

No Other Name! Cornerstone or Stumbling Stone

Handling Hostility (Part 1) – Acts 4:1-31

Because of many “signs” in the book of Acts – often signs of a *miraculous* nature – but always *signs that point to Jesus*, I’ve had a few introductions beginning with ‘road signs’.

One more of such introductions will suit us well.

Recall that most road signs have a common message:

Be Safe! Arrive at your destination Safely!

Likewise, we’ve seen all the Signs in Acts have this message:

‘Turn’ to Jesus. He is the ‘One Way’ to be Safe with God and arrive at Heaven.

In Acts chapter 4, a new thread becomes *prominent* that will become *dominant* in the tapestry of the rest of the book:

Opposition! Hostility to King Jesus & His Good News.

Peter’s sermon from Acts 3 is interrupted at the start of Acts 4,
and then Peter & John are hauled off to jail!

The world will “**tolerate**” Jesus & His church **ONLY** when it’s the type of Messiah & message the world finds “**tolerable**”.¹

The ‘verdict’ of Peter’s message is as shocking a declaration to our ‘multi-cultural’ society, as it was back in the multi-cultural days of Jesus and His apostles!:

The verdict: Acts 4:12 – “*There is salvation in no one else,*

Just in case the impact is not felt, or felt only “locally”, Peter speaks categorically:

for there is no other name UNDER HEAVEN given to people by which we must be saved”

To this, our world says, and much the ancient world said:

“One Way?...NO Way!!”

The 1st Opposition the ancient church faced is perhaps the main opposition **we** face TODAY:
The **Exclusivity** of Jesus!...which is inseparable from His **Identity**.

The nations “rage” against this *exclusivity* Idea! They do now, and they did then!

In Acts 4, the church quotes Psalm 2:

*Why do the **nations rage** . . . against the Lord and against His Messiah? (Acts 4:25-26)*

And they declare the psalm **fulfilled** in Jesus . . . with both Gentiles and Jews raging against Jesus the Messiah, the Christ.

The Romans (Gentiles) were happy to let Christians call Christ “Lord” – *Christos kurios* – as long as they ALSO called Caesar “Lord” - Kaiser kurios.

Worship Jesus AND worship the Emperor!... but NO **exclusivity** allowed!

The Church knew, if Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not! So, OPPOSITION came as the Gentiles raged.²

Israel was obviously mistaken about the **identity** of Jesus – they crucified Him!

You might think the raging of the Jews was only about Jesus’ **identity**, since they had no problem with **exclusivity** – being monotheists (believing in 1 God), whose Scriptures say “*the Lord God is the only Saviour*” (Isaiah 43:11).

¹ Paraphrase of David Cook, *Teaching Acts*, p. 99.

² We will see this more in Acts 13-28.

But the Jews also had a problem with Jesus' exclusivity: He is not ***exclusive enough!***

The wanted a 'selective Saviour' for ONLY Jews! But, Jesus is an *impartial* Saviour to people from ANY tongue, tribe or nation who turn in Him. Not acceptable to Jewish national pride!

And so, Jews also raged against Jesus in OPPOSITION.

And Opposition continues today, because Jesus fits in no one's box; we must fit in His.

Jesus breaks the mould for both Jew & Gentile, shattering expectations as the only, the *exclusive* Messiah, who is nonetheless *inclusive* to all peoples!

Jesus' *Identity & Exclusivity* is the focus of Acts 4, begging the Question:

Who do you say Jesus is? This is the question for the whole world.

Peter makes this choice, this dilemma clear in Acts 4:11,

"This Jesus is 'the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the CORNERSTONE."

That's Peter quoting another Psalm, Psalm 118.

Peter **again** quotes this verse, in his letter 1 Peter, there adding a verse from Isaiah:

*"The stone the builders rejected
has become the CORNERSTONE",*

"A stone that causes men to STUMBLE" (1 Peter 2:8)

The ***CORNERSTONE*** or The ***STUMBLING STONE?***

. . . the answer depends on your response . . . He can only be one or the other to you!

- To those who reject Jesus: He's Stumbling Stone . . . our lives crash down without Him
- To those who receive Jesus: He's Cornerstone!...to build our life on/build God's kingdom

There is **no other Name**, no avoiding Jesus as THE dividing line of Kingdoms.

Who do you say Jesus is? – that's the Question for the whole world.

And since the thread of **OPPOSITION** to Jesus is becoming more *prominent* in the tapestry of the **our** culture, The Question for the Church is:

How will we handle the inevitable opposition His name brings, pressing on as His witnesses?

We could summarise the main idea of Acts 4 like this:

***Opposition to Jesus comes!
Only on our Knees will we Stand for His Name.***

Outline:

4:1-22 Opposition to Jesus

4:23-31 On our Knees, we Stand for His Name (referring to a prayer mtg at chapter's end)

We've already had a good overview of the chapter...so now let's fill in the gaps, then get to application!

4:1-22 OPPOSITION TO JESUS

First we see, **4:1-7 Opposing the Name of Jesus**

v.1 – "While they [Peter & John] were speaking to the people, the PRIESTS, the captain of the TEMPLE POLICE, and the SADDUCEES confronted them".

Remember, in chapter 3, Peter & John healed a man crippled from birth – they did so at a Temple gate called Beautiful, and a huge crowd gathered in Solomon’s Colonnade (gigantic verandah), where Peter started to *proclaim the name* of Jesus.

At this location, all is happening right under the nose of the Temple authorities, so the whole gamut of Jewish rulers come quick-smart!:

Priest, Temple Police, Sadducees

- The Priests were responsible for official Temple activity: Teaching, Offerings, etc.
- Temple Police maintained “order” for all Temple activities.
- Sadducees were Israel’s ruling class, the ‘power brokers’, who had not only theological but political motivations to maintain a healthy relationship with Roman authorities. Most, if not all, of this mob would be Sadducees.

We could sum up this gang as the *Priests*, the *Police* & the *Pollies*.

The Captain of Temple Police was the 2nd-in-command priest, below only the High Priest. So, it’s likely the High Priest was also amongst them.

This is a **LOT of ‘fire power’** to confront 2 guys who healed somebody! WHY?!

This group of power brokers arrived, v. 2,
because they were annoyed/vexed that [Peter & John] were
a] teaching the people, and b] proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

a] “Teaching the people” – “Hey, that’s OUR job”, they thought.

Chapter 5 is like a ‘repeat’ of chapter 4 . . . healing, preaching, arrest.

And midway through chapter 5, the motive is stated mostly clearly:

“The high priest & ALL who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, were filled with JEALOUSY. So they arrested them.”

‘These guys are not ordained from our college. Who do they think they are drawing crowds!’

But it was not a jealousy to protect right-teaching/Orthodoxy.

It was a jealousy of **Authority** . . .

b] “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.”

Unlike the theologically conservative Pharisees,
 the Sadducees were more like theological liberals. Acts 23 (verse 8) says,
“The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, and neither angel nor spirit.”

But even the Pharisees believed the resurrection was only at the end of time – not now. If someone – Jesus – was resurrected now, such that *all resurrection* is based “in Jesus”, comes through Jesus . . . then Jesus has the AUTHORITY . . . not them!

We could paraphrase & amplify the opening 2 verses like this:

*We already bribed Judas–and Pontius Pilate’s guards to cover up the whole empty tomb thing!
 Now they’re bringing this ‘Jesus is resurrected’ teaching back to the Temple!
 We’ve got to stop these ‘commoners’, before they undermine our **power & authority**.*

Verses 3-4 continue [actual vv. 3-4, not Dave's amplified version],

*So they seized them & took them into custody until the next day since it was already evening.
But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*

I love how Luke inserts "5,000" with no fanfare/trumpet, just a quick 'matter of fact':

*Oh yeah, despite opposition & arrest, there were **100s & 100s** of new believers!*
The church was 3,000 strong at the end of chapter 2.
Now it's about 5,000 "men" (Greek means "males"), so including women, maybe 10,000?

Another powerful reminder of the main theme of Acts:

The God News of King Jesus is Unstoppable!

So after a night in the slammer, jail, the big house...all the **big guns** assemble:

*"The next day, their rulers, elders & scribes assembled in Jerusalem
with Annas the high priest . . ."*

Every sphere of power bears down on them: State, Academia, Religion (the Sanhedrin³)

With the 'big guns', comes **big irony** in verse 7,

*After they had Peter and John stand before them, they began to question them:
"By what power or in what name have you done this?"*

The so-called leaders of God's people have **no clue** what God is doing for His people!!

Authority is tied up with one's **NAME** . . . so the scene moves from *opposing* to . . .

4:8-12 EXALTING the Name of Jesus

⁸ *Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said"*

Quick comment on the consistent outcome of being *filled with the Spirit* in Acts:

Courage to speak about Jesus & His good news of salvation.

- Peter did not speak in a foreign language here, as the Disciples did at Pentecost.
- The Holy Spirit did not "*descend from heaven*", as in Chapter 2, because the Holy Spirit had *already* been sent from Heaven to the Disciples in Jerusalem.

What's happening here, is Peter – who now **already** has God's Spirit dwelling in Him – is empowered/emboldened to witness for Jesus as Peter **walks by the Spirit**.

The Bible says, "*Walk by the Spirit, & you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*"⁴

So walking by the Spirit means continually *re-dedicating, re-consecrating* our lives to God – daily taking up our cross, offering ourselves as living sacrifices to God's service.

See how Peter describes this in his letter, 1 Peter:

In your hearts, consecrate/dedicate Christ as Lord [which leads to?..]

ALWAYS BEING READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER to everyone who asks the reason for the hope in you"
(1 Peter 3:15)

³ Verse 15 identifies this assembly as the Sanhedrin.

⁴ Galatians 5:16

As Peter continues,

We hear that consistent 'echo' from previous chapters: "You killed Him, God raised Him"! Verses 9-10,

*"If we are being examined today about a **GOOD DEED** done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed, 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 and whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing here before you healthy."*

By the **Authority** of **JESUS** – who **lives & reigns** – the cripple is healed.

'Jesus' is the Name, 'Christ' or 'Messiah' is the Title, so sometimes "Jesus the Christ".

The key question is by what Name.

So Peter shifts the focus from the healing to the Healer, from the sign to the Saviour, v.11,

This JESUS is

***the stone rejected by you builders,
which has become the cornerstone.***

We saw that Peter is quoting a Psalm, Psalm 118, and showing its Messianic fulfillment. He's saying, by crucifying Him, you officially rejected Him.

A catastrophic mistake, b/c Jesus is not just another prophet, another stone in God's Temple. He is THE Stone in whom the whole Temple fits together/stays together.

Scholars debate, does the word mean "**capstone**" (the central piece finishing an archway)

The Hebrew word in Psalm 118 is *rosh*, meaning "*head, chief*", so the "head-stone".

A parallel passage Isaiah (without the word *rosh*) is clearly a foundation, a **cornerstone**.

Isa 28:16 God said: "I have laid a stone in Zion . . . a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation"

A cornerstone establishes every angle, supports the walls and sets the foundation.

Either way – *capstone* or *cornerstone* – without it, The **Temple collapses!**

Which is the Peter's point!: **WITHOUT JESUS**, your whole religious system *crashes down!*

That's because Jesus is God Himself taking on human flesh.

Jesus is not just THE Stone in Whom whole Temple fits/stays together.

Jesus said, He IS the Temple itself, the ***dwelling place of God with man!***

Speaking of His body, Jesus said,

"Tear down this Temple, and in 3 days I will raise it up again!" (resurrection)

Without Him, rejecting Him, you have **no Temple**, no place of mediation to make peace between God and man. To reject Jesus is to reject God!

It is the unique IDENTITY of Jesus (God in flesh) that makes His Name EXCLUSIVE, v.12

*There is salvation in no one else, for there is **NO OTHER NAME** under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."*

ONLY Jesus is **sinless**; so ONLY Jesus can **save**:

on the cross as our substitute, taking the penalty of our wretchedness/giving us His righteousness!

4:13-18 SILENCING the Name

In verse 13, it's the first time the word "*amazed*" is used not about a **sign**, but about a **sermon** (at least, their delivery & insight into Scripture, being mere fishermen!):

*When they observed the **boldness** of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated & untrained men, they were AMAZED and recognized that they had **been with Jesus**. (v.13)*

It's not about Ph.Ds, but being **close to Jesus** – knowing *His word, His will, His ways*. And having *His indwelling Spirit*.

STOP & THINK . . . about the last time Peter was called out in the setting of a jail & trial
It was Jesus' arrest & trial. What happened? Peter crumbled 3x, **denying** he knew Jesus!

Now Peter's the one arrested, being cross-examined, and Peter does not respond on the back foot, in retreat . . . He's courageous!

What has changed?

God's Spirit has come to indwell and empower Peter . . . and us!

Q: What is tangible evidence of God's Spirit filling His people?

Courage to speak about Jesus, to give an account for the hope in us, even in the context of opposition & hostility.

So an obvious 'opposite' Question:

How in particular do God's people QUENCH God's Spirit?

By being 'sheepish' about Jesus, to avoid opposition from His Name.

Chapter 5 will be a "Round 2", where things are largely repeated, and there we will consider why *Persecuted Church* is making a much bigger gospel impact than us softies!

V.13 is the Sanhedrin's internal response. Vv. 14-18 describe their public ruling.

In short, they've got NOTHING . . .

No counter argument to Jesus' resurrection, authority, exclusivity.

No counter argument to the undeniable miraculous healing in His name.

They have NOTHING, so they order NOTHING . . . literally . . . "**Silence**":

*¹⁷⁻¹⁸ so that this does not spread any further among the people, let's **threaten them against SPEAKING** to anyone in this name again. So they called for them and ORDERED them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."*

Censorship.

The irony!

It's the religious fundamentalists of recent history who are 'ridiculed' for censoring explicit music lyrics, sacrilegious art, movie ratings to restrict audiences.

Here in Acts, it is the theological liberals *censoring* Christians!

Nothing new under the sun...

To guard freedom of expression, 'artists' today want to paint Jesus in a urine beaker, sing the Lord's name in vain...**YET** at the same time make us feel bad for saying '*Merry Christmas*' instead of '*Happy Holidays*'; worse they argue it's a 'hate crime' to express Jesus' thoughts about marriage, or say what Jesus said– that He's the only way to heaven b/c of His *unique sinless nature* & His *unique accomplishment* with a cross & empty tomb.

It's a double-edge sword, because to enforce censorship of any nature still *presumes right & wrong* based on standards. Censorship is a form of **exclusion/exclusivism!**

The Disciples knew it back then, and us disciples need to know it today . . .

4:19-22 Church's Response: **STANDING** on the Name

What we do **NOT** see here is, for example, Peter avoiding paying *any* taxes because *some* tax \$ funded persecution of Christian.

"Render to Caesar's what is Caesar's", said Jesus about taxes. (And Jesus was persecuted)

In Acts 4, the command of human government **directly contradicts** the command of God:

19-20 Peter and John answered them,

*"Whether it's right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide;
For we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

Basically, they're saying "you live with *your* decision.

But we have to face God with *our* decision – which is to honour King Jesus
And that means we can't stop talkin' 'bout Jesus!"

Bold does not mean "obnoxious."

"With reverence" is how Peter wrote we must 'give an account for the hope in us.'

Bold does not mean "obnoxious."

Bold does mean 'being **CLEAR** in the face of **FEAR**.'⁵ Clear about Jesus, that is.

They did not hide the truth, or hedge it back, shaving off the call to turn to Jesus' as Lord.

"God has a wonderful plan for your life! A bucket full o' Blessings! Prayer this prayer!"

No smoke & mirrors, no bait & switch, only later mentioning Jesus is the Cornerstone, the Lord of Lords whom we serve.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, how do we deal with ridicule/opposition to Jesus' exclusivism today?

Since Peter & John are speaking to **Jews in Jerusalem** at this stage in the book of Acts, I'll include a couple modern illustrations relating to Jews/Rabbis . . .

1st] We need to RECOGNISE *self-defeating* arguments about Exclusivism (not *Fear* them)

2nd] We need not just a reverent, loving "tone". We need to genuinely Love the lost.

1st] we need to RECOGNISE *self-defeating* arguments about Exclusivism (not *Fear* them)

A "self-defeating" argument falls by its own weight, crumbles on its own ground.

An example Greg Koukl shares in his book *Tactics*, is The 'Angry Rabbis'

On a nation-wide TV talk show in America, 2 Rabbis expressed outrage that 2 Christians were on the streets trying persuade Jews about Jesus being Messiah. This was their argument:

*Proselytizing (sharing Jesus) should be reserved for people with **NO** spiritual convictions.*

Stop trying to CHANGE people's religious beliefs.

It's the height of arrogance to say CHANGE is needed – for our views or others!"⁶

⁵ Nice phrasing from pastor Kevin Deyoung, "No Other Name."

⁶ Paraphrase of Greg Koukl, *Tactics* (Kindle edition)

Can you sniff out the judgmental double-standard here?

The rabbis were furious that:

*Christians were trying to **CHANGE** people's religious beliefs. That's just wrong!*

Yet . . . their solution? What is it that the Rabbis are really Demanding?:

*Christians must **CHANGE** their own religious convictions! (in at least 2 ways) . . .*

1] Adopt OUR rabbinical beliefs, OUR religious view:

*That if anyone has any religion, **no change** is needed.*

But this view declares all religions equally valid – which contradicts Jesus & Christianity, that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved.

They're saying Jesus & Christianity is WRONG, while *pretending* it's "equally valid"

A 2nd way they demand Christians change their own religious beliefs & practices

2] STOP telling others about Jesus – even though Jesus commands it.

In other words – obey us rabbis, and disobey your God/violate your religious conscience

The Rabbis might sound 'humble' & 'tolerant', but they're JUST as pushy & demanding and judgmental in their religious beliefs & practices.

It's hardly just rabbis who attempt this.

Ravi Zacharias – a Christian who was born in India – shares a story often told in India – the nation with the most religions and the most gods (300 million!).

The story promotes being "inclusive" including all (in the religion: all religions are "true") and devalues being "exclusive" = excluding some (not all religions are "true")

It's a story about an **ELEPHANT & blind men** . . . The story goes roughly like this⁷:

Blind men are each touching part of an elephant.

Each blind man grasps a different part of the animal. Says one who is holding . . .

Tusk: *"This animal is curved & long – hard and smooth"*

Trunk: *"This animal is curved & long, but flexible & furry"*

Body: *"This animal is curved & long, but not skinny – it's wide and leathery"*

Ear: *"This animal long, but not curved & wide – it's flat, thin"*

EVERYONE is both right (in part), but wrong (about the whole)

So (it is claimed), all *religions* have just "part" of the truth. So don't be 'exclusive'!

All praise be to inclusivism!

What is wrong with that illustration?

➔ You can only TELL this story, if YOU are not blind and can see the whole elephant.

Likewise, the only way you can say all religions have *part of the truth* is if YOU can comprehensively see ALL religious truth (the whole elephant)! . . . which is to claim to

⁷ Told by both Ravi Zacharias (RZIM Podcast) and Tim Keller, "Who Is This Jesus?"

have the **superior** knowledge that you say NO PERSON / NO RELIGION has a right to claim!...especially not me/Christians.

Your desire to be "inclusive" is *self-defeating*. [Besides . . . the 'elephant' has spoken!!]

In more everyday terms, regarding inclusiveness & **morality** . . . an objection came up at one of my discussion tables in the course *Introducing God*.

It was right after the Bible lesson about the notorious criminal on the cross next to Jesus.

This criminal is hanging there, broken physically, but also spiritually . . . humbled. At the very end of his life, he expressed true repentance and faith in Jesus – and Jesus **promises** this guy eternal life – in paradise with Christ – forgiven despite all the wrong he'd done . . . no making-up for a lifetime of wrongs.

A LAWYER we invited from the local doggie park commented,

"I like lots about Christianity. But 2 things really bother me.

*That Jesus is **exclusive**, and this idea of a **wicked** person repenting & going to heaven."*

I asked her, "*What are you saying about wicked people who repentant & trust in Jesus?*"

She replied forcefully: "*They should **not** go to heaven! They're **not good enough**."*

I asked:

*"So then **YOU**, too, are **exclusive**?*

***EXCLUDING** people from Heaven on the basis of . . . a percentage of bad deeds?"*

She paused, and all she could say was: "Yes!"

You see, friends, everyone is **EXCLUSIVE** one way or another.

But Christians are not trying to hide Jesus' exclusivity.

And the different standard of exclusivity is massive. See, "*what about us moral failures?*"

In my lawyer-friend's view: they are ALL without hope.

The impact of such a view got really personal, when after the same Bible talk about the criminal, but at a different table from a different year, the SAME objection was made by someone after the same talk.

That talk occurs after 5 dinners together, so you'd gotten to know each other.

And this young gal expressed her **outrage** that a long-time scoundrel (this criminal) could be forgiven near the end of life because of what **Jesus** had done for him.

Sitting directly across from her is this older man, who over the course had opened up about his many sins. He asked her . . . "**Then what hope do I have?**"

She turned white as a ghost, as she realised she'd just excluded the man from any hope of heaven & forgiveness!

But hear this: Christianity's exclusivism is the MOST inclusive! It joyfully declares,

"No matter what you have done, you can turn to Jesus – friend of sinners!

*Offering grace to **any & every sinner** & moral failure who repents & trusts in Him!*

To a holy God, **we're all moral failures!** We've **all** lied, cheated, stolen & much more!
So here is a series of 3 questions I have found really helpful is:

- 1] **What's the "Pass" mark to get to Heaven . . . what %? 50%? 70%?**
- 2] **How can we know we've "hit the mark" ?**
- 3] **Does _____% seem FAIR to the sinner just 1% shy of another sinner's 50% mark?"**

But Jesus is categorically different: sinless! His moral score is 100%!
So Christians can sing "**Jesus Paid It all**" – He paid 100% of my sins, granting me His *perfect score* before a holy God! We all need Jesus, because *we're all moral failures*.

2nd] We need not only a reverent, loving "tone". We need to genuinely Love the lost.
Only love risks consequences for the good of others, and perseveres through opposition.
Peter could begin his witness to Jesus with confidence in v.9,
If we are being examined today about a GOOD DEED done to a disabled man . . .

Peter could begin with confidence because he lovingly cared for that disabled man.
[Next week's passage shows more deeply what it looks like to use our resources for good.]

- Illustrating loving a love that risks consequences for the good of others
(a 2nd Jewish Rabbi illustration!) . . .

Don Carson shares the story of a friend, a pastor looking to become more fluent in Hebrew who hired a Rabbi new to town. It provided the pastor opportunities to truly befriend this Rabbi and share the Gospel with him . . .

The best 90 second clip I know of on "tolerance" & speaking the Truth in LOVE **{CLIP}**

Rabbi: "You are the ONLY friend who tells me I'm wrong & my sin is serious enough to merit Hell.
Did you know that?"

Pastor: "Yes . . . and **I LOVE you.**"

Carson: "We are going to have to recapture the **HIGH GROUND**
of bold declaration of TRUTH mingled with COURTESY

Christianity was born in a pluralistic/multicultural/multi-faith society.

Yet, it has always taught the is No name under HEAVEN by which people can be saved.

Briefly,

4:23-31 ON OUR KNEES, WE STAND FOR HIS NAME

We need equipping! But . . .

All the **tactics** in the world will not fill us with love, compassion and Christ-centredness!
Resting, pleading, depending on God in prayer can. You see,

"Prayer is not a means by which we get our will done in heaven.

Rather, it is a means by which God gets His will done one earth!"^B

The Church's 'Resort': Praying in His Name

^B Norman Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997), 86.

Not a 'last resort' . . . a 'first resort' – preparing for battle!

Peter & John did not respond on the back foot, in retreat . . . and
The Church did not pray on the back foot . . . but as advancing.

Praying not to **remove trouble**,

But for **conviction & boldness** through trouble,

After [Peter & John] were released, they went to their own people and reported everything . . .

*When [the church] heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, “**MASTER**, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them.*

This is no “theology-lite”, mood-enhancer prayer (**spiritual 'msg'**)!

It's re-calibrating/re-fuelling the soul of the Church with truths about God.

God is Not Small, Not Scared and Not Surprised⁹ . . .

● **God is Not SMALL**

Creator of all things and “*Master*” over all things – including our circumstances.

My circumstance & your circumstances! Rest in the Master, you servant of His!

● **God is Not SCARED**

The church quotes Psalm 2, where God actually **laughs** at threats made to Him!

There you have it – God has a sense of humour [which you knew, because he made us!]

You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant:

Why do the Gentiles rage

and the Peoples plot futile things?

The kings of the earth take their stand

and the rulers assemble together

against the Lord and against the Lord and His Messiah. (4:25-26)

In the next verse of Psalm 2, God laughs at their threats. God is not *Small*, not *Scared*...

● **God is Not SURPRISED!**

The church does something we should do often:

Reference their circumstances in light of God's promised salvation plan!

With Christ-centred Bible-interpretation, in **v. 27**, they are given eyes to see . . .

the 3 Groups were all **fulfilled** in their midst:

All Peoples (Jews & Gentiles), *All Rulers* (Jews [Herod] & Gentiles [Pilate]) opposed *Jesus*.

Should it be different for us?!... Jesus said,

“The world hates Me BECAUSE I testify about it—that its works are evil.” (John 7:7)

“If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you.” (John 15:18)

*I have told you these things so that in Me you may have **PEACE**.*

*You will have **SUFFERING** in this world.*

[What? Which is it? Peace or suffering? Both.]

*Be **courageous!** I have conquered the world.” (John 16:33)*

God is Not *Small*, Not *Scared* & Not *Surprised* . . . neither should we be!

⁹ *God is not Small, not Scared, not Surprised* outline from Kevin DeYoung, *Acts: A Visual Guide*.

Acts 4:31

*When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **BEGAN TO SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD BOLDLY!***

Praying in the **Spirit** = Praying in the **name of Jesus**, since the Spirit testifies to Jesus and *empowers* His people to testify to Jesus.

- Are you following the lead of the Holy Spirit, to pray for **courage** to testify to Jesus?
- Are you praying for people, by name, that you want to speak with about Jesus?

As an “-ism”, that is a belief system, “multi-culturalism” has deep flaws, as we’ve seen. But being a multicultural *society* is a glorious reality as it was in Acts, because

The NATIONS of are here!!

WE are in the midst of a mission field . . . especially Logan.

Statistic: Springwood High students represent over 200 nationalities!

Less than half of Logan families have both parents born in Australia.

35% of Logan families have not one, but BOTH parents born overseas.

In our multi-cultural world of many gods, Jesus stands out as Supreme/Unique.

Krishna & Allah tell us to spill OUR blood on the battle field for the forgiveness of OUR sins.

Jesus spilled His own blood, for us.

Toyohiko Kagawa – a Japanese convert to Christianity said that in Jesus he found wonderful uniqueness.

He said,

“I am grateful for Shinto, for Confucianism and for Buddhism. I owe much to these faiths.

*Yet these three faiths **utterly failed** to minister to my heart’s deepest needs. I was a pilgrim journeying upon a long road that had no turning. I was weary, I was footsore.*

I wandered through a dark and dismal world where tragedies were thick.

[Other religions] teach great compassion... but since the beginning of time, who has declared,

*“**This is MY blood ... which is poured out for many unto the forgiveness of sins?**”*

What other religious leader has paid the eternal penalty for your sin? None!

There is **NO OTHER NAME!**

PRAYER