

Church history teaches us that persecution tends to strengthen the church rather than weaken it. Peter and John have been brought before the Sanhedrin court to answer for healing and preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. However, the Sanhedrin's threats against them for preaching Jesus Christ only strengthened the early church's trust and dependence on God.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

**"But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves"** – Peter, John and the healed man are still standing before the Sanhedrin court. They are sent out of the room so that the members of the Sanhedrin could privately discuss what course of action they should take.

**"Saying, What shall we do to these men?"** – The members of the Sanhedrin were becoming desperate because they did not know how to handle this situation. Notice that they are not interested in seeking the truth. Instead, they are wanting to suppress it.

**"for that indeed a notable [known] miracle [sign; mark; token] hath been done by them is manifest [evident; recognized] to all them that dwell in Jerusalem"** – The fact that the apostles have performed a miracle has been recognized by all of Jerusalem. It was done in public at the temple gate and the excitement of the man who was healed had drawn even more attention to the miracle. The public nature of this incident has put these Jewish leaders in a difficult position. Notice that although they admit that the healing was a miracle, they want to cover it up rather than allow it to give credibility to the apostles' testimony of Jesus Christ.

**"and we cannot deny it"** – They cannot prove that a legitimate miracle did not occur since everyone in Jerusalem was aware of it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

**"But that it spread no further among the people"** – Further proof that they are more interested in suppressing the truth than in embracing it. They hate Jesus Christ and want to stifle anything that would bring glory to His name.

**"let us straitly [to menace] threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name"** – The Greek word for "straitly" (*apeilē*) is derived from the Greek word translated "threaten" (*apeilōō*) and both words convey the idea of "to threaten" or "to menace." Since Peter and John had not broken any laws, all that the Sanhedrin could do was severely threaten and attempt to intimidate the two apostles in an effort to prevent them from speaking to anyone "in this name" (the name of Jesus Christ).

**"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus"** – They called the apostles back into the room and proceeded to command them (and presumably threaten them with punishment) if they ever spoke or taught in the name of Jesus Christ.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

The Bible never advocates defiance of legitimate authority except when that authority conflicts with a higher authority. In this case the higher authority is God and Peter and John ask the rhetorical question of who has more authority: the Sanhedrin or God. Peter and John are saying that they are obeying God when they are preaching in the name of Jesus Christ, therefore they would have to disobey God in order to obey the Sanhedrin's command to not preach in the name of Jesus Christ.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Peter and John were obeying the command of Jesus Christ to be witnesses of Him (Acts 1:8) and they were compelled to obey. A witness is called upon to bear testimony of what he/she has seen and heard - nothing more and nothing less. When we witness for Jesus Christ today, all that is required of us is to tell what we've seen and heard by telling others what Jesus has done for us.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

The Sanhedrin more strenuously threatened the apostles but had to let them go since the public recognized that the healing of the lame man was a genuine miracle from God (v. 21). Since the man was over 40 years old, he had been known to be lame for over 4 decades, showing that the miracle that had now enabled him to walk was indeed real.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

**"And being let go, they went to their own company"** – After being released by the Sanhedrin, Peter and John return to "their own company." This was either to the other 10 apostles, or, more likely, the church at large.

**"and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them"** – Peter and John wanted them to be aware of all that had happened and of the threats that the Jewish rulers had made.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

**"And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord"** – These believers respond to what Peter and John has told them by praying to God together "with one accord." They were united in the intent and purpose of their prayer.

**"and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is"** – They begin their prayer by recognizing God as Creator, and as Creator, He is sovereign over all that He has created. He is in complete control.

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

Next, they acknowledge the fact that God is not surprised by these events because He predicted the world's opposition to Jesus Christ through David, who wrote Psalm 2, a Messianic psalm. This psalm predicts the opposition of world leaders against Jesus Christ when He returns to establish His earthly kingdom and these leaders respond by foolishly attempting to fight Him. In this prayer, the church quotes the initial two verses of Psalm 2 which speak of the folly of resisting the return of Jesus Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

They then point out that the opposition to Jesus Christ (God's anointed) had already begun because rulers such as Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with Gentiles and Israel have "gathered together" (in a figurative sense) to oppose Jesus Christ. Although acting independently, they all had the same goal: to resist the will of God in Christ. However, even though they resisted the will of God, God's sovereign plan was still being accomplished through their actions. Their resistance was part of God's plan in sending Jesus to the cross to purchase our redemption. Man cannot defeat sovereignty of God. We see this same truth demonstrated in Judas Iscariot's choice to betray Jesus: **Luke 22:22** "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!"

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

**"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings"** – They now move from the past examples of opposition to Christ to this latest example. The Sanhedrin has threatened the apostles (and the church) to never again speak in the name of Jesus Christ (vs. 17, 18, 21).

**"and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word"** – Notice that they do not ask God to punish those who threatened them or to prevent them from issuing the threats. Rather, they ask that God would give them the boldness to speak the word of God as obedient witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). They understand that the opposition against Jesus Christ is part of God's purpose (v. 28) and under His sovereign control.

**"By stretching forth thine hand to heal"** – The power to heal did not belong to the apostles. All healing was done by the hand of God and the early church understood that. They ask that God would continue to stretch forth His healing hand in order to make them more effective witnesses of Jesus Christ.

**"and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child [child; servant] Jesus"** – All miracles performed by the apostles were done in name of Jesus Christ, not through any power inherent in them. They were done under the authority of Christ and in obedience to Him. The church is asking God to give them the ability to be the proper witnesses of Jesus Christ through speaking, healing and performing miracles in such a way as to lead people to Christ.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Their prayer was perfectly in line with the will of God and He answered their prayer by giving them a fresh infilling of the Holy Ghost, resulting in the boldness to speak the word of God. **1 John 5:14-15** "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." God apparently shook the place as a physical affirmation that He had heard and granted their prayer. He likely did this rather than repeat the rushing mighty wind, the cloven tongues of fire or the speaking in other tongues that occurred on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

The early church was unified in purpose, desire and their love for one another and they demonstrated this by sharing their possessions. They willingly passed their possessions around to whoever needed them. Their love for each other outweighed their love for their possessions. This was not a form of communism or socialism, for they willingly shared their possessions out of love, not compulsion.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

**"And with great power [miraculous power] gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"** – Apparently the ability to perform miracles was only given to the apostles, who were originally given that ability that by Jesus (Matt. 10:1; Mark 3:14-15; Luke 9:1-2).

**"and great grace [favor] was upon them all"** – God was showing his favor to the whole church through answered prayers, blessing their love and generosity, saving souls, etc. Some commentators even suggest that there was also favor being shown by those outside the church who were impressed by the church's love and tender care for one another.

**Verses 34-37:** No one in the early church in those days had unmet needs because everyone provided for those who lacked anything. There were those who sold land that they owned in order to provide for the less fortunate believers. A prime example listed is Barnabas, who later becomes a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul on a missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3).