

## ACTS 4 | *Believers' Boldness Baffles the Big Boys*

### *Peter and John Arrested*

1 And as they [Peter and John] were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees (Σαδδουκαῖος) came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching (διδάσκω, pres.) the people and proclaiming (καταγγέλλω, pres.)<sup>1</sup> in Jesus the resurrection (ἀνάστασις) from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed (πιστεύω, aor.), and the number of the men came to about five thousand.<sup>2</sup>

### *Peter's First Message to the Jewish Leaders*

5 On the next day their rulers, elders, and scribes were gathered together (συνάγω, aor. pass.) in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power (δύναμις) or by what name (ὄνομα) did you do this? 8 Then Peter, filled (πίμπλημι, aor. pass.) with the Holy Spirit,<sup>3</sup> said to them,

Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Messiah of Nazareth,<sup>4</sup> whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well/healthy/sound (ὕγιος). 11 This Jesus is the stone (λίθος) that was rejected (ἐξουθενέω)<sup>5</sup> by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone (κεφαλῆ). 12 And there is salvation (σωτηρία) in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (σώζω, aor. pass.).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “[T]o make known in public, with implication of broad dissemination, *proclaim, announce*” (BDAG, 515).

<sup>2</sup> See *The Great Game*.

<sup>3</sup> **Mt 10:17-20** 17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to testify before them and the Gentiles. 19 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

<sup>4</sup> **Ac 3:6** 6 ...In the name of Jesus Messiah of Nazareth, rise up and walk!

<sup>5</sup> “[T]o have no use for something as being beneath one’s consideration, reject disdainfully; to regard another as of no significance and therefore worthy of maltreatment, treat w. contempt” (BDAG, 352). **Mk 9:12** 12 How is it written of the Son of Man that he will suffer many things and be treated with contempt [ἐξουθενέω]? **Lk 23:11** 11 Herod with his soldiers, after treating [Jesus] with contempt (ἐξουθενέω) and mocking him, dressed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him back to Pilate. **1 Co 1:28** 28 The base things of the world and the despised (ἐξουθενέω) God has chosen, the things that are not, so that he may nullify the things that are. See *Israel’s Rejection of Jesus*.

<sup>6</sup> σώζω is used three times in this paragraph. The theme is salvation through Jesus. Jesus’ salvation of the crippled man on a micro, physical level means he has the power to deliver Israel on a macro, spiritual level.

### *Astonishment of the Jewish Leaders*

13 Now when they saw the boldness (παρρησία)<sup>7</sup> of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated (ἀγράμματος), common (ιδιώτης)<sup>8</sup> men, they were astonished. And they recognized (ἐπιγινώσκω) that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the Sanhedrin (συνέδριον), they conferred with one another 16 saying,

What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign (σημεῖον) has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

18 So they called them and charged them not to proclaim (φθέγγομαι, pres.) or teach (διδάσκω, pres.) at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them,

Whether it is right (δίκαιος) in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.<sup>9</sup>

21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people (λαός), for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.<sup>10</sup>

### *Believers' Prayer for Boldness*

23 When they [Peter and John] were released, they went to their friends/associates/fellow Christians (ἴδιος) and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices with one mind/purpose/impulse (ὁμοθυμαδόν) to God and said,

Sovereign Lord (δεσπότης), who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

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<sup>7</sup> “[A] state of boldness and confidence, courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness, esp. in the presence of persons of high rank” (BDAG, 781). **Ac 2:29** 29 Brothers and sisters, I [Peter] may confidently (παρρησία) say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. **Ac 4:29** 29 Now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that your bond-servants may speak your message with all confidence (παρρησία). **Ac 4:31** 31 When they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and were speaking the message of God with boldness (παρρησία). **Ac 28:31** 31 [Paul was] preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Messiah with all boldness (παρρησία), unhindered. See *Courage*.

<sup>8</sup> “[A] person who is relatively unskilled or inexperienced in some activity or field of knowledge, *layperson*, *amateur* in contrast to an expert or specialist of any kind” (BDAG, 468).

<sup>9</sup> The gospel message is built upon historic eyewitness testimony.

<sup>10</sup> With this detail, Luke wraps up this story very nicely.

Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples [of Israel] plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord (יהוה) and against his Anointed (משיח)—

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined (προορίζω, aor.) to take place.<sup>11</sup> 29 And now, Lord (κύριος) [Father], look upon their threats<sup>12</sup> and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness (παρρησία), 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness (παρρησία).<sup>13</sup>

### *One Heart and Soul*

32 Now the full number of those who believed were heart and soul one (καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία), and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

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<sup>11</sup> **Ac 2:23** 23 ... This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

<sup>12</sup> **2 Ki 19:16** 16 Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear. Open your eyes, O Lord, and see, and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God.

<sup>13</sup> **Php 1:14** 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

## Commentary

### 1. Overview.

- a. Ac 4 is the direct outcome of the healing of the crippled beggar in Ac 3. Luke presents the arrest (vv. 1-4), trial (vv. 5-7, 13-22), witness (vv. 8-12), and prayer (vv. 23-31) of Peter and John and their companions.

### 2. Peter and John Arrested (Ac 4:1-4).

- a. **Ac 4:1-4** 1 And as they [Peter and John] were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.
- b. The “great game” between good and evil continues (v. 1). Jesus, the apostles, and believers are on one side. The Jewish leaders are on the other. The crowds are caught in the middle.
  - (1) The proclamation of Jesus’s resurrection has troubled societal leaders for centuries. (Ac 4:1-3, 17-18, 21). The gospel is a threat to humanistic power structures all over the world.
  - (2) The captain of the temple guard was the commanding officer of the temple police force, inferior only to the high priest. He was always a high-caste Sadducee.<sup>14</sup> It was probably the temple guard who had guarded Jesus’ tomb (Mt 27:65ff).<sup>15</sup>
  - (3) The Sadducees were descendants of the Hasmoneans who believed the Messianic age had already begun. They were from the tribe of Levi and claimed to represent ancient orthodoxy. They opposed any teaching having to do with angels, demons, resurrection, God’s intervention in history, or a future Messiah. They believed the Maccabean heroes began the promised kingdom. For them, the Messiah was an ideal, not a person, and the Messianic age was a process, not a datable event. They stressed cooperation with Rome and maintenance of the status quo.<sup>16</sup> They held the Prophets and Writings less authoritative than the Pentateuch.<sup>17</sup>
- c. Peter and John were arrested on two counts: (1) they were teaching the people; and (2) proclaiming resurrection from the dead.
  - (1) Today, Christians similarly get in trouble with the authorities when they teach the people (Bible in Schools) and promote a future resurrection (supernaturalism in academia).
  - (2) Peter and John were arrested and our or two after the time of the afternoon prayers (Ac 3:1).
- d. As a result of the sign miracle followed by Peter’s message (Ac 3:12-26), the number of believers grew from 3000 (Ac 2:41) to 5000 men (v. 4).

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<sup>14</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts*, 10:769.

<sup>15</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICOT, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts*, 10:769.

<sup>17</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICOT, 96.

### 3. Peter's First Message to the Jewish Leaders (Ac 4:5-12).

- a. **Ac 4:5-12** 5 On the next day their rulers, elders, and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power or by what name did you do this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been saved (σώζω), 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Messiah of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation (σωτηρία) in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (σώζω).
- b. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish senate and supreme court, with jurisdiction over all noncapital cases. It consisted of 71 members and met just west of the temple precincts.<sup>18</sup> On this occasion it probably arranged itself in a semicircle around Peter, John, and the man who was healed (vv. 9, 14).<sup>19</sup>
  - (1) Annas had been high priest from ad 6-15, and he continued to exert great influence over the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was high priest from ad 18-36. Over the years Annas arranged to have five sons, one son-in-law, and one grandson appointed as high priest.<sup>20</sup> See Jn 18:12-27 for Jesus' trial before Annas and Caiaphas and Peter's denial of Jesus.
- c. Peter and John take up this opportunity for an aggressive evangelistic witness to Israel's top leaders.<sup>21</sup> Peter isn't playing defense. He goes on the offense.<sup>22</sup>
  - (1) These are the same men Peter had been cowed by before, but two things have changed. Peter has witnessed Jesus risen from the dead, and he has been baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter is a new man!
    - (a) **Lk 22:31-33** 31 Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. 33 Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death. 34 Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.
    - (b) **Lk 22:54-62** 54 Then they seized [Jesus] and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. 56 Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him said, This man also was with him. 57 But he

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<sup>18</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICOT, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke-Acts*, 10:769.

<sup>20</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke-Acts*, 10:769.

<sup>21</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke-Acts*, 10:769.

<sup>22</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICOT, 99.

denied it saying, Woman, I do not know him. 58 And a little later someone else saw him and said, You also are one of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. 59 And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean. 60 But Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are talking about. And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times. 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

- d. The aorist passive of *πίμπλημι* (“filled”) indicates a special moment of inspiration by the Holy Spirit. There is special filling of the Spirit for special occasions, but there is also a habitual, characteristic filling of the Spirit.
- (1) **Ac 6:5** 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full (*πλήρης*) of faith and of the Holy Spirit....
- (2) **Ac 11:24** 24 ...For [Barnabas] was a good man, full (*πλήρης*) of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.
- e. Jesus had instructed the disciples how to speak to their adversaries, and Peter was following Jesus’ instructions.
- (1) **Lk 21:14-15** 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.
- f. Peter’s message is straightforward, free, and forthright, without compromise or accommodation. The Jewish leaders have rejected Messiah (v. 11) and crucified him (v. 10). Only a few weeks had passed since these events. The apostles were absolutely convinced Jesus is the only way of salvation.<sup>23</sup>
- (1) To reject (*ἐξουθενέω*) means “to have no use for something as being beneath one’s consideration, reject disdainfully; to regard another as of no significance and therefore worthy of maltreatment, treat w. contempt” (*BDAG*, 352).
- (a) **Lk 23:11** 11 Herod with his soldiers, after treating [Jesus] with contempt (*ἐξουθενέω*) and mocking him, dressed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him back to Pilate.
- (2) Peter boldly asserts Jesus is the stone of Ps 118 and Is 8 and 28. This was a central early Christian argument for Jesus as the Messiah.
- (a) **Ps 118:22** 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
- (b) **Is 8:14-15** 14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken. They shall be snared and taken.
- (c) **Is 28:16** 16 ...Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste.
- (d) **Lk 20:17-18** 17 But [Jesus] looked directly at [the Jewish leaders] and said, What then is this that is written: The stone that the builders rejected has

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<sup>23</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts*, 10:769.



become the cornerstone? 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

- (e) **Ro 9:33** 33 ...Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
- (f) **1 Pe 2:6** 6 For it stands in Scripture: Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
- g. Evangelism is like providing witness testimony to a jury (vv. 2, 10, 16, 19-21, 27, 33), who must pass a verdict. The gospel message concerns testimony about a person who lived in space-time history and who died and was raised in space-time history. The message we share is historically verifiable, meaning it is subject to space-time verification. See *Jesus' Resurrection*.
- h. The σωζω word group is used three times (vv. 9, 12) in this paragraph. The theme is clearly salvation through Jesus. Jesus' healing of the crippled man on a micro, physical level (v. 9) means he can heal Israel on a macro, spiritual level (v. 12).
  - (1) "In the longer Isaiah scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 'God's Salvation' and 'Salvation' appear as Jewish designations for the expected Davidic Messiah (cf. 1QIsa 51:4-5, which uses the third person masculine suffix and pronoun in connection with the expression "my Salvation"). Likewise, "Salvation" is used as a messianic title in other Qumran texts (cf. CD 9:43, 54; 1QH 7.18-19; 4Q174 on 2 Sa 7:14 and in connection with Am 9:11), in various intertestamental writings (cf. *Jub.* 31:19; also *T. Dan* 5:10; *T. Naph.* 8:3; *T. Gad* 8:1; *T. Jos.* 19:11, though the provenance of the Greek version of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is debated), and in the rabbinic materials (cf. *b. Ber.* 56b-57a)."<sup>24</sup>
  - (2) **Lk 1:69** 69 ...And has raised up a horn of salvation (σωτηρία) for us in the house of his servant David....
  - (3) **Lk 2:30** 30 ...For my eyes have seen your salvation (σωτηρία)....
  - (4) **Lk 3:6** 6 ...And all flesh shall see the salvation (σωτηρία) of God.
  - (5) In Christianity, salvation is not an ideology, party, programme, or philosophy, but a person.

#### 4. Astonishment of the Jewish Leaders (Ac 4:13-22).

- a. **Ac 4:13-22** 13 Now when they saw the boldness (παρρησία) of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the Sanhedrin (συνέδριον), they conferred with one another 16 saying, What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name. 18 So they called them and charged them not to proclaim (φθεγγομαι, pres.) or teach (διδάσκω, pres.) at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, Whether it is right (δίκαιος) in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak

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<sup>24</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke-Acts*, 10:769.

of what we have seen and heard. 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

- b. Peter and John were uneducated, common men (v. 13), yet God used them to do extraordinary things. Jesus was also considered unlearned.
  - (1) **Jn 7:15** 15 The Jews therefore marvelled saying, How is it that this man [Jesus] has learning, when he has never studied?
  - (2) God loves to use uneducated, common people like you and me.
- c. The confidence of Peter and John astonished the Jewish leaders (v. 13).
  - (1) *παρρησία* (vv. 13, 29, 31) means “a state of boldness and confidence, courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness, esp. in the presence of persons of high rank” (*BDAG*, 781). Luke uses this word throughout the book of Acts.
    - (a) **Ac 4:29** 29 Now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that your bond-servants may speak your message with all confidence (*παρρησία*).
    - (b) **Ac 4:31** 31 When they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and were speaking the message of God with boldness (*παρρησία*).
    - (c) **Ac 9:27-28** 27 But Barnabas took [Paul] and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.
    - (d) **Ac 13:46** 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly saying, It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Because you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.
    - (e) **Ac 14:3** 3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.
    - (f) **Ac 18:26** 26 [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.
    - (g) **Ac 19:8** 8 And [Paul] entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.
    - (h) **Ac 26:26** 26 For the king [Agrippa] knows about these things, and to him I [Paul] speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.
    - (i) **Ac 28:31** 31 [Paul was] preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Messiah with all boldness (*παρρησία*), unhindered.
  - (2) Confidence is to be the normal attitude of the church. When the church is not proclaiming the gospel with boldness, there is a problem.
    - (a) To be brutally honest, the New Zealand church is not very bold. It is frightened and scared to go against political correctness.
  - (3) In an age of postmodern skepticism and epistemological doubt, we, filled with the Holy Spirit, must speak God’s message with boldness.



- (4) What would it look like in our lives if we had astonishing boldness for Jesus?
- d. Perhaps Luke knew of the Sanhedrin's deliberations (vv. 15-17) through Paul via Gamaliel.
- e. The Sanhedrin would like to deny Jesus' resurrection and the miracle of the healing of the crippled man, but they cannot (v. 16). The apostles' central affirmation, the resurrection of Jesus, cannot be disproven. They cannot produce the body. Despite this, they have no disposition to be convinced by the miracle or the apostles' arguments. Their goal is to quash this new movement.<sup>25</sup>
- (1) The Sanhedrin were the humanistic elite of their day. They were privileged and powerful. They didn't want "misinformation" or "disinformation" causing a movement among the middle-class and poor.
- f. In noncapital cases, commoners had to be given a legal admonition (v. 17) and could only be punished for an offence after they had been duly warned.<sup>26</sup>
- (1) In Ac 5:27-29, the Sanhedrin reminds the apostles of its first warning (v. 28).
- (a) **Ac 5:27-32** 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them 28 saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men.
- g. Jesus clearly commanded the apostles to proclaim the gospel message, and the apostles are determined to obey. They will engage in civil disobedience if required (vv. 19-20). The gospel is like a burning fire in their hearts. They have an inner compulsion to speak.
- (1) **Ac 1:8** 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
- (2) **Ac 10:42** 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.
- (3) **Je 20:9** 9 If I say, I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name, there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.
- (4) When Socrates was offered release from prison on the condition he would no longer pursue truth and wisdom, he said, "I shall obey God rather than you."<sup>27</sup>
- (5) By contrast, Jesus has not given a clear command against socialism or for the right not to get vaccinated. Therefore, these movements are clearly not on the same level as the gospel message when it comes to civil disobedience. Whether the church should segregate between vaccinated and unvaccinated for a temporary period of time is a closer issue.
- h. The gospel message must be proclaimed by speaking verbal words from our mouths (vv. 1-2, 8, 17-20, 29, 31).
- (1) We are engaged in a war of information with respect to the gospel. The "uninformed" and the "misinformed" are all around us. It is our Christian

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<sup>25</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke-Acts*, 10:774-75.

<sup>26</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke-Acts*, 10:769.

<sup>27</sup> Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, 29 D.

responsibility to provide the true information of the gospel. No law may deter us from this endeavour.

## 5. Believers' Prayer for Boldness (Ac 4:23-31).

- a. **Ac 4:23-31** 23 When they [Peter and John] were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, Sovereign Lord (δεσπότης), who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples [of Israel] plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord (יהוה) and against his Anointed (משיח)—27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined (προορίζω, aor.) to take place. 29 And now, Lord (κύριος) [Father], look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness (παρρησία), 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness (παρρησία).
- b. The believers' prayer demonstrates how well they understood the Old Testament (vv. 24-26). They read the Old Testament Messianically/Christocentrically, and so must we. They seemed to have closely followed the pattern of Hezekiah's prayer in Is 37.
  - (1) **Ex 20:11** 11 For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them....
  - (2) **Ne 9:6** 6 You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them....
  - (3) **Ps 146:6** 6 ...Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them....
  - (4) **Ps 2:1-2** 1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying....
  - (5) **Is 37:16-20** 16 Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline your ear, Yahweh, and hear. Open your eyes, Yahweh, and see, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 18 Truly, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19 and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. 20 So now, Yahweh our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are Yahweh.
- c. God's sovereignly planned Jesus' death and resurrection (v. 28). This doesn't negate the volitional responsibility of the Gentile and Jewish leaders, however.
  - (1) **Ac 2:23** 23 ...This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

- d. The believers do not pray for relief from oppression or for judgment on their oppressors, but for enablement from God to speak the gospel with boldness. Their concern is the church's witness. They leave their own circumstances to God.<sup>28</sup>
- e. It takes the filling of the Spirit (vv. 8, 29, 31) to speak God's word with boldness.
  - (1) Notice they are "all" filled, not just Peter and John (v. 31).
- f. The boldness of a few emboldens more. Confidence can and does multiply.
  - (1) What courageous act do we need to perform that will make others more courageous?

## 6. One Heart and Soul (Ac 4:32-37).

- a. **Ac 4:32-37** 32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.
- b. Here are some additional keys to a rapid spread of the gospel:
  - (1) Unity (v. 32).
  - (2) Sharing of possessions (v. 32, 34-37).
  - (3) Powerful testimony of Jesus' resurrection (v. 33).
  - (4) God's grace (v. 33).

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<sup>28</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts*, 10:774-75.