

# Opposition from the Sanhedrin

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want people to be looking to us. And so they need to get rid of it, squash it down.! And so they say, silence. Peter and John, be quiet.

Maybe just like when we hear something annoying.! A few weeks ago we heard a car alarm in the night and I just wanted to shout, be quiet! Or maybe you're listening to the news at the moment, you're hearing another politician talking and you're just thinking, just be quiet!

Well that's how the Sanhedrin feel about Peter and John and the name of Jesus. Just be quiet!

Verse 17, but to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.

Just be quiet! Silence! They must have thought, we killed Jesus, didn't we, to stop all this going on? Just be quiet now! The authorities thought they had had the final word, didn't they? When they put Jesus to death.

[ 1 : 17 ] But look at Peter and John, they say there's a higher authority than them. Verse 10, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified.

But look, who raised him again? God raised him from the dead. They thought they were in control. They thought they were in power.

But no, God is the one in control. He's the ultimate authority. They tried to stop Jesus, but you cannot stop Jesus.

You cannot silence his name from going out into the world. Verse 11, Peter goes on and he quotes from the Old Testament, from a psalm, and says that it points us to Jesus.

Verse 11, Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. You see, these authorities, it's like they've been, religious authorities have been building this building of their religion.

[ 2 : 24 ] And there's lots of bricks there with laws and various rituals and things. And then they get the brick that says Jesus and they discard it on the rubbish pile. That's no good to them. That's useless to them.

But what has God done? They may have rejected Jesus, but the God they claim to worship has placed Jesus in the very important position in the building as the cornerstone.

The most important stone in the building. Without Jesus crucified and risen again, the gospel would fall down.

Without Jesus crucified and risen again, this church, not physically, but spiritually, would fall down. That's why we say on this banner, we're Christ-centered.

Christ has got to be at the center of all things. And so we must pray that he would remain so. The authorities who Peter and John stand before had tried their best.

[ 3 : 36 ] They nailed Jesus to the cross, but they had failed. And just maybe here this morning, there's someone who's tried to stop listening to Jesus.

You've even tried to convince others to stop listening to Jesus. But you're still here, and guess what? The Bible is about Jesus.

You can't stop the work of Jesus. Or maybe you're here and you've tried to do religion in some way. You've tried by your own works to save yourself.

Maybe even this morning, you're trying again by coming along to church and thinking, that's how I'm going to find peace with God. But Peter is very clear with these people.

And so what does that mean?

[ 4 : 50 ] That means all the sins of our past. All the lies. All the anger. All the lust. All the jealousy. All the drunkenness. All the gossip.

All the greed. All the sinful pride. All that guilt that hangs over us. For the wrongs we have done. There is forgiveness. Full and free. Found in nobody else. But Jesus. Jesus who hung in your place on the cross. With arms open wide to welcome you in. And he can even do that for you this morning. Salvation is found in nobody else but Jesus. You cannot silence the name of Jesus. And actually, if you're a Christian here this morning, do you still believe this about Jesus? Do you still believe that Jesus' work to save you is enough? [ 5 : 56 ] Or are you trusting somehow in your own works and efforts? Because remember, salvation is not found in you. It's found entirely in the work of Jesus. We must hold on to that truth. For our sins, they are many. But his mercy is more. So they've tried to stop Jesus. They do try. But they won't succeed. You cannot stop this good news from spreading to the world. However, they won't go out without a fight. I think verse 13 to 16 shows us that. Let's read those verses. [ 7 : 25 ] Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign. And we cannot deny it. They are trying to work out how they stop Jesus. But one of the problems that they have is everyone in Jerusalem has heard about this man who was healed. They cannot deny the evidence. This man who couldn't walk was now walking and leaping and praising God. And so in these verses, verses 13 to 16, as they puzzle over what to do, that they have no real arguments as to why they should tell them to stop. It's only that this is a complete offense and threat to them. Should we be surprised by this opposition? I don't think we're shit. Would Peter and John be surprised? I don't think they would. John 16, verse 33. [ 8 : 47 ] Actually, I might just read a few verses at the beginning or earlier in the chapter. John 16, verse 1, first of all. This is Jesus speaking to his disciples. All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue. In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. And then the last verse, John 16, verse 33. I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world. Jesus was clear. [ 9 : 50 ] With Peter and John and the other apostles, you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world. I guess we know he said elsewhere to his followers. He said, if you're my disciple or whoever would be my disciple, they must take up their cross and follow me. And so if we're taking up a cross, that means we're walking the road of rejection, of suffering. Even the road to death, to execution. Jesus is clear about what following him may mean in this world. We ourselves, we're living in a world where tomorrow morning if someone asks us, how was your weekend? And if we were to respond saying, it was great at church yesterday. I heard that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus. We're living in a world where that may get ignored. Where maybe we'll be shouted at. [ 11 : 03 ] Where maybe a complaint might be made against us. If we were telling someone, a neighbor or something, the door might shut in our face. If we believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation, we may just feel we don't belong in this world. And around the world, in other countries, it's even harder to be a Christian. May face the prospect of not getting the job that you want. May face rejection from your family or prison or even death. And so this passage is good for us to look at because it reminds us that we're to expect suffering if we believe salvation is found in no one else than Jesus.

The book of Acts is a marvelous book. It's so exciting, but it's also realistic with us. It shows us suffering. But as we expect suffering as believers, there are reasons for confidence and encouragement.

And I think there's three reasons for that here in this passage. First of all, God is building his church. God is building his church.

[12:31] Verse 4, look at what it says there. But many who heard the message believed. So the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000.

In all the drama of Peter and John being arrested and put up before the authorities and told not to speak, maybe we could easily miss verse 4 or just think, well, that doesn't belong there, does it? The church growing. But it's here to help us to see that even in the midst of persecution, God is growing his church.

Instead of everything grinding to a halt when Peter and John are arrested, actually God is growing his church. People are being added to the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, didn't he, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Which means hell, Satan, evil forces may try to stand against the Lord's work.

[13:41] They will. But Jesus is stronger. Jesus is greater and Jesus is building his church.

Opposition, persecution will not batter it down.

If anything, it can make it stronger. Here's an encouragement for you that I read this week.

It was written a couple of years ago about Christians in Iran. And praise God we've got Christians here this morning from Iran. The writer says, The Iranian revolution of 1979 established a hardline Islamic regime.

Over the next two decades, Christians faced increasing opposition and persecution. All missionaries were kicked out. Evangelism was outlawed.

Bibles in Persian were banned and soon became scarce. And several pastors were killed. The church came under tremendous pressure. And many feared it would soon wither away and die.

[14:49] But here's an encouragement. The exact opposite has happened. What has happened? In the last 20 years, more Iranians have become Christians than in the previous 13 centuries since Islam came to Iran.

In 1979, there were an estimated 500 Christians from a Muslim background in Iran. Today, there are hundreds of thousands and some even estimate more than 1 million.

According to the research organization Operation World, Iran has the fastest growing evangelical movement in the world. The second fastest growing church is in Afghanistan, where Afghans are being reached in large part by Iranians.

God is building his church. The gospel is going out and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And he's even doing that here in Brighton. God is building his church in this city that we live in.

Maybe to us, the work seems small, but he is doing it because you cannot stop the work of Jesus in his world, even in Brighton.

[16:05] So when you're rejected, maybe at school for telling someone of the Lord Jesus, know that they cannot stop God's work in this world.

If a complaint were to be made against you at work because you speak of Jesus in some way, Jesus says, do not fear, take heart, I have overcome the world.

God is building his church and nothing and nobody can stop that from happening. Second encouragement, the Holy Spirit gives us courage to speak.

Note this in verse eight, then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers and elders of the people, where does their confidence to speak so boldly of Jesus come from?

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. As they stood before the council after spending a whole night in jail, they did not cower in fear.

[17:27] Rather, they had courage and their courage to speak came not from themselves, but from the Holy Spirit. They were filled with his spirit who equipped them to speak in Jesus' name, boldly to the opposition.

Acts chapter one, verse eight, a key verse, and I will probably come back to it time and time again and you'll get bored, but that's okay because this is important.

Acts chapter one, verse eight, Jesus said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the world.

Jesus has equipped his people, he's clothed them with power from on high, with the Holy Spirit to help them to be his witnesses in the world.

And he's doing that here in this passage. And it's remarkable because what does the passage describe Peter and John as? Well, have a look in verse 13. When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled and ordinary men, they were astonished.

[ 18 : 45 ] They were unschooled and they were ordinary. Do you feel ordinary this morning?

Do you feel uneducated? Do you feel your weakness? God can use you. He is Peter and John here.

Peter, that lowly fisherman who when Jesus was arrested denied him three times.

Now this unschooled and ordinary man speaks the gospel boldly to people. It's an incredible transformation. And so the authorities, as they heard them speak, as they noted that they were unschooled and ordinary, it says in verse 13, they took note that these men have been with Jesus. That's an encouragement for us as ordinary and as weak as we may feel to speak of Jesus. Our confidence to speak to our neighbors, to our parents, to our siblings, to our children, to someone on the bus, to our taxi driver, where do you find it?

[ 20 : 10 ] Well, we find it from the Lord. And so we can pray, Lord, open doors for me today. Fill me with your spirit to help me speak of you.

We can pray that. confidence in the name of Jesus. And thirdly and finally, confidence in the name of Jesus.

That's who Peter and John speak boldly of in these verses. The Holy Spirit gives us confidence, the name of Jesus to people.

The name of Jesus that brings life and light to a world of tohokness. The name of Jesus that is salvation for lost sinners.

We get to hold him out to the world. Some of us, the church here, we were at a conference with the evangelist, Glenn Scrivener from Eastbourne down the road.

[ 21 : 19 ] He gave us some helpful tips for speaking of the Lord Jesus. We talk about scattering seeds in conversation.

So when someone says something and it reminds us of Jesus, we can say, well, that's what I love about Jesus. So for example, during this election time, if someone says, I don't know who to choose, none of them keep their promises.

Well, no, maybe they don't. But that's what I love about my King Jesus. He is good to me and he always keeps his promises. Or during the Euros, when England players don't play well again, we can say, well, you know what?

I love Jesus because he never lets me down and he has won me the crown of life. Let's hold out the name of Jesus to people. He is hope for this broken world.

You cannot stop Jesus' work in this world. And if people do try to silence us, well, let's take inspiration from Peter and John at the end of this passage.

[ 22 : 41 ] Verse 18. Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John replied, which is right in God's eyes to listen to you or to him? You be the judges. As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

If Jesus has changed our lives, surely we cannot but help but speak of him. You cannot silence the name of Jesus.

The encouragement there, God is building his church. The Holy Spirit gives us courage to speak and we speak the name of Jesus. Let's just pause for a moment, 30 seconds or so, just to respond quietly to the Lord.

And then I'll lead us in a prayer. Let's just pause for a moment,