

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth

Sunday, June 14th, 2026

Rev. Gerry Gallant

No Other Name

Proper 6

Acts 4:1-12

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty God,
we praise You as the Creator of all things,
the King over every nation,
and the faithful Lord who never changes.

You are holy, righteous, wise, and good in all Your ways.
We thank You for Your mercy toward sinners
and for the privilege of gathering in Your presence today.

By Your Holy Spirit,
help us to worship You with sincere hearts,
attentive minds, and joyful obedience.
May all that is said and done bring honor to Your great name.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Call to Confession

God calls His people to draw near with humble and repentant hearts.
Knowing that He is gracious and merciful, let us confess our sins together.

Prayer of Confession

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved You with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have sought our own paths,
trusted in our own strength,
and turned away from Your perfect will.**

**Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father;
for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please You
in newness of life, to the honor and glory of Your holy Name.
Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
In Christ, we are forgiven,
reconciled to God,
and empowered to walk in newness of life.
Thanks be to God!

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.**

Hymn #749: "Be Still, My Soul"

Be still, my soul!: the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;

In every change God faithful will remain.
 Be still, my soul! thy best, your heavenly Friend
 Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
 To guide the future wisely, as the past.
 Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake;
 all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
 Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
 the voice that ruled them here on earth below.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
 When we shall be forever with the Lord,
 When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
 Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
 Be still my soul: when change and tears are past,
 All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 95:1-7

95 Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;
 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
² **Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
 let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!**

³ For the Lord is a great God,
 and a great King above all gods.

⁴ **In his hand are the depths of the earth;
 the heights of the mountains are his also.**

⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
 and his hands formed the dry land.

⁶ Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
 let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

⁷ **For he is our God,
 and we are the people of his pasture,
 and the sheep of his hand.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): "Here is There"

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Acts 4:1-12

4 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

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

Sermon

We come this morning to a passage of Scripture that is clear, powerful, and crucial for the life of the church.

Although Acts is the only historical book in the New Testament, it is far more than ancient history. It is the living and active Word of God, and because it is God's living Word, it speaks to believers seeking to follow Christ in a hostile world, to sinners trusting in themselves, and to every person gathered here today.

This passage confronts us with one unavoidable question: **How will we respond to Jesus Christ?**

Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, answers that question by showing us three realities: first, the opposition Christ provokes from the world; second, the authority and power by which Christ is proclaimed; and third, the fact that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

The focus of this passage of Scripture is not Peter and John, impressive as their courage is. It is not the Sanhedrin with all its power and influence. It is not even the remarkable healing of the lame man.

The central figure is Jesus Christ Himself—crucified, risen, rejected by men, exalted by God, proclaimed by His apostles, opposed by the world, and the only Savior of sinners.

The scene takes place in the crowded temple courts of Jerusalem. Only a short time has passed since Jesus was crucified. The same city that cried, 'Crucify Him!' is now being confronted with the message that Jesus has risen from the dead and is alive.

A man who had been lame for more than 40 years, a familiar sight to those who worshiped at the temple, had been completely healed. No longer was he sitting and begging, he was walking, leaping, praising God, and standing with the apostles for everyone to see.

As the crowd gathered, Peter did what every faithful preacher must do: he turned the crowd's attention away from himself and pointed them directly to Jesus Christ.

However, whenever Jesus Christ is faithfully proclaimed, opposition follows.

This should not surprise us. It did not surprise the apostles, and it should not discourage the church today. Whenever the light of Christ shines into the darkness of the world, the darkness resists it. Whenever the Gospel of grace is clearly preached, human pride rises against it. Whenever people are told that salvation is found only in Christ, the natural heart takes offense unless God graciously changes it.

This is why in Acts 4 we see a direct clash between two kingdoms.

On one side stands the kingdom of man, with its power, prestige, traditions, learning, and authority. It is represented by Israel's religious leaders, who are determined to oppose Jesus.

On the other side stands the kingdom of Christ, advancing through the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is represented by two ordinary men, filled with the Spirit and armed only with the truth of God's Word.

This is how Luke introduces the opposition that suddenly arises against the apostles.

Acts 4:1-3

4 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

Luke tells us that these authorities arrived 'while Peter and John were still speaking.' Peter and John were not leading a political rebellion against Rome. They were not stirring up violence or causing unrest. They were simply preaching Christ. Yet almost immediately, the religious and civil authorities came against them.

Luke uses a strong expression when he says they 'came upon them.' The phrase suggests a sudden and hostile confrontation. This was an aggressive use of authority intended to silence God's messengers—something like a SWAT raid designed to stop their preaching.

Luke carefully identifies the groups involved. There were the priests, whose lives revolved around the temple and its sacrifices. There was the captain of the temple guard, a powerful official responsible for maintaining order and carrying out arrests. And Luke gives special attention to the Sadducees.

Why were the Sadducees so determined to stop them?

The Sadducees were the wealthy and influential ruling class of Israel. They held much of the power in the temple and maintained a cooperative relationship with Rome. Unlike the Pharisees, they denied the resurrection of the dead, rejected angels and spirits, and accepted only the first five books of Moses as fully authoritative. Their power, status, and worldview were firmly rooted in their worldly wealth, power and prestige.

So, when Peter and John proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead and that eternal life had entered human history, the Sadducees felt deeply threatened. The resurrection challenged their theology, their authority, and the comfortable system from which they benefited.

Luke explains the reason for their anger in verse 2: they were 'greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.' The Greek word (*diaponeomai*) suggests deep irritation and indignation. Their real problem was not the healing miracle or the crowd gathering around it. Their problem was Jesus and His resurrection.

Why is the resurrection so offensive?

Because the resurrection is God's final verdict on His Son.

The religious leaders had condemned Jesus, but God vindicated Him.

They declared Him a blasphemer, but God declared Him righteous and holy.

They cast Him out to die among criminals, but God exalted Him to His right hand.

They thought they had silenced Him on a cross, but God raised Him from the dead and caused His message to spread throughout the world.

If Jesus truly rose from the dead, then every false religion, every human philosophy, and every attempt at self-salvation stands exposed and condemned.

That still remains true today.

The world can often tolerate a watered-down Christianity that stays private and makes few demands. But when Christians boldly proclaim that Jesus Christ is the crucified, risen, and reigning Lord; that all people must repent; and that salvation is found in Him alone, opposition quickly appears.

You see, the greatest offense of Christianity is not its moral teaching or its call to love others. The greatest offense is Jesus Christ Himself.

The Jesus of Scripture does not present Himself as one option among many. He comes as King, Savior, and Judge. He demands repentance and faith. He calls sinners to abandon self-righteousness and bow before Him.

Fallen human nature resists that claim.

This is why Christians should not be surprised by opposition.

Whenever Christ is faithfully proclaimed, hearts are revealed.

The Gospel is like bright sunlight shining into a dark room. Under dim light, the room may seem clean. But when sunlight streams in, every speck of dust becomes visible, even the little ones floating in the air. The sunlight did not create the dust; it simply revealed what was already there.

The Gospel works in the same way. It does not create unbelief or rebellion; it exposes what is already there hidden away in the darkness of the human heart. This is why some respond with repentance and faith and others with hostility and rejection.

Yet even when people oppose God's kingdom, God advances His purposes.

While the authorities were arresting the preachers and putting them in prison, God was at work. Human chains could bind His messengers, but they could not bind the gospel. Luke is about to show us that no earthly power can stop the sovereign purposes of God.

Acts 4:4

⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

Notice what Luke emphasizes: these thousands believed because they heard the Word.

That detail matters. The power that changed their lives was not Peter's personality, charisma, education, or social standing. It was not even the miracle of healing itself. The saving power was found in the Word of God that was preached.

This is how Jesus Christ has always built His church.

He does not build it through entertainment, political influence, or compromise with the culture. He builds His church through the faithful preaching of the Gospel. Through the Holy Spirit, He takes the Word of God and applies it directly to the hearts of sinners, bringing them from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Everyone involved in Christian ministry must remember this: the growth, strength, and security of Christ's kingdom do not depend on human ability, wisdom, or eloquence. They depend entirely on the sovereign power of God.

Jesus Himself declared in Matthew 16:18

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Notice the certainty of those words. Jesus did not say hell might not prevail or probably will not prevail. He gave an absolute promise: it shall not prevail.

The rulers of Jerusalem looked powerful and untouchable. The Sanhedrin appeared secure. The wealthy Sadducees seemed firmly established.

But where are they today?

Their power has disappeared into history. Their positions are gone. Their influence has faded away. Yet through centuries of persecution, opposition, corruption, intellectual attacks, and cultural hostility, the church of Jesus Christ remains.

The Gospel is still being preached. Christ is still saving sinners. His kingdom continues to advance throughout the world.

And it is for this reason; the church must never fall into despair when opposition grows stronger. Believers must not panic when society rejects Biblical truth, when religious institutions fail, or when denominations compromise.

The kingdom of God has never depended on political power or cultural approval.

Jesus Christ is not anxiously watching events unfold from heaven. He reigns over all things. Nothing surprises Him. In fact, He often uses the very opposition meant to stop His kingdom to advance it.

Consider the irony in this passage. Peter and John are arrested and imprisoned, yet their arrest becomes the means by which God brings the Gospel before the highest religious court in Israel.

The enemies of Christ thought they were silencing the message. Instead, they were providing a platform for that message to reach the nation's rulers.

God often works this way. You can imprison the messenger, but you cannot imprison the message. You can attack the witness, but you cannot destroy the Word. You can oppose the church, but you cannot overthrow Christ, who is her eternal King and Defender.

As the next day dawns, Luke carefully records the names and titles of those gathered before the apostles. What follows is one of the most remarkable confrontations in the early history of the church.

Acts 4:5-7

⁵ On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

This was no minor committee. The Sanhedrin was the highest religious and civil court in Israel, made up of about seventy-one members, including chief priests, elders, scribes, and the most influential leaders in the nation.

These were the most educated, respected, and powerful men in Jewish society. Their decisions could affect a person's reputation, livelihood, and even life itself. They were the same men who had arranged the arrest of Jesus, put Him through an unjust trial, and handed Him over to Pontius Pilate for execution.

From a human standpoint, Peter and John had every reason to be afraid. They stood before a court that had already shown it was willing to kill anyone who threatened its authority.

Imagine the scene. Two ordinary Galilean fishermen, with no titles, no formal rabbinical training, and no position of influence, stood in the middle of the room. Surrounding them were the nation's most powerful leaders—experts in the Law who were accustomed to receiving respect and obedience from everyone around them. It was an intimidating setting.

Then came the question: 'By what power or by what name did you do this?'

This was not a sincere search for information. The Sanhedrin was really asking, 'Who gave you authority to teach here? Who authorized you to speak to the people? What gives you the right to do these things? You do not have our approval or our credentials. By whose authority are you acting?'

Those questions are still asked today:

Who gives the church authority to proclaim God's truth?

Who gives Christians the right to call sin what God calls sin?

Who gives believers the confidence to declare that Jesus Christ is the only Savior?

Who gives ordinary Christians the courage to stand against the spirit of the age?

The answer is the same today as it was in that Jerusalem courtroom: our authority comes from Jesus Christ alone.

The church has no authority to invent its own message. It is not called to reshape God's Word to fit the culture or seek the approval of the world. Its calling is to faithfully proclaim the truth God has already revealed and to bear witness to Christ without compromise.

And now Peter, the same man who once crumbled under pressure and denied his Lord, steps forward to answer the highest court in the land.

Acts 4:8-10

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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.

Peter is not left to his own resources.

Luke explicitly records the secret to his boldness: Peter was **‘filled with the Holy Spirit.’**

The Greek *pimplēmi* (filled) indicates a fresh filling for this moment—empowerment for witness, as Jesus promised to His disciples during His earthly ministry. He had told them in Luke 12 that when they were dragged before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, they must not be anxious about how they would defend themselves or what they would say, because the Holy Spirit would teach them in that very hour what was necessary to speak.

Notice how Peter begins his defense with appropriate civil respect: *‘Rulers of the people and elders.’*

He does not employ coarse insults or indulge in sinful disrespect toward their office. But then, with an inspired, holy wit, he completely turns the entire legal proceeding on its head.

He states: *‘If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed...’*

Do you see the devastating irony that Peter highlights? He is exposing the absurdity of the entire trial.

He is saying, in effect: *‘Is this truly the grave emergency that has brought the highest court of Israel together in a panic? Are we standing in chains today because an act of pure mercy, love, and compassion?’*

The sheer spiritual blindness of these religious authorities is staggering. It serves as a warning for all of us regarding the nature of religion when it is devoid of Christ. Religion without Jesus Christ will protect its human traditions at the direct expense of divine truths, and it will fiercely guard its own institutional power while remaining utterly blind to the miraculous grace of God.

Peter does stay in this defensive posture; instead, he immediately goes on the offensive, driving straight to the heart of the matter with absolute clarity: *'Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth...'*

He does not flinch. He does not use unclear language or safe euphemisms. He explicitly names the name that the Sanhedrin desperately wanted to erase from human memory.

And then, in one single sentence, he delivers a summary of the Gospel that is breathtaking in its fearlessness and theological depth: *'...whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.'*

Consider the weight that is packed into this single apostolic statement:

There is undeniable historical specificity: *'Jesus Christ of Nazareth.'*

There is a direct, searching indictment of human guilt: *'whom you crucified.'*

There is a supreme declaration of divine vindication: *'whom God raised from the dead.'*

There is an undeniable proof of present, supernatural power: *'by him this man is standing before you well.'*

This is the model of true preaching. It is entirely Christ-centered, historically grounded, morally searching, theologically rich, and completely fearless.

This is the great contrast that unmask all human pride. The Sanhedrin sat on their elevated benches, imagining that they were the supreme judges and that the apostles were the prisoners at the bar. But in spiritual reality, the courtroom had been completely reversed.

The sovereign God of heaven was speaking a verdict of judgment over the court of Israel through the mouth of a fisherman.

This same choice stands before every person today. We can either trust our own judgment about Jesus, or we can humbly accept God's verdict and bow before Him as Lord. There is no middle ground.

Peter then immediately anchors his testimony in the Old Testament.

He shows that the rejection of Christ by the leaders of Israel was never an unforeseen accident or a failure of the divine plan, but was instead the fulfillment of what had already been written in the Word of God.

Acts 4:11

¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

Peter is quoting directly from the text of Psalm 118, verse 22.

Psalm 118:22

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

This demonstrates another principle of faithful ministry: true, powerful witnessing must always root itself in the objective truth of Holy Scripture.

Peter does not just point to the healed man as an experiential proof; he points to the Scriptures as God's own authoritative interpretation of the event.

Peter's use of the cornerstone's imagery is vivid and powerful. The leaders of the Sanhedrin were meant to be the spiritual 'builders' of God's people. They had been entrusted with guiding Israel in worship, teaching, and faithfulness to God. More than anyone else, they should have recognized the Messiah when He came. They should have welcomed Him with joy and built their lives and ministry upon Him.

Instead, when the precious Stone appeared—when Jesus stood before them in all His moral purity, divine wisdom, supernatural power, and absolute truth—they examined Him through the lens of their own pride, found Him unsuitable for their self-centered plans, and deliberately threw Him into the refuse heap.

Notice the piercing directness of Peter's application: '*rejected by you.*' He makes it personal. He does not allow them to hide. He looks the rulers in the eye and declares: 'You were the official builders. You had the scrolls, the prophets, the temple, and the covenants. You should have known better. You should have recognized the foundation. Yet, you are the very ones who cast Him aside as worthless.'

However, the tragic rejection of men could never interfere with the eternal purpose of the Almighty. The very stone that the human builders rejected has been designated by God as the ultimate *cornerstone* of the entire spiritual house.

In ancient building practices, the cornerstone was the most important stone in the entire structure. It was the first foundation stone laid, and it determined the alignment, shape, and stability of the whole building. Every other stone had to be measured against it. If

the cornerstone was properly placed, the building would stand strong. If it was rejected or set incorrectly, the entire structure would eventually fail.

Every builder understands this principle. A weak foundation may not be obvious at first. A building can look solid for a time, but as more weight is added, hidden flaws begin to appear. Cracks form, walls shift, and the problem that was buried in the foundation becomes visible to everyone.

The same principle applies spiritually. A life built on career success, wealth, or social standing may seem secure until suffering, loss, or illness comes. A life built on morality, good works, or human wisdom may appear respectable until it faces the reality of sin and death. Even a life built on religious activity cannot stand if it is not founded on Christ.

Every foundation created by human effort will eventually fail. But the person who builds his life on Jesus Christ, the true Cornerstone, will stand firm through every trial and into eternity, because Christ Himself never fails.

Peter's message is clear: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of God's plan. Augustine observed that the religious leaders rejected Him because they judged by outward appearances instead of God's truth. They saw only a humble man from Nazareth—without wealth, status, or an army—and they dismissed Him. But God chose His obedient Son to be the foundation of everything.

This means the church is not built on ceremonies, family heritage, human achievement, or institutional reputation. It is not built on our feelings, cultural trends, programs, or traditions. The church is built on one foundation alone: the person and finished work of Jesus Christ.

This is where human religion often goes wrong. By nature, we want to contribute something to our salvation. We want some reason to take a little credit for our standing before God. We prefer a religion where Christ helps us, improves us, and works alongside us, while we remain in control. But the cornerstone leaves no room for any other foundation. Salvation is found in Christ alone. He is not an addition to a life we build ourselves; He is the foundation upon which our entire lives must be rebuilt.

This line of thought brings Peter to the monumental, soaring climax of his speech, a verse that stands as one of the clearest, most definitive, and most uncompromised declarations in the entire Bible regarding the absolute exclusivity of salvation in Jesus Christ:

Acts 4:12

¹² 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."

Peter does not soften his words or leave room for compromise. He does not present Jesus as one good option among many. He does not suggest that different people can find different paths to God. Instead, he makes an absolute declaration: **'There is salvation in no one else.'**

That means:

- There is no salvation in the temple of Jerusalem.
- There is no salvation in the priests or religious leaders.
- There is no salvation in the decisions of the Sanhedrin.
- There is no salvation through trying to earn God's favor by keeping the law.
- There is no salvation in human wisdom, morality, or self-improvement.

Peter then strengthens his statement: **'For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'**

Think about the scope of those words: **'no other name under heaven.'** Every nation, every culture, every generation, and every person is included. No other person in history has the authority, qualification, or power to save sinners from the judgment of God. There is no other mediator, no other redeemer, and no other Savior.

Then there is the word **'must.'** This is not a suggestion or a preference. It is a divine necessity. If sinners are to be reconciled to a Holy God, they must come through Jesus Christ. If sins are to be forgiven, they must be cleansed by His blood. If anyone is to stand on the Day of Judgment, they must be clothed in His righteousness.

Why is salvation found only in Christ? Because only Christ has done what is necessary to save.

- Only Jesus became both fully God and fully man.
- Only Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life.
- Only Jesus bore God's wrath against sin in the place of His people.
- Only Jesus died as a substitute for sinners, fully satisfying divine justice.
- Only Jesus rose from the dead, conquering sin and death forever.

No religious leader, philosopher, politician, or moral teacher has ever done these things. Therefore, no one else can save.

As John Calvin observed, Peter's words leave no room for human boasting. They destroy every false confidence and every attempt at self-salvation. God has not given His Son as one helper among many; He has given Him as the one and only Savior. To seek salvation anywhere else is not simply unnecessary, it is impossible.

This exclusivity is not the result of human pride or intolerance. It comes from God's own revelation. The church did not invent this message; it simply proclaims what God has declared in His Word.

However, this truth is not bad news, in fact it is glorious news.

The same name that excludes every false hope welcomes every sinner who comes in faith.

God has not left humanity struggling in the darkness. In His mercy, He has provided a perfect Savior. He has opened the door of salvation through His Son.

So, Acts 4:12 is not only a statement of exclusion; it is also an invitation of grace.

If you come to Christ burdened by sin, He will receive you.
 If you come conscious of your guilt, He will cleanse you.
 If you come weary and broken, He will give you rest.
 If you come ruined and helpless, He will save you.
 If you come empty-handed, He will fill you with the riches of His grace.

But you must come to Him alone.

You cannot trust in Christ and your good works. You cannot trust in Christ and your religious background. You cannot trust in Christ and your morality, baptism, or church membership. Salvation is found in **Christ alone**.

That was the tragedy of the Sanhedrin. Their problem was not a lack of religion. They had plenty of religion. Their problem was that they trusted themselves and their own interpretation of God's Word rather than God's Messiah and that same danger remains today.

So, what does this passage call us to do?

First, expect opposition if you faithfully follow Christ. The world may tolerate religion in general, but it resists the Christ who claims to be Lord and Savior. Opposition is not

always a sign of failure; sometimes it is evidence that the Gospel is being clearly proclaimed.

Second, depend daily on the Holy Spirit. Peter's courage did not come from himself. It came from the Spirit of God. The church does not need worldly methods or human confidence. It needs believers who rely upon the Spirit and seek to glorify Christ.

Third, proclaim Christ clearly. The world does not need a watered-down Gospel. It needs the crucified and risen Christ—the Cornerstone and the Savior of sinners. Let us speak of Him with clarity, humility, love, and conviction. And let us be encouraged. Christ's kingdom cannot fail. Nations may rage, rulers may threaten, and cultures may change, but the risen Lord still reigns and is accomplishing His sovereign purposes.

The Sanhedrin thought they were judging Peter and John. By the end of Peter's speech, the situation had been reversed. The judges themselves stood before the judgment seat of God.

The same thing happens here. This passage does not allow us to remain detached observers. It brings each of us into God's courtroom and asks a personal question:

What will you do with Jesus Christ?

He is the rejected stone whom God has made the Cornerstone. He is the crucified and risen Savior. There is salvation in no one else.

Perhaps you have known about Jesus for years. You know the stories and understand the doctrines of the faith. Yet you have never truly trusted Him, never really lived in obedience to His Word. The Sanhedrin knew a great deal of theology, they knew the scripture and yet they still rejected their Messiah, they refused to obey because they loved the things of this world more. Do not make the same mistake.

Jesus does not call you to clean yourself up before coming to Him. He calls sinners to come as they are.

Come with your guilt, and He will forgive you.
 Come with your weariness, and He will give you rest.
 Come with your emptiness, and He will fill you with His grace.
 Come to Christ—and come to Christ alone.

And if you already belong to Him, go into the world as His witness. Rest confidently in His finished work, speak His name without fear, and proclaim the Savior who alone is mighty to save as you walk as the Salt and Light of His Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,

Grant, Almighty God,
that as You have once given us the knowledge of Your truth,
we may remain grounded in it and not be carried about by the deceit of this world.
Cause Your Word to take deep root in our hearts,
that in life and in death we may rest wholly in Your mercy
and walk before You in faithfulness and obedience;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Calvin

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #707: "More Love to Thee"

More love to thee, O Christ, more love to thee:
hear thou the prayer I make on bended knee;
this is my earnest plea: more love, O Christ, to thee,
more love to thee, more love to thee!

Through all that life may bring joy, grief or pain,
work out thy perfect plan: true heavenly gain;
only create in me more love, O Christ, to thee,
more love to thee, more love to thee!

Pastoral Prayer

Heavenly Father,
we thank You for the privilege of gathering as Your body today
to lift our voices in praise,
to confess our needs,

and to feast upon Your truth.

We pray for Your church scattered throughout the world,
that she may stand firm in faith and abound in love.
Comfort those who are suffering,
heal the brokenhearted,
and provide for the needy among us.

As we leave this sanctuary to enter into a time of fellowship,
we ask Your blessing upon our conversation, our laughter,
and the refreshments we share.

May our time together strengthen the bonds of Christian love and unity,
preparing us to serve You in the week ahead.

We ask all this in the precious name of Christ. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go forth into the world as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ,
resting confidently in His finished work and speaking His name without fear.

May the Holy Spirit fill you with holy boldness to stand firm through every trial,
knowing that your life is anchored upon the true Cornerstone who never fails.
Do not fall into despair or fear the hostility of this world,
for our risen Lord reigns supreme over all things,
and His sovereign kingdom shall surely prevail.

And now, may the blessing of God Almighty
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
be with you and remain with you always.

Amen.