



[Title Slide] According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, there have been 2,347 journalists who have been imprisoned over the years. As of December 1st, 2025, there are currently 334 journalists imprisoned around the world for their reporting.¹ Which in all honesty, is a shocking number to me. Some of the major offenders are nations like China, Iran, and Russia, to name a few. They frequently incarcerate reporters for being anti-state.

[Slide] This is Svetlana Khustik, a 47-year-old Russian freelance reporter. She was imprisoned this past September and faces up to ten years for reporting about a Russian missile killing 23 people, including children, in an apartment complex in Ukraine. They charged her with spreading “fake news” about the Russian army. The attack is well documented; the world was outraged when it happened and it drew international condemnation.² The thing is, it’s not surprising she was arrested; quite a few Russian journalists have been imprisoned for writing about the attacks on Ukraine.

What motivates someone to report on something they know might put their life at risk? How much of a sense of purpose must you have to be willing to take that chance? She may well spend a decade in prison for simply telling the truth.

[Slide] Let me ask you a different question: **If God answered every prayer for safety, would the Gospel have spread?**

We pray for comfortable expectations, good grades, the role we want in the play or the position we want on the sports team; but then we wonder why we're so quiet about our faith.

We're in the book of Acts, during a moment when the early Christians experienced their first persecution. God didn't give the early church safety. They weren't special people. But they did pray differently. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

¹ <https://cpj.org>, accessed March 13, 2026.

² <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/28/europe/russian-strike-apartment-block-uman-intl>, accessed March 13, 2026.

[Slide] Acts 3:1-8 (NLT) ¹ Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. ² As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

[Slide] ⁴ Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"

[Slide] ⁷ Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. ⁸ He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

Peter and John, through the power of God, gave the man an entirely new life. This moment of healing lived out what salvation does; it transforms our future. It's also a lesson in compassion; compassion expresses itself in service to others and in meeting their needs.

Acts goes on to describe this 40-year-old man, unable to walk since birth, standing, then walking, then leaping and running and praising God. As a lame man, he wouldn't have been allowed in the temple, so for the first time in his life he is able to go.

When the three of them came out, there was a crowd waiting. These people had seen him for decades. They all knew of this man. There was no denying the miracle. Peter seized the opportunity and preached a sermon!

He used the man's healing, his transformation, as a picture of the salvation Jesus offers to all of us through His death and resurrection. He directly told them,

[Slide] Acts 3:19 (NLT) Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.

And they did. By the end of that day, Acts records that the believers grew from 3,000 total to 5,000 men. Look, back in the day they didn't bother

counting the women or children. Which means, the actual size of this Christian movement was over ten thousand people.

Suddenly the Jesus problem, the one the religious leaders thought they had eliminated at the crucifixion, was a lot bigger.

[Slide] Acts 4:1-3 (NLT) ¹ While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. ² These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. ³ They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning.

Morning did not look good for Peter and John. The council of rulers, elders and teachers of religious law gathered. Annas, the former high priest, and Caiaphas, the current high priest, were there. Why are those names familiar? They're the ones that had engineered Jesus' arrest and crucifixion just a few weeks before. Now they demanded answers from Peter and John. It did not go the way they intended.

[Slide] Acts 4:8-12 (NLT) ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit,

Don't miss that. This is not Peter's strength or eloquence, it's God's.

said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, ⁹ are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? ¹⁰ Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,

[Slide] the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹ For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, 'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' ¹² There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

Mic drop. Are these the same disciples who hid when Jesus was arrested? Who stayed silent? Didn't Peter deny knowing Jesus three times? And now he is speaking directly and boldly to the same leaders he was so terrified of just a handful of weeks prior?

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