

# Suppressing Jesus: The Ultimate Futility

Acts 4:1-22

*Halifax: 2 October 2011*

## **Introduction**

As we move along in our Sermon series in Acts today,

- we come to the account of the first confrontation of the Jewish authorities with our risen Lord and His disciples.
  - Of course there had been many confrontations with Jesus prior to His resurrection leading up to and climaxing with His crucifixion...
    - But this is the first confrontation against Him after His resurrection.
- The Jewish establishment must have been very very frustrated because they thought they had done away with Him once and for all by crucifying Him.
- But now here He is again, this time, acting among the people through the acts of His apostles.
  - Last week we saw in chapter 3 how Peter and John healed the lame man through the name of Jesus, and then proclaimed Jesus to the great crowd that gathered to see what had been done!
    - The man who was healed was a familiar fixture at the temple, a man who had been taken up daily to beg for years, unable to walk from birth.
      - Everybody from Jerusalem knew him...
      - And now, here he was, walking, and leaping, and praising God for his healing in the name of Jesus Christ.
    - No one could deny the miracle—it was evident and certain to all.
      - And now Peter is proclaiming to them that this healing was done by Jesus whom God sent to bring times of refreshing and ultimate restoration as the prophets had foretold,
        - that God had sent Him to turn His people away from their sin.
        - They could not deny the miracle—could they deny the Saviour?
- Today we get to see in chapter 4 how the Jewish leaders respond to all this.
  - There are many lessons for us here about the opposition to the gospel!
    - First, that it is the gospel itself that causes offence and that is opposed.
    - Second, that inquisitions about the gospel serve only to make it more convincing and sure.
    - Third, that threats against those who preach the gospel only serve to highlight their loyalty and sincerity to Jesus.

- To put it one sentence,
  - The gospel is offensive, but the more it is opposed, the more it is strengthened.
    - That means that we must not be discouraged by the opposition!
      - Let the enemy go ahead and attack the gospel.
      - It will only make it all the more powerful among the peoples!
        - Isn't that what we want?
        - Be encouraged!
        - Be encouraged as we look at opposition to the gospel from our text.

**I. First, see that it is the gospel itself that causes offence and draws the opposition.**

A. You can see that it was offence with the gospel that led the establishment to arrest Peter and John.

1. You see in verses 1-3 that an impressive array of Jewish authorities came and set upon Peter and John while they were preaching!

a. It says that they came upon them—literally—*set upon them*

- and then it says that they laid hands on them and put them in custody.
- The Jews did not ordinarily use jails to punish people—jails were used to hold them until they could be brought to trial.
  - Technically, it was not lawful to hold court after dark, so they put them in custody until the next day.
    - Ordinarily, the Sanhedrin which was the Jewish supreme court, met between the morning and evening sacrifices.

b. And look at who it was that came upon Peter and John here...

1) It was the priests—probably a reference in particular to the high priests.

- Caiaphas, the son in law of Annas, was the high priest at that time,
  - but Annas who had been the high priest before him was still referred to as high priest—
  - We might call him high priest emeritus—and he wielded more power than Caiaphas.

2) The captain of the temple was also there.

- He was in charge of what went on in and around the temple and was second in rank to the high priest.
  - He commanded the police force of the temple and was responsible to see that order was kept in the temple precincts.

3) And then the Sadducees are also mentioned.

- This was the party to which the chief priests belonged.
  - For the most part, it was made up of powerful families who were not professional theologians—they were aristocrats.
  - They held as much power as they could under Roman rule and were not hesitant to play up to the Romans when necessary.
- The Sadducees were the theological liberals of the day.
  - They did not believe in miracles, the resurrection, eternal life, angels.
    - They rejected all but the first five books of the Bible and did not hold that the Messiah would come.
    - So the idea of a risen Messiah who promised resurrection at the last day was especially offensive to them.
- For this reason, the Sadducees are the primary opponents of Jesus in Acts while the Pharisees seem to have been at least equal if not the more prominent antagonists in the Gospels.
  - The Pharisees were truly religious—they did believe in the miracles and the resurrection and the coming of the messiah,
    - but they were full of self-righteousness, following the traditions of the fathers that were added to scripture.
    - Their main opposition to Jesus was that He did not follow their traditions.

TRANS> So this is an opposition initiated primarily by the Sadducees.

2. And we are told that they were particularly offended by the gospel.

- Look at verse 2. We are told that they came upon Peter and John...
  - **Acts 4:2: being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**
- a. The problem, for them was not so much that they had healed a crippled man.
  - They could have done that all they wanted.
    - Opposition does not ordinarily come to the church for our good works.
    - No one objects if we love one another and if we build hospitals and feed the poor.
      - And those are all things that the church has done ought to keep on doing!
    - This is all fine with our opponents.

- The Sadducees did not mind that Peter and John healed a man.
- b. But what disturbed them—what *greatly disturbed* them—
- was the fact that Peter and John were teaching the people and preaching in Jesus the resurrection of the dead!
  - That is the gospel!
    - The word *gospel* means *good news*—
  - The good news was that Jesus had been judicially crucified, but then judicially raised from the dead for the forgiveness of sins...
    - What I mean is, that He had been crucified under the law of God for His people sins—judicially crucified according to the Father’s plan,
      - and then judicially raised because the Father had accepted His sacrifice for His peoples’ sins!
      - And now there was promised eternal life—resurrection to life—to all who receive Him.
        - In fact, Jesus had promised a two-fold resurrection...
          - First, that He would give spiritual life to all who believe, delivering them from death in sin to new life in Himself...
          - And second, that He would raise up everyone at the last day for judgement and would give eternal life in His Father’s house to all who had believed.
    - It was all about resurrection!
      - Jesus Himself was raised for our justification.
      - We are raised with Him to newness of life now—as soon as we believe...
      - And we will be raised to immortality to live in the new heavens and the new earth at the last day.
        - That is the gospel!
        - That is the good news!
        - Resurrection to life in Jesus Christ!
- c. The preaching of the good news is always the cause of offence!
- 1) That is why the apostles were opposed here in Acts 4, and that is the reason Christians are opposed all over the world.
    - Keep quiet about good news and the offence will cease.
  - 2) Do you see why this is so? Do you see why the gospel is so offensive?

- It is opposed because it declares to all that we do not have life in ourselves, but only in the resurrected Jesus.
  - It tells us that the cross was deliberate—that He went there for our sins in order to rise from curse with eternal life for us.
  - We like to flatter ourselves and pretend that such extreme measures are not needed—
    - We like to think that we are good people and don't need an atoning saviour.
    - A Saviour who dies as an example is okay, but not a Saviour who must appease the wrath of God because of our sins!
      - That is the message that offends.

TRANS> Leave that out and you will have very little opposition.

- People will admire your good deeds as long as they are not attached to the gospel.

3) And isn't that how we see church being done all around?

- In the traditional churches, the emphasis is on rituals—
  - sure, something of the gospel may be buried in them, but it misses most of the worshippers.
  - Talk to most Roman Catholics or High Anglicans and you will find that they have deficient understanding of the very gospel of Jesus.
- And in the contemporary churches, the emphasis is on entertainment—
  - there is comedy and multi-media and there is lots of music...
    - but talk to the people and you find that many of them have never been told that we are sinners who need to be saved.
    - Jesus is just a leader and an example of a good guy who loves people as they are.
- And then there are churches who emphasise social action or community life or whatever—but the gospel is put on the sidelines.
  - Again, you talk to the people and they do not know why Jesus came or what He rose *from* when He rose from the dead.
- There is a real temptation to sideline the gospel because the gospel is where the offence is.
  - If Jesus and the apostles had just healed people and established a caring community (both of which they did) and had not preached the gospel,
    - they would have had very little opposition...
    - But they would not do that and neither ought we to do that.

B. You can see here in our text that the gospel, though the cause of opposition, was also the power of God for salvation!

- Look at verse 4:
  - **Acts 4:4: However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**

1. Wow! 5000 converts!

- As is often done in the Bible, Luke counts the men.
  - In the Bible, the focus is on households—that is why men who are the head of the household are numbered.
  - This way of counting goes all the way back into the Old Testament.
- It is not entirely clear here if Luke means to indicate that the total number of men who believed came to number 5000,
  - or if he means that 5000 more families were added at this juncture!
- It really doesn't matter a whole lot—
  - The point is that a whole lot more people were saved as a result of this man's healing.

TRANS> But it was not just the healing that did it.

- It was the preaching of the gospel!

2. What if Peter had not preached the gospel?

- What if he had just healed the man and not told everyone that it was the work of the risen Jesus who had been crucified and who promised life to those who believe?
  - Then people would have wanted to come around and they would have been impressed and wanted to be involved,
    - but they would not have heard the word and believed!
  - How could they believe if they were not told about Jesus and the resurrection?
    - They would have remained in their sins.
    - And the Jewish authorities would not have been offended.
      - They were greatly disturbed, not because of the healing,
        - but because Peter and John taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead!

TRANS> And so Peter and John were arrested and taken into custody.

- Opposition came because of the preaching of the gospel.

- But now we get to see what happens when inquisition is made concerning the gospel!

## **II. We shall see that inquisition serves only to make the truth of the gospel all the more prominent and certain!**

- A. That is one of the great things about the gospel. It always comes out on top.
1. When the authorities come and start to make an inquiry, it just gives us an opportunity to speak of Christ again!
    - And if they start challenging the gospel,
      - it gives us an opportunity to defend it and the truth of it is so evident that it leaves the opponents in a worse position than they were in to start with!
    - I mean, really, look at some of the intellectuals and rationalists in our day!
      - They actually believe that life formed by naturalistic processes!
        - Even though they have no evidence for it, they believe it had to happen that way.
        - And the more they want to talk to us about it the better—
          - because the more they talk about it, the more evident it is that they have no basis for what they believe.
      - We, on the other hand, have the word of God in which God testifies to us that He made the world in six days.
        - And we have a risen Saviour who declares that He made the world and that He is going to restore the world.
          - This is what everyone is trying so hard to suppress that they come with absurd theories about aliens or about evolution.
          - They cannot bear to think that they will have to stand before Him at the end and face their sin.
    - And there are the sociologists and the philosophers and the psychologists and politicians.
      - They claim that they have ways to change people's behaviour, but people go on being selfish and killing each other.
        - They go on with their addictions and with no way to escape.
      - We, on the other hand, have a risen Saviour who is at work in the world and who takes murderers and make them sweet,
        - He takes addicts and turns them into those who give to others.
        - He takes adulterers and makes them faithful spouses and parents.
        - He promises us a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

2. So don't get knotted up when the inquisitors come.
  - a. Indeed, it can be an intimidating thing.
    - Here Peter was before the highest Jewish authorities who had crucified Jesus only a few months before.
      - They had a lot of power.
      - There was Annas and Caiaphas and rulers and elders and other big wigs.
    - They sat in a semi-circle when they met and put those who were on trial in the middle of the circle so that everyone could see them.
      - Here they are, beginning to grill Peter and John...
        - Asking them by what authority they have acted.
        - They emphasise the word **you** in verse 7...
          - **Acts 4:7: By what power or what authority have you done this?**
      - It was an intimidating place to be for sure.
    - b. But Peter had a promise as did all the apostles...
      - Jesus told them that whenever there was an inquisition, he would be with them to give them words of wisdom to speak.
        - They did not need to worry about what to say beforehand because He would help them when the time came.
        - And so it is that Peter is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit when he begins to speak.
          - The Spirit is enabling him to speak with wisdom and power.
    - c. The promise is not expressly given to us, but the principle applies.
      - The apostles were especially gifted with the ability to speak the pure word of God so that they could give us the scriptures and lay the foundation of the church.
        - But we can take this promise, not that we will be directly inspired, but that we will be strengthened by the Spirit to speak for the Lord.
        - We need to trust God at such times.

TRANS> Peter seems to rejoice in the opportunity to speak of Jesus again.

B. He declares that all the power and authority to heal this man came from Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

1. You would think that Peter might have been too intimidated to say this...



- You would think that He might have softened the message a bit.
  - These men had only recently crucified Jesus and here Peter is boldly claiming that Jesus is the one that performed this miracle.
    - He does not hesitate at all.
- a. That is by far the best way to handle yourself in a situation like this.
- Those who attack the gospel will ask questions in way that expects a certain answer...
    - “You don’t really believe that God made the world in six days, do you?”
    - They want you to waffle around and get intimidated...
      - But the best thing you can do is just say,
        - “Yes, of course I believe that, don’t you?”
        - Then they can laugh, but they know that they don’t really have any answers—and that you do.
          - The stubborn fact is that world is there, and they have no plausible explanation for it.
    - Or they will say,
      - “You don’t really believe that people will go to hell if they don’t believe in this one Saviour named Jesus, do you?”
        - And again, the best thing is just to say,
          - “Yes of course I believe that. Jesus is the only way.”
          - “You don’t think God sent His only Son and that He died on the cross when it was not necessary, do you?”
          - “There is no other way for sins to be forgiven—do you have one?”
            - What will you do when you come before God at the last day to be judged?
            - And of course they don’t have a way of forgiveness and they know that they don’t.
- b. You see what Peter does here...how plainly he speaks...
- 1) He declares to these inquisitors that it was Jesus who made this man well.
    - He wants everyone to know it...
      - **Acts 4:10: 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.**

- 2) You see how Peter not only tells them without any hesitation that it was Jesus who wrought this miracle...
  - but also adds that they had rejected Him and that God had raised Him up!
    - Peter was able to do this great work because God raised Him up from the dead after they had crucified Him!
    - They rejected Him, but God raised Him up and now He is doing miracles among the people again.
    - He had made this man walk—
      - *this* man who was probably standing right there—
      - *this* man that everyone knew had been crippled from birth...
      - Jesus had done this!
  
- 3) What ever could these men say?
  - Could they provide some other reasonable explanation of how this had happened?
    - They had hoped that Peter would be too awed by them to give an answer, but he had given them answer.
    - And now it is worse for them than if they had never even asked.
      - It is just like it was when they tried to trap Jesus with questions.
      - They always came out looking foolish.
        - The unvarnished truth is far more potent than the watered down truth.
          - Don't ever think you can help the gospel along by watering it down or leaving out the parts that you think will be particularly offensive to your inquisitors.
          - The very place of offence is where the power is!
  
2. And look, Peter goes on to show them where the scripture prophesied about their rejection of the Messiah...
  - a. He quotes from Psalm 118 where David had written about this...
    - Look at Acts 4:11...
      - **Acts 4:11: "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'**
      - He quotes it almost exactly except that he changes a couple of things:

- Instead of saying that the stone was rejected by *the* builders, he says that it was rejected by *you* builders.
- He had just told them that though they had crucified Jesus, God had raised Him up.
  - And now here is this lame man standing here, healed through Jesus' name and by His authority to prove that Jesus was raised!
  - Surely God had healed this man, and Peter insists that it was through Jesus whom they rejected but God raised up!
    - This prophecy about the builders was about them!
      - Peter has exposing their crime in rejecting the Messiah.
      - They rejected Him,
        - but God made Him the centre of Israel's salvation—the chief cornerstone on which everything was to be built!

TRANS> And indeed He is!

- b. Jesus' has this authority to heal this man because He has authority to save all people!
  - Look at verse 12. Peter makes it clear:
    - **Acts 4:12: Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**
    - Jesus is not just the healer of this individual lame man—He is the Saviour every man needs and must have if he is to be saved from sin.
- 1) How offensive this was to these men—but how hard to argue against!
  - The rejected stone was working miracles before their eyes.
    - God had appointed Him to be Israel's one and only Saviour.
    - There was no other name—not only for Israel, but for all the world!
- 2) These men would want to say that they did not need to be saved!
  - As they said to Jesus, “we were not born of fornication—we are Abraham's seed.”
    - Indeed they were—they were covenant people who had the promises of God!
    - But Jesus *is* God's promised provision in the covenant for the salvation of Israel.
      - It doesn't matter if they are children of the covenant promise.
        - If they reject God's provision for salvation there is no other remedy—not other salvation!

- What good does it do to have the promise of a glorious inheritance if you reject your inheritance when it is given to you?
    - There is no other Saviour!
    - There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved.
- 3) To reject Jesus when the Father has provided Him in love shows extreme contempt toward the Father.
- It is like a person who owes a great debt.
    - And in kindness, the creditor sees that the individual cannot possibly pay the debt, so he provides a gift that will enable him to pay.
  - But the malice of the debtor is so great that instead of using the gift to settle the account,
    - He destroys it in spite!
    - If He rejects this gracious provision—provided for him in the covenant itself—there is no other remedy.
      - There is no other remedy for anyone—either inside or outside the covenant.
      - There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved.
3. This is one of the most offensive things you can ever say in our day—
- We pride ourselves on being tolerant and pluralistic.
    - We want to say that everyone can have his own way.
  - a. Perhaps everyone can, but there is no other way to be saved than through Jesus.
    - And you need to go on telling people that!
    - The power of the gospel is in the gospel, not in your modifications of the gospel!
      - When it comes to salvation, He is it!
      - He must be it!
        - What did Buddha or Mohammed or Confucius ever do to take away sin?
        - When did God make them the chief cornerstone of His house?
          - Anyone who wishes to be saved must come to Jesus Christ.
          - He is the foundation that God has laid and there is no other.

- b. You can be baptised into this covenant, into the name of Jesus...
  - But the only provision God has for your salvation is Jesus Christ.
    - Your own baptism points to that.
    - So if you will not look to Him and trust in Him for forgiveness through His cross, there is no salvation for you.
      - When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, it is was God's provision for Israel.
        - But you had to look to be healed.
        - If you did not look, you did not live.

TRANS> So you see what happened when inquisition was made of Peter by these Jewish rulers about the gospel.

- They had expected to see Peter melt, but instead, the gospel came out on top and put them to shame.
  - They marvel at how bold he and John are, as it says in verse 13.
    - They had not expected this.
    - But now they were really in a pickle.

C. Verse 13-16 explains the pickle they were in.

- **Acts 4:13-16: 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. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 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.**

1. You can see their dishonesty here.

- The facts have called them up short!
  - They cannot deny the miracle.
  - But they refuse to act with integrity and admit that what Peter has said is irrefutable.
    - All they can think about is how to stop him from spreading this teaching about Jesus!
- Do not do this when you are confronted with your error!
  - Do not say, "How can I deny that I have erred."
  - Just go on and admit that you were wrong.
  - When God exposes your sin, confess it, repent of it—
    - don't try to pretend that you did not sin.

TRANS> You will have to carry the burden of trying to suppress the truth

2. But this is in fact what every unbeliever must do when he is confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- The truth is self-evident.
  - It is there, staring you in the face when the gospel is preached.
    - You are a sinner and you know it is true.
    - As a sinner, you are in need of salvation.
    - Jesus is a true provision and you know there is no other provision
  - But instead of bowing to Him, you determine that you've got to find a way to avoid this.
    - And so for the rest of your life until you repent, you have to spend your days suppressing what you know to be true.
      - It is so futile, so foolish, but to your carnal mind, there is nothing else to do.
      - The alternative of humbling yourself and accepting the gospel is too much for you to accept.

TRANS> You can see the tactic that Peter's inquisitors turn to suppress the gospel.

- Inquisition has failed, so now they will use force.
- They will use their authority to suppress this teaching—raw authority.
  - They can't refute it, so they will resort to threats and intimidation.
  - In verse 17, their plan is described:
    - **Acts 4:17: "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."**
- But as inquisition only made the truth of the gospel shine forth all the more brilliantly,
  - So now we see that...

**III. Threats only make the loyalty of Christ's followers all the more evident, and they expose the inability of the detractors to refute the gospel.**

- No matter what these men do to suppress the gospel, the gospel always comes out on top.

A. See how they put their plan to use threats into motion...

1. In verse 18 it says:

- **Acts 4:18: And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.**
  - They are in authority over these men, so they will use their authority to shut them up.
2. This is a very common tactic when men can't refute the truth.
- They will play the authority card.
- a. Some of you told me about this when you first starting coming here.
- You were in a church that had compromised the gospel and you tried to challenge this...
    - only to be told that you were ignorant and had no authority and no theological training that you were just being rebellious.
    - And they you were told by your peers that they didn't want to talk about it...
      - and they began to call you names—to say that you were a legalist or an extremist or a divisive intolerant bigot...
        - but they wouldn't even talk to you about it or give you a chance to explain.
        - Just listen to the experts.
- b. Just this week, I received a report about Creation Ministries international in the UK.
- It is an example of the use (or abuse) of authority to suppress truth that the authorities cannot refute:
    - In May of this year, CMI-UK's Philip Bell addressed some pupils at a Religious Education study day at a Church of England school in Exeter. As a result, the self-styled 'British Centre for Science Education' (BCSE) launched its 'Creationism-In-Schools-Isn't-Science' (CrISIS) campaign, supported by the National Secular Society. This took the form of a letter to the UK Secretary of State for Education, signed by a number of prominent scientists, demanding that action be taken to prevent creationism being taught in schools as having any kind of scientific validity.
    - This week, the British Humanist Association (BHA) joined the party, making their bid to silence all who would seek to inform children of the scientific short comings of evolutionary theory and to present them with an alternative view of origins. Supported by a much more impressive group of scientists than those co-opted by the BCSE, the BHA has launched their 'Teach Evolution, not Creationism!' campaign. Backed by over twenty Fellows of the Royal Society, including Sir David Attenborough and Prof Richard Dawkins, they are calling for "enforceable statutory guidance that [creationism and intelligent design] may not be presented as scientific theories in any publically funded school."

- Amazing that these scientists did not think what is taught day after day in every science classroom was sufficient to enable students to withstand a single lesson in what they deem to be the false teaching of creationism!
  - When truth cannot be refuted, it must be suppressed by force and intolerance!
- c. That is the way those in authority behave when they don't have any answers.
  - This is the root of persecution and the beginnings of it.
    - If you can't win with the tongue, start making laws and threats!

B. But see how this plan also backfires!

1. Remember that Peter and John are standing before these authorities who had crucified Jesus only two months before!
  - And they have been commanded by these same authorities not to speak at all or teach in this name!
    - Surely Peter and John would be silenced by fear!
    - Surely they know that these men can do the same thing to them that they did to Jesus.

TRANS> But no!

2. Peter and John appeal to a higher authority!
  - They show these men that there is an authority that is higher than them.
    - Look at verse 19-20:
      - **Acts 4:19-20: 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. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."**
  - a. Peter and John feel that they have no choice in this matter!
    - God has spoken, God has acted, God has commanded and they must obey God.
      - No one has a right to command anything that contradicts what God Himself has commanded.
      - And God has commanded these men to speak of Jesus.
        - They must comply with God's command no matter what human authorities may say.
        - They resolve that this is what they will do.
  - b. See how wisely Peter puts the question to these authorities...
    - **"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.**



- The answer is obvious and so are the facts...
  - The lame man has been healed.
  - God has healed Him and He has done it in the name of Jesus.
  - Jesus is risen from the grave and is seated at God's right hand as the Saviour of the world.
  - He is the one who must be obeyed!
  
- 3. See how Peter and John's loyalty to Jesus shines out to shame these men even more than they were shamed by the failed inquisition!
  - a. These men have the power to execute them!
    - Yet, Peter and John show that they are ready to lay down their lives if necessary for the gospel.
    - They would not do this for a lie that they themselves were spinning.
      - It is true enough—men might die for a lie that they believe to be true.
      - But in the case of Peter and John, it is not things which they have been told, but things which they have seen for themselves that they are ready to die for.
  
  - b. What a rebuke their loyalty is these spin doctors!
    - Peter and John are ready to lose everything in their loyalty to their Lord,
      - But these men refuse to acknowledge what God has clearly done before their eyes because they don't want to lose face.
        - They don't want to lose their position in the community.
        - They do not want to admit that they have been wrong about Jesus.
          - It would be so much better for them if they would!
            - Now the must fight against God.
    - They would kill Peter and John right then and there if the fear of an uprising of the people did not prevent them.
      - An uprising would also jeopardise their position, so they can't risk that!
        - What corrupt judges they are!
          - Instead of considering what is right and true and just as judges are supposed to do,
            - They act on the basis of political expediency—what will be best to safeguard their own positions.
  
- You can see here what they do.

- Verse 21 shows that they threaten them all the more, but let them go for fear of the people:
  - **Acts 4:21-22: 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. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.**
- They know that they cannot publicly refute the truth, but they hope that they can suppress it by further threats of force.
  - They do follow standard policy here—of issuing and warning the first time followed by punishment if the warning is disregarded.

TRANS> But you see how their hypocrisy is so fatally exposed by the loyalty of Peter and John.

- c. How a man makes his decisions tells you everything about him.
  - A man of the truth considers only what is right and true in deciding what he will and will not do.
  - A man of falsehood considers what he supposes will put him in the best possible position.
    - Those who live for the truth show themselves to be men of sincerity.
    - Those who posture for expedience show themselves to be hypocrites.

### **Conclusion: So what is the conclusion of the whole matter?**

Understand that opposition to the gospel will come...

- But when it does, there is no need for you to be discouraged about it!
  - If it comes in the form of inquisition, rejoice because the truth will stand against every attack that is brought against it.
    - This is not to say that you will come out on top every time someone confronts you about the gospel,
      - but it is to say that the truth will always prevail at last and that those who oppose it will be brought to shame.
  - And if opposition comes in the form of persecution, you should also rejoice.
    - It shows that those who oppose the gospel have resorted to force because they cannot refute you.
      - This only gives you an opportunity to show the world your love for Christ and your loyalty to Him by your readiness to suffer for Him.
        - There is no greater privilege!
        - It is for the LORD who has given Himself so freely for you!

- No matter what the enemies of the gospel may do,
  - The gospel always comes out on top in the end.
  - It saves those who embrace it, it slays those who oppose it.
  
- So my brothers and sisters, don't resort to modifying the gospel to make it more appealing to the masses.
  - There has been way too much of that in the history of the church and there is way way too much of it in our day.
    - Remember, it is the *gospel* that is the power of God to salvation, not your medications of the gospel!
    - Let us learn from Peter to put it forth in all its purity without shame or compromise.
      - Then and only then will our gracious Lord scatter our enemies.