

# ACTS

## Chapter 4

### *Peter and John Before the Council*

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. 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 council, 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 speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 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, 20 for we cannot but speak 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.

**4:1** *priests*. Those who were serving that week in the temple precincts. (CSB)

*captain of the temple*. A member of one of the leading priestly families; next in rank to the high priest (see 5:24, 26; Lk 22:4, 52). (CSB)

Chief of temple police, a Levite second only to the high priest in the temple hierarchy. (TLSB)

*Sadducees*. A Jewish sect whose members came from the priestly line and controlled the temple. They did not believe in the resurrection or a personal Messiah, but held that the Messianic age—an ideal time—was then present and must be preserved. The high priest, one of their number, presided over the Sanhedrin (see 5:17; 23:6–8; Mt 22:23–33). (CSB)

Although they were like “freethinkers” in religion, the Sadducees were very conservative in political matters. They were satisfied with things as they were under Roman rule, and they did not want any preaching that might in any way disturb the status quo. That was why they had conspired against Jesus. (PBC)

*Sanhedrin* – Was made up of seventy (or seventy-two) rulers, elders, and teachers of the law. The rulers were those who supervised the temple with its priests and administered the temple treasury. The elders were laymen of mature age, respected for their piety and wisdom. In the gospels they are usually mentioned last and may have been the least influential. Many of these were Pharisees. The teachers of the law were professional interpreters of the Scriptures. Many of these, also, were Pharisees. The Jews still recognized Annas as high priest, although the Romans had deposed him 15 or 16 years before. Annas’ son-in-law Caiaphas was the officially recognized high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. (PBC)

There was a group ready to be used by Satan. They were called the Sadducees and were members of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. Though small in number, they were powerful and influential because the family of the high priest and a number of other priests belonged to their group. They claimed that this life is the whole of existence and that souls die with the bodies, that there are neither angels nor spirits, and that there is no resurrection of the dead. Perfect tools for Satan, but what a sad commentary on the state of true faith among the Jewish leaders! (LL)

Pharisee was a member of a Jewish religious party which originated in the time of Maccabees; taught immortality of soul, existence of angels, union of fate and human will, strict adherence to divine law; avoided contact with non-Pharisees; laid great stress on oral law and observances such as washing, tithing, and fasting. (Concordia Bible Dictionary)

The temple authorities are the first opponents of the new mission. An indication of their reasons appears in 4:2. they were disturbed because the apostles “were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” Probably the offense is a double one. The apostles were usurping authority to teach in the temple, and the content of their teaching conflicted with denial of the resurrection by the Sadducees, an important group in the temple leadership. (Tannehill)

**4:2** *proclaiming...Jesus...resurrection* - Many Jew (especially the Pharisees; had expected the resurrection of all the dead at the end time. Jesus’ resurrection proved that the end had already appeared in one man. (TLSB)

**4:3** *evening*. The evening sacrifices ended about 4:00 P.M., and the temple gates would be closed at that time. Any judgments involving life and death must be begun and concluded in daylight hours. (CSB)

**4:4** *many...heard...believed* - The temple authorities could not destroy the Spirit’s work. (TLSB)

*men*. Lit. “males.” (CSB)

*five thousand*. A growth from the 3,000 at Pentecost (2:41); see later growth (5:14; 6:7). (CSB)

The result of this clear preaching of the Law and the Gospel? Exactly what the Lord intended. Without the Word the Holy Spirit doesn’t work, but give Him the bridge of the Word to walk into people’s hearts and watch out! (LL)

This does not mean people. It means “males.” With women and children, therefore, the number of Christians must have exceeded 10,000. These statistics are not given by Luke to bolster the reputation of the apostles. Rather, they are a testimony to the power of the gospel. (PBC)

**4:5** *rulers, elders and scribes.* The three groups making up the Sanhedrin, Israel’s supreme court (see Lk 22:66). (CSB)

**4:6** *Annas.* High priest A.D. 6–15, but deposed by the Romans and succeeded by his son, Eleazar, then by his son-in-law, Caiaphas (18–36), who was also called Joseph. However, Annas was still recognized by the Jews as high priest (Lk 3:2; cf. Jn 18:13, 24). (CSB)

*John.* May be Jonathan son of Annas, who was appointed high priest in A.D. 36. Others suggest it was Johanan ben Zaccai, who became the president of the Great Synagogue after the fall of Jerusalem. (CSB)

Likely son of Annas, Caiaphas’s successor. (TL SB)

*Alexander.* Not further identified. (CSB)

Unknown from other sources. (TL SB)

*priestly family* - Hasmoneans. From Greek Hasmonaios, which likely refers to a place-name associated with the priest Mattathias, who led his family in revolt (BC 167) against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Mattathias’s son, Judas Maccabeus (“the hammer”) became the leader of the movement and established the Hasmonean dynasty (167 BC-AD 63) over Judea. Hasmonean rulers also served as high priests. (TL SB p. 1556)

**4:7** *power* - Perhaps echoing the accusation that Jesus performed miracles by sorcery (cf. Mt. 12:24). (TL SB)

**4:8** *filled with the Holy Spirit.* The authorities’ force is powerless against Peter’s prophetic inspiration, a fulfillment of Luke 12:11-12; 21:14-15. (TL SB)

“filled with the Holy Spirit.” Peter speaks respectfully before the Sanhedrin; he does so by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gave him courage as an unlearned fisherman to speak to these rulers. There was no question, no doubt, and no hesitation. Openly and frankly, Peter explained that the cripple was healed by the power of Jesus’ name. He was unafraid to blame them for the crucifixion, and he was certain that Jesus rose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

Jesus had told the disciples (Matt. 10:19-20): “When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking. But the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Luke wants us to know that there is a difference this time in Peter being filled with the Holy Spirit. (LL)

*rulers...elders* - Peter is standing before the Sanhedrin in fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Mt 10:19–20 and Lk 21:12–15. Though formerly he had cringed before a young woman in a courtyard, now he is filled with the Holy Spirit and testifies before the Jewish leaders. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:9-10** Peter points to as evidence the formerly crippled man who now stands before the court. In answer to the question of v 7 (“By what power or what name did you do this?”), Peter responds that it was through “the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” that this miracle had been worked. Note that the emphatic *humeis* of v 7 is matched with Peter’s bold *hēmeis*, indicating that there was no shame for the disciples to be associated with the name Jesus. “Jesus of Nazareth” was the title placed over his head when he was crucified (Jn 19:19); “Jesus Christ of Nazareth” indicates his full status as God’s anointed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

“the name of Jesus.” There are numerous references to the Jesus’ name in the text and context (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30). A miracle was performed, an act of kindness, a good deed (*euergesia*). The Sanhedrin should investigate crimes and not good deeds. This healing act was accomplished under the power and authority of Jesus, who still lives and is everything he claimed to be. God has nullified what the Sanhedrin had done. It had intended to abolish Jesus, but God raised him and established him. The evidence is certain: the healed beggar standing before them. “The name of Jesus” refers to his total activity and revelation as the Son of God and promised Messiah. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:11-12** “no other name.” Here, Peter centers his attention on Jesus, on the unbelief of the Jewish leaders in rejecting him (Ps 118:22, which Jesus himself had quoted to the chief priests and Pharisees and which they had clearly understood at the time [Mt 21:42–45]), and on the deed of God in making him the Savior. Christ’s sacrifice was not only comprehensive in its effect (objective justification, 1 Jn 2:2), but also exclusive in its claim (subjective justification). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:11** *the stone ... rejected*. Fulfillment of prophecy was an important element in early Christian sermons and defenses. Jesus had also used Ps 118:22 (Mt 21:42; see 1Pe 2:7 and cf. Ro 9:33; Isa 28:16). (CSB)

The Holy One was treated as accursed (Gal. 3:13), as sin itself (2 Cor. 5:21). (TLSB)

*cornerstone* - Jesus burst forth from the tomb as the Second Adam, able to support the whole spiritual temple, the Church. (TLSB)

In a building the keystone is at the top of an arch, without which the arch and the building would collapse. It may also be the cornerstone, which in ancient architecture determined the lines for the whole building. Without a cornerstone or with a badly laid cornerstone there could be no sound construction. (PBC)

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**4:12** *no other name*. Christianity is the one true faith because Jesus, the only source of salvation, recues us from the evil one. He delivers all people from a verdict of damnation and heals ill of body and soul. “Christ’s name is received only by faith. Therefore, we are saved by confidence in Christ’s name, and not by our own efforts.

Jesus comes to us by means of His Name (Word). That Name creates faith. And by faith in His Name, He saves us. No second, no substitute, no alternative – faith is that Name alone, “given to men,” for all people, for all time. Again, beyond any shadow of a doubt, we are included! “One little Word” and Satan was stopped for now. The Sadducees, who had caused the arrest, were literally left speechless. (LL)

The name of “Jesus” means “Savior.” What his name means is what he does. Salvation is surely found in him. It is found in him alone. Without this conviction there can be no evangelism, no home missions, no world missions. Without this certainty the church would lose its reason for being. (PBC)

The name that brought healing is also the name that brings salvation. Note the emphatic of *ouden*, which underscores the futility of trying to find salvation in another name. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:13 boldness.** A certain boldness characterized by the assurance, authority and forthrightness of the apostles (2:29; 4:29; 28:31) and shared by the believers (4:31). (CSB)

*uneducated, common men.* Peter and John had not been trained in the rabbinic schools, nor did they hold official positions in recognized religious circles. (CSB)

Unschooling fishermen; it was unthinkable that these apostles should speak with such force and passion. (TLNB)

Literally means to be illiterate, but is extended to mean lack of education generally. The leaders are upset because the apostles are proclaiming “in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” Yet they cannot deny the evidence that resurrection power is at work through the apostles. They refuse to acknowledge it, even though Luke has them pay ironic tribute to the power of Jesus at work in the apostles: they can see the apostles do not have learning, yet they speak with boldness, so “they recognized they had been with Jesus!” (Sacra)

How could such laymen, untrained in the religious schools speak with such courage? The answer really was that they had been with Jesus. (PBC)

*had been with Jesus* - Their accents betrayed their Galilean origin; their faces were likely recognized by some. (TLNB)

**4:16** Like Pilate (John 18:38), the authorities disregard truth. (TLNB)

**4:17-18** The vested interests of the ruling class triumph over obvious truth. The Judean leadership refuses God’s gracious appeal, with dire consequences in time (Jerusalem destroyed in AD 70) and eternity (John 3:18; 2 John 9). (TLNB)

**4:19-20** Allegiance to God alone is the antidote to all totalitarianism. (TLNB)

**4:20** *we cannot but speak.* See 5:29. (CSB)

**4:21** *to punish them* - Simple force would rebound against the Council, so they must tread softly - for now. (TLNB)

**4:22** The single act of healing pointed to a greater cure available to all through Christ the healer. Because of his age, this man’s crippled condition would have been widely known. (TLSB)

**4:1–22** Locking their hearts, the religious authorities also close their eyes and cover their ears to silence the Word. But the crippled man still stands, the name of Jesus displays its power, and salvation resides in Him alone. Today, the Lord wants you to stand along with His bold apostles. He pledges His life and blessing to you in the midst of all difficulties. • Christ, our Savior, give us courage to stand firm. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Believers’ Prayer for Boldness*

**23 When they 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, who made the heaven and 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 plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—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 to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 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.**

**4:23-33** The reading follows the confrontation between Peter and the Sanhedrin, which was precipitated by the healing of the crippled beggar at the temple and by the disciples’ proclamation of the resurrection of Christ. Note the Sadducees’ deep concern! Due to the public nature of the miracle and the goodwill the disciples had among the people, the Sanhedrin was not in a position to do anything rash (4:16, 21). However, the disciples clearly were going to face official opposition, and they knew from sad experience where that could lead. *This* time, though, the disciples had the experience of the risen Christ and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost behind (and within) them. Living in the reality of their relationship to God, they together reflect on the situation in prayer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:23-24** A critical moment has come for the apostles: from this time forward, all of their preaching and teaching will be done in open violation of the law. Instead of shrinking back from the task that lay ahead, they together (the apostles with *tous idious*, lit. “their own”), in unity (*homothumadon*, “with one accord” [KJV]) recognize the absolute power and authority of God and join together in prayer, asking for the ability to go on preaching with boldness. There is no coward among the apostles. This power from God and the resurrected Christ is of great comfort to the apostles, as they are certain that God is in control and is able to defeat any enemy of the Gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:23** *went to their friends*. Probably to the same upper room where the apostles had met before (1:13) and where the congregation may have continued to meet (12:12). (CSB)

The Church is more close-knit than any family. (TLSB)

The Christians in the text did not specifically express thanks to God for the release of the apostles from prison. Instead, they prayed for the preaching mission that was ahead of them. They were grateful for the release of their leaders, of course, but they realized that they were freed for the purpose of proclamation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Notice the high level of trust (something to be broken by Ananias and Sapphira in ch 5); they share their situation with each other without shame and draw on the strength of their common faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:24** *together* - The word *homothumadon* loses some impact in the English translation “together.” They had “team spirit,” a sense of togetherness, a unity that was not only external but intrinsic. Such likemindedness comes from the infusion of God’s Spirit, as Paul delineates in Ephesians 3. The description of God as the Creator of heaven and earth is a classic OT phrase that emphasizes the absolute power and authority of God (Gen 14:19; Exod 20:11; Ps 146:6). This power is of comfort to the Christians facing persecution, since they know God is able to control and defeat those forces hostile to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

God is there—and sympathetic, of course. The disciples call on God to remember the creative and powerful nature of his purpose. God is addressed as *despota*. He is the owner or master, the one in control, who sets policy, who runs the show, not simply by virtue of his power but because of his will and position. He determines what life’s reality is for those under his dominion, that is, all creation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

*lifted their voices...to God* – Instead of launching into a tirade against the Sandedrin and its unjust demands, as seems to be our custom so often today, the apostles automatically turned to God and lay their case before Him in prayer. There was no whining or complaining or asking for a removal of the threat. Instead, we find absolute confidence that their Sovereign Lord was in control and that what had happened was but the beginning of fulfillments of what the Holy Spirit spoke through David in Psalm 2, beginning with the crucifixion of Christ. (LL)

It was a prayer of thanksgiving for all that God had done. It was also a petition for courage to continue the word of proclaiming Jesus’ name by word and deed. (PBC)

*Sovereign Lord*. See Lk 2:29. (CSB)

Or, “Master.” God rules in fatherly love as an absolute powerful ruler. (TLSB)

**4:25-29** Ps 2 is quoted, which originally spoke of the surrounding heathen nations attacking Israel under the Davidic monarchy in OT times. This age-old animosity toward God’s anointed kings has now culminated in the condemnation of Christ, the anointed son of David, by Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, and Jews, who united for this very purpose. The persecution of Christians, then and now, is but a continuation of the opposition God’s people have always faced. It is consoling that they (and we today) are not alone; God’s people have always faced such attacks, in fulfillment of prophecy (“what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen,” v 28). Just as those who warred against God’s OT people were really fighting Yahweh and his anointed representative, the Davidic king (Ps 2:2:2), so also those who attack Christians are really persecuting Christ himself (Acts 9:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Portions of Psalm 2 are quoted, a psalm that is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament. This psalm originally spoke of the surrounding heathen nations attacking Israel under the Davidic

monarchy. The psalmist mocks the raging of the Lord's enemies and declares that the One in heaven "laughs" and "scoffs at them" (Ps 2:4), as he installs his King on Zion (Ps 2:6). David can be seen as a type of Christ, whose enemies now consist of Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, Jews, or anyone else who is opposed to or intent on abolishing Christ or any of his followers. The text indicates an evil coalition intent on destroying the Gospel message. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

However, unwittingly, and by their freely chosen acts, these enemies of Christ carried out the Father's will. (God's predestination—note the use of *proōrisen*—is always in love [Rom 8:28–30; Eph 1:4–5], even when it employs the sins of unbelievers, who do indeed freely choose to act sinfully.) These vicious things were made to serve his purpose and intent. God is always in control. God rules in the midst of his enemies, and because Jesus rose from the dead, we are constantly assured that our three greatest enemies—sin, death, and the devil—have been defeated. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:25-26** The apostles and disciples now fully recognize God's plan revealed in Scripture. The quotation (Ps 2:1–2) demonstrates the singular way that early Christians read the Old Testament: a prophetic witness to the life, death and resurrection of the Anointed One, the Messiah. In retrospect, then, the opposition from the kings and rulers was part of the divine purpose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

Used in the coronation liturgy of Davidic kings, Psalm 2 describes Satan's ongoing war against God and against Jesus as the Christ. (TLSB)

*father David.* David's intimate relationship with God prefigures Jesus' unique relationship with Him. (TLSB)

**4:27 Herod.** Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Lk 23:7–15). (CSB)

*Pontius Pilate.* Roman procurator of Judea (Lk 23:1–24). (CSB)

Formerly, the nation Israel resisted any political or social contact with Gentiles. Now the marquee points to an unusual alliance: Herod and Pilate. Together with many others, they stand against God's servant. (For the reconciliation between the Jewish Herod and the Roman Pilate, see Lk 23:12.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

*holy servant* - Identifies Jesus with the figure of Ps. 2:2. Hatred of Christianity is ultimately loathing of Christ Himself. (TLSB)

**4:28 had predestined.** Not that God had compelled them to act as they did, but he willed to use them and their freely chosen acts to accomplish his saving purpose. (CSB)

God directs events while allowing human choices, all to achieve His saving plan. (TLSB)

The irony! The disciples know from their experience, however, how God uses the fear and sin and evil intent of even the wicked to his own good purposes. Why does Satan even bother? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)



**4:29-33** It is important to note here what the apostles don't pray for. They don't pray that the Sanhedrin be punished; they don't ask for protection; they don't ask to be spared from further hardship. All they plead for is the gift to speak boldly the Word, the Gospel of Christ, despite any real threats of persecution. Their only concern was that the kingdom of God should spread, and if God helped them to keep sounding forth the Word, all would be well. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

How important it is also for congregations and church bodies to realize that, for their mission to be more effective, they must hold in unity to the one faith and doctrine. As Luke states, "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (v 32, *tu de plēthous tōn pisteusantōn ēn hē kardia kai hē psuchē mia*). There was no evidence, despite the great number (last count: five thousand men), of divisions, factions, or contentions. They all wanted the same thing: to be faithful to the Lord Jesus and his Word. This mother congregation of all Christendom should serve as a model for all of us. Unity in faith and doctrine (Acts 2:42–44) glorifies the one true God by unanimously testifying to the undivided truth of the Gospel. Such oneness is the prerequisite for service and witness. The Church today enjoys the same unity as the ancient Church when it gathers around the pure Word and Sacraments, which alone empower us for witness. There was such a unity established in this Early Church that they shared their possessions with one another, confident that God's grace was upon them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

It was the resurrection of Jesus that brought confidence and a completely new outlook on life for his people. Persecution was their lot, but they knew where they could go for assistance. The Good Shepherd, who had laid down his life for the sheep and had taken it up again, had also promised that he would not abandon his sheep in the midst of any enemy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**4:29** The expression "with great boldness" which characterized the Christians' speaking style does not refer to nerve or brashness. Instead, it denotes the willingness to speak the Gospel despite the very real threats of the persecutors. The hymn, "Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling" (LW 318) describes ways in which Christians can support and carry out the task of witnessing: "If you cannot speak like angels, if you cannot preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus; You can say He died for all. If you cannot rouse the wicked With the judgment's dread alarms, You can lead the little children To the Savior's waiting arms." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The disciples have a sense of *déjà vu*. They've been in this sort of place before. But now, with confidence in what God can do with evil, they are unafraid. They seek only to be the mouthpiece for their Shepherd, and they look to withstand the opposition with "your word" (*ton logon sou*). As if to say, "Here, enemies of Christ—oppose *this!*" (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:30** *holy servant*. "Who *are* these individuals?" the people were asking. Public displays of Jesus' power (for healing and caring, note!) authenticated the credentials of the disciples, so that their message might be heard ("He who listens to you listens to me"; Lk 10:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:31** *was shaken*. An immediate sign that the prayers had been heard (see 16:26). (CSB)

The Holy Spirit shows His presence by a sign similar to, but distinct from, what occurred at 2:2 (cf. Ex 19:18). (TLSB)

God gave them a sign that their prayer was answered. They had not asked for a sign or for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They had asked for boldness in speaking the word. The boldness was given with the filling of the Spirit. (PBC)

This shaking had no natural cause but was evidence of the Holy Spirit. (LL)

*filled with the Holy Spirit.* The remarkable event is reminiscent of Pentecost! The result? The Word is proclaimed! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

*speak the word of God.* They continued preaching the gospel despite the warnings of the council. (CSB)

**4:23–31** Mounting pressure drives the apostles to prayer. They recite God’s sure Word and ask Him for boldness and a demonstration of His presence. Remember to pray for boldness when faced with persecution. Rejoice that the Lord refashions you in His image by His Word and Spirit. • Lord, grant Your Church throughout the world such a prayer for boldness, said with one heart and one Spirit. Amen. (TLSB)

*They Had Everything in Common*

**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 and 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.**

**4:32-33** The trust theme again. And with the support of the whole community, the apostles did what they needed to do—witness to the resurrection. Surrounded and infused by the Word—the Word incarnate in Jesus, and spoken by him—they knew Christ’s love and strength, gave it away, and found new life in the grace that flowed directly from God’s heart. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**4:32** *one in heart and soul.* In complete accord, extending to their attitude toward personal possessions (see 2:44). (CSB)

Preview and foretaste of the restoration of Paradise-like conditions in heaven. God gives us property and resources for our neighbor’s benefit. The early Christians fully shared with one another, but not in the same way as the failed communist experiments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here there is no compulsion or involvement of the State - only believers are affected, and only goods are shared, not their production. (TLSB)

And this picture is truly all the more remarkable because all the elements for disharmony and squabbling were present! This congregation, was made up of a vast variety of people, old and young, rich and poor, with many differences in occupations, education, gifts, temperaments, etc. This is food for serious thought for us: We have the same Word, and the same Holy Spirit stands ready and waiting to make us, too, more ready to share our blessings with those who have need of them. (LL)

The church's unity expressed itself in a willingness to share. This was not a regulation of the apostles. The right to hold property and have personal possessions had not been abolished. "Much grace was upon them all" means that the results of the apostle's work showed in the lives of the believers. (PBC)

**4:33** *with great power the apostles*. Such preaching was the opposite of dull, distant reading from a manuscript. (TLSB)

*testimony to the resurrection*. As significant as the death of Christ was, the most compelling event was the resurrection—an event about which the disciples could not keep silent. (CSB)

A word study of *marturion*, "testimony, witness," discloses how this general term for a person or message developed into the English word martyr. The believer put his or her life on the line—and often lost it—when he or she spoke about the Savior. Christians should not ask to be spared trials and dangers, but pray to be made strong enough to endure them. Instead of asking God to remove pressure and opposition, pray for boldness to confront the enemy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

*great grace* - Likely high esteem from the average person in Jerusalem. Cf. Mark 7:37. (TLSB)

**4:35** *distributed...as..need* -Voluntary, commendable. (TLSB)

**4:36** *Levite*. Although Levites owned no inherited land in Palestine, these regulations may not have applied to the Levites in other countries (Cyprus). So perhaps Barnabas sold land he owned in Cyprus and brought the proceeds to the apostles (v. 37). Or he may have been married, and the land sold may have been from his wife's property. It is also possible that the prohibition against Levite ownership of land in Palestine was no longer observed. (CSB)

Descendants of the patriarch Levi whom the Lord appointed as tabernacle/temple workers through Moses (Nu. 3:5-39). (TLSB)

*Cyprus*. An island in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Jews had settled there from Maccabean times. (CSB)

*Barnabas*. Used here as a good example of giving. In this way Luke introduces the one who will become an important companion of Paul (see 13:1-4). For other significant contributions of this greathearted leader to the life and ministry of the early church see 9:27; 11:22, 25; 15:37-39. (CSB)

Barnabas stands in contrast to Ananias and Sapphira (ch 5). He will play a major role, beginning in ch 13, when he becomes Paul's co-worker. (TLSB)

The nickname would distinguish Joseph from his many Jewish namesakes. (TLSB)

*encouragement* - A role he would fulfill later in the mission to the Gentiles. (TLSB)

**4:32-37** As the early Christians loved their Lord, they loved His Bride, the Church, giving of themselves freely. As you gather goods that perish, consider that "it is more blessed to give than

to receive” (20:35). Lavish love on your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as Jesus lavished His love on us all and gave Himself unto death for the worst of sinners. • Grant us, Lord, to live each hour in the knowledge that “love never ends” (1Co 13:8). Amen. (TLSB)