

Sunday, June 8, 2025 | Filled

Week 11 | Acts 4:1- | “One Name, Three Hearts, Pt. 1”

READ: Acts 4:1-13 (ESV)

¹ And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵ On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “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 healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you 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 in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” ¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Start talking about Jesus, and you’re bound to get a variety of reactions. Some will doubtless be encouraged to know you’re a fellow believer. Others may be indifferent, thinking that Jesus is just one of the many religious leaders in one of the many different religions. But talk about the Lord with enough people, and you’re bound to run into someone who is openly hostile toward the name of Jesus. What are we to do in such situations? Should we change the subject to something less offensive, thinking it best not to stir the waters? Or should we double down, taking the opportunity to share the gospel? Given your temperament, you’ll lean more toward either flight or fight.

Admittedly, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to such a situation. As Mike Tyson famously said, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.” This is why wisdom must guide us. We

mustn't jam Jesus down people's throats, but neither must we shirk our responsibility to witness.

Today's passage gives us a benchmark for evangelism. The strength and poise of the apostles, particularly that of Peter, is awe-inspiring. And because of their demeanor, Christians quickly got a reputation for being problematic for the religious establishment. The Jews will try to lock them up, but believers are doing so much good that any accusations won't stick. Even more frustrating, at least for the Sanhedrin, these uneducated and unsophisticated people from the backwaters of Israel appeared to be well-versed in the art of apologetics, rhetoric, and debate! Trying to keep a Christian from talking about Jesus will prove to be a herculean task, if not impossible.

There are three kinds of hearts in this passage:

i. Vs. 1-4 – The Tenderheart of the Israelites

Vs. 1-2 – “And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees.” There were three mainline sects or denominations within Judaism during the first century: the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes. The Essenes are responsible for preserving the Dead Sea Scrolls. They lived an eccentric lifestyle in unpopulated areas as a sign of condemnation of Israel; it's likely for this reason that there is no explicit mention of them in the NT. The other two sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees are more well-known, and they differed in three primary ways:

- (1) Most members of the ruling class were a part of the Sadducees. As such, they wielded enormous influence in Israel.
- (2) Though they were powerful, they were still the minority within the Jewish community, as most Jews ascribed to the beliefs of the Pharisees.
- (3) Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection (cf. Mar. 12:18).

Luke says this group “came upon them.” The phrase literally means “set upon,” as if they were predators pouncing on their prey (cf. Ac. 17:5).¹ Given these facts, it should not surprise us that these religious leaders, comprised chiefly of Sadducees, were “greatly annoyed because [Peter and John] were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” They were teachers, not these backwater Galileans. They didn't believe in the resurrection. Most importantly, the Sadducees were responsible for crucifying Jesus Christ and so would take

¹ Bock, Darrell L., *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 2007), p. 186.

issue with Peter and John “proclaiming” any message in that name. This message was disastrous for their professional and political lives. In their view, the apostles needed to be stopped before this got out of hand.

Vs. 3 – This is the first account of a Christian being “arrested” for the faith. Given what is said later (vs. 10, 14), we can assume that when Luke says the religious leaders “arrested them and put them in custody,” he's not just referring to Peter and John; he's also referring to the lame man!

Now, while it's clear the religious leaders were “annoyed,” this arrest was motivated by procedural concerns rather than some grand conspiracy. Luke specifies the reason as “for it was already evening.” If you recall, this entire event began while Peter and John were “going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour,” aka 3 PM (cf. 3:1). For it to already be nighttime would mean two things. First, Peter and John had been preaching for quite a while. Second, in accordance with Jewish custom, no official temple business could be done during the evening. Whatever question the Sanhedrin had would have to wait until the next day. In the meantime, the apostles and the formerly lame man would have to wait in a holding cell.

Vs. 4 – Before moving on with the story, Luke tells us that though the apostles were arrested, the damage had already been done. He tells us that “many of those who had heard the word believed.” Although we can rightly assume that these new converts were baptized (cf. 2:28), Luke emphasizes the element of belief rather than the mode of baptism.

Luke says that “the number of the men came to about five thousand,” which is two thousand more than those who became believers on the day of Pentecost (cf. 2:41). This brings the total converts to 8,000. It's possible that when Luke says “men,” he means males. However, given its use in 17:34, he could be including women (cf. 1:16). If so, 8,000 is the low estimate, and the church was likely far larger.

So, what's the takeaway? Suffering for Jesus is not an indication of failure but of faithfulness.

During the farewell discourse in John, Jesus makes it clear that the world will hate Christ and Christians “without a cause” (cf. Jn. 15:25). In other words, although the believer has done nothing worthy of condemnation, they will still be condemned. This is not to say that Christians throughout history haven't deserved some of the animosity thrown at them. The atrocities that have been done in the name of Christianity throughout the years are embarrassing: the Crusades, the witch hunts in 17th century New England, how slavery was supported by many

churches during the Civil War,² and how many evangelicals opposed the Civil Rights movement,³ etc. For more on these and other such failures, read John Dickson's book *Bullies and Saints*.

However, by and large, Christians have been **persecuted** more than they've been the **persecutor**. In fact, according to a Pew Research article published in 2020, Christians experienced harassment in more countries in 2018 than any other world religion.⁴ Christian persecution is both a historical fact and, as Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab puts it, "part of a global phenomenon" that has reached the modern age.⁵

So, while, admittedly, the church is not entirely without blame, it has been the victim more than any other world religion throughout history. **To be loved by God is to be hated by the world.** But that hatred of the world is a badge of honor; it is a sign that the follower of Christ is truly following Christ. Or, as Jesus himself said,

READ: John 15:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ "If the world **hates** you, know that it has **hated** me before it **hated** you. ¹⁹ If you were **of the world**, the world would **love** you as its own; but because you are **not of the world**, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world **hates** you. ²⁰ 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.

On the very day that, through the name of Jesus, a man was healed of his paralysis, and five thousand people were saved, Peter, John, and even the healed man were imprisoned. When the world cannot stop the truth, it will try to suppress it. And when it fails to suppress it, it'll try to destroy it. Thus, while it may not seem like a blessing, it is an honor to stand for, be hated for, and possibly even die for the truth. Jesus tells us, "**Blessed are you when people hate you**

² Menikoff, Aaron, "How and Why Did Some Christians Defend Slavery?" February 24, 2017, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-and-why-did-some-christians-defend-slavery/>, [accessed June 7, 2025].

³ Taylor, Justin, "A Conversation with Four Historians on the Response of White Evangelicals to the Civil Rights Movement," July 1, 2016, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/a-conversation-with-four-historians-on-the-response-of-white-evangelicals-to-the-civil-rights-movement/>, [accessed June 7, 2025].

⁴ General Editors, "Harassment of religious groups continues to be reported in more than 90% of countries," November 10, 2020, *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2020/11/10/harassment-of-religious-groups-continues-to-be-reported-in-more-than-90-of-countries/>, [accessed June 7, 2025].

⁵ Ochab, Ewelina U., "Recognizing The Phenomenon Of The Persecution Of Christians Globally," November 30, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2019/11/30/recognizing-the-phenomenon-of-the-persecution-of-christians-globally/?sh=52fc15053935>, [accessed June 7, 2025].

and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets” (Lu. 6:22-23).

ii. Vs. 5-13 – The Lionheart of the Apostles

Vs. 5-7 – “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, and all who were of the high-priestly family.” This group was partly responsible for Jesus’ death (cf. Lu. 22-23). “Annas” was the patriarch of the family, and while it did not hold the position of high priest in the eyes of the Romans, he was recognized as such by the Jewish people. “Caiaphas” was installed by the Romans as the high priest, and he was the son-in-law of Annas (cf. Jn. 18:13). If “John” refers to Jonathan, then this was the high priest that came after Caiaphas.⁶ Nothing is known about “Alexander,” but given that he was also part of the “high-priestly family,” he could have served as high priest at some later point. Luke’s point here is that the apostles were hauled before some of the most powerful and influential people in all of Israel.

Luke tells us that religious leaders had one question for the apostles: “By what power or by what name did you do this?” The implied rebuke is that they were acting *without* the authority, “power,” and “name” of the Sanhedrin. However, what’s remarkable about this question is that it *completely overlooks* the miraculous events. A forty-year-old man who had been lame since birth was just healed within the walls of the Temple, and these religious leaders want to squabble over who gave the apostles permission to do so!

Vs. 8-10 – Before telling us what Peter said, Luke tells us that he “was filled with the Holy Spirit.” This is a fulfillment of something Jesus said to them in Luke 21:12-15, “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it, therefore, in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.”

Peter exemplified *five* virtues in his answer; he was courteous, clever, cunning, courageous, and, most importantly, compassionate.

- (1) Peter was *courteous*; he called the religious “Rulers of the people and elders.
- (2) Peter was *clever*; he acknowledged that they were “being examined.” The Greek term translated as “examined” refers to “conduct a judicial inquiry—‘to investigate in court,

⁶ Bock (2007), p. 189.

to hear a case, to interrogate, to question'.⁷ They were being grilled by the Supreme Court of Israel. This was no small matter.

- (3) Peter was cunning; he says this official inquiry concerns “a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed.” This judicial proceeding wasn’t about some crime; it was investing a “good deed”—i.e., the healing of someone who had been paralyzed since birth!
- (4) Peter was courageous; he said, “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.” As before (cf. 2:21, 38; 3:6, 2xs in 16), the name of Jesus plays a pivotal role in the passage. It shows up at critical points throughout the narrative (cf. 7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30). We can assume that if they were “annoyed” before, they must’ve been outraged when they heard this! He punctuates his point by quoting Psalm 118:22, “The stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.” Jesus, whom the Jews denied, God exalted. The Lord is the “cornerstone,” that is to say, he is the main support for the whole structure.
- (5) Peter was compassionate; he said to the very men who were responsible for killing Jesus, “There is salvation in no one else.” The term “savior” was a common word in the first century. It was applied to figures like Phillip of Macedon, Cassander, Antiochus I, or, more generally, gods, physicians, philosophers, statesmen, and, of course, Roman Emperors.⁸ But of them all, only Jesus is the true Savior. So much so, Peter says, “for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Vs. 13 – “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John.” “Boldness” is a key term in this passage. Here’ the religious see the boldness of the apostles. Later, they’ll pray that the Lord would “grand to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness” (vs. 29). And Luke tells us that they “continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (vs. 31). Proverbs 28:1 says, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”

The religious leaders “perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.” And when the apostles are being called “uneducated, common men,” it wasn’t

⁷ Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. 1996. *In Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (<https://ref.ly/res/LLS:46.30.4/2024-07-02T19:28:19Z/2375964?len=134>), electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., 1:552. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁸ Bock (2007), p. 194.

that they were illiterate; it referred to the lack of formal education.⁹ They were astonished that they were able to stand their own before them, even arguing persuasively from the OT.

How were such ordinary men so extraordinarily proficient in the art of debate and rhetoric? Luke says the religious leaders "[recognized that they had been with Jesus.](#)" The explanation for their boldness and cogent presentation is that they possessed the hallmark characteristics of being among Jesus' disciples.

So, what's the takeaway? The quality of our communication betrays the quality of our associations.

READ: Mark 7:14-23 (ESV)

¹⁴ And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." ¹⁷ And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Just like, "You are what you eat," you are who you hang out with. One need only listen to people to know if they're a follower of Jesus.

Video Description:

Filled | Week 11 | “One Name, Three Hearts, Pt. 1” (Acts 4:1-13)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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