

Persecuted for Christ (Part 7)

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon explores the first persecution of the Christian church in Acts 3, highlighting the opposition's characteristics and the importance of trusting in God's power and love.

Duration: 38:41

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 3:1-10, Acts 4:1-4, Acts 4:8-12, Acts 4:19-20, Acts 4:31

Topics: "Persecuted For Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the word of God without relying on notes or following a structured order of service. He highlights examples from the book of Acts where regular people, like Jesus with the woman at the well or Nicodemus, encountered opportunities to speak the word of God spontaneously. The sermon focuses on three main aspects: the opposition faced by the disciples, including the Sadducees, priests, and teachers; the disciples themselves, specifically Peter and John; and the invisible but active role of God in these situations. The preacher encourages the audience to read the Bible with a broader perspective, looking for lessons and insights from various characters and events.

Transcript

We started a few months ago a study on the historical book that follows the Gospels after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John comes what? Acts. And that is written by Luke, the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. He was a doctor.

He researched this very carefully. Historians have said, studying the book of Luke and Acts, that Luke is a historian of the very first order. He investigated what happened, and then God inspired him to write this for our learning and encouragement.

And what we're studying here is about the beginning of something called the Christian Church. Jesus predicted it. He said that when he left, he would send the Spirit, and the Spirit would give birth and empower his believers who were to meet together and represent him on earth, and continue the proclamation of salvation that he began, and continue showing his love to the world.

That's what the church is. The problem in this book, as we've learned, is that we all have concepts of the church that are a little bit different than what the Bible lays out. So when we come to it, instead of learning, we force what we've experienced growing up, Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Charismatic, whatever.

We force what we read into the lenses that we've already put on, and then we lose learning process. We lose revelation, teaching from God, because we're already convinced, oh, I know what church is about. And our suggestion from the beginning is, maybe we don't.

Maybe we know a little bit. Maybe we're practicing a little bit, but God gave us this book so we could learn from it and say, God, make us the church that you planned us to be. Make us the preachers you planned us to be.

Make us the witnesses you planned us to be. What did you want the church to look like? Not what I'm used to, not what my Polish-Ukrainian heritage and where I grew up, or you're wherever you're from, or Korea, or anything else. God is not Korean.

God is not Polish. God's not black. He's not from Grenada.

He's God. And all across the world, He has laid out for us His plan, not only for salvation, but for how the church should stand for Him and proclaim His message. So the Spirit fell in Acts 2. The church was born.

A crowd gathered. Peter preached the first sermon or the first exhortation. Thousands were converted.

They were baptized. And now we learned in chapter 3 that on the way to the temple, Peter and John see someone who's lame, and through some process through the Spirit, God gives them faith and boldness and His leading to call this guy out and to speak words of deliverance to him. And now a man lame from birth has been healed, and he's jumping and he's frolicking all around the temple courts, and that gathers another crowd.

What's interesting, by the way, we learned so far, Acts 2 and Acts 3, Peter's going to preach now again, is that all the proclamations for Jesus were unplanned and unrehearsed. The idea of having notes and knowing when you're going to speak and having a message for the people, that has not yet been encountered. In fact, we're never going to encounter that in the book of Acts.

It's regular people just going through the flow of life. Someone says something, something happens, like Jesus with the woman at the well, or Jesus to Nicodemus, somebody visits, the door opens, and they're ready to speak the Word of God. Not, the service begins, and Pam's going to sing, and then Karen, and then the preacher's going to preach.

Yeah, there's a place for that, but that's not what we find mostly in the book of Acts. We find regular, just encounters, everyday encounters, where Jason's doing something, and he meets someone, and someone says something, and God says, say this, and it begins. So Peter preaches, because a crowd gathers and says, how's this guy walking now? This guy's been blamed since birth.

So this miracle produces an audience, and Peter preaches, and he's preaching the resurrection of Jesus, and he's proclaiming the gospel, but they come in, and they bust it up, because he's in the temple, and now the religious leaders, the Jewish religious establishment busts this up and stops it, and now we're going to read about the first persecution, the first opposition to the Christian church. This is it. This is the first time the church suffers persecution.

In its first encounter, they had favor with all the people, God was adding to the church, everything was beautiful, but now things turn. So let's read it. I'll speed read it, and then focus on some verses, okay? The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they

were speaking to the people, and they were greatly disturbed, because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus, what? The resurrection of the dead.

The Sadducees in the book of Acts become the main opposition to the Christian cause. Who is the main opposition among Jewish leadership to the life of Jesus and the teachings of Jesus? Not the Sadducees, but the who? The Pharisees. Now, what was their difference? The Pharisees were much more conservative.

They were what we would call like the Hessedim, fundamentalists, super legalistic. While the Sadducees were more liberal, they didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead. They did not believe in spirits, the invisible world.

They did not believe in angels. They were politically connected. They wanted to get along with Rome and just don't rock the boat, and they were the leaders during the book of Acts.

When opposition came, the Sadducees were behind it, and that's why they didn't like that they were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They didn't believe in that. No supernatural stuff.

All right, now we'll move on. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. How do you think Peter and John felt when they were put in jail, when the last person they saw arrested was Jesus, and he never got out? So Peter and John were arrested.

What were they thinking when they put them away? We men never see the light of day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about 5,000. So 2,000 more men, probably with women and children, got baptized, became believers, and the church was growing.

The next day, the rulers, the elders, the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. That's the Sanhedrin. Annas, the high priest, was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the other men of the high priest family.

And the Sanhedrin was made up of 70 or 71 Jewish leaders, and look, they sat in a semicircle like this, and the leader was in the front, the high priest, and then whoever was going to be tried had to stand in front of this semicircle and hear their verdict on whatever the accusations were. And they had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them, by what power, what name did you do this? In other words, you did something, but how did you do it? Then Peter, first time we're going to see this for an individual in the book of Acts, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, something must have transacted at that moment, said to them, rulers and elders of the people, if we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple, and we are asked how he was healed, in other words, he's saying, you mean your accusation is not that we killed someone? Your accusation is not that we sold drugs? Your accusation is that we brought a blessing to someone? That's what we're here for? Well, this is something else. All right, but if we're called to give an explanation, then know this, you and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucify, what courage, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

In other words, it's not us, they point them to Jesus. The sign of a good minister is he always points, or she points away from herself or himself, and always at Jesus, amen? He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation, important verse, is found in no one else, for there's no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

There's no second way, or fourth way, or fifth way. There's no Hindu way, Muslim way. It's Jesus.

I am the way, the truth, and the life, he said. When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, in other words, these were fishermen. These were not like polished preachers.

No one had an MDiv, Masters of Divinity. No one had a PhD. No one had been to seminary.

Nobody had notes. Nobody was eloquent. These guys were losers.

Oh, I love that about God. How many are happy that God uses losers? Let's put our hands together. And Peter, in the world's eyes, in the world's eyes, not losers in God's eyes, and Peter had just denied the Lord less than two months earlier.

So these were not perfect people that God is using. That's an important lesson. They were just ordinary, unschooled.

They were that the Sanhedrin was looking down. We've had all these guys with PhDs and MDivs in front of us, and you're a bunch of babblers, a bunch of street people. You smell from the bait they used to use for fishing.

Oh, you're telling us something? Ah, but when they saw their courage and saw they were ordinary, unschooled men, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin, and then they conferred together.

What are we going to do with these men, they asked. Everyone living in Jerusalem knows that they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. In other words, look, the guy's there.

What are we going to do about this? But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name. Notice they don't even say the name. They won't even put the name on their lips.

They say, in this name. We got to stop them from using that name of Jesus. Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or to teach at all in the name of Jesus.

No more Jesus. But Peter and John replied, judge for yourselves whether it's right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. What do you think we're going to do, listen to you or God? That's our choice.

Guess what? You lose. We're going to obey God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Isn't that a great lesson for us? What we've experienced from God, we can't stop telling people what we've seen and heard about Jesus. Now I want to just step back briefly, and I want to go like above the scene, and I want to look down at the scene that we just saw, this historical thing, and I want to say to you today, let's just look quickly at three things. The opposition, the disciples, and God.

God's invisible in this thing, but he's working. So here we see the opposition, the Sadducees, the priests, the teachers, the leaders. We see the disciples, Peter and John.

The lame man has already disappeared off the scene, although he's present because of what happened to him. And then what is God doing in all this? This is a good way to read the Bible. Step back when you read a passage and say, all right, let me look at this.

Who's in this? Elijah's in this, the prophets of Baal, or wherever you're reading. David, Goliath, God. And then let me step back and gather what I see, and what lessons can we learn? What do we learn about the opposition? Why did God put this in the Bible? All scripture is inspired.

It's balcony, people. This is for you. There's a lesson in here for us.

But what? So now we look. The opposition, what do we learn about them? We learn this. The first opposition against the Christian church was religious.

These aren't Romans. These aren't drug dealers. These aren't a bunch of winebibbers, drunk people wanting to carouse and attacking the church.

No. Religion was the first thing that opposed the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's interesting.

Later, it'll be other people. But for now, we're going to see at the beginning, it's religion. The Jewish religious establishment is the one that locked up Peter and John.

Pilate didn't do it. And that shows us how twisted religion can be. You can be religious and close to Jesus Christ.

That's why God put that in the Bible. You can be quoting the Old Testament and standing on Moses and David and be fighting what Jesus wants to do in your life. If anyone knew the Bible in that day, it was the people who were persecuting Peter and John.

That gives us a warning. My, my. You can be religious and be totally lost, totally blinded, totally prejudiced, totally wrong.

And you're using your twisted version of the Bible to validate your wrongness. So that should make all of us say, God, help us. How many are with me? Say amen.

I don't want to be religious and wrong. I don't want to be religious. I want to be a follower of Jesus.

I want to be a New Testament Christian. I don't want to be a Baptist. I don't want to be a charismatic.

I don't want to be in assemblies of God. I don't want to be a Presbyterian. I don't want to be anything.

I want to be a New Testament Christian. That way, if someone attacks me, they're going to have to talk about Christ or the New Testament. That's good.

But I don't want to defend whatever any other denomination has done because there's too much wrong we've all done. I don't want to be a Brooklyn Tabernacle-ite. How many are with me on that? I want to be a New Testament Christian.

Now, what else do we see here about the opposition? They're anti-supernatural. They're anti-supernatural, like some of you that are here today visiting. You don't mind religion.

You don't mind church. But when it comes to the power of God to deliver and change people, the power of God to heal someone, that's where all the trouble begins with you. You want staid, nice religion, conservative reserve, but anything out of your comfort zone, you're going to reject, not because it's not of God, because it's not in your comfort zone.

And we all form our comfort zones. And instead of going to the Bible and saying, what does God say he will do? We say, what am I comfortable with? What did I grow up seeing? And this is what has held Christianity back for 2,000 years. Instead of reading the Bible and taking it and saying, this is what God can do.

We're like those Sadducees and religious leaders who said they cannot talk about resurrection from the dead. Well, let's investigate if there is resurrection from the dead. I don't want to hear their evidence.

I don't believe it. I know, but they want to tell you about Jesus. They saw him.

Now they're risking their life. I don't want to hear it. I didn't grow up that way.

I'm a Sadducee. We don't believe in those things. I know what you don't believe in, but is it true? That's what I want to say to everyone here.

I don't care what you believe or I believe. I want to know what's true. Do I get a witness here? I want to know what's true.

Let's put our hands together and say amen to that. So here they are locked. Here they are locked in their prejudice, locked in their doctrinal traditions, locked in their system, just like we do.

Don't you think if we weren't so locked up, we'd be doing much more for Christ in the world? We're locked up. We're bound by what we're used to in church. I just got an email on my desk today.

Somebody wants to start a new church and they just sent me an email. Could you contact me? We want to have a prayer meeting to start our church. We think that's important.

We just saw a video series you did. So could you call us because we need some help. How do you have a prayer meeting? Because this guy's in his 40s, but he's been in a prayer meeting.

Never been in a meeting where people gather to pray. So he wants to know what should I do. If you go to the Bible, if the apostles were here, they would say, what are you talking about? Jesus said my father's house should be called a house of what? Not preaching, not singing, not a choir.

They all have their place, but a house of prayer. So we've departed so far that what our normal is, is abnormal. We've made unbiblical things normal, standardized.

And when someone just says, well, let's do what the Bible says, you're a radical. You're a radical. You're out there.

So their prejudice and their religious traditions and their unbelief in the supernatural made them persecute the church of Jesus Christ. So I want to declare to all of you today that with God, nothing is impossible. How many are with me? With God, nothing is impossible.

Notice they go from healing to the fact that Jesus gives not just physical healing, because then you die anyway, as good as physical healing is, but he not only gives physical healings, he gives salvation and changes a life from the inside out. He can change any life. He can change anyone you know.

There's a guy down here, one in leadership in the church, Angel Zapata, who heads our Celebrate Recovery program. The guy should be dead. The guy was a nut.

The guy was ready to commit suicide. And God intervened, am I right? God intervened and saved him at the very moment that he was going to take his life. I want to declare to everybody, nothing is too hard for God.

And we're not like Mormons or Jehovah Witnesses, where we have to train somebody for two years before they get brainwashed into our way of thinking. When you're born again, you're born again in an instant. How many say amen? You're changed in an instant.

If anyone is in Christ Jesus, if anyone is in Christ Jesus, they are a new creation. They're a new creation. There was this young lady living up in the Bronx, and some people in our church heard about her years ago and started to pray for her and try to get her to church, but she wouldn't go to church.

She grew up angry. She grew up very troubled. She was in gangs, and all she wanted to do was her gang had their turf, and she was just ready for trouble.

In trouble in school, in trouble everywhere. Then got involved in drugs and gangs and all that stuff. It was just crazy, but I didn't know her then.

All I heard was that two people in our church were trying to invite her to church. She wouldn't come. But what I didn't know about it is her mother and some of her family got involved in santeria, which is like the Latin version of voodoo.

So I didn't know what she was exposed to. I didn't know the baths that her was giving her with herbs and the chants that were said over her. I knew nothing of that.

All I knew is that they bring in this little tiny thing to a Tuesday night prayer meeting, okay? And they say, would you pray for her? But all I think is, here's some drug addict who wants to be liberated by Christ. Let's do it. But when I call for her, Diana is her name.

I call for her to be prayed for. She's not moving, and she tells her friends, no. They say he wants to pray for you.

No, let him come here. I don't want to go up there. Some nerve she had, right? So finally I said, no, come up.

So she comes up to the front. She gets about 10 feet from me, and God gives me a warning. This is not about drugs.

This is about something totally different than drugs. And someone in the front row just says, Jesus, as my heart is pounding and I'm getting like alert, and suddenly she goes totally nuts on us and goes crazy and grabs me, look how tiny she is, and grabs me and throws me against the front of the platform, right? And these voices started coming out of her, and she was screaming out of that little mouth. She was screaming, leave her alone.

She's ours. You'll never have her. You'll never have her.

She's ours. Get away from her. She's mine.

And she's trying to choke me, and she ripped the collar not off of a shirt like this, but out of like a dress shirt. She ripped it off like it was tissue paper. Look at the size of her.

She's driving me against the platform. I grabbed her off of me and threw her down on the ground, and I was going to, in the name of the Lord, no, but in the name of the Lord I was going to do it. I wasn't going to do it out of anger.

And her eyes are rolling like in some movie. I'm telling you the truth. She's here.

These voices are screaming, and I tell them, shut up. Shut up. You're not going to speak here.

Shut up. Everyone starts praying. People were covering their heads.

There was total chaos in the church. Pastor's being thrown around like a doll by this little thing, and I threw her down to the ground, and I'm leaning over her and speaking to these evil spirits. I never addressed her because she wasn't home.

It was evil spirits. You don't believe in that? Well, I'm telling you that's what happened, and there are people sitting here right over there who were there when it happened, okay? And as I'm leaning over her and doing that, twice she spit in my face. It's a wonder I'm even speaking to this woman even now.

And then within four or five minutes, the Lord delivered her. Those evil spirits were cast out of her life. Listen.

She got up. We started singing, Oh, the blood of Jesus that washes white as snow. She lifted up her hand.

She was crying. She was dazed. She wasn't really sure what was going on.

And now more than 20 years later, she is standing for Jesus Christ, all of that. Praise God. Praise God.

Come on. Praise God. That's the supernatural power of Jesus Christ.

So I want to declare to all of you, I want to say two things. I want to declare to all of you, Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive, and there's nothing too hard for him.

There's nothing too hard for him. You think any of that was planned? You think you plan these things? You prepare for these things? No, they just happen. But greater is he that's in us, one more time, than he that is in the world.

Come on. Let me close. Now we see the opposition.

But what could they do? What can you do? You don't believe? There was a lame man healed. You don't believe here? You're into your doctrinal patterns and your church, and you don't believe what God can do? You know how many ministers today are preaching now? They don't believe Jesus can change a life. I'm not talking about congregations.

Ministers do not believe in instantaneous deliverances and a changed life. They do not believe that. I have ministers tell me, if somebody's a homosexual, they're always going to be homosexual.

I don't want to hear about God delivering them. Ministers tell me this. Nonsense.

I believe. How many believe? Lift your right hand up if you believe. We believe in the name of Jesus.

We believe he was raised from the dead. All right, let me close. The apostles, let's look at them just for a second.

What were they doing? They were proclaiming boldly, notice, Jesus. They didn't preach church. They didn't preach join my church.

They weren't Calvinist. They weren't Arminians. They weren't with a doctrinal argument, ax to grind.

They didn't say, no, you got to be an evangelical. No, you got to be charismatic. They weren't talking about any of that.

They preached Jesus and in him the cross and resurrection of the dead, that he died on the cross for our sins. You crucified him, but he was dying for you when you crucified him. Oh, amazing love.

He died for the ones who crucified him. Who would do that? So they proclaim the supernatural resurrection power of Jesus Christ. They proclaim the cross.

They preach about Jesus. They talk Jesus. You squeeze these guys, you get Jesus.

Would to God we would be like that. Instead of arguing, Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives, what nonsense. You think any of them are going to change the world? They are proclaiming also that there's only one way to be saved.

Notice that verse, for there's only one name given whereby we must be saved. Under heaven, there's no other name. There's no alternate way.

Percival, that sounds so narrow. Look, all I can say to you, it is what it is. This is what Jesus said.

I'm not making this stuff up. I'm not narrow. I'm telling you what Jesus said.

He is the door. He is the way. He is the truth.

Nobody can come to the Father but by him. But how about all the Buddhists? How about all this? How about all that? Listen, all I'm telling you is he said, go into all the world and tell people about me. And if they believe and are baptized, they will be saved.

Well, but how did God do that? Listen, when you see him, ask him about it. But right now, let's get on with the work. How many say amen? Come on.

Notice how bold they are when they threaten them and said, now we declare to you, you better not preach anymore or talk in that name. They won't even say the name of Jesus. And by the way, that's how you know a lot about people because she never exploded until the name of Jesus was said.

She was just walking up in the meeting. But the moment Jesus was said, and that person who said that was inspired by the Holy Spirit to say that at that moment because they sensed something was going to happen too. Jesus.

Everyone say his name. Jesus. Jesus.

We love the name of Jesus. We pray in the name of Jesus. We lay hands on people in the name of Jesus.

Everything is in the name, the authority, the power, the character of Jesus. Notice how bold they are. God make us bold.

Look, we're warning you no more talking in that name. They go, hey, look, you judge for yourself. You're religious leaders.

Should we obey God or men? We're going to, we're going to look everything we've experienced. We can't stop talking about it. What if we all had that attitude this week? What building could contain all the people that God would give us as fruit? If when people squeezed us, they got Jesus.

And if we just said, I cannot stop talking about everything he has done in my life. You don't have to be a theologian. These were ignorant, unlearned people.

This whole idea of fancy notes and degrees. I'm not against Bible school seminary. I didn't have the privilege to go to one, but I'm just telling you, you will not find it in the Bible.

It's not by might nor by power, nor by education, but it's by my spirit. Say of the Lord, God loves to take average people like you and me. I'm below average, but God loves to take average people like you and me who fail and who make mistakes like Peter, because then he says, when I use them, I'll get all the glory.

I'll get all the honor. When I use people like that, these people who sing and speak and testify. Sometimes I know them better than you.

I know some of the battles been through. I know some of the mistakes they made. What do you think? These people are perfect up here.

They're not, but they love Jesus. They believe in Jesus. You think our musicians never make mistakes.

God doesn't use perfect people because there are no perfect people. He uses people who put their trust in him and dare to be bold enough to speak for him. Oh, God, help us just this week to be bold wherever we go, to be looking for opportunities, not to be obnoxious, to be wise as serpents, harmless as doves, to be able to speak boldly.

I do believe. Here's what he's done in my life. Oh, that's a bunch.

You can say what you want, but he changed my life, and I know you're like I used to be. You're empty as a drum even while you're making fun of my Jesus. You're empty as a drum because only Jesus gives peace and joy.

So now as we close, we look at one last thing. We look at God. We see the opposition.

We see these humble disciples standing so boldly, and then what do we see God doing? God is building his church even though it's negative environment. God is building his church. You got to always remember that.

When things are sometimes at their worst in terms of opposition, God is doing his best work. Thousands were added. Why? Because you can put Peter and John in jail, but you can't put the word of God in jail.

The gospel is running. It's spreading. People are believing.

People are praying like what's happening in mainland China today. Government can do whatever they want, threaten whatever they want, try to shut down the internet. You can't shut down the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So God is building his church even when there's opposition. Always remember he does some of his best things when you and I are most surrounded by trials and difficulties. Don't think because you're surrounded by difficulties.

What if Peter and John would have said, man, we're busted. We went out. He told us to go and preach.

He never said we'd be thrown in jail. Oh, he did say there would be trouble. Oh, the devil is getting the upper hand.

No, no matter what people do, you just keep talking. You keep praying. You keep speaking the name of Jesus, and you leave the rest with God.

You don't wait for the perfect environment. There are no perfect environments. But one last thing.

It's a beautiful little sentence. Peter brought before the Sanhedrin. Here they are in their semicircle choir, 71 of them with the chief priest being the 71st.

And here's Peter and John, two fishermen, who all fled when Jesus was arrested. And Peter cursed and denied them. And here they are standing.

And the Bible says when they questioned them, excuse my back, it says Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said. Now, why would the Bible say that? In other words, there was some special impartation of power and wisdom at that moment so that Luke, it doesn't just say, and Peter said unto them. No, Peter full of the Holy Spirit said.

In other words, when you do God's work, God's going to take care of your business. When you and I open our mouth to talk to him, talk for him. Do you think he's going to leave us to our own cleverness? No.

A lot of people pray, pray, God do this, come Holy Spirit. But they got to realize we don't need the Holy Spirit so much in this building. We need the Holy Spirit on the number three train tomorrow.

We need the Holy Spirit in our jobs and our neighborhoods. And when we stand up for Jesus, you got to remember he's going to be there with you. Someone once said it, God doesn't send anybody on an errand unless he goes with them.

God never says, I want you to go and do this. I'll wait. Report back to me.

Tell me how good you did. No. God says, I'm sending you on an errand.

Take my hand. I'm going to go with you. I'm going to walk with you.

I'm going to help you. I'm going to give you wisdom. Don't worry about what you're going to say, because when you open your mouth, I'll put the words in.

Don't even, don't sweat it. Don't. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit.

When was he full of the Holy Spirit? When he needed the Holy Spirit, when he needed power and wisdom. And how in the world would a fisherman answer 71 theologians? How would he answer them? Full of the Holy Spirit. Nobody can overcome us when we're full of the Holy Spirit.

Nobody's smarter than us. Nobody's wiser than us. We're never going to be left, I don't know what to do.

God will give us the words, the wisdom, the power. Come on, let's praise him together. We praise you, Lord.

Come on, everybody, clap your hands. Come on, real loud. Let's clap our hands.

Every eye closed, every head bound. Father, thank you for your word to us today. Save us from religious narrowness, prejudice, traditions that grieve your spirit, that blind our eyes.

Jesus, when you were alive on earth, you were 10 feet in front of the religious leaders, and they didn't even know you were the son of God. They were quoting verses at you. Save us.

Save us from that kind of sectarian blindness, unbelief in the supernatural, that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Write that in our hearts. Give us boldness today to speak for you, to be looking for open doors to witness for you.

Open up our mouths and help us to speak. We text, we Twitter, we call people. We're always communicating, and so much of it is drivel, nothing, worthless.

Let our words be seasoned with salt so that everyone who hears what we say will be blessed and encouraged, Lord. And God, we thank you that no matter what happens around us, you are building your church. You're building it in Korea.

You're building it in New York. You're building it in Guyana. You're building it in Africa.

You're building it everywhere, Lord. Help us not to be afraid when things are getting tough around us, because you work in every environment. You work anywhere.

Nothing can hold you back, Lord. Let the church be the church. Let Christians open their mouths and speak.

We don't care about debt ceilings. We don't care about political matters. We care about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

We live for his kingdom. This earth is not our home. We thank you for making us a family, and that you never send us on an errand without going with us, and that when we don't know what to do, that's the very moment we can expect your Spirit to come and empower us and grant us wisdom.

Let no one use the excuse, I'm not trained enough, I'm too new as a believer, I'm too old, I've dropped out of school. Get rid of every excuse, Lord. I have failed him in the past.

I'm not what I ought to be. Get rid of every trick of the enemy, Lord. We are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

We are spotless in your sight, and we're the only representatives you have on planet earth. You're not using angels to talk to sinners. You're using sinners to talk to sinners, sinners like us who have been saved by your grace.

So use us. Help us to open our mouths as we've heard, and you will fill it. If you're here today and you're not a born-again Christian, you never received Christ as your Savior.

You never had that critical moment of decision where you said, I'm turning from my way of living with me at the center, and I want to live for Jesus. I want to put my trust in him. I want him not only as my Savior, I want him front and center as the ruler of my life.

I want to live by his principles, not my own. I would be happy to meet you because I will pray over you, and I will have some friends help me to minister to you. You receive Christ, we'll pray over you, then you can get baptized just like these other folks.

Today is the day of salvation. Don't say tomorrow. Do not say tomorrow.

How do you know that you'll be alive tomorrow? Don't say yesterday, it's past. This is the only day that you have that you can decide to follow Christ. Father, now I ask your blessing upon your people.

Thank you for your love for us. We just give you our day today, Lord. Give us this day whatever we need, bread and everything else, for we ask it in Jesus' name.

And everyone said? Amen.

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