

AN AUDIENCE OF ONE (vv. 18-22).

The most important decision we can make is whose opinion is more important—God’s or anyone else’s. Peter and John pose the question to the Sanhedrin, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!” and then come to the obvious conclusion, “As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” The call of the gospel is to live for an audience of one.

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

1. What happens when we are more concerned with the way people think about us than we are with how God thinks about us?
2. What happens when we are more concerned with the way God thinks about us than we are with how people think about us?



When is an act of kindness much more than an act kindness? When it draws your attention to a far greater act of kindness.

In Acts 4:1-22, Peter and John are called to task for a miraculous healing, but it is obvious that there is much more at stake than a simple “act of kindness shown to a man who was lame.” It was a visible demonstration that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that he offers far more than physical healing to those who trust in him.

PETER AND JOHN THROWN INTO PRISON (vv. 1-4)

A man who is lame from birth has been healed. Everybody is happy, right? Not quite. The celebration is short lived. No sooner does the man enter the temple courts, “walking, and jumping and praising God,” than the temple guard converges on Peter and John.

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. ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

1. When Luke tells us that Peter and John were “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead,” he is talking about more than the simple fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead. God has inaugurated his kingdom project through Jesus’s resurrection from the dead. We are already experiencing some of the blessings of the kingdom, and one day will experience the fullness of the kingdom.
 - a. How do we benefit from Jesus’ resurrection now?
 - b. How will we benefit from Jesus’ resurrection in the future?

- c. Why would this have been upsetting to “the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees?”
2. Luke wants us to know that the gospel is advancing in spite of strong opposition—a theme that will be developed through the remainder of the book.
 - a. Why can we expect opposition to the claims of Christ?
 - b. Why can we expect the gospel to prosper in spite of opposition?

ON TRIAL FOR THE GOSPEL (vv. 5-12)

After an uncomfortable night in jail, Peter and John find themselves standing before the very court that handed Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. They were not amused with Jesus’ teaching, and are no less amused at the Apostle’s teaching.

⁵ The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?”

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

1. Jesus had promised the disciples, “But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict (Luke 21:14-15).” How is that promise being fulfilled in our passage?
2. Peter employs an interesting word play in verse 9, the word he uses for healed is a word that is more commonly translated “saved.”
 - a. What do physical healing and saving grace have in common?
 - b. How is this healing a portrait of our ultimate salvation in Christ?
3. Why had the Jerusalem establishment rejected Jesus?
4. How had he become the chief cornerstone?

5. According to verse 12, how is the gospel exclusive?
6. How is the gospel inclusive?

THE WRONG RESPONSE TO A NOTABLE SIGN (vv. 13-17)

You would think that, when the Sanhedrin admit, “they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it,” they might re-think their position. Instead, they try to find a way to silence Peter and John’s proclamation of the gospel.

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. 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.”

1. What do you think it was about Peter and John that reminded the Sanhedrin “these men had been with Jesus?”
2. What are some of the things people should see in us that remind them, we have “been with Jesus?”
3. How should the Sanhedrin have responded to the “notable sign” they had just witnessed?
4. How should we respond to everything we have seen and heard from Jesus?