God has given you.

You know, Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. So we have to be careful not to get sucked up into a kind of a self-centered mentality where we're always looking for Jesus to bless us, bless us, bless us. And we're never really getting outside of our comfort zone to give out to others.

All right, verse seven. Then Peter took the lame man by the hand and pulled him to his feet. And as he did, the man's feet and ankle bones were healed and strengthened so that he came up with a leap, stood there a moment, and began walking.

Then walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the temple with them. That's a wonderful way to say it. Now, I've got a passage here, and you can see it in your notes, that the pulpit commentary wrote, or one of the commentators wrote.

And I'm gonna read it, even though it's lengthy, it is just very good. He really captures what this man was experiencing, but really brings out something very powerful out of that experience. So let's read this.

Every day he was carried by some kind hands and laid at the beautiful gate of the temple. In the hope that those who passed to and fro to the house of God would look with pity upon his misery and minister to his wants. They must have been sad and dreary hours, past in expectancy and frequent disappointment.

Watching the countenances of the passers by, overlooked by some, turned away from with proud contempt by others. Sharply refused by this well-dressed but hard-hearted Sadducee. And occasionally receiving a mite or a farthing from that ostentatious Pharisee.

Doubtful whether he would carry home enough to supply his daily meal and his necessary raiment. Anyhow, we may be sure that his utmost hopes did not go beyond receiving some small coin at their hands. But then he heard the words from Peter.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And in an instant, he was whole, no longer a cripple, no longer chained down to his bed, no longer a prisoner. He sprang to his feet.

He walked, he leapt, he danced for very joy. And singing praise as he went, he entered the holy courts. Here, there was an instance of God doing unto men exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think.

Here, we have a type of the exceeding riches of God's grace, resulting in unlooked-for mercies to the children of men. Let us take note of it and frame our estimate of God's character accordingly. Nothing more elevates the tone of a man's religion than a worthy conception of God's goodness.

It stimulates his love, it kindles his adoration, it raises his hopes, it intensifies all his spiritual emotions. Low conceptions of God's nature beget a low standard of love and service. There is nothing like a true view of the infinity of the love of God and of the unsearchable riches of his grace in Jesus Christ, to lash all the sluggish emotions of the heart into a holy and healthy enthusiasm.

Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, is another mode of expressing the same blessed truth. And, thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, is the language of those whose experience coincides with the revelation which God has given of himself in his holy word. Wow, man, praise the Lord.

Isn't that true? You know, Lord, help us to lift our eyes up to the hills from once our help come us. Help us to look on high, to set our minds and our hearts and our eyes on things above and not on things on this earth. It's so easy to get bogged down with the dismal, dreary life of earth.

You know, and all this stuff here on earth. If only we could just get our minds and our hearts fixated on the Lord and his goodness. Praise the Lord.

All right, so here's the experience that happened. And now, Peter is given a wonderful chance to share again. So we'll see some bold preaching here, starting verse nine.

When the people inside saw him walking and heard him praising God and realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the beautiful gate, they were inexpressibly surprised. They all rushed out to Solomon's Hall where he was holding tightly to Peter and John. Everyone stood there awed by the wonderful thing that had happened.

Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. Men of Israel, he said. What is so surprising about this? And why look at us though we by our own power and godliness had made this man walk? For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of all of our ancestors who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this.

I refer to the Jesus whom you rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's determination to release him. You didn't want him freed, this holy, righteous one. Instead, you demanded the release of a murderer.

And you killed the author of life. But God brought him back to life again. And John and I are witnesses of this fact.

For after you killed him, we saw him alive. Wow, praise the Lord. So you see, and again, the living Bible really brings out what Peter was expressing that day that kind of gets limited in our literal translations.

All right, let's continue on. Verse 19, I'll skip down here. I'm gonna have to start skipping through some of this.

Because now Peter is going to bring it to a head, get to the point. So this is what he said, and this again is the living Bible. Now change your mind and attitude to God and turn to him so he can cleanse away your

sins and send you wonderful times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord.

Now here again, Kenneth Taylor kind of jumps ahead into what the words actually mean, because I had a note here that the term repent means change of thinking, and the word to turn means a change of conduct. But this is what he does. He gets the meaning, and he lays it out and says it instead of in the actual literal words, the way that it was meant by what was being expressed.

So Peter continues preaching here, and he's really showing them the Messiah. This is a whole new group of people. This message is similar to the one that he preached on the day of Pentecost.

And he's confronting them for taking part in the murder of the Holy One. And so, I don't know, maybe he was starting to wrap things up, but anyway, he gets interrupted. So let's start again in chapter four.

While they were talking to the people, the chief priest, the captain of the temple police, and some of the Sadducees came over to them. Very disturbed that Peter and John were claiming that Jesus had risen from the dead. All right, now here again, this is one of those times when he's kind of expressing things in a different way.

But it's not really bringing out in clarity what Luke was saying, so we'll have to go to the literal translation more. It says here in verse two, this is why they were greatly disturbed because, number one, they were teaching the people, and number two, they were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. So there you see it a little more clearly, that there were two distinct things the Sadducees were upset about.

They were upset because these fishermen, these lay people, these untrained nobodies would have the audacity on the temple grounds to stand there and speak as if they have some kind of authority to speak to all these people. And there must have been 2,000 people there, again, thousands of people there hearing what they're saying. And this ticked them off.

Why? Because they're full of pride. And because their authority, their positions were being undermined or whatever. And the second thing is, as I've mentioned before, is that the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection.

And that was one of the core beliefs of the Sadducees, was that there was no resurrection, there was no hereafter, there was no judgment. Everything that happened, happened on Earth. And yeah, there was a God, but he dealt with things right there on the spot.

And so that's why, partly, why the Sadducees work hand in hand with the Roman officials. And that's why the Romans liked them, because they didn't give them problems like the Pharisees did. Well anyway, if Peter's view of life was right, theirs was wrong.

And they were not gonna put up with these nobodies standing there preaching some kind of a different doctrine than what they have. Okay, verse three. They arrested them and since it was already evening, jailed them overnight.

But many of the people who heard their message believed it so that the number of believers now reached a new high of about 5,000 men. Wow, that's just amazing. The next day it happened that the council of all the Jewish leaders was in session in Jerusalem.

Annas, the high priest, was there, and Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and others of the high priest's relatives. So the two disciples were brought in before them. By what power or by whose authority have you done this, the council demanded.

All right, this is, first of all, substantially the same court that had condemned Jesus a few months before. The same hall, probably, that that happened in. Actually, and I went back to look this up this morning.

Actually, it was only a few feet from here that Peter had denied Jesus. Because it was when Jesus was standing before the Sanhedrin and Peter was outside, right at the gate out there with some other people out there. And the servant girl noticed him and whoever else it was.

That's where he denied him. So here it is a few months later, he's hauled in, thrust before the same group. And demanded to know why he was doing what he was doing.

And well, he understood what the implications were and what it meant. But look at the difference in his attitude from when he was kind of acting the coward in the previous occasion. Think how intimidating it must have been, just in a natural sense.

For all the religious leaders, men whose names were just as, you know, known to him as all the radio preachers and famous authors. Big mega preachers that we hear about. You know the names.

We could go down a list of names and we would all know those names. Well, these 70 men were the leaders of Judaism at the time. Imagine being hauled in front of them.

And they're, you know, I mean, at this point, they're still pretty early on in their Christian life. And all of a sudden, they're being put on the spot like this. I know a little bit about this.

I remember one time in our early days back in the 80s, we began Pure Life in a big mega church in Sacramento. And the pastor there was a good man, and he really helped us a lot. But he really had a blind spot with psychology.

He just really believed in Christian psychology. They had a whole psychology department attached to the church. And because Pure Life Ministries was a support group working in the church, you know, in a counseling role sort of thing, they wanted us to get in line with the mentality of the church, of the counseling department.

And, you know, I just couldn't do it. In good conscience, I could not do it. But I felt so stuck because I knew God had us in this church.

I was trying to be submissive to the leadership there. But yet, I could not go against my convictions. So it was a kind of a, between a rock and a hard place there.

And one day, they brought me in. And what really made it worse was I thought they were bringing me in to tell me how good of a job I was doing or, you know, tell me how they were gonna help me out or something. Instead, they brought me in and really rebuked me.

And there was 20 of them. They had this big room with a long, what do you call it, conference table. And all these pastors that I knew their names, you know, and who was I? I was a Bible school student, you know, ex-cop from LA.

Here I am in this setting. I'm standing there. They're all sitting around this table.

And they're wanting to know, what is your problem? You know, why can't you get in line? I mean, that's basically the gist of what they're asking. And I had to stand my ground there in that situation, you know? And I don't, I wasn't very conquered in those days, that's for sure. But, but I did.

I mean, I stood my ground. It wasn't easy. But I could comprehend a little bit.

Not that I would compare my setting to theirs, because their life could have been on the line. But I understand it, how intimidating it would be. But look at how Peter reacted.

Verse eight. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, honorable leaders and elders of our nation. You know, he's not defensive, but he's not cowering either.

If you mean the good deed done to the cripple and how he was healed, let me clearly state to you and to all the people of Israel that it was done in the name and power of Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah, the man you crucified. Wow. I mean, to be able to say that in that setting, you know he was full of the Holy Spirit.

But God raised him back to life again. It is by his authority that this man stands here healed. For Jesus the Messiah is the one referred to in the scriptures when they speak of a stone discarded by the builders, which became the capstone of the arch.

There is salvation in no one else. Under all heaven, there is no other name for men to call upon to save them. When the council saw the boldness of Peter and John and could see that they were obviously uneducated, non-professionals, they were amazed and realized what being with Jesus had done for them.

So, you know, Peter really laid it out and he did it fearlessly. And again, we see the difference in his spirit now from a few months before or whatever it was when he was cowering outside the council. Let me read this quote from Alexander McLaren.

Instead of a timid answer followed by silence, they got an almost defiant proclamation of the name followed by a charge against them, which turns the accused into the accuser and puts them at the bar of judgment. Here was the first instance of the fulfillment of that promise, which has been fulfilled again and again since. And he's quoting Jesus, for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

Unlearned, quote, as ignorant of rabbinical traditions and ignorant as holding no official position, these two wielded a power over hearts and consciences which not even official indifference and arrogance could shake off. It was before such a hostile audience that the apostles were now called to witness. And here they first proved the power of the divine words.

When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. Matthew 10, 19. Saint Peter was at the moment of need filled with the Holy Ghost and enabled to testify with a power which defeated his determined foes.

Yeah, he just told them the truth whether they liked it or not. Okay, let's continue reading again. Verse 14.

And the council could hardly discredit the healing when the man they had healed was standing right there beside them. So they sent them out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves. What shall

we do with these men? They asked each other.

We can't deny that they have done a tremendous miracle and everyone in Jerusalem knows about it. But perhaps we can stop them from spreading their propaganda. We'll tell them that if they do it again, we'll really throw the book at them.

So they called them back in and told them never again to speak about Jesus. But Peter and John replied, you decide whether God wants us to obey you instead of him. We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we saw Jesus do and heard him say.

Man, what a tremendous conviction. The council then threatened them further and finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God for this wonderful miracle, the healing of a man who had been lame for 40 years.

All right, now I just want to stop here and make a few observations about Peter's response to them. First of all, you can see it in verse 8. Peter spoke with the unction of the Holy Spirit. This is the spirit of truth, life, and love.

A wonderful, wonderful Holy Spirit. This is the spirit Jesus promised would give them the words they needed when they stood before their persecutors. This is the spirit that Jesus said would convict the world of sin and righteousness.

That Holy Spirit had consumed Peter that day, filled him to overflowing, and filled his mouth with powerful words that went right into the hearts of these men. But we'll see their response here in a moment. So he spoke with the unction of the Holy Spirit.

Number two, he spoke with boldness and courage. Verse 13, depending on your translation, the NAS says confidence, the New King James uses boldness, NIV says courage, but the Greek term is *parousia*, which means to have the courage to speak openly and frankly. You know, so all those terms work.

But what a thing, you know, that he could speak so boldly in such an intimidating environment as that. Only God can do that. You know, only God can allow or cause or make a man able to speak forth in that kind of an intimidating situation, boldly, but in the right spirit.

Not defiantly in the sense of, defensive or argumentative, but speaking forth the truth fearlessly. Only the Holy Spirit can make it possible for a man to do that. And I think in your notes, you'll see that a bunch of passages throughout the book of Acts where this theme of boldness will also show up in the future there.

So you can do a study on that later if you wish. All right, number three, Peter spoke with authority. You know, in the religious realm, authority, well, let me say it this way.

There are two different kinds of authority. There's man's authority, and then there's God's authority. And sometimes they're the same.

You know, sometimes it's both in the same person. But a lot of times, men have authority who don't really walk in God's authority. And I have met many of them in my days.

It's so many big names I have been around and have not felt like they were walking in the authority of God. They were walking in the authority of a charismatic personality or of being a star or of being very capable or being a great preacher or writer or something. But they were not walking in the authority of

God.

I remember one time, this is another time that goes back, this situation probably about 22 years ago, I don't know. It was one of the times that I went to CNN and appeared on the 700 Club. And I was brought in as, you know, the pervert who changed because God did something in me, you know.

So they're parading me before the world as, you know, this poor pervert that God set free. And then the expert was the psychologist, this woman who, you know, came in and just very professionally and explained all the dynamics involved and, you know, all of this. And so that's the way the show went.

But for some reason, they asked me to share at the CNN daily staff chapel time that happened right after the show. They didn't know what they were asking for. So I had 20 minutes.

And, you know, I'm sure what they were looking for was some nice little words or something or other. But I went in there blazing. And I shared my testimony very briefly and then I preached repentance like no one's business, you know.

I was telling them, if you don't repent for this backslidden lifestyle that you are living and this, you know, carnality. I mean, I was really hitting them right between the eyes. I didn't have much wisdom in those days, but I had a lot of fire, you know, and I wasn't afraid to use it.

And anyway, at the end of my 20 minutes, and I was being conscious of the time. But at the end of my 20 minutes, I said, now I want you all to bow your heads and close your eyes. And if you want God to do a work inside you, I want you to raise your hand right now.

A bunch of them did. I think they were just absolutely in shock that they would be talked to like this. But it was the Lord there, you know.

I mean, I wasn't very conquered in those days. And I'm not saying I was anything, but I had an authority with God, because every day I was spending hours with the Lord, you know. And when I walked in there and I, the Lord gave me that situation.

I opened my mouth. I'm telling you, God went right through there to those people's hearts. And even that woman who was the expert on the show with all her, you know, credentials and her personality and all that.

She humbled, you know, I just remember her having her head bowed raising her hand and coming up to me afterwards. And I want to have what you have, you know, something like that. That I remember.

But anyway, you know, you will see in the church world two kinds of authority. Man's authority and God's authority. And if you are walking with the Lord, you're allowing him to deal with you in your interior world.

And you are spending time with him and you are spending time in the word. God is putting an authority inside of you that no one can refute. They can take everything from you, but they cannot take what you have in God.

And they can't dismiss it, you know. And that's what's happening here with Peter in this situation. These religious leaders had been in a position to dominate and intimidate the Jewish people for all these many years.

And here these upstarts come in, but they are on fire with God. And they've got the power of God at work in their midst. Praise the Lord.

Okay, number four. Peter refused to be silenced. And you see that in verses 19 and 20.

He would not allow them to shut him down. He was going to speak the truth whether they liked it or not. Now remember that the apostles were called to be witnesses, to testify of Jesus Christ, of his resurrection and so on.

That was the great calling of their lives, you know. But how many sincere believers down through the ages have been persecuted and even martyred because they refused to stop speaking about what they had seen and heard and experienced? And the day is going to come, very possibly, where we will face these sort of things as well. Well, I have faced these kinds of things in different sort of settings, not to where my life was on the line, but certainly intimidating situations.

And God has always given me the words to speak. All right, and finally, we see how the Sanhedrin stopped their ears to the truth in verse 21. You know, they did not want to hear it.

They wouldn't hear it from Jesus and they wouldn't hear it from his followers. They refused to hear the truth. And, you know, just it was the same as when Jesus was in their midst.

They were hard-hearted and did not want to hear the truth. But, you know, there was that healed man standing there, just quietly standing there in their midst. And it was undeniable that God had done something.

And who knows about the conviction of the Holy Spirit? But whatever, they didn't want to hear about it. All right, so now they release the disciples and the disciples go back, or, you know, these two, Peter and John, go back to the rest of the disciples and the other, you know, the other ones that are involved with that close-knit group, Mary, Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and, you know, some of the other people, Philip, the apostle, and, I mean, the evangelist, and probably Stephen and some others, you know. So they go back to their group and you see here in verse 23, as soon as they were freed, Peter and John found the other disciples and told them what the council had said.

And I'll skip down here to verse 29. They begin to pray, just worshiping the Lord, praising Him, and so on. And then in verse 29, they said, one of them, whoever was praying now, and now, O Lord, hear their threats and grant to your servants great boldness in their preaching and send your healing power and may miracles and wonders be done by the name of your holy servant, Jesus.

After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly preached God's message. You know, they weren't praying for everything to go well. They weren't even praying for protection.

They weren't praying for, you know, a comfy life or something. They were praying that the Word of God would go forth without hindrance. And I'll close here with these words from Alexander McLaren.

Fear would have prayed for protection. Passion would have asked retribution on enemies. Christian courage and devotion only ask that they may not shrink from their duty and that the Word may be spoken, whatever becomes of the speakers.

The world is powerless against men like that. Yeah, men who walk with the Lord may not have a title, may not be a big name, may not be known anywhere, may not be known on earth. But men like this, people like you, may not be known outside of pure life ministries.

But if you're really walking with the Lord, heaven moves when you pray and hell trembles. And don't ever forget that and think lightly of it, because some of you in this room are very godly people and really know what it means to walk with the Lord. And that is not unnoticed in the spiritual realm, even if you're not known in the physical realm.

Amen. But be encouraged by that. And, you know, as we proceed forward in the days ahead, as the kingdom of God continues to unfold, even in our day, as all things are moving towards a consummation, know that God is with you and you don't need to fear about the future or whatever may come.

God is going to take us through and he's going to use us in ways that we can't imagine. Praise the Lord. God bless you.

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