



## **The Boldness of Spirit-Filled Believers (Acts 4:1-31)**

*Notes: Week Nine*

### **Acts 4:1-31 (NIV)**

#### **Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin**

<sup>4</sup> The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people.<sup>2</sup> They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.<sup>3</sup> They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.<sup>4</sup> But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup> The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family.<sup>7</sup> They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!<sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed,<sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.<sup>11</sup> Jesus is

“the stone you builders rejected,  
which has become the cornerstone.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

<sup>13</sup> When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.<sup>14</sup> But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.<sup>15</sup> So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.<sup>16</sup> “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it.<sup>17</sup> But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

<sup>18</sup> Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! <sup>20</sup> As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

<sup>21</sup> After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup> For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

### **The Believers Pray**

<sup>23</sup> On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup> You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

““Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?

<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth rise up  
and the rulers band together  
against the Lord

and against his anointed one. <sup>[b],[c]</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup> They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. <sup>29</sup> Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. <sup>30</sup> Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

<sup>31</sup> After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

### **Footnotes:**

- a. Acts 4:11 Psalm 118:22
- b. Acts 4:26 That is, Messiah or Christ
- c. Acts 4:26 Psalm 2:1,2

## Acts 4:1-31 (HCSB)

### Peter and John Arrested

<sup>4</sup> Now as they were speaking to the people, the priests, the commander of the temple police, and the Sadducees confronted them, <sup>2</sup> because they were provoked that they were teaching the people and proclaiming the resurrection from the dead, using Jesus as the example.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>3</sup> So they seized them and put them in custody until the next day, since it was already evening. <sup>4</sup> But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000.

### Peter and John Face the Jewish Leadership

<sup>5</sup> The next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem <sup>6</sup> with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John and Alexander, and all the members of the high-priestly family.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup> After they had Peter and John stand before them, they asked the question: “By what power or in what name have you done this?”

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders:<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>9</sup> If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man—by what means he was healed—<sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing here before you healthy.<sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.<sup>[d][e]</sup>

<sup>12</sup> There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it.”

### The Name Forbidden

<sup>13</sup> When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And since they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in response. <sup>15</sup> After they had ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, they conferred among themselves, <sup>16</sup> saying, “What should we do with these men? For an obvious sign, evident to all who live in Jerusalem, has been done through them, and we cannot deny it! <sup>17</sup> However, so this does not spread any further among the people, let’s threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again.” <sup>18</sup> So they called for them and ordered them not to preach or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; <sup>20</sup> for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

<sup>21</sup> After threatening them further, they released them. They found no way to punish them, because the people were all giving glory to God over what had been done; <sup>22</sup> for this sign of healing had been performed on a man over 40 years old.

### Prayer for Boldness

<sup>23</sup> After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> When they heard this, they all raised their voices to God and said, “Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup> You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant:<sup>[f]</sup>

Why did the Gentiles rage  
and the peoples plot futile things?

<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth took their stand  
and the rulers assembled together  
against the Lord and against His Messiah.<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people<sup>[h]</sup> of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness, <sup>30</sup> while You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs, and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” <sup>31</sup> When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness.

### Footnotes:

- a. [Acts 4:2](#) Lit *proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead*
- b. [Acts 4:6](#) Or *high-priestly class*, or *high-priestly clan*
- c. [Acts 4:8](#) Other mss add *of Israel*
- d. [Acts 4:11](#) Lit *the head of the corner*
- e. [Acts 4:11](#) [Ps 118:22](#)
- f. [Acts 4:25](#) Other mss read *through the mouth of David Your servant*
- g. [Acts 4:26](#) [Ps 2:1-2](#)
- h. [Acts 4:27](#) Lit *peoples*

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible<sup>1</sup>

Acts 4:1-31

**4:1-3** The religious authorities **confronted** and ultimately arrested Peter and John for unauthorized teaching about **the resurrection from the dead by using Jesus as the example**. The Sadducees in particular were provoked by this, for they did not believe in resurrection because they did not think it was taught in the Pentateuch, the only portion of the Hebrew Bible they acknowledged as authoritative ([Mt 22:23](#)). The apostles were held **in custody** overnight because Sanhedrin trials were not conducted at night. Rome had granted the Sanhedrin legal authority over the temple area since disputes arising there were religious in nature rather than civic.

**4:4** Repeated attempts to suppress the Christian message only caused it to spread more quickly. On Pentecost morning the believers in Jerusalem only numbered 120 ([1:15](#)). In response to Peter's sermon that day, another 3,000 were added ([2:41](#)). Now, with the healing of the lame man, Peter's sermon, and the arrest of the apostles, the church grew **to about 5,000**.

**4:5-7** The parties listed in [verses 5-6](#) represent all the most powerful players in the Jewish religious establishment. They made **Peter and John stand before them**, two men against all the powers of Israel. Ironical, therefore, that they asked the apostles **by what power** they had performed the miracle and preached the gospel. It was clear that the apostles, who shirked the traditional powers, considered themselves answerable to and empowered by a different authority.

**4:8** Peter was **filled with the Holy Spirit**, a necessary prelude to his successful confrontation with the Jewish religious establishment.

**4:9-10** Peter again emphasizes to a Jewish audience that **Jesus Christ the Nazarene**, whom the nation had **crucified**, was **raised from the dead** by God. This same Jesus is the power by which the lame man was made **healthy**.

**4:11** Peter again identifies Jesus with OT testimony by citing [Ps 118:22](#). Though Jesus was a **stone rejected** by the Jewish leaders, God made Him **the cornerstone** (foundation) of the church.

**4:12** Peter concluded by making clear the uncompromising claim of Christianity: There is **salvation in no one else** besides Jesus. This message rings throughout the NT. Jesus Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" ([Jn 14:6](#)).

**4:16-18** Remarkably, the Sanhedrin admitted that **an obvious sign** had been done **through them** (the apostles), and yet rather than repent and believe they focused on damage control **among the people**. They sought to halt the spread of Christianity at all costs, so they **ordered** the apostles **not to preach or teach** any more about Jesus. It seems they wished to guard their status as religious authorities even at the expense of obvious truth.

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Acts 4".

## parresia

**Greek Pronunciation** [pahr ray SEE ah]

**HCSB Translation** boldness

**Uses in Acts** 5

**Uses in the NT** 31

**Focus passage** [Acts 4:13,29,31](#)

The Greek noun *parresia* literally means *every word* and thus signifies the freedom to speak *openly*. Since such freedom of speech often provokes opposition, *parresia* also indicated fearlessness in speaking one's mind. Finally, *parresia* developed into a term meaning *boldness*, *openness*, or *confidence* (as an adverb, *openly* or *plainly*). The word was normally used in a positive sense, but a negative usage such as *bluntness* or *shamelessness* also occurs in ancient Greek literature.

All ten occurrences of *parresia* in the Gospels refer to speaking *openly* or *plainly*, either by Jesus or about Jesus ([Mk 8:32](#); [Jn 7:4,13,26](#); [10:24](#); [11:14,54](#); [16:25,29](#); [18:20](#)). The uses of the term in Acts refer to three instances of *boldness* on the part of the apostles in proclaiming the gospel ([2:29](#); [4:13,29,31](#); [28:31](#)), something Paul referred to in his letters ([2Co 3:12](#); [Eph 6:19](#); [Php 1:20](#)).

[4:19-20](#) Peter and John's reference to what they had **seen and heard** included their experiences with Jesus plus what they had witnessed since the founding of the church at Pentecost. All told, they had been eyewitnesses to many of God's revelatory acts.

[4:24-28](#) When Peter and John told the members of their fellowship what had happened, they all recognized this persecution as fulfillment of [Ps 2:1-2](#). **Gentiles and the people of Israel** had united in opposition to God's **holy Servant Jesus** and His followers. Then and now, believers take comfort in knowing that Jesus' sufferings (as well as their own) are not by chance, but are **predestined** by God.

[4:29](#) The early Christians recognized that just as Jesus had been promised trouble, they too would encounter persecution for proclaiming Him as Messiah. They asked God for the power to speak with **complete boldness**, even if punishment should follow.

[4:30](#) Besides boldness in testifying, the early Christians expected to receive power from God to perform **healing, signs, and wonders** through the **name of... Jesus**.

## English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

Acts 4:1-31

**4:1-22 Peter and John Witness before the Jewish Council.** Provoked by Peter's sermon, the Sadducean leaders had the two apostles arrested and held for trial before the Sanhedrin. The section falls into three parts: the arrest ([vv. 1-4](#)), the hearing ([vv. 5-12](#)), and the warning ([vv. 13-22](#)).

**4:1 The captain of the temple** was second in rank to the high priest. **The Sadducees** may have accepted only the Pentateuch as Scripture; they also denied the resurrection (see [23:8](#)), and represented the privileged aristocracy who worked closely with the Romans to protect their own political and economic interests. (See Josephus, [Jewish Antiquities 13.297; 18.17-18](#); see also [Jewish Groups at the Time of the New Testament](#).)

**4:2** Though the Sadducees did not themselves believe in a resurrection, most other Jews did, including the Pharisees (Josephus, [Jewish Antiquities 18.14](#)). The Sadducees were upset with Peter's preaching that **in Jesus** the general **resurrection** had begun, a message with definite messianic implications that was liable to be viewed by the Romans as revolutionary.

**4:3** The Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, met in the mornings. Since it was evening, the two apostles were placed in detention for the night.

**4:4** Luke continues his catalog of Christian growth: 120 ([1:15](#)); then 3,000 ([2:41](#)); and now the **men** alone were **about five thousand**, suggesting that the total number of Christians would have been well in excess of 10,000. The incredible growth of the church occurred in response to two activities empowered by the Holy Spirit: the powerful preaching of the gospel message about Jesus and the "many wonders and signs" ([2:43](#); cf. [4:14](#), [16](#)).

**4:5** The Jewish high court consisted of 71 members—70 elders according to the pattern of [Num. 11:16](#) plus the high priest as presiding officer. It was dominated by the priestly Sadducees with a Pharisaic minority, represented mainly by the **scribes** (lawyers) of the court.

**4:6 Annas** is designated as **high priest**. (Much like U.S. presidents, high priests seem to have retained their title for life.) He had served in that role earlier (A.D. 6-15) and was the controlling figure in the high-priestly circle, which may also explain why he is given the title here. His son-in-law **Caiaphas** was the official high priest at this time (serving A.D. 18-36), and Annas's son **John** would serve in the role later (36-37). See also note on [John 18:13](#).

**4:8 filled with the Holy Spirit, said.** Cf. [Luke 12:11-12](#).

**4:10 whom you crucified.** As he had accused the Jews in his two temple sermons ([2:23](#); [3:15](#)), Peter now accused the Sanhedrin judges of their role in Jesus' death and pointed to the divine power that had raised him from the dead.

**4:11 cornerstone.** Cf. [Ps. 118:22](#); [Isa. 28:16](#).

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2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Acts 4".



**4:12** Peter's statement that there was salvation in **no other name** was an implicit invitation to the Sanhedrin to place their faith in Jesus. It was Jesus' name that brought physical deliverance to the lame man (**3:1-10**)—the same powerful and exclusive name that brings eternal salvation to all who call upon him. Peter emphasizes this by saying that it is the only name **under heaven** (that is, throughout the whole earth) by which a person can be saved. Further, there is no other name **among men** (that is, in all of human society) that saves. On Christ as the exclusive way of salvation, see also [Matt. 11:27](#); [John 3:18](#); [14:6](#); [1 John 5:12](#). This verse also suggests that salvation comes only through conscious faith in Jesus.

**4:13 Boldness** (Gk. *parrēsia*) is an important word in Acts which depicts Spirit-inspired courage and confidence to speak in spite of any danger or threat. It also occurs at [2:29](#); [4:29](#), [31](#); [28:31](#); cf. [2 Cor. 3:12](#). **Uneducated** and **common** ("nonprofessional") men like Peter and John were not expected to speak so confidently before the supreme court of the land. The two words do not mean that they were illiterate or unintelligent but rather that they had not gone through the advanced training of the rabbinic schools. **they had been with Jesus**. It is impossible to imagine how much the disciples would have learned from spending three years in close association with the Son of God living on earth, listening to him teach, hearing him pray, and watching him interact with the most difficult challenges. They knew Jesus, and in knowing him they knew much more than all the learned scribes of the Sanhedrin.

**4:16 What shall we do with these men?** The religious leaders didn't know what action to take, since the healing of the man was well known and punishing his healers would displease the populace. Official leaders often act from fear of the people rather than from fear of God: see [Matt. 14:5](#); [21:26](#), [46](#); [Luke 19:48](#); [22:2](#); [Acts 4:21](#); [5:26](#); cf. [John 12:42-43](#).

**4:17 in order that it may spread no further among the people.** Sadly, the leaders were motivated by fear of losing power and influence rather than by a desire to glorify God, to be faithful to his Word, or to spread the true knowledge of salvation.

**4:18-20** Though the leaders of the council **charged them not to speak or teach... in the name of Jesus**, Peter realized the impossibility of abiding by this prohibition, thus demonstrating that believers have the responsibility not to obey authorities when such authorities prohibit preaching the gospel or otherwise require Christians to disobey God's explicit commandments (cf. [5:29](#)).

**4:23-31 The Christian Community Prays for Boldness in Witness.** Peter and John returned to their fellow Christians and reported the Sanhedrin's injunction against preaching the gospel. In response the Christians prayed, asking for power to witness even more boldly.

**4:24** After praising God, the believers prayed, quoting [Ps. 2:1-2](#) ([Acts 4:25-26](#)), which they treated as a messianic prophecy inspired by the Spirit speaking through David.

**4:25 who through the mouth of our father David... said.** Scripture is truly and totally the word of God even though it comes through flawed men like David. Even as they are persecuted, they address God as master and are in service to his will.

**4:27** The psalm is interpreted in light of Jesus' death. The "kings" and "rulers" of [v. 26](#) correspond to **Herod Antipas** (see note on [Matt. 14:1](#)) and **Pilate** (see note on [Matt. 27:2](#)), while the **Gentiles** and **peoples of Israel** exemplify those who participated in the crucifixion ([Acts 2:23](#)). Much as in Peter's second temple sermon ([3:18](#)), this is viewed as being planned by God. Human responsibility is compatible with divine predestination (cf. notes on [2:23](#); [3:13-16](#); [3:17](#)).



**4:28** In their prayer, reported with approval by Luke, the believers affirm both God's sovereignty and human responsibility. **Whatever** includes all of the evil rejection, false accusation, miscarriage of justice, wrongful beatings, mockery, and crucifixion that both Jews and Gentiles poured out against Jesus. These things were **predestined** by God, yet the human beings who did them were morally "lawless" (see [2:23](#), [36](#)); they were responsible for their evil deeds (see [3:13-15](#)); and they needed to "repent" (see [2:38](#); [3:19](#)). This prayer reflects both a deep acknowledgment of human responsibility and a deep trust in God's wisdom in his sovereign direction of the detailed events of history.

**4:29** Their prayer for **boldness** in witness shows a determination to directly disobey the command of the Sanhedrin. They do not pray against those who persecute them but pray for their own faithfulness in witness.

**4:30 and signs and wonders are performed.** The believers do not hesitate to pray that God would work more miracles as they continued proclaiming the gospel. Such a prayer does not indicate deficient faith but is rather an evidence of their strong belief that God would work in their midst in an immediate way that authenticates the gospel.

**4:31** God answered the believers' prayer. The place where they were gathered **was shaken** as if by an earthquake, and the Spirit descended upon them in a way they could perceive. **They were all filled with the Holy Spirit** indicates that people could be "filled" with the Holy Spirit more than once, for Peter was among them and he had already been "filled with the Holy Spirit" ([v. 8](#)), and all the disciples present at Pentecost had been "filled" with the Spirit as well ([2:4](#)). The Holy Spirit's power did not come on them automatically but in answer to their expectant, believing prayer.

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

*Acts 4:1-31*

**4:1** These priests had special influence and were often close relatives of the high priest. The captain of the Temple guard was the leader of the guards who were stationed around the Temple to ensure order. The Sadducees were members of a small but powerful Jewish religious sect that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They were the religious leaders who stood to gain financially by cooperating with the Romans. Most of those who planned and carried out Jesus' arrest and crucifixion were from these three groups.

**4:2, 3** Peter and John spoke to the people during the afternoon prayer time. The Sadducees moved in quickly to investigate. Because they did not believe in the Resurrection, they were understandably disturbed with what the apostles were saying. Peter and John were refuting one of their fundamental beliefs and thus threatening their authority as religious teachers. Even though the nation was under Roman rule, the Sadducees had almost unlimited power over the Temple grounds. Thus, they were able to arrest Peter and John for no other reason than teaching something that contradicted their beliefs.

**4:3** Seldom will sharing the Good News send us to jail as it did Peter and John. Still, we run risks in trying to win others to Christ. We might be willing to face a night in jail if it would bring 5,000 people to Christ, but shouldn't we also be willing to suffer for the sake of even one? What do you risk in witnessing—rejection, persecution? Whatever the risks, realize that nothing done for God is ever wasted.

**4:5, 6** The rulers, elders, and teachers of religious law made up the Jewish high council—the same council that had condemned Jesus to death ([Luke 22:66](#)). It had 70 members plus the current high priest, who presided over the group. The Sadducees held a majority in this ruling group. These were the wealthy, intellectual, and powerful men of Jerusalem. Jesus' followers stood before the same high council that Jesus had.

**4:6** Annas had been deposed as high priest by the Romans, who then had appointed Caiaphas, Annas's son-in-law, in his place. Because the Jews considered the office of high priest a lifetime position, however, they still called Annas by that title and gave him respect and authority within the high council. Annas and Caiaphas had played significant roles in Jesus' trial ([John 18:24, 28](#)). They were not pleased that the man they thought they had sacrificed for the good of the nation ([John 11:49-51](#)) had followers who were just as persistent and promised to be just as troublesome as he had been.

**4:7** The high council asked Peter and John by what power they had healed the man ([3:6, 7](#)) and by what authority they preached ([3:12-26](#)). The actions and words of Peter and John threatened these religious leaders, who, for the most part, were more interested in their reputations and positions than in God. Through the help of the Holy Spirit ([Mark 13:11](#)), Peter spoke boldly before the council, actually putting the council on trial by showing them that the one they had crucified had risen again. Instead of being defensive, the apostles went on the offensive, boldly speaking out for God and presenting the Good News to these leaders.

**4:11** The cornerstone unites two walls at the corner of a building and holds the building together. Peter said that the Jews rejected Christ, but now Christ had become the cornerstone of the church ([Psalm 118:22](#); [Mark 12:10](#); [1 Peter 2:7](#)). Without him there would be no church because it wouldn't be able to stand.

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1821-1823.

**4:12** Many people react negatively to the fact that there is no other name than that of Jesus to call on for salvation. Yet this is not something the church decided; it is the specific teaching of Jesus himself ([John 14:6](#)). If God designated Jesus to be the Savior of the world, no one else can be his equal. Christians are to be open-minded on many issues but not on how we are saved from sin. No other religious teacher could die for our sins; no other religious teacher came to earth as God's only Son; no other religious teacher rose from the dead. Our focus should be on Jesus, whom God provided as the way to have an eternal relationship with himself. There is no other name or way!

**4:13** Knowing that Peter and John were untrained, the council was amazed at what being with Jesus had done for them. A changed life convinces people of Christ's power. One of your greatest testimonies is the difference others see in your life and attitudes since you have believed in Christ.

**4:13-18** Although the evidence was overwhelming and irrefutable (changed lives and a healed man), the religious leaders refused to believe in Christ and continued to try to suppress the truth. Don't be surprised if some people reject you and your positive witness for Christ. When minds are closed, even the clearest presentation of the facts can't open them. But don't give up either. Pray for those people and continue to spread the Good News.

**4:20** We may sometimes be afraid to share our faith in Christ because people may feel uncomfortable or reject us. But Peter and John's zeal for the Lord was so strong that they could not keep quiet, even when threatened. If your courage to witness for God has weakened, pray that your boldness may increase. Remember Jesus' promise, "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven" ([Matthew 10:32](#)).

**4:24-30** Notice how the believers prayed. First, they praised God; then they told God their specific problem and asked for his help. They did not ask God to remove the problem but to help them deal with it. We can follow this model when we pray. We may ask God to remove our problems, and he may choose to do so. But we must recognize that often he will leave a problem but give us the strength and courage to deal with it.

**4:27** Herod Antipas had been appointed by the Romans to rule over the territory of Galilee. For more information on Herod, see his Profile in [Mark 6, p. 1629](#). Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor over Judea. He bowed to pressure from the crowd and sentenced Jesus to death. For more information on Pilate, see his Profile in [Mark 15, p. 1661](#).

**4:28** God is the sovereign Lord of all events, who rules history to fulfill his purposes. What his will determines, his power carries out. No leader, army, government, or council can stand in God's way.

**4:29-31** Boldness is not reckless impulsiveness. Boldness requires courage to press on through our fears and do what we know is right. How can we be more bold? Like the disciples, we need to pray with others. To gain boldness, you can (1) pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to give you courage, (2) look for opportunities in your family and neighborhood to talk about Christ, (3) realize that rejection, social discomfort, and embarrassment are not necessarily persecution, and (4) start where you are by being bolder in small ways.