

Acts 4:14-22

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[0 : 00] All right, very good. Please take your copy of God's Word out and turn to the book of Acts chapter 4. Our text for today will be Acts chapter 4, verses 14 through 22.

But before we read the text and get into it, I'd like to begin by reminding you where we are in our text and what we have considered together in the past weeks.

If you have been here, if you have not been here, I hope this will serve you well by catching you up to where we are in our text as well. Beginning three weeks ago on Easter Sunday, we started into chapter 3 and we saw the healing of a lame beggar.

This figure at the temple that sat always at the beautiful gate and Peter and John going up at the hour of prayer. It must be three o'clock in the afternoon to pray, encounter this man, and he's miraculously healed.

And in so doing, God orchestrates the setting of a stage for Peter's second sermon. So we look also at the beginning of Peter's second sermon in which he exalts Jesus as the Christ by speaking of him with five different titles.

[1 : 16] And those titles are, and you can look there at the beginning of chapter 3 and spot these, God's servant, Jesus, which means salvation comes from the Lord.

Peter refers to him as the holy and righteous one, the author of life and the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one.

So he exalts Jesus Christ in his preaching. Secondly, he indicts his listeners, this crowd that has gathered because of the healing of this lame man. He indicts them.

He points out their guilt, beginning in verse 13 of chapter 3 and then 14 and 15. See the phrases, you delivered, you denied, you killed.

And he's addressing specifically their misconception about who Jesus is. The following week, we concluded our study of Peter's second sermon.

[2 : 14] So this is two weeks ago now. And we saw the conclusion of his outline. So first, he exalts Jesus Christ. Second, he indicts his listeners. And third, he calls his listeners to repentance.

Verse 19 of chapter 3, repent, therefore, and turn again. And he speaks of the restoration that accompanies repentance. If you are a disciple of Christ, then you are commanded, not merely suggested, but you are commanded to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

None of us are outside of this. This isn't just a sermon to observe for pastors only. But all of us as disciples of Christ are commanded to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And we should follow this very same outline with some consideration to our particular listeners and those listeners' particular context.

For example, the gospel, if we're to present it in its entirety, and I'm saying this to you because I think many people believe they're presenting the gospel to their friends and their co-workers.

[3 : 25] But what they're really doing is they're having a spiritual conversation. They're not actually presenting the gospel. They're not giving all of the information necessary for someone to come to believing faith in Christ.

And in its simplest form, and there's much to be said about this, needs to be God, man, Christ, repentance. You heard me say to the kids this morning, ask your parents about God and ask your parents about yourself.

That conversation rightly leads us to speaking of Christ. And as these little ones grow older, they need to be called to repent. Well, that's what Peter's doing here.

He's using that format, God, man, Christ, repentance. But he's being sensitive to the listener's context. This is a Jewish audience. They believed in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God that had created the world.

They believed that He was holy and that He had a holy standard for them to live by. They were aware of the law and they were also aware of their transgression of that law. They knew that they needed a sacrifice for that.

[4 : 26] And so Peter's able to come in the midst of that understanding of God and man and speak of Christ and then call them to repentance. So being sensitive to that, you can see God, man, Christ, repentance, even in his outline.

And as he exalts Jesus, indicts the listeners, calls them guilty and calls them to repentance. Now, last week, we began to study chapter 4, verses 1 through 31.

So it's kind of our larger, broader text over these past two weeks and now into next week as well.

And in that, at the beginning of it, we observe the arrest of Peter and John as a result of their preaching, their overnight imprisonment, and the beginning of their trial before the Sanhedrin.

In verses 8 through 12 of chapter 4, we read and considered Peter's third sermon where he follows the exact same outline.

So this is number three, one on the day of Pentecost, second following the healing of the lame man, and now the next day, his third sermon as recorded in the book of Acts. Again, exaltation of Jesus Christ, the indictment of his listeners, now the Sanhedrin, the religious rulers, the court of Israel, and then calling those listeners to repentance.

[5 : 55] And, last week, I spoke to you of the normalcy of Christian persecution.

The normalcy of it. Christian persecution should not be a foreign concept to us. Christian persecution should not be a foreign concept to us.

Persecution has been and still is the norm for the Christian church in the world. Always has been and still is.

Broadly speaking, we looked at the statistics. More Christians are suffering for the sake of the gospel in the world right now than are not.

But, the fact that this is not the case for the American church is not a factor of our political environment. It is not a factor of our political environment that we don't suffer in that way, that we're not persecuted because of the gospel.

[6 : 58] Let me show you a bit more what I mean. The persecution, hear this carefully, The persecution of the citizens of God's kingdom always accompanies the coming of God's kingdom.

They're carried along together. It's not optional. Let this sink. 2 Timothy 3.12 I read this to you last week.

You need to hear these words and they need to resonate. They need to bounce around inside of your head. Paul, at the end of his life, he had suffered much. He had certainly been persecuted. He would be finally martyred not long after the writing of this second letter to Timothy 3.12. And he said, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Stages book. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. All will be persecuted.

[8 : 08] Don't let American religious freedom numb you to this reality. Now, many places in the world and throughout history, what was experienced as persecution was persecution of the body.

That's not a present reality where we live today. And I'm not suggesting that it should be. Please don't seek to go out and be beat up for your faith.

It may happen. It's very possible. Certainly, we don't receive systematic persecution. Right. The state is not persecuting Christians, throwing us in prison for the preaching of the gospel.

But there is and there should exist amongst us a persecution of the ego. If you preach the good news of Jesus Christ boldly, you might lose your reputation, your status, your position, your job. People might think that you're strange or narrow minded or judgmental. They might label you unloving. A difficult one for many of us.

[9 : 24] People may just not like you. I like to be liked by people, but they may not like me if I begin to exalt Christ and indict them for their sin against a holy God and call them to repentance.

It's the ultimately loving thing I can do for them, but they may not appreciate it. So it's the it's the ego that has the potential of being assaulted here in the U.S.

If we're to boldly declare the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some have suggested that the fear of persecution against the ego is a more stifling tool of the devil because it is not so clear an injustice as an assault against the body.

So catch what I'm saying. I think I'm tracking with this idea that it's it's more stifling because an injustice against the body. So let's say a man rushed the stage right now because I'm declaring the good news of Jesus Christ in my preaching and just clocked me in the face.

I believe I would tend to go, well, hey, suffering for righteousness sake. Right. How clear the injustice is on his part to attack me physically for simply declaring the truth as I understand it.

[10:45] But it seems that it's subliminally restrictive when I'm afraid that that guy just might not like me. He might cross his arms and walk out of here and never return.

He might speak poorly of me in the community and I entertain this thought in the back of my head and it could. It has the potential to cause me to shrink back when I should push forward.

I will say to you honestly, in the times that I have shrunk back, when I should have pressed forward, when I haven't been bold as I should have been. My concern was that I would get lumped in with other Christians.

It seems to me often that Christians that make the popular media are crazy. And so often I go, that's not me.

Like, oh, please don't associate me with that guy or that lady. I don't want to be associated with them. I don't want to be seen as weird like them.

[11:47] So I think I'm tracking on this idea that possibly this is the case. But all the same, persecution of one kind or another should be the normative experience of the Christian life.

Should be normative, beloved. Should be coming together on Sunday, having experienced the hostility of the world throughout the week. That's why this should be such a refreshing time to be together because we look around at each other and we go, we're not crazy.

Everyone in this room believes what I believe. And this is so charging. We sing songs about it. We hear the preaching of it. And we go back out into our week ready once again to bear reproach for the sake of the gospel.

I'll give you just a quick example. And this is kind of off the wall, but I thought of it this morning while we were singing. So if you track with me. Normally, day to day, I normally wear a pair of like trail running shoes and a little bit of the soles coming off of one of them.

It's a piece I can just glue back on really easily, but I just haven't done it yet. And it's been doing that for about two weeks. So it's a little flat. So you catch them. If you can catch it, it's coming from forward. So when I shuffle my foot on the ground, it catches and does a little like boop with my foot.

[13:02] Picturing that in your mind. So I started walking different. And this morning, I realized I'm not wearing those shoes, but I was also picking that foot up a little bit higher. As I walked, I was doing a little more like lifting, not shuffling my feet, as I often do.

Because I had adjusted to a new norm. And the problem is that we have a culture in our churches where we don't boldly proclaim the gospel everywhere we go. And so therefore, we don't bear the reproach of Christ.

And it's normative. It's normal that we don't do these things. Rather than it being abnormal that we don't do these things. That you come amongst a group of believers and you go, really? All of you this week suffering for the sake of the gospel?

What's wrong with me? And we're silent about it. Right? We don't go, look what the scripture has to say about this. We very conveniently take 2 Timothy 3.12 and we go, well, maybe someday. Could possibly be a thing that would happen. We should be willing to do it. He gives us no space for that type of interpretation, beloved.

[14:05] If you don't like what I'm saying, your problem is with him. Paul, the spirit of God that inspired him to say, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

The kingdom of God comes about accompanied by persecution. And because it should be a reality, we begin to prepare for it.

It is my hope. It is my prayer that we leave here today ready to go out and boldly proclaim the gospel and that you will be persecuted for that.

I hope it would be wonderful if each and every one of you, every single person you encountered, was favorable to the message of the gospel. Already found in Christ or saying, tell me more.

I've been waiting my whole life to meet a person that would preach this good news to me. But if you're propagating the gospel widely, I'm also confident that that will not be the case. Right? Will be persecuted.

[15:01] To some people, they will want to shut you down as quickly as they can. They don't want to hear it. So we began to consider in these first one through thirty one, seven ways to honor God in the midst of persecution.

I promise I'm going to get to our text through this long introduction. Seven ways to honor God in the midst of persecution. Or if you prefer, seven ways to handle persecution. We looked at the first three last week.

The first one was to be expendable. Right? And this is implied in the text. Look at verse four of chapter four. It's implied, but I believe it's there.

I don't think I'm taking liberty with the text at all. Verse four. After their arrest, Luke records the arrest and imprisonment. But many of those who had heard the word believed.

And the number of the men came to about five thousand. Right? I talked a little bit last week about the varying ways we could count the number of the church in that day. But it's a massive, massive number.

[16:06] Be expendable. Hold your life loosely for the sake of others. Don't be so concerned about the way people view you because they're dying.

Be willing to be ridiculed for the sake of others. Consider this. If you're in Christ, it's possible that you picked up a copy of God's word and you read the scripture for yourself.

You read the gospel in the scripture. But more likely, someone shared the gospel with you.

Someone taught you the gospel of Jesus Christ. And by the inworking of the spirit and God's grace, you responded in faith.

Someone was willing to bear the reproach of Christ for you. They were willing to do so. Fortunately, you responded favorably. You didn't take him out back and beat him up.

But you were not likely the only person that that good news was preached to. The person that taught you the gospel was likely teaching other people the gospel as well.

[17:11] And that person probably met with opposition to the message of Christ. Someone was willing to bear reproach for you.

Hold loosely to your life. Be expendable. Secondly, we looked at being filled with the spirit. We see that in verse 8, that Peter was filled with the spirit.

And I certainly can't talk about this at length. Many Sundays. We ask that question, what does it mean to be filled with the spirit? And I've been saying to you and establishing for you that it is not this extra spiritual experience.

It's not this second normative Christian experience where you reach a whole new plateau and plane. It's not a thing that's meant to be sought in the midst of a service by a certain set of incantations or meditation.

It's not nearly that complex. If you're in Christ, you have been baptized in the spirit. One time thing. Being in Christ, you have the spirit of God. And you can be filled with him or not.

[18:20] It's a matter of walking in obedience or not. If you want to hear more about this, Acts 2, 1 through 12, the second sermon, you can find it online. I talk about it a bit more.

But just quickly, in order for you to study this yourself, I want you to look in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, Romans 8. Feel free to talk to me about it more as well. But be filled with the spirit.

Have the word of God saturate you deeply. Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, these parallel passages.

And have it come out of you. Have it so worked into you that it comes out of you.

Romans 8. Set your mind on the things of the spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Thirdly, be bold. Be bold. What a great deal of boldness on Peter's part in front of these men.

This is a big deal. Again, God orchestrating the miracle itself to bring them to being able to preach in front of this great crowd at the temple. And now the Sanhedrin. Now these religious elite, this ruling party, right?

[19:29] In cahoots with the Romans. And they're sitting in front of this group, 71, 70 men plus the high priest. No way they could have called this audience together on their own, right?

This was a work of God. And here, Peter, the one we read this morning, denying Christ three times before his crucifixion. Now, having seen the resurrected Christ, is bold.

Man, this was a group to stand in front of. It would have been frightening to be standing in front of these men. The closest equivalent I can draw to it is maybe a joint session of Congress and the Supreme Court.

And then we'll just toss the president in the mix, all sitting in a big half circle asking you questions. Right? And you're meant to respond. And boy, does he respond with great boldness.

Verse 11, this Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And he's citing from Psalm 118, 22, which says the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

[20 : 35] Peter does not remove the offense of the gospel. In fear, he doesn't shrink back. He presses forward. He speaks the truth. He boldly indicts them.

He's saying to them, you are fulfilling Psalm 118, 22. You, you're the builders. You've rejected the cornerstone on which the whole temple of God is built.

He presses forward instead of shrinking back. He goes on to say, verse 12, there is salvation in no one else. Now, remember, these men are saying to him, they're concerned about the teaching of Jesus.

These men were integral to the crucifixion of Christ. These men hated Jesus. And he says, there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

If you don't hang all of your hope of salvation in the personal work of Jesus Christ, you will be destroyed. And opponents to this will say, how very narrow.

[21 : 39] Why couldn't God make many, many ways? But the question we should be asking is, why did God make a way at all? Praise God forevermore than he made a way.

And he made a specific way. And it's in faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ. So those were last weeks. We're caught up now.

This week, I'm just going to address one additional point from the seven. Because the structure of the text lends itself to that.

And you've all been so very gracious. As I've been taking huge bites out of these narratives. And we have a members meeting following the service.

So we're just going to add one. So in the seven ways to honor God in the midst of persecution, the one we'll add today is number four. Be obedient.

[22 : 38] Be obedient. Okay. My text for this morning is verse 14 to 22. But I would like to begin reading in verse one. So Acts four.

One through 22. And as they were speaking to the people, the priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000.

On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, all who were of the high priestly family.

And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name do you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed?

[23 : 57] Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished, and they recognized they had been with Jesus.

But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, what shall we do with these men?

For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

[25 : 02] So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.

For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. 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. For the man on whom the sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old. Beloved, this is God's word to us.

It was written for his glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

All right, beginning in verse 14. Now, remembering that they're before the Sanhedrin, these 71 men, this highly intimidating situation. Recognize that's where they are and that it was customary to assess claims of miracles.

[26 : 11] If miracles occurred in this day, it was normative that the Sanhedrin would call together the people who were supposedly responsible for it and assess the claim of it.

They knew that God was a miracle-working God. And if someone was to come and perform a miracle, it was possible that they were sent on behalf of God, that they were a prophet of God.

This is likely the reason that the man was with them. You see that in verse 14. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, he didn't wander his own way into this meeting.

He was brought in and he was there with them to be assessed. But remember, this is not ultimately why Peter and John are on trial.

So this is the normative thing that would be going on. Like, miracles have been performed. People are saying there's a miracle that's happened. And we need to get together. We need to gather everyone together. The Sanhedrin, we need to gather together. And we need to check this out to see if it's a true claim or not.

[27 : 10] And we know that's not the primary reason. Back in the beginning of chapter 4.

Remember, they were annoyed. They were greatly annoyed with them. And they seized them.

And they arrested them. They were annoyed with them for three reasons. They were teaching. It's not a thing that common men did. In verse 13, we saw that they were uneducated, common men. They weren't trained in their rabbinical schools. And they didn't have these clout of a professional theologian. They were amazed by Jesus as well when He came into synagogues and into the temple.

And He spoke as one with authority. That's what they're referencing. One who had been granted authority to. Rather than just speaking what God had said in His Word.

They were teaching. Second part of verse 2 because they were teaching the people. They were teaching about Jesus. They were proclaiming in Jesus.

[28 : 10] This one that they had put to death. That they had deemed a false prophet and killed. And they were teaching about resurrection. The Sanhedrin was made up primarily, not in entirety, but primarily of Sadducees.

And Sadducees were a sect of Judaism that did not believe in the resurrection from the dead. I didn't think that was a possible thing. So, they're teaching. They're teaching about Jesus. And they're teaching about resurrection.

That Jesus Himself was raised from the dead. So, they're greatly annoyed with this. They're greatly annoyed. But they have nothing to say in opposition.

Here's the man standing before them. We find out at the end of our text, verse 22, that this man had been crippled for 40 years. From birth for 40 years, he was a figure at the temple.

Always was at the beautiful gate. They themselves would have seen them. So, here he is standing with them and they're seeing. They're saying, yes, that's the guy. And they've healed him. And they're saying to us that they healed him in the name of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 19] So, they have nothing to say. So, what do they do? They, in verse 15 and on into 16, they took a recess. They sent him out and took a recess. They conferred amongst each other to figure out what in the world they should do.

Verse 16, 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. It's evident to everyone.

Many thousands had witnessed the man healed. We see that there at the many who believed at the preaching of Peter. Many thousands had witnessed the man healed and the news of his healing

had spread.

All the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the city was abuzz with this miracle. miracle. They couldn't deny it. There were too many witnesses.

It's not that they didn't want to deny it. They would have gladly just dismissed it. They would have gladly just said, this didn't happen at all. This affirms the case against us. We could just deny it, but we can't.

[30 : 25] Because if we do, we'll lose power. Everyone will think we're crazy. The Sadducees also could not deny the resurrection.

We're going to see this throughout the book of Acts when the apostles stand in these councils before the Sadducees. They would have loved to have denied the resurrection to present the proof that the resurrection had not happened.

But they don't. They never do. They never bring it up because they couldn't. It was impossible for them to do so. This is a bit of a side note, but a commentary on this text by F.F. Bruce, who was a 20th century Scottish Bible scholar I commend to you.

He wrote, it is particularly striking that neither on this nor on any other subsequent occasion did the Sanhedrin 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 readily would the Sanhedrin have seized the opportunity? Had they succeeded, how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed?

[31 : 34] So they can't. They can't go after that. They're not even here able to go after the fact that a miracle had been performed. And Peter is saying it happened in the name of Christ.

And so, what do they do? Verse 17 into 18. But in order that it may spread no further among the people.

Let's restrict it to Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem. Let's squelch the rumor that someone was healed by the power of Christ. Let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

So they did. They called them in, charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

These men were not concerned with the truth.

What opportunity they had before them to witness their miracle working God performing a miracle in their midst. even being offered the opportunity to repent.

[32 : 37] Chapter 4, verse 12. To turn from their sin and turn back to God. But they were not concerned with the truth. They were concerned with their power and the holding of it.

They were wealthy men because of the positions that they held. If the people were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Sanhedrin would certainly have been held culpable for his death.

He just wanted it dismissed, swept under the rug. The sooner the movement could die, the better for them. So they command them, don't speak anymore in this name.

I think it's of interesting note at this point to see. We're going to see again in the book of Acts, again and again and again. The apostles had to be commanded to stop speaking of Jesus.

Jesus. And today we have to command people to speak of Jesus. They were so enthralled with who he was to them.

[33 : 38] They loved him so immensely that they wouldn't shut up. At the threat of their life, they would not be quiet.

And we see some of that in the response, verse 19 and 20. Peter and John answered them. So Peter's preached this sermon before, but now Peter and John, and I don't want you to picture this as like the creepy talking at the exact same time, but I think what Luke's trying to communicate is that they were unified in their obstinance.

They were both equally bold. One of them spoke up, we're not sure which, likely Peter. Peter talked all the time. They said, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.

He's saying to them, you guys decide, should we listen to you or should we listen to God? I love what John MacArthur said of this position that he puts them in by saying this.

He says, by such an appeal to the divine judge, the apostles impaled the Sanhedrin on the horns of a dilemma. He sets them up for failure.

[34 : 52] Either they have to deny God or they have to deny themselves as proper judges over Israel. Peter and John spoke on behalf of God in Jesus Christ.

They put the Sanhedrin in a position to worship their own power or the God of all power. And sadly, the Sanhedrin chose the former.

verse 20, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. So compelling and so moving to them.

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the effect that it had had on them. They couldn't help but speak about it. And here they stand, verse 19 and 20, boldly before their government. These men had Christ put to death. Little help from the Romans, of course. But had Christ put to death and here they stand in defiance of their government.

[35 : 57] Now a note on that. We're told in the scripture to obey our government. Are we not? Peter himself writes in 1 Peter 2, 13-17. I'll shorten it for the sake of time.

Through 15. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

14. 13 and 14. Be subject for the Lord to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

Paul wrote something similar. Romans 13-1. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God.

So we're told the scripture to obey the government but not at the cost of disobeying God. So if any government in the world or if our government speaks in direct opposition to the command of God, we're freed from obeying that command in order to obey the command of God.

[37 : 12] And we see them doing that. This wonderful example of that here. Standing up to the Sanhedrin's command to no longer speak in the name of Christ. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

And the last part of the text, they further threatened them. They're bold in this proclamation. They threatened them a little bit more. Probably with the threat of imprisonment and possible death. Let them go. You'll find no way to punish them because of the people. Because they're afraid of what the people are going to say about them. They're afraid of losing power in the eyes of the people. Because they were all praising God for what had happened for the man on whom the sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old.

It was a very significant miracle. It was a massive, massive miracle. From birth, he couldn't walk. Now he can. This old man has been sitting, excuse me if you're over 40.

It's a very significant miracle is the point. You've been crippled for a very long, long time. So the exhortation is to be obedient. Let me add to that.

[38 : 16] Be obedient at all costs. So here they are, Peter and John in unison saying, we know what you're telling us to do but we must obey God. We must speak of what we have seen and what we have heard.

We must tell people of the only way to salvation. The cost is too high. The war is too precious. We must speak in the name of Christ. Be obedient at all costs. And what does that obedience look like in this context? It's boldness in the face of persecution.

That's the way in which they were obedient. That's the way they're going to continue being obedient. In the rest of our text through verse 31 next week, we're going to see them pray for even more boldness.

Thank God for their boldness and they're going to pray for even more boldness. So obedience at all cost is boldness in the face both in the midst of and in the threat of persecution.

[39 : 18] So I want us to see two things quickly kind of in summary. First, the command of boldness in the face of persecution. This is obedience.

The command of boldness in the face of persecution and the example of boldness in the face of persecution. The command of boldness in the face of persecution. We are, beloved Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ, to live and serve the lost world just as our Lord did.

That is the point, the ultimate point of what we're doing together today. The exaltation of Jesus Christ, the glory of God in the salvation of His people.

That's the work that we're about. We gather today not to feel good about ourselves. We didn't gather today to meet with friends. So I sure hope not. We gather today to worship the Lord, to be

equipped, to be sent back out to the world.

We're gathered to go. Gathered to go. Gathered to go. We shouldn't neglect gathering, but we also shouldn't neglect the going. We're to live and serve the lost world just as our Lord did. Mark 10, 45, Jesus says, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom from me.

[40 : 35] That's why Jesus came to the earth, to ransom the church to the glory of God. In 1 Timothy 1, 15, Paul states, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

In John 20, 21, Jesus says, As the Father has sent me into the world to be a ransom for many, to save sinners, even so, I am sending you.

The book of Acts is about that. Jesus Christ exalted at the right hand of the Father sending the Spirit of God to His people so that He's multiplied across the planet.

Hands and feet, moving, mouthpieces, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. He has multiplied Himself. He does that even in our suffering.

As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you. You're familiar with Matthew 28, 18-20? Jesus issues the marching orders to the apostles and the church.

[41 : 40] This is for each one of us, beloved. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

This command for us to go is sandwiched on either side by Christ's authority and His presence, power and presence on either side of us to go and carry the good news to all nations, raising up disciples.

I hate that I have to say disciples of Jesus Christ make disciples of Jesus Christ. Duh. But that doesn't seem to be the case. This is to be the activity of all of us.

The primary task of the disciple of Jesus Christ is to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ far and wide in order to make disciples. Do you share Paul's sentiment that he expresses in 1 Corinthians 9.16?

Do you share this? For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting, for necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.

[42 : 51] This weekend at the biblical counseling and discipleship training that a number of us from our church participated in. It's a wonderful thing. I'm going to encourage you to go to it next year. One of the speakers said multiple times that a common question he asks counselees, those he's counseling, and I really love this, would you rather glorify God than breathe?

Would you rather glorify God than breathe? Because of what he's done for you, the way in which he's expressed is great love for us. Is that so precious to you?

Christ must be magnified in my life. I'd rather do that than breathe. In John 15.8, Jesus states, By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

And he says in John 14.15, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Now, beloved, it's the normative response.

It's the thing that should be happening. We properly treasure the gospel as we should. Really understand our sin. Really get our depravity. What we've been saved from.

[44 : 08] Eternal damnation. Eternal separation from him. But because of what Christ did on our behalf, we can have life and life everlasting. Love Christ for that.

He should be most pleasurable for us. We'll keep his commandments. But one follows the other. In front of your bulletin, you can see just two quotes I'll read.

Love is not just a sentiment. This is Martin Lloyd-Jones. Love is not just a sentiment. Love is a great controlling passion and it always expresses itself in terms of obedience.

He's speaking of our love of God here. It's of no value if I just tell my wife Sam, I love you, and I do nothing to actually show her and express to her my love of her.

The same is true of God. You cannot just say it. There has to be some outflow of that. Who we are in Christ produces this love and produces the work we're meant to be about.

[45 : 09] Quote by Augustine is a typo. There should be an E at the end of his name. Augustine, if you prefer. Wicked men obey from fear.

Good men from love. Good men from love. So we have a command to boldness in the face of persecution.

Don't think yourself exempt from this. It's for your good. Then we have the example of boldness in the face of persecution. 1 Peter 2 21.

Peter writes, For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you. He's talking about suffering. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

Jesus Christ is the great example for us of boldness in the face of persecution. Turn with me if you will please in your copy of God's word to Matthew chapter 26.

[46 : 20] Amen. I had every intention of this being a short sermon.

Hang with me. Matthew 26 beginning in verse 36. It's a picture of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane before the eve of his crucifixion.

It's the night before. Most of you are probably familiar with the story. Think about him as an example of boldness in the face of persecution. Find yourself in the garden in this place.

Verse 36 and Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. He said to his disciples, sit here while I go over there and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

He's anticipating what's coming the next day. Then he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death, remain here and watch with me. And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

[47 : 37] Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. He's saying, if it's at all possible, if there's any other way for this to be accomplished, this is the way we know that this had to happen in this way.

Jesus himself said, if I can avoid the persecution, can we do this another way? Is there any other way to do it? But I prefer what you will. verse 40, and he came to the disciples and he found them sleeping and he said to Peter, so could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, my father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, we understand that to be the wrath of God, your will be done.

If this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done. And again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he doesn't even wake them up that time, so leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

So three times he said, is there any other way for this to happen? I would prefer to avoid the persecution, but your will be done. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, sleep and take your rest later on.

[49 : 00] See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. So we ask that the Lord would take the persecution from him.

He doesn't do so, and he boldly faces it. The will of God, that the people of God are persecuted for the sake of the gospel. Jesus is our great example in this.

Hebrews 12, 1 and 2. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

This is what I've been talking about. This is the race set before us, this battle that we're in to preach the good news to the whole world. Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

So we see Jesus looks to the joy that is before him and the exaltation of his person at the right hand of God in order to endure the suffering that will come.

[50 : 09] He has an eternal mindset. He has a concern for the will of God and the glory of God. And so he suffers well. He's obedient at all cost.

Jesus is certainly the greatest and highest example of this. There are lesser examples. I want you to be encouraged by these things. They can be of massive encouragement to us.

To know about the persecution that happens in the world around us makes me being called weird so inconsequential. people. You familiar with Voice of the Martyrs?

You can subscribe to this for free. This is a cool organization. Persecution.com They'll send you a deal like this. I think it's monthly that it comes. They tend to stack up on my desk and I read them and then go back.

I don't even know where we're at in the April. Monthly. These will come to you. Great resources. Great videos. Pray for these people.

[51 : 10] I can guarantee you they're praying for us. They pity us for not getting to experience the reproach of Christ the way they do. Pray for them.

Be encouraged by them. Another resource I want to commend to you is Fox's Book of Martyrs. Thumb through these pages and then try to put American Christianity in the context of the history of the church.

Something's really wrong with us in that way. I want to read one to you quickly. There were ten systematic persecutions by the Roman Empire.

This one happens in the seventh systematic persecution. It's under the emperor Decius and in Asia under the governor Optimus.

It's 80-249-251. This took place. Short little account. Two quick paragraphs. A weak Christian Nicomachus was brought before Optimus and ordered to sacrifice to the pagan idols.

[52 : 21] Nicomachus replied, I cannot pay the respect to devils that is due only to the Almighty. It's a good start, right? He was immediately placed on the rack and after enduring his torments for only a short time, recanted his faith in Christ.

As soon as he was freed from the rack, he was seized with a great agony and fell to the ground and died. Okay, so there's the weak Christian Nicomachus.

seeing what seemed to be a terrible judgment, Denisa, a 16-year-old girl who was among the observers exclaimed, are young people in the room?

Are you hearing? Denisa, a 16-year-old girl, yells out, Oh, unhappy wretch, why would you buy a moment's ease at the expense of a miserable eternity?

When Optimus heard this, he called her to himself, and when Denisa confessed that she was a Christian, he had her beheaded. Are you more like Nicomachus or Denisa?

[53 : 38] Christian, we are to be obedient no matter the cost. The companion to the coming of the kingdom of God is Christian persecution. The kingdom of God will come with or without you.

I pray that you would choose to be a minister of reconciliation and not sit idly by on the sidelines. Your momentary comfort is not worth trading for the astounding joy you can have in Christ even now in the midst of such suffering.

Remember what Jesus said in John 15, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

But because you were not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. do not continue to go on from this day willing to be complacent and comfortable.

[54 : 54] Be bold for the sake of others, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the glory of his name, and be prepared. You will be persecuted. If you have not placed believing faith in Jesus Christ, this is not a good evangelistic sermon.

you need to know, though, that there are people in this room that are willing to risk everything. And I mean that. I know people in this room who are willing to risk everything, their lives, the lives of their families, so that you would repent and believe in Christ.

When we come to you with the good news and suffer for it, or at least are willing to suffer for it, we are saying in me behold the love of God. I care about you deeply and as I sacrifice to come to you and preach to you and risk my reputation or my status or my position or my job behold the love of Christ.

Repent and believe. It's not very evangelistic in the world's terms, I should say, but I'm unwilling to neuter the gospel.

The call to follow Jesus is a call to die. You know that. Not enough churches are saying that. A lot of churches are saying the risk of following Jesus is that someone with their head bowed and their eyes closed might peak.

[56 : 19] That's the potential risk you face. Most places in the world to follow Jesus means to be disowned by your family. It means you can't go to university. It means you may be beaten in the street and left for dead.

It may mean you are imprisoned. It may mean you're beheaded. Horrible atrocities. It's a call to die. It's a call to hold our lives loosely.

It's a call to give them up for the! of our king. And if you don't find Christ precious enough to give up everything to gain him then you don't deserve him. Because the call to follow Christ is a call to die but it's also a call to a measurable joy in him here and forever more.
Let's pray together.