

Can't Be Stopped Acts 4:1-22

It is easy to live as a Christian in this world—if you never live for Jesus; never give, never sacrifice, never serve, never tell people about Christ—it is easy. But we are not called to an easy life, we are called to courageously take the gospel into all the world.

But this type of Christian is not found in the NT. Jesus tells us to take the gospel into the world/to follow his example/to have courage in the face of evil

Our passage today, looks at Peter & John before the Sanhedrin after they have finished preaching in the temple following the healing of the lame beggar.

From this story we will see how the gospel cannot be stopped.

While the world may try to shut the gospel down, shut you down for living for Jesus, if you stand firm for Christ the gospel will prevail, and lives will be changed because of your obedience to Jesus over the world.

¹As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, ² being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

⁵ On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; ⁶ and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. ⁷ When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?” ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people, ⁹ if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. ¹¹ He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. ¹² And there is

salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

¹³ Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. ¹⁴ And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. ¹⁵ But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, ¹⁶ saying, “What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.” ¹⁸ And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all 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 give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; ²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” ²¹ When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; ²² for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

I. THE WORLD WILL FIGHT THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT REVEALS OUR BROKENNESS (1-3)

*As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, ² being **greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.** ³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.*

To recap. Peter and John just healed the lame beggar and people were amazed so they gathered around. Peter took the opportunity to share the gospel and people were saved.

This took place in the busiest place in the Temple with the people exchanging money and selling sacrifices.

The priests hear about a miracle and more importantly they hear Jesus’ name, the same Jesus they just killed a few weeks ago so they go to investigate.

The priests were on duty for sacrifices, the Captain of the guard and the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection and were kind of like the religion aristocracy) showed up.

Peter was preaching in the name of the guy they just killed and more than this, he is actively telling these people that while Jesus for sure did die, he absolutely rose from the dead.

They were bucking the system and the rulers and priests did not like this and would not stand for it.

So, they grabbed them up and threw them in jail, thinking jail might change them, but what they did not know is that Jesus had prepared them for just this kind of treatment and worse.

The priests and rulers didn't like them challenging the status quo/didn't like the Christian gospel and what it meant in their world.

If Jesus was truly resurrected, then it meant he truly was the Messiah and it then meant that their roles were no longer needed.

This treatment is really no different than today. The baker in Colorado, Jack Phillips, is constantly taken to court by the far left for his biblical stance supporting biblical marriage and sexuality and his refusal to bake cakes that promote otherwise.

Trinity Western University has been denied its law school license due to the fact of its biblical stance on gender, marriage, and sexuality.

Right here in our own state, the College of the Ozarks is facing a lawsuit by gender activists due to its stance on gender and sexuality.

If you stand on a biblical view of manhood/womanhood, marriage, sexuality; if you hold to a biblical moral and ethic; if you believe and proclaim Jesus as the only way to a relationship with God be prepared to be attacked by the world

What do we do in these situations? How do we respond when our faith is attacked? What happens when there are consequences for living out our faith according to the Bible? Do we give in? Shrink back? Accommodate?

No, because we know that because of the gospel, because of the name of Jesus a miracle happened in us.

We know Jesus is the only means by which the world can be changed, so we continue to stand firm and proclaim-no matter who or what comes against us.

Will this take courage? Will there be backlash in your life? Will you lose friends and even family? Yes, Yes, and Yes.

But we know the cost is too great. The miracle is undeniable. Just like Peter & John, they had to tell; so do we. They had courage as the world stood against them.

And do you know why? Because the gospel still has power in a sinful world.

II. THE GOSPEL STILL HAS POWER IN A SINFUL WORLD (4)

⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Peter and John were just harassed, shut down, and carted off to prison, but that did not matter.

The gospel message had been preached. The people heard the saving power of Jesus.

And what was the response? 5,000 people came to faith in Jesus because of Peter and John's faithful witness.

The world will try to do everything it can, but it can't shut down the power of the gospel.

Despite all the adversity, the sermon was no failure.

The Sadducees tried their best to stop the witness of Peter and John, but they did not succeed. The rulers raged, but it was all in vain for the gospel message is more powerful than any natural or supernatural opposition.

While Peter and John sat in jail the gospel still spread.

Here is the crux - you may not see the harvest or results of your witnessing, sacrificing, giving, serving, forgiving, standing for justice.

Know this though, the gospel is working through your life as you faithfully stand share and live in the world which hates you and hates Jesus.

The tracts, prayer cards, Bibles, and pamphlets we give out as a church may seem simple and unimportant; your testimony and gospel presentation may not seem like a big deal, but the gospel they carry has the power to change lives-to save the damned from hell.

Don't quit because you don't see the results. Never stop living for Jesus because the gospel still has power in a sinful world.

III. WE ARE CALLED TO STAND FIRM UNDER PRESSURE FROM A WORLD THAT DESIRES TO SHUT US DOWN (5-11)

⁵ On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; ⁶ and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. ⁷ When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, ⁹ if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by his

name this man stands here before you in good health. ¹¹ He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone.

The pressure is going to come; we know the gospel has power over the world, so what do we do? How do we respond?

We are called to stand firm in the power of the Holy Spirit regardless of the pressure.

The next day at court in the temple they faced the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin convened as a court which sat with 70 people in a semi-circle with the accused standing in the middle before them.

Annas is there. He was the previous high priest and he still acts like the godfather behind the scenes. Caiaphas is the current high priest.

Sadducees and Pharisees made up the Sanhedrin.

The moderator was Gamaliel, the apostle Paul's mentor before his conversion. There was a lot of power in the room.

It was not long ago they had Jesus in the same room, asking similar questions.

Think of standing before a joint session of Congress and the Mafia with no lawyer.

They begin to ask the questions. "By what name?" "Under what authority?" "No one authorized you to preach in Jesus' name."

They want to know who gave these low-class fisherman, disciples of a dead religious zealot permission to preach in their Temple.

I love this next part. It is the fulfillment of a promise Jesus made in Mt. 10:19.

Verse 8 says, "then Peter filled w/ the Spirit."

Peter lets them know that the authority he has, comes directly from the man they killed, the man who God raised from the dead. That man is Jesus Christ the Living God.

Will there be pressure to conform? To slack off? To not take a stand? To not be a Jesus freak? To not allow Christ to control all of your life? Sure, absolutely!

But, just like Peter and John, Christ, who has supreme authority, has given you and I authority to spread his gospel message of salvation to any and all.

And that's the way it is with the kingdom and its heroes. The battle goes to the determined, to the unwavering; not to the outraged or the dramatic. It goes to the committed.

We will win the battle for the gospel because we are more committed to the gospel; we are more concerned about the gospel than our own lives.

We have no excuse not to be sold out for sharing the gospel, to not have courage because the very one who created us, saved us, sustains us, and will return for us has given us authority to share the gospel and live for him.

And when the world tells you to stop, to slow down, to slack off/when they ask you why you and your family make those choices, why you put church over kids sports, why you give instead of buy, why you forgive instead of hold a grudge, why you suffer in joy- you tell them it is by and through the name of Jesus Christ.

And just as the Holy Spirit filled Peter and gave him the power to stand firm, he will fill you and give you the power and courage to face whatever opposition is in your life.

We are to proclaim the gospel above all else because it is only the gospel which will change a life/save a life.

IV. WE ARE TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL ABOVE ALL ELSE (12)

¹² And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Verse 12 shows this point. Verse 12 shows why we are to stand firm no matter the persecution.

And if you are here today and do not have a relationship with God through Jesus; if you have never asked God to forgive you of your sin; if you have never repented and placed your faith in Jesus' finished work on the cross this verse right here is the reason you are here today.

We are to proclaim the gospel above all else because it is the only thing which will change the world.

Better education won't do it. More money in your bank account won't do it. Greater government involvement won't fix the problem. Redefining morality won't solve the issue.

We do not need more religion, greater tolerance, more labels, or great self-awareness.

These things are distractions and disguises, robbing of us of the true answer to our issue-our own sin.

The world is not in the state it is in because of bad education, lack of food, climate change, or corrupt government.

The world is in the state it is in because of my sin, your sin, our sin.

The only solution for our sin is Jesus.

This is why it is imperative that we as a church, as individual believers pray for, strive toward, and engage in evangelistic and gospel interactions with others.

Our greatest need is for our sin to be wiped away so that we may be made right with God.

Which makes our obedience in sharing the gospel all the more critical.

Let me ask a few probing questions:

- When was the last time you prayed for the lost?
- When was the last time you prayed for a gospel interaction?
- When was the last time you had a gospel interaction?

I pray for the ridiculous. I regularly pray that God will pour out his Spirit on our church like he has never done so before. I pray that we will so be consumed with the gospel that everything else in our life pales in comparison. I pray that God will give our church such wonderful opportunities to minister in our community so we may share and show the love of Christ to the sinner. I ask God to send a Holy Ghost, Acts level revival right in our De Soto.

Why do I pray this way? Because the gospel is our greatest need.

Which is why we are to proclaim the gospel above all else.

V. THOSE WHO SPEND TIME WITH JESUS ARE DIFFERENT AND IT SHOWS (13-16)

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. ¹⁴ And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. ¹⁵ But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, ¹⁶ saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

Now they are before the court.

This passage tells us some very interesting information. The court recognized a few traits of these men.

- Confident
- Uneducated
- Untrained
- Had been with Jesus

The most interesting trait the court observed is that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

And here is our point. Those who spend time with Jesus are different and it shows.

Peter and John spent intimate time with Jesus. They were a part of the inner circle of 3. They saw how Jesus moved, how he talked, how he observed people.

They observed his depth of compassion, the magnitude of his mercies, and fervency of his forgiveness.

They understood his mission and his urgency to spread the gospel.

They witnessed how he gave his life for the salvation of the lost.

They knew all these things about Jesus, and they lived so intimately with Jesus they could not help but take on his character and traits themselves.

The same is true for us today. When we spend time with Jesus it makes us different.

Intimate time with Jesus changes us. Time with Christ strips us of our flesh, our pride, our lusts, and our greed.

When we spend time with Jesus in prayer and in the word we see more of God and less of self.

The glory of God becomes of greater importance in our lives and our own importance begins to shrink.

When these changes start taking place in your life; when you begin to grow in the character of Jesus people cannot help but take notice because you are literally dying and becoming a new person every day.

When you spend time with Jesus, you are dying to self and living for Christ and this is how we validate our testimony to a lost world.

When we are tangibly changing into the character of Jesus our testimony is more powerful and the gospel is proven true.

What about you? Are you spending time with Jesus? Are you allowing Christ to change you and mold you?

If not, why not? What needs to move around in your life, so you have more time to spend with Jesus.

If the gospel is the most important part of our lives and time with Jesus makes the gospel come alive in us, we must discipline ourselves to spend time with Christ.

VI. YOUR TESTIMONY IS POWERFUL SO NEVER STOP SHARING IT (17-20)

*But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.”¹⁸ And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all 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 give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;**²⁰ **for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**”*

Every been on trial? Accused? Questioned by authorities?

The conclusion of the Sanhedrin was for Peter and John to stop talking about Jesus.

Peter and John told the truth and the truth was not what they wanted to hear.

Sadly, our country is moving toward the attitude of Canada, Britain, and many other European countries when it comes to openly sharing the gospel and teaching the Bible.

Peter and John were told they had to stop this “Jesus” talk.

What was their response?

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; ²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

They couldn’t stop talking about Jesus and how he changed their lives because their testimony pointed to the gospel.

And this is our last point. Your testimony is powerful so never stop sharing it.

When you can tell people of how God saved you, how he loved you even when you were a sinner deserving of hell, how he has filled you with his Spirit, how he has shown you immeasurable compassion, grace, and love, that is powerful, that is life changing.

So, never stop sharing your testimony.

The gospel can’t be stopped, no matter the pressure the world puts on the church or on believers.

The gospel can’t be stopped because it alone is the power of God to salvation.

Let us never stop telling others that God has changed our lives and how he can change theirs.

The gospel is to be the center of our lives. We have the power to change the world, but we must allow the gospel to empower us to do so.

Yes, the world will fight against you/you will fight against yourself

But if we truly believe the gospel has the power to change lives and if we claim to be followers of Jesus, then we will do well to stand tall in the world/to boldly live out our faith in our homes, at our jobs, at school, on social media, in our relationships, where ever we find ourselves.

The gospel will continue to change lives as we continue to live boldly and be disciples who share the power of the gospel to others.

I want to challenge you today, to be the follower of Christ you are called to be/represent and present Christ wherever you are

If you find yourself shying away from presenting Christ; from following your convictions and the leading of the Spirit-I want to encourage you to renew your commitment to a faithful consistent witness