

WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY  
STUDY TEN

## The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

*Acts 4:1–22*

*Peter and John are classic examples of integrity at work with great courage, for without courage, integrity simply lies dormant.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**O**UR world is growing increasingly hostile toward Christians and the values we hold. Young believers are more likely to endure bullying at school for defending their religious convictions. At the office, refusing to align with a particular anti-Christian movement can be cause for discipline, even dismissal. Standing against the decadent tide on any level of our culture is getting more and more risky.

In many places around the world, suffering Christians hide from hostile authorities and fear for their lives. For these faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, imprisonment, torture, and death are real possibilities. Most of us in the West will never endure their level of persecution, but, nevertheless, we are getting a taste of the world's hatred that Jesus told us to expect.

*“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.” (John 15:18–19)*

Walking with integrity through *this* kind of adversity takes courage, doesn't it? Not just *any* courage, but Spirit-empowered courage—the kind Peter and John demonstrated when they became targets of the first ever government-sponsored persecution of Jesus' church.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## The Integrity of Righteous Resistance

*Acts 4:1–22*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin this *Searching the Scriptures* study on righteous resistance by joining hands through prayer with persecuted believers around the world. Use the following space to ask the Lord to strengthen them through their suffering. Make the same request for yourself in whatever trial you may be enduring for your faith.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

On the day the church was born on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers—indwelling and empowering them to boldly expand Jesus’ ministry on earth (Acts 2:1–42). Plugged into a supernatural power source, the disciples went out as “little” Christs, doing what Jesus did and teaching what He taught.

It follows, then, that Peter and John’s first miracle looked just like one of Jesus’ miracles. The religious authorities who crucified Jesus to get rid of Him couldn’t help but notice the resemblance.



### Observation: Peter and John Carry On Jesus’ Ministry

What miracle did Peter and John perform at the gate to the temple, according to [Acts 3:1–11](#)? Carefully observe the biblical author’s account. What details did he want to impress upon his readers?



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The miracle proved Christ's resurrection, for only faith in a *living* Christ could heal the lame man. "Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins will be wiped away" (Acts 3:19), Peter proclaimed to the awestruck crowd—in full view of the religious leaders.

How did these temple watchdogs react to Peter declaring the gospel, according to *Acts 4:1–4*?



### ***Searching the Scriptures Study Tool: The Priests and Sadducees***

Resources such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* offer helpful background information about Bible characters. The chief priests and Sadducees were among the religious ruling class that orchestrated Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 26:3, 59; 27:20). Politically, the Sadducees maintained their power by collaborating with the Romans; theologically, they denied the resurrection of the dead. So, they viewed Peter's preaching about a resurrected Savior as both subversive and heretical.

The high council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, gathered the next day to interrogate Peter and John. What techniques of intimidation and coercion do you observe in *Acts 4:5–7*?

*If you've ever been in a courtroom, you understand intimidation. Intimidation is a technique used to strike fear in the hearts of those who are on trial. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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Not many weeks before, Jesus was on trial before this same group at Caiaphas' house. At that time, Peter was filled with fear as he watched from the courtyard (Matthew 26:69–75). Now what fills Peter according to *Acts 4:8–12*? What changes do you observe in Peter's **confidence**?

What judgments did he pass on these “judges”? From whom did Peter draw his **authority**? *Why not take a moment to memorize 4:12!*

In the author's comments in *4:13*, what specific qualities in Peter and John did the council observe?



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The council couldn't deny the miracle. The "evidence" was smiling at them from the gallery! All they could do was fume and bluster. What order did the council give, and how did Peter and John respond, according to *Acts 4:14–22*?

How **effective** was Peter and John's response on these men who tried to stop the unstoppable spread of the gospel?

*The council members were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John. Not arrogance. Arrogance stems from trying to cover up weakness. Boldness is a confidence that only Christ can give. Peter and John were Jesus' people, sounding like Jesus and doing the work of Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: The Characteristics of Spiritual Courage

Luke wrote Acts, in part, to encourage persecuted believers. The same Holy Spirit who filled the apostles also filled them. Jesus, whom the Jews had rejected, had truly been raised from the dead and set in place as "the cornerstone" of His church on which His followers could stand without fear (Acts 4:11). With the Spirit empowering them and God at work through them, ordinary Christians could do extraordinary things in Jesus' name.



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Based on your observations, write three principles under the themes below that the author of Acts would have wanted his persecuted readers to live by.

Christians can have *confidence* when persecuted because . . .

Christians can speak with *authority* when persecuted because . . .

Christians can act with *effectiveness* when persecuted because . . .

Peter and John could resist the religious system in their day with *confidence* because they believed in Christ who held supreme *authority* and they trusted in the *effectiveness* of the Spirit's power.

*We don't face the Sanhedrin, but we do face people who want to "cancel" us because we believe in eternal things. Take courage to respond like Peter in verse 20, "We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Correlation: “We Must Obey God”

Chained to their religious system, the authorities couldn’t conceive of God working in new ways through Christ. They were the prisoners . . . *but not Peter and John!* While the paper-tiger legalists sought to intimidate with their glares and growls, they lacked the real power of the Spirit.

Christ had set His followers free to follow Him under the banner of grace, and they were determined to live free . . . in or out of prison!

What happened when Peter and John were imprisoned again for ministering in Jesus’ name at the temple according to [Acts 5:17–21](#)?

God’s angelic jailbreak demonstrated His greater authority. When the religious leaders tracked down the freed apostles and arrested them again, the leaders raged, “We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man’s name!” (5:28).

What response did Peter and the apostles give in [5:29–32](#)?



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Whether religious or secular, man-made systems may try to pull rank on us but, like the apostles, we answer to a higher authority who has set us free and holds the keys to life! We can boldly declare with the psalmist:

*“I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?  
What can mere mortals do to me?” (Psalm 56:11)*



### Application: Righteous Resistance in Your Sphere of Influence

What pressure do you feel to conform to ungodly ways of thinking and behaving? What is the context of that pressure—family, work, community?

Each of us has an opportunity in our sphere of influence to take a stand for Christ. Even quoting Acts 4:12 can spark controversy in some circles: “God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved”—the name of Jesus Christ!

Are you living under the risk of being singled out for your Christian convictions? Let the principles from this study encourage you to take a stand.

In what is your *confidence*? Who is your true *authority*? What faith do you have that your actions will be *effective*?



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Not much has changed since the days of Peter and John when Christians were forced to choose between obeying God or human authority. Take into your world the principles they modeled and see the influence God's Spirit can have through you today.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You that nothing can separate me from Your love. Not trouble. Not calamity. Not persecution, danger, or even death. I cling to Your promise: "Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Help me live free today. In His name, amen.*

