

# Signs of Life: Boldness Part 1

Acts 4:1-21

4/25/2026

## Custom

## Scripture

Acts 4:1-21 (NKJV) [1] Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, [2] being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. [3] And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. [4] However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. [5] And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, [6] as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. [7] And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" [8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: [9] If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, [10] let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole. [11] This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' [12] Nor is there salvation in any other, 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 and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. [14] And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. [15] But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, [16] saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. [17] But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." [18] So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. [19] But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. [20] For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." [21] So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

How many of you have ever been afraid? In our natural human nature, fear is the reaction when we face things that potentially threaten our well-being.

Listen to some snippets taken from the diary of John Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist church...

Sunday, a.m. May 5 - Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore. Sunday, p.m. May 5 - Preached in St. John's. Deacons said, "Get out and stay out." Sunday, a.m. May 12 - Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either. Sunday, a.m. May 19 - Preached in St. Somebody Else... Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return. Sunday, p.m. May 19 - Preached on the street. Got kicked off the street. Sunday, a.m. May 26 - Preached in a meadow. Chased out of a meadow as bull was turned loose during the service. Sunday, September 9, preached to 10,000 people three weeks in a row in Moorfields

Persistent boldness in the face of opposition and discouragement!

## Application

Many Christians look at opportunities that are beyond their natural abilities or inclinations and shrink back in fear. Someone criticizes, threatens, or mocks them, and fear and self-preservation set in. They see opportunities to share the gospel or be a witness, yet shrink back in fear because they aren't sure what the outcome will be. Sometimes it's the fear of potential consequences or hardships that might follow obedience to Christ. The "what ifs" that threaten our comfort or security in this world cause us to shy away from bold steps of faith.

In Acts 4, we see a progression of how the early church changes and grows.

At first, the believers are a small group keeping to themselves. Then, the Holy Spirit comes and fills them with power. Because of this, thousands of people come to believe in Jesus, and their lives are completely changed. At first, outsiders just watch with curiosity. But soon, what God is doing in the church begins to make a difference in the whole community. People are being healed in Jesus' name. One man who couldn't walk since birth was healed right outside the temple. This miracle grabs the attention of the religious leaders and temple worshippers. Peter sees the crowd's amazement and, for the second time, tells everyone that Jesus is the one who healed the man. He gives all the glory to Jesus and calls everyone to turn away from their sins and turn to God. Peter says, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19 NKJV).

So what comes next? The inevitable... persecution from those whose power and authority are threatened by the true King.

The world doesn't mind a feeble, non-invasive, compromising church that leaves out Jesus and lacks biblical conviction. But when a church that is committed to the gospel starts to make waves that go against their agenda and system, you can bet that persecution will come in some form.

Not because we are hateful. Not because we are looking for a fight. But because the gospel announces that there is another King, another kingdom, another authority, and another name by which men must be saved.

This is why the Apostle Paul tells us:

## Scripture

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) [12] Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Today, we look at Signs of Life: Boldness. What does bold faith look like? We will look at how the Holy Spirit responds to persecution through Peter. What does the Spirit do? He gives his disciples boldness in the face of fear, persecution, and adversity!

Acts 4 is not merely the story of Peter and John getting in trouble. It is the first major collision between the Spirit-filled church and the powers of this world.

The lame man has been healed. The gospel has been preached. Thousands have believed. The name of Jesus is spreading through Jerusalem. And now the question becomes: What will the church do when obedience to Christ becomes costly?

The first thing we see is this:

## Main Point

### Point 1

Bold Faith: Does not yield to political correctness

## Scripture

Acts 4:1-2 (NKJV) [1] Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, [2] being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Notice that the disciples are approached by these groups of people:

First, the priests:

Those who were recognized as the religious leaders of Israel, responsible for maintaining the rituals, sacrifices, and spiritual instruction of the people. These were men deeply respected within Jewish society, regarded as intermediaries between God and His people through their service in the temple. Their presence demonstrates that Jesus was a threat to the religious rituals of the sacrificial system.

Second, there is the captain of the temple.

This person was not just a figurehead; he had real authority in the temple, just below the high priest. The captain was responsible for keeping peace in the temple area, leading the guards, and making sure everyone followed the rules there. He was the temple-cop! His involvement shows that what the disciples were doing was seen as more than just a religious issue; it was also viewed as a possible threat to public order and the smooth running of temple worship.

Third, the Sadducees—the political leaders.

It's interesting because the majority of the persecution against Christ came from the Pharisees, who persecuted Jesus out of religious conviction and jealousy. The Sadducees, however, were a group with a distinct political agenda. The Jewish historian Josephus described the Sadducees as

## Quote

— *Josephus*

"the upper social and economic echelon of Judean society."

Though they were a small minority, at the time, they wielded the greatest influence on the political and religious atmosphere of Israel. To understand their significance, it's important to remember that the ancient Jewish state was an integration of religion and politics. Even under Roman occupation, the Jews maintained a measure of self-governance through the Sanhedrin, their governing council.

The Sanhedrin was effectively a combination of the supreme court and the senate, composed of the High Priest, Sadducees, and some Pharisees. The Sadducees, with their aristocratic backgrounds, often held the most powerful positions. Additionally, the Sadducees were hung up on the issue of resurrection, seeing that they denied the very idea, which often pitted them against the Pharisees. Commentator Kent Hughes describes the Sadducees as:

## Quote

— *Kent Hughes*

"...the materialistic rationalists of their day—denying the supernatural, denying evil spirits, denying angels (see Acts 23:8). Above all, they denied the Resurrection (see Mark 12:18), which the apostles boldly preached."

The Sadducees, especially, were disturbed because they denied the resurrection. They were the power class. They had position, influence, wealth, and a working relationship with Rome. They had a system to preserve.

And here comes Peter and John preaching that Jesus, the man these leaders rejected and condemned, had been raised from the dead by the power of God.

That message did not merely challenge their theology. It threatened their whole arrangement. The historian F.F. Bruce notes,

## Quote

— *FF Bruce*

"It was the Sadducees' interest in maintaining public order and their own privileged position that made them the chief persecutors of the early church."

**THEIR ATTITUDE:** "If people start turning to Jesus and believing will stop listening to us, and we will lose power and status and authority." Here was the main threat:

## Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

"The gospel was contrary to the belief system that kept the Sadducees in positions of power."

And that is still where the conflict comes, church. The gospel does not merely comfort sinners. It confronts systems of power and the people who run them. It confronts pride. It confronts lust. It confronts greed. It confronts false religion. It confronts self-righteousness. It confronts every throne where man has seated himself and says, "Come down. Christ alone is Lord."

And that is why a faithful church must never measure her success by whether the world applauds her. Sometimes, the evidence that we are being faithful is not applause, but resistance. You want to find a battle, just threaten the power platforms of the religious and political elite.

## Application

Does this sound familiar? It should. The testimony of Scripture and the history of the church both affirm that faithfulness to the gospel inevitably brings opposition from the world. Jesus Himself declared, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you... If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:18, 20). I truly believe that any church in America that continues to stand firm in the gospel will see increasing persecution and pressure from our culture and political system. As our political systems and cultural institutions drift further from the righteousness of God, those who faithfully proclaim the truth of Christ and the authority of Scripture will face growing hostility. For two thousand years, there have been spiritual forces at work—“principalities... powers... the rulers of the darkness of this age, [and] spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)—operating behind political parties, governments, educational systems, and even religious institutions, all bent on one ultimate aim: to silence the name of Jesus, challenge His ultimate authority as King, and suppress the witness of the church. This spiritual conflict is not new; it is the ongoing enmity between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. For us, there will always be political and cultural issues that demand our attention and, at times, our courageous stand. But let us be clear: the church is not a political machine, nor is our mission to align ourselves with any earthly power. Rather, as citizens of heaven, we are called to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. God’s Word shapes our worldview, compels us to uphold His standards of truth, justice, and mercy, and often places us at odds with prevailing societal norms. Ultimately, our calling to raise our voices is not to win temporal political victories, but to bear faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Scripture

Proverbs 24:11-12 (NKJV) [11] Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. [12] If you say, “Surely we did not know this,” Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?

The Issues:

Someone may say, “Pastor, I thought we were just supposed to preach the Word and preach the gospel.”

Amen. That is exactly what we must do.

But we must also understand that many issues placed on the political table are not merely political issues. They are moral issues. They are biblical issues. They are gospel issues because they deal with sin, righteousness, judgment, human dignity, the image of God, the design of God, and the need of man for redemption in Christ.

When the world redefines marriage, we do not answer first as Republicans or Democrats. We answer as people under the authority of Scripture. When the world celebrates sexual confusion, we do not speak because we hate sinners. We speak because sin destroys, Christ saves, and truth is not cruelty. When the unborn are treated as disposable, we do not speak as activists. We speak as those who believe every child is fearfully and wonderfully made by God.

## Scripture

1 Timothy 1:8-11 (ESV) [8] Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9] understanding this, [10] the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, [11] in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Do you notice that these issues are contrary to sound doctrine and are directly connected to the gospel? How so? Well, the Holy standards of God are to create conviction over sin and ultimately lead people to the knowledge of the Savior! Because look what Paul says a few verses down in verse 15:

APPLICATION: If we don't stand on these issues and make a stand against them, we, by default, affirm them and therefore lower God's standards and limit our ability to effectively preach the gospel to sinners whom Jesus wants to save. Some say, "No, we just need to be the church of the open mind." To which I agree. I just tend to fall in line with GK Chesterton when he said,

## Quote

— Chesterton

"Merely having an open mind is nothing; the object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid."

So... The leaders were disturbed because the apostles were preaching Jesus. So what did they do? They applied pressure. They arrested them. They brought them before the council. They asked them the question meant to intimidate them: "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

But pressure does not create conviction. Pressure reveals conviction.

And when Peter is pressed, what comes out of him? Not fear. Not apology. Not compromise. The gospel comes out.

## Main Point

### Point 2

Bold Faith: Is unashamed of the Gospel

## Scripture

Acts 4:3-4 (NKJV) [3] And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. [4] However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. What a scene: Imagine now 5000 new believers gathered together, and the authorities arrest these guys, probably causing some reaction from this crowd. 5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

**THE CROWD:** Do not miss the scene. Peter is standing before some of the same power players that condemned Jesus. Annas is there. Caiaphas is there. The atmosphere must have felt familiar. This was not a friendly Bible study. This was not a casual conversation. This was the court of intimidation.

John 18 & Matthew 26 - Annas and Caiaphas were both part of Christ's condemnation.

**THE QUESTION:** By what power of name have you done this? As usual, they didn't ask this because they were genuinely intrigued by the miracle or interested in Jesus. This was a dangerous and intentional trap question.

## Custom

According to Deuteronomy 13, if someone performed a miracle but did not give Jehovah credit, they were to be put to death. Well, Peter actually does give Jehovah credit, they just didn't recognize Him by His name... Jesus.

And this is the same Peter who, not long before, had trembled before a servant girl and denied that he even knew Jesus. But now he stands before the rulers of Israel, filled with the Holy Spirit, and says, "Let it be known to you all..."

What changed? Peter had seen the risen Christ. Peter had been restored by grace. Peter had been filled with the Spirit. The fear of man that once made him deny Christ had now been swallowed up by the power of the risen Christ.

## Scripture

Acts 4:8-10 (NKJV) [8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: [9] If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, [10] let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole.

Notice how Peter first mocks the gathering. I don't believe he does this to be disrespectful or funny, but to draw attention to how ridiculous it really is that they are being judged for doing 1.) A good deed 2.) for a helpless man.

Only a Christian would get judged for doing something good for people who are helpless. Why? Because they do it in the name of Jesus.

Then, as in the past, he gets personal. He knows the Sadducees are really anti-resurrection, so he makes sure to emphasize that not only did they have a hand in crucifying him, but Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God!

I LOVE THIS: Peter was not intimidated by his audience. He was not deterred by political correctness. He did not shrink back in fear or speak eloquent circles that would sidestep the issue. HE JUST DECLARES THE TRUTH.

Notice also that the man who was healed was there, in the court. Whether by choice or force, I like that he stood beside the disciples in their defense. He was a new believer, but wouldn't dare deny the life-changing power that he experienced both physically and spiritually in Jesus.

## Scripture

Acts 4:11 (NKJV) [11] This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

Here, Peter uses prophetic passages from Psalm 118 and Isaiah 28 that all in the room would be familiar with. Peter and Paul both refer to Jesus in their letters as "The Chief Cornerstone."

## Illustration

There is an old tradition that when the temple was being built, the builders rejected a stone they did not think would fit, only to discover later that the rejected stone was the very one needed for the foundation. Whether or not that tradition is historically exact, the biblical point is clear: the leaders rejected Jesus, but God made Him the cornerstone. Man rejected Him. God exalted Him. Man crucified Him. God raised Him. Man cast Him aside. God made Him the cornerstone of salvation.

## Scripture

Acts 4:12 (NKJV) [12] Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Not only is he the chief cornerstone, but he is also the sole cornerstone. There are many names of those who have gone before. Many skilled teachers, many astute philosophers, many dynamic and charismatic leaders, many religious icons, but only one risen Savior of the World.

## Application

Peter did not say Jesus is one beautiful option among many. He did not say Jesus is one path for sincere spiritual people. He did not say Jesus is my truth, but you may have yours. He said there is no other name. Not the name of Moses. Not the name of Abraham. Not the name of Caesar. Not the name of philosophy. Not the name of religion. Not the name of self. Not the name of good works. Not the name of sincerity. There is one name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, and His name is Jesus.

This is not a statement I invented, but one that I believe is absolutely true. Jesus said:

## Scripture

John 14:6 (NKJV) [6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Some people say, "That way is too narrow!" Yes, it is narrow—just like Jesus said when He told us, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). But before we get upset about how narrow it is, we should ask, "Is it true?" If it is true, then how wide or narrow the way is doesn't matter. We aren't God, so we don't get to decide what is fair or how things should be. It's actually a gift of God's grace that there is a way at all. It's far better to have one way to God than none.

The narrowness of the gospel is not cruelty. It is mercy. If there is only one cure for the disease, love does not hide it. If there is only one door out of the fire, love does not apologize for pointing to it. If there is only one Savior for sinners, love lifts up His name.

Peter preached Christ clearly, and the council could not ignore what they saw. They may have hated the message, but they could not explain away the messengers.

They expected fear. They saw boldness. They expected ignorance. They heard wisdom. They expected weakness. They saw men who had been with Jesus.

## Main Point

### Point 3

**BOLD FAITH:** Is visible to an unbelieving world

## Scripture

Acts 4:13-14 (NKJV) [13] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. [14] And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Uneducated, simple men.

The establishment is trying to destroy Christianity. It is the educated of the world, the rich, and the powerful against a couple of fishermen with no education and no money. Uneducated doesn't mean they were stupid, ignorant, or unskilled. It simply means that they didn't meet the criteria that those in power would have considered impressive or sufficient to warrant such influence.

## Scripture

1 Corinthians 1:27 (NKJV) [27] But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

## Application

**BUT THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS:** They recognized the boldness and that wisdom of the "unqualified" men, and it reminded them of Jesus, the humble carpenter from Nazareth. "They realized that they had been with Jesus." What a sentence. They did not merely realize these men had been to church. They did not merely realize they had religious opinions. They did not merely realize they had memorized answers. They realized they had been with Jesus. Oh, may that be said of us! Not merely that we are conservative. Not merely that we are moral. Not merely that we are well-read. Not merely that we know how to win arguments. May it be obvious that we have been with Jesus. There is a kind of courage that cannot be manufactured by personality. There is a kind of wisdom that cannot be purchased with degrees. There is a kind of holiness that cannot be faked by religious performance. There is a kind of love that cannot be explained by human temperament. It comes from being with Jesus. Oh, Christian, that those who interact with us every day would KNOW that we have been with Jesus. If we truly have been! If we truly spend time in His presence and know His heart and His love. If we are filled with the wisdom from above and the power from on high, something will catch their attention regardless of our qualifications.

David Hume, 18th-century British philosopher who rejected historic Christianity, once met a friend hurrying along a London street and asked where he was going to hear George Whitfield preach.

## Quote

— *David Hume*

"But surely you don't believe what Whitfield preaches, do you?" "No, I don't, but he does."

## Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

"What Peter and John possessed made what they lacked totally obsolete."

They lacked credentials, but they had communion. They lacked status, but they had the Spirit. They lacked institutional approval, but they had the approval of God.

But the council was not finished. When they could not deny the miracle, they tried to silence the message. That is often how opposition works. If it cannot refute the truth, it tries to intimidate the witness. If it cannot disprove the gospel, it pressures the Christian to keep quiet.

So now the issue becomes very simple: Whose voice carries more weight? The voice of man or the voice of God?

And that brings us to the fourth mark of bold faith:

## Main Point

### Point 4

**BOLD FAITH:** Is concerned with obedience to God

[Act 4:15-22 NKJV] 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

This is such a horrible plan! What they didn't realize is that when you chain up the Christian, you are really unleashing the gospel. You cannot lock up the power of God in hearts filled with the Holy Spirit's fire! They thought that a threat would keep them quiet, but they didn't anticipate that Jesus meant more to these men than their very lives or well-being. There is no force powerful enough, spiritually or physically, that can defeat the Spirit-filled believer.

## Scripture

Acts 4:18-20 (NKJV) [18] So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. [19] But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. [20] For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

What is a person called who speaks the things they have seen and heard? A WITNESS  
The disciples could not obey the commands of the religious and political leaders at the expense of disobeying Jesus Christ's command.

## Application

The command was clear: "Do not speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Not merely, "Tone it down." Not merely, "Be careful." Not merely, "Stay private." They commanded them to stop speaking the name. And there it is. That is always the issue. The world does not simply want a quieter church. It wants a Christless church. It does not mind our charity if we leave out His Lordship. It does not mind our morality if we leave out His authority. It does not mind our spirituality if we leave out His cross, His blood, His resurrection, His judgment, and His exclusive claim over every human soul. But Peter and John answer, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge." In other words: You may have a council, but God has a throne. You may have temporary authority, but God has ultimate authority. You may threaten our bodies, but our consciences answer to God. You may command our silence, but Christ has commanded our witness. [Pro 29:25 NKJV] 25 The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe. When it comes down to it, there is only one to whom you and I will have to give an account. What would you rather choose? To have to explain to man why you must be bold, or to have to explain to God why you chose to be afraid? Church, there must come a point where the fear of God becomes greater than the fear of man. There must come a point where we say, "I cannot be silent about the One who saved me. I cannot deny the One who bought me. I cannot hide the One who raised me from death to life. I cannot pretend I have not seen what I have seen and heard what I have heard." If Christ has opened our blind eyes, shall we act as though we still cannot see? If Christ has raised our dead hearts, shall we speak as though we are still in the grave? If Christ has forgiven our sins, broken our chains, washed our souls, and filled us with His Spirit, shall we then be embarrassed by His name? No. A thousand times, no. We should honor governing authorities. We should pray for leaders. We should be respectful, sober-minded, and truthful. Christian boldness is not arrogance. It is not rudeness. It is not political rage baptized in Bible verses. But when man commands what God forbids, or forbids what God commands, the path is clear: we obey God.

## Scripture

Acts 4:21-22 (NKJV) [21] So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

Threats were as far as they could go this day, because 2000 more people just got saved, and the entire city was glorifying God for healing this man who had been with an obvious condition for over 40 years. It would have been political suicide to punish these men any further. That won't stop future attackers, but it temporarily suppresses the flame of their indignation.

## Conclusion

Because boldness is not the absence of danger. Boldness is obedience to Christ in the presence of danger. And church, we need this kind of boldness. We need believers who are compassionate without compromise, humble without cowardice, loving without lying, and bold without becoming cruel.

But this boldness does not come from anger at the world. It comes from nearness to Jesus. They realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

That is the secret.

If we have not been with Jesus, we will either shrink back in fear or lash out in the flesh. But if we have been with Jesus, if we have remembered His cross, tasted His grace, and been filled with His Spirit, then we can stand in a trembling world with steady hearts and say, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

And when obedience becomes costly, shall we turn back?

Can we not embrace wounds when He was wounded for our transgressions? Should we shrink back when scorned or mocked, when He was scorned and mocked for our shame? Will we insist only on receiving a crown of gold, when our Savior first embraced a crown of thorns? Will we demand a Christianity without cost, when Christ carried a cross for us?

No, church. If He bore shame for us, then by His grace, we can bear shame for Him. If He was wounded for us, then by His grace, we can endure wounds for Him. If He stood in our place beneath the judgment of God, then by His grace, we can stand in this world as witnesses to His name.

Paul said, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings..."

Not the power only. The fellowship, too. Not the crown only. The cross too.

So may God make us bold. And may the watching world be forced to say of us what they said of them:

“They have been with Jesus.”