

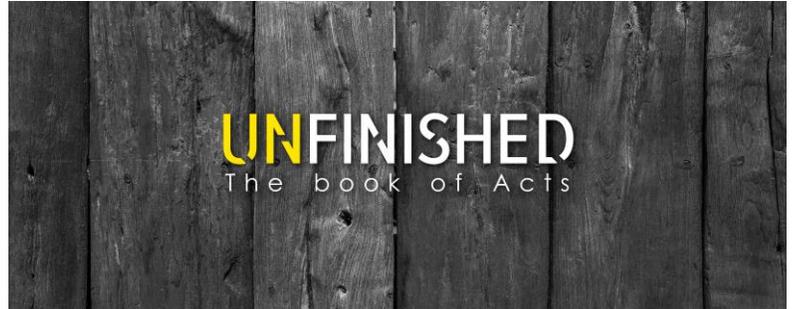


# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

## SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## Unfinished

Part 7: Bold Believers—Acts 4:1–22  
Tim Badal | October 22, 2017



We'll be continuing our series in Acts called "Unfinished." As we've seen, the work of the church is still unfinished. We're learning from the stories in Acts that with God's help we can change the world. The Christians in those days were really no different from any of us. They were filled with the Spirit of God. They were humble and willing to do the hard stuff to spread the gospel.

God is calling us to that same task today. No matter where we live, God is calling every man, woman and young person to be a life-change agent in the world. In Acts, not only do we see models for how we are to work, we also read about how the Holy Spirit works with us to do the impossible in some of the most difficult situations. We too can have faith that God will meet us in the tasks He's given us.

Today we're in Acts 4, which takes place in the same event Luke has been describing in the previous chapter. Peter and John are on their way to a routine time of prayer. As they approach the temple, they see a man who has been lame since birth. He's looking for money, something that was probably common in the first century. But Peter and John tell him, "We don't have any money, but what we do have can change your life. In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk."

Immediately the man gets up and walks. He's filled with great joy for what God has done, so he tries to cling to Peter and John as they move into the temple. For years, many people had seen him as a cripple, begging at the temple gates, but now a crowd quickly gathers to see him walking and leaping for joy.

I want to remind you that when we step out in faith, people are going to be impacted. In this case, the first person who was impacted was the lame man. His life was completely changed. When we are bold to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people, their lives can be changed, but also those around this person will be changed. It says the crowd was astonished by what they saw.

I was gripped this week by that word "astonished," and I asked myself, "Does my Christian life astonish people? When unbelievers see what's going on in my life and how I order my life, do they take notice?" The crowd in Acts realized there was something different about Peter and John, because they were living in an extra-ordinary way.

We need to ask ourselves if people are noticing anything different in our lives. If not, either they're blind or unwilling to think about it, or more likely, it's that we're not doing anything like these people in the book of Acts. We're not bold in our faith. We're not sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Then there's a third group of people in this story who took notice of what happened to this man—the opposition. When you step out in faith, people will come to know Christ. He promises that. Second, the people around them will take notice. We always see crowds gathering and asking questions in these situations. But there will also be opposition. There will be people who will fight against you, mock you, or cut you down. In those moments, we'll need even greater boldness.

We'll see this theme of boldness in Acts 4. Some people have asked me if I have a secret way of studying the Scriptures. They might say, "I'm just struggling when I study the Bible and you seem to get so much out of a text." So here's a little glimpse into how I study.

First, I simply look at what the text says. I'm not thinking about the Greek or Hebrew. I just read the same Bible you have. I look for common words or themes within the passage. Boldness is the common theme in this text. Three times in this chapter Luke uses the phrase, "And they were bold," or "There was boldness shown." So what is the Holy Spirit trying to teach us in Acts 4? To be bold as believers. It's as simple as that. But I will tell you, while the church could use a great infusion of boldness, it's difficult to come by. We're going to learn how the first disciples did it and see how we can apply that today. So let's look at Acts 4:1–22:

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

<sup>5</sup> On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem,<sup>6</sup> with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.<sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,<sup>9</sup> if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.<sup>12</sup> 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."

<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.<sup>15</sup> But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another,<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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."<sup>18</sup> So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> 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,<sup>20</sup> for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

The Holy Spirit was the engine that produced the ministry of the early church. Boldness was the mechanism or conduit that allowed that result. The Holy Spirit filled them, but they also had a role to play and we have the same role today. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit—and that's what studies like this are for. The purpose is for us to go out and proclaim the gospel, bringing light into a world of darkness. To do that involves boldness.

What is boldness? The Bible uses the word *parrhesia*, which appears often in the New Testament. It has a range of meanings, including courage, fearlessness, outspokenness, or frankness. It's an ability to use speech that conceals nothing. One scholar called it "the ultimate freedom of speech." It's not concerned about what anyone might say or think.

When we speak of biblical courage or Christian courage, we're talking about freedom to proclaim the good news of Christ—His life, death, and resurrection—to a world around us without fear of reprisal or lost reputation or any other recourse. This is one of the most needed sermons for the American church. We're not bold. We're timid and afraid. In all the world, only our nation has an "inalienable right" to speak without fear of reprisal. We fight for that right, yet we rarely take advantage of it. We rarely are guilty of freely speaking our faith. Boldness is absent from the church.

We can define boldness this way: our willingness to venture out and do the right thing at the right time, regardless of the barriers or fears we may encounter. This enables us to speak the truth and perform a task without fear of consequences because it is the right and biblical thing to do. It is realizing that God is in control. He is within us and beside us, and He will take care of us. Therefore we do not need to fear what others might do. Rather, we are to concentrate on our character and our call with passion and conviction. This defines what we as Christians are called to do, yet sadly far too many of us fail in this every day.

God in His grace doesn't give up on us on our first try. He gives us more and more opportunities, encouraging us to keep going. He also gives us great examples of courage in the Scripture.

What keeps you from being bold? You probably have a litany of excuses to explain why you're not very bold. It might be "personality." Maybe you have a quiet spirit. You may say, "That's just not my gift. I'll leave that to guys like Tim. They're outspoken."

They always have something to say.” Maybe you just don’t feel you have anything important to say. Maybe you feel as though you don’t know the Bible well enough.

Well, there are a lot of things that are the opposite of boldness. Words like cowardice, fearfulness, cynicism, negativity, discouragement, pessimism—these are all opposites of boldness. These negative traits create a negative attitude that is infectious to others. If you are not bold, it will start to spin off to other people. The boldness of Peter and John fed into boldness for the rest of the church. The reason we want courageous leaders isn’t just so we can point to them, but so that when you see courageous elders, you’ll see a courageous church. It takes on a life of its own. But the negative traits can keep people from going forward to what God is calling them to do, and it can leave the church ensnared in fear. The people can be stopped by obstacles, so the work our Lord has for them remains undone. Fear, worry, anxiety are plagues within the church.

We need to speak the truth of Scripture, that God is with us, and He’ll never leave or forsake us. We must realize we’re more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37). What can man or woman do to us? We have to believe and promote these things, encouraging one another with these truths. Otherwise we’ll allow the church’s job to remain unfinished. It’s not because we don’t have the ability, or because the Spirit is not with us, but because we’re unwilling to step out in faith and be bold for Christ.

Every incredible movement in human history has started with a bold person. Let me share with you a few examples from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I wonder how much boldness it took for an African-American man named Jesse Owens to head to the Olympics in Berlin, a place where the Third Reich of the Nazis was promoting white supremacy—a “thousand year reign” of white individuals. No wonder Hitler was so upset when Jesse Owens won four gold medals. It took a bold athlete to do that.

Another bold person in the face of Nazi powers was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran minister in Germany during the Nazi occupation. Bonhoeffer was one of the most well-known pastors in Germany. The two most-listened-to radio programs in Germany were the weekly address by Adolf Hitler and the weekly sermon by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He used his time to rail, from a biblical perspective, against the wrongs of Nazi ideologies and the paranoia of Hitler. Bonhoeffer lost his life for the stance he took. That’s a bold preacher. At times he stood alone, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ against a tyrant.

How about this example from the American South during the 1950s when desegregation was beginning? The “Little Rock Nine” were students who were being jeered at, mocked, threatened and abused, yet they were bold enough to step into a school where they would be hated. Their boldness changed a nation’s view on race.

Let’s fast forward to Rosa Parks who didn’t look very bold. She didn’t look like a super-hero. She was a little, bitty lady who made a bold decision to sit in the front of the bus instead of the back—and she started a revolution. Would it cost her? You bet. She had death threats. Her family received threatening notes. She went to jail. But she was bold.

Boldness moved into the world of technology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It took some bold men to dream a big dream—that we could put men on the moon. Think about those men in those space ships that made that first trip to the moon. Think about the courage it took to go into the unknown. I don’t know that I could have done that, but they did. They were able to advance a dream that the impossible could be reached.

Then in my lifetime, there was an event many of you will never forget. In Communist China, in Tiananmen Square, a lone man stood in front of a line of tanks that were moving in to squelch the rebellion. I wish I had the video, but maybe you remember that he stood firm as the tanks came. That was boldness. That was courage.

These people all stood for righteous things. But might I say without any disrespect for what they did, is not the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, plus eternity with Jesus Christ far more important than the most important temporal things of this world? Does it not therefore call us to be bold and courageous, standing in the gap for God and His ministry?

Peter and John did that, but their work is unfinished. They didn’t do all the bold stuff so we no longer have to think about it. They were bold in their generation and now they’ve handed the baton to you and me. One day, I want to be able to look at them and say, “Hey guys, you were bold in the first century and Village Bible Church was bold in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We picked up where you left off.” But in order to do that, we need to look at some important truths regarding boldness.

# 1. Boldness is necessary because of opposition.

You cannot be bold if everybody is already agreeing with you. If you're a Republican, it's not hard to be bold at the Republican Convention. If you're a Democrat, the same is true. If you're a Cub fan in Wrigley Field, it's not hard to root for the Cubs. But go down to the South Side and root for those Cubs? That will take some boldness.

It's not bold if you're here today amening and singing. That's easy for us. But it becomes difficult when we go to the opponents' side of the world, into hostile territory. For many of you, boldness isn't needed here in the church, but it will be needed tomorrow in your workplace or in your school. For some, it might be needed when you go home to your spouse who hates that you come to church. Boldness may be needed in your extended family or with your friends or in your neighborhood, where you're outnumbered, where you're the minority, where your views are not accepted as they are here in church.

In a similar way, we see in Acts 2 that things were going well for the church. Twice we see everybody responded positively. No boldness was needed, because there were many people getting saved and everybody was enjoying it. No one seemed to be arguing with anybody. It was a great time. But just as the church began to really move, opposition showed up in Acts 4, requiring a new quality of boldness and courage in the Christians. What opposition did they begin to face? Acts 4 picks up where Acts 3 left off. The priests and the captain of the temple (the guard) and the Sadducees (the politicians and theological liberals of the day) heard what Peter just preached. They saw that the crowd was responding favorably—in fact, 5,000 men had come to know Jesus.

So these men, who were opposed to Christ, decided they had to put a stop to all this. They arrested Peter and John. Why? We've heard a lot about the Pharisees, priests who held to the law of Moses, making sure everyone was doing their religious duties properly. But the Sadducees were different. They were rich aristocrats who worried more about political matters than the Scriptures. In other words, they didn't really care one way or the other about Jesus.

During the time when Jesus was alive, the Pharisees were His strongest opposition. The Sadducees weren't usually involved in those discussions. But now that Jesus was gone and the church was beginning to grow—as more people aligned themselves with this particular movement—it became politically significant. First there were 3,000 and now 5,000 in Jerusalem alone. Upwards of 10,000 people were claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Sadducees said, "Wait a minute. This is getting political. If these guys start assembling on a regular basis, they're going to start taking over—then we've got a problem."

Actually, they had two problems. First, they did not believe in the concept of a Messiah. The Pharisees did. They had an idea of a Messiah coming to be the leader of their people, but they didn't think it was Jesus. The Sadducees believed that the Messiah was sort of an ideal of how society should be run—not a person, but a concept of how life should be lived. The disciples were saying Jesus was the Messiah, the One the prophets foretold would come.

Second, the Sadducees didn't believe in an afterlife. They didn't believe in any kind of resurrection for anybody. And what was the major theme of the early church? Jesus Christ, the Messiah, Who was crucified, died, buried, and rose again. The Sadducees threw up a red flag.

In my younger years in a Sunday School class, we were told that the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was that the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead, and that was why they were "Sad, you see." Just think how much a person can learn in Sunday School. They didn't teach me that in seminary. I learned that in Mrs. Jones' class and have never forgotten it.

Here are these uneducated upstarts who are preaching that Jesus is the Messiah and that He's been raised from the dead, so the Sadducees realized they needed to stop this. If it spread any further, it could have political results and would be something they couldn't stop.

## **This opposition comes from the world's denials.**

The Sadducees opposed Peter and John's teachings, denying that Jesus was Who He claimed He was or that He had done the things He'd actually done. What's the world opposing us with today? Basically the same thing. The world today denies that Jesus is the Savior, the Messiah, and that He's been raised from the dead. The world says, "We don't need Jesus." They might talk about Him as a concept or an ideal, but not as a person—especially not the Son of God. Because they deny Him, they want to stop people from preaching about Him. And they call us intolerant or bigoted.

While there aren't people called Sadducees in our day, the unbelieving world stands in solidarity with the Sadducees of the first century.

## **This opposition comes from the world's dilemmas.**

Let's look at the dilemma for the Sadducees. They were angry with the disciples for preaching something they denied, but they now had some 5,000 people who affirmed these teachings. Acts 4:14 sums up their problem: *"But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition."*

What could they do with that? A man who had always been sitting by the Beautiful Gate of the temple was now with the believers. He was not only standing, he was in the front of the line for jump rope. They thought, "We've got a problem. We don't know how to explain that. We can deny Who Jesus was or that what He said was true—but we can't deny what we see." So the Sadducees had heard Peter say that the Man they said was nothing had now made something happen that they could not deny.

We have to realize the world will deny many things about Jesus, but what they cannot deny—which causes a dilemma for them—is the change that happens in Christ followers. How could the Sadducees deny a guy who could say, "I was lame, but now I run"? Would they say, "No, you can't"? He'd respond, "Watch me. See it with your own eyes." He had experienced something that contradicted what they believed. When we live lives of courage, we allow the unbelieving world to experience the change Jesus has done in us, which causes a dilemma for them.

We have family or friends who see my life and Amanda's life, and they might say, "We don't like your Jesus, but we don't know how to explain your joy or courage. That peace you have? We see it and we can't deny it." We can't tell them, "Well, we're just great people." No. "This comes from Jesus. He is our peace and our courage and our joy." They can deny what Jesus has said in the Bible, but they can't deny the change that's happened in us. That's why we have to be bold and courageous, because we are the light and salt in the world, and like Peter, we should be proclaiming the excellencies of Him Who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

Let me ask you this: Do your fellow employees in your workplace see something different in you on Monday morning because you were with Jesus on Sunday? Do they realize you have something they don't have? Of course, you may have things that you're hiding, or else you may not be as filled with the Spirit as you thought you were. Boldness is necessary because of opposition.

## **2. Boldness demands great conviction.**

In order to be bold, you have to stand for something. What good is it to be bold about something dumb or unnecessary or unimportant? Verse seven says, *"And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?'"* They're deliberately trying to intimidate them. They put Peter and John in the middle of a circle, and they asked them, "How did this happen?"

I wonder if Peter and John were thinking, "Here we go. Jesus said they'd bring us into the temple and threaten to abuse us." In fact, they remembered not that long ago that these people were part of the very group that beat and mocked Jesus. I wonder if they were tempted to think, "This isn't worth it. We should just keep our mouths shut." Or maybe they thought they should wait for another day to continue their mission when their odds of not being hurt were better. But that's not what Peter does. I'm sure they were afraid, wondering what would happen. They did not usurp the authority of the temple guard.

But Jesus had warned them that they would face persecution—and the same warning applies to us today. But Peter and John also remembered that Jesus had sent them out to the uttermost parts of the world. They knew their mission was not complete—they were still in Jerusalem. This wasn't a battle they had chosen, but with courage they realized that God was in charge—they were made bold by their conviction.

## **This conviction is clearly from the Holy Spirit.**

How did they get there? Clearly, their conviction had come from the Spirit. We read in verse eight, *"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders...'"* Now, don't think Peter was just an outspoken individual. For those of you who are naturally timid and who are thinking of reasons why you don't need to be bold, remember how the big, bad, bold Peter in this story wasn't bold the night Jesus was arrested. This isn't a personality thing. On Peter's first opportunity to be bold, he wasn't. So even those people in your life who are big, bad and bold have the same fears and anxieties you might have. But what changed in Peter? It wasn't his personality. It was that he had been filled with the Spirit.

What does that mean? We've been talking about the Spirit's impact in our lives—and we'll continue to do this as we go through Acts. To be filled with the Spirit means that instead of fear, you're filled with something else. The Apostle Paul speaks of being filled with the Spirit like the drunk who is intoxicated with wine. The picture works well, even though it's opposite in essence. The drunk

fills himself with wine to the point that the wine directs him. The wine takes away fear and inhibitions. The wine causes him not to think but simply to respond.

Likewise, when we allow the Spirit to fill us, and when we are filling ourselves with good things from the Lord, there's no opportunity for fear, because we are filled with the courage and boldness of the Lord. There's no opportunity for excuses, because we're filled to the brim with what God is going to do. We aren't filled with anxieties or worries or fears, but rather with the good things of the Lord. Therefore, when we speak of the things of God, it's not us doing the talking, but that which has filled us.

If you've ever been around a drunk individual, they will say things—and someone will comment, "That's not them talking. It's the booze." Well, I'll bet John was saying, "That's not Peter talking—that's the Spirit talking." Peter was so filled with the Spirit that the Spirit was taking over. Watch as we go through the book of Acts and you will see people being filled with the Spirit, and the next thing that will happen is they will speak boldly for Christ, proclaiming Him openly to a lost generation in a lost world. Are we filled with the Spirit today? The text tells us we'll be more about pleasing God than pleasing men. This is because we are so intent with the truth that realizes God is bigger and more important than our popularity or our comfort or our job or our future or our friends. When we're filled with all the things of this world—popularity and pleasure and possessions—these will outweigh the things of God. But Peter was filled with the Spirit and he boldly proclaimed the gospel.

### **This conviction is confirmed by the Scriptures.**

Look at Acts 4:8–10. Peter's conviction was confirmed through Scripture. Peter told the leaders:

Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 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.

He continues, *"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone."* Where did Peter get that language? He got it from Jesus. But where did Jesus get this? This wording comes from Psalms 118:22. Isaiah 28:16 also mentions that Jesus will be the rock that was rejected, but He will become a precious cornerstone. Notice in Acts 3:18 we read, *"But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled."* Boldness means we have to have a working knowledge of the Scriptures.

Earlier today I was talking with Jeff Nordell who is an air traffic controller. I have zero boldness when it comes to landing an airplane. I've got nothing. So if you put me in Jeff's seat, I'm scared. I've got no idea what I'm doing. And you know who should be scared? The people up in the plane. Why? Because I have no working knowledge of that. But if you ask me how to cook a good chop or a good steak, I've got courage. I've got boldness. I know my way around a grill.

Listen, your boldness will only go as far as the Scriptures have been built into your life. If you don't have a working knowledge of the Scriptures—if you don't know how Jesus has done things in the past and how He's doing things in the present or the future—then you will never be bold in your faith, because you don't know what your faith is.

We don't teach theology here at Village Bible Church to give you a big head. We teach you theology so you can be bold, so you know what you believe and how to proclaim it. Does that mean we should be snobby intellectuals? No. The people still saw Peter and John as uneducated, common men. It wasn't like they had a certificate that proved they were smart so we should listen to them.

But verse 13 says, "They had been with Jesus." Some of us aren't bold because we're not hanging around Jesus enough to see how powerful and wise He is and the wonderful things He's done. So if we're in a crowded room where Jesus is being mocked, the last thing we'll do is pretend to be an expert on Him if we have no working knowledge of Him. Instead, we cower away.

### **This conviction is clear about salvation.**

Our conviction is confirmed by Scriptures and it's clear about salvation. In verse 12, one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture, Peter says this: *"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* That's a mouthful—where did he get this knowledge? He had heard Jesus say, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6).

Peter knew the lame man wasn't healed by any means other than Jesus. So essentially he was saying to the opposing world, "If you want to be made right with God, you must go through Jesus." And yes, that could mean that the opposition will come down hard

on you. The world doesn't agree that Jesus is the only way, but in reality they have no defense. They can't explain why the man was healed. They can't explain why the followers of Christ are so different.

So the leaders eventually had to let Peter and John go. But first they decided, in Acts 4:17–18, *"In order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name. So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."* But they were merely flapping their gums (spiritually speaking). Threats should not cause us to fear.

In fact, as we'll see next week, when the disciples returned to their friends, they praised God for the opportunity they had to speak boldly for Christ. If we truly believe there is only one hope in this world, then we too will boldly proclaim this good news to anyone who will listen, because apart from Jesus no one will be saved.

### **3. Boldness involves action.**

Boldness demands that we be moved to action. I want you to understand three things. Peter fought the law and the Lord won. Peter and John were outnumbered, intimidated and threatened. But in the end they had to be released. It was a huge victory for the early church.

But what about us? What about the battles in our lives when we're ganged up on, intimidated and threatened in our workplaces or schools or through the media or in our neighborhoods where we're outnumbered? Church, it's time to be bold, to show courage. If God is truly for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? Remember these three things:

#### **When opposition comes, remember the power of your partnership.**

Does the world recognize you've been with Jesus? You may not have all the education. You may not be very eloquent. You may be sort of timid in your personality, but when you've hung around Jesus a long time, everything changes. Hanging out with Jesus will give you the courage you need. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He specifically said, *"Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). We have a partner. Even when the going gets tough, Jesus is with us.

#### **When opposition comes, remember to pick the right Powerbroker.**

Are you going to choose to be submissive to the Sadducees of our world, to those who are outspoken dissenters in our world? Or like Peter and John, are you going to say, "It may seem right to follow you, but we have to follow Jesus. And if that means breaking your man-made rules, we'll do that, because the great Powerbroker isn't you. Even though you're trying to intimidate us, you're not really in charge. God is." When we realize that God is truly in charge, we'll show courage.

#### **When opposition comes, remember to praise God and not pout.**

Finally, we see at the end of the text that Peter and John praise God instead of pouting. This is huge. Verse 21 says the men found *"no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened."* Looking ahead to verse 24, we also read this: *"And when [the other disciples] heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, 'Sovereign Lord,' and they go on to praise Him.*

But what do we often do? We pout. When there's opposition, we bemoan all the opposition we're getting. Yet we're not experiencing anything even close to the opposition they had to deal with. What did they say? "Praise God! This is awesome." Do you know why they praised God and didn't pout? This is important. Opposition means God is on the move.

So if you're being opposed today at your workplace or in your school, take heart and praise the Lord. That means you're doing the right thing. You're standing for what is right and true, and the devil wants to fight against it. He'll use people to oppose you. But start praising God and stop pouting about the opposition, because the opposition made the church stronger in their day and it will make this church stronger as well.