

Acts Chapter 4 Continued

Acts 4:17 "But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name."

In the previous lesson, we saw the leaders of the temple confining Peter and John overnight.

They could not hold them, because they had no charges against them that were believable.

They could plainly see that the lame man could now walk, and they could not deny that it was truly a miracle.

Somehow they were going to have to get the People's minds off Jesus Christ of Nazareth, or they felt it would jeopardize worship in the temple.

The people who regularly came to the temple to worship might begin to believe in Jesus as the Christ, and if they did they would lose the rule over them.

At this point, these officials had to know that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Christ).

Rather than lose their position in the church, they would not openly admit to believing in Him.

Acts 4:18 "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

Here we see a spiritual truth about whether we should obey the government when it conflicts with the teachings in the Bible.

The answer is, we should at all times do what we are taught to do in the Bible.

We are directed to obey those that rule over us, but not when it opposes God and His teaching.

Acts 4:19 "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."

"To hearken unto you more than unto God":

Christians should obey governmental authority (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), but when government decrees are clearly contrary to God's Word, God must be obeyed (Exodus 1:15-17; Dan. 6:4-10).

We see here, a boldness in Christ.

These disciples are speaking of the righteousness of Christ.

They are not concerned with what the world will do to them.

They want to be in the perfect will of God.

The same God that saved Daniel in the Lions' den could save them in whatever trials come.

These religious people of the day knew the law, but were not acquainted with the Lawgiver.

I like the way these apostles tell them that they will have to follow God, rather than follow the earthly leaders.

They make the rulers of the temple decide.

If these rulers say to do as they say, they would be saying don't listen to God.

Acts 4:20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Here, we see the apostles explaining that they are compelled to speak the things that have been shown them.

Many ministers in our day should be like these apostles.

They should speak what they have seen and heard of God regardless of whose toes they step on.

Acts 4:21 "So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all [men] glorified God for that which was done."

The people would have come against these rulers of the church, if they had tried to punish Peter and John here.

This leaves it unsaid, but it appears above that these rulers would have punished Peter and John to get them hushed up (despite this great miracle).

I see over and over again in these rulers a fear of losing their position in the temple and also with the people.

It was evident there was a miracle, (but they were able to overlook that), just to save face and stay as the leaders of the church.

Acts 4:22 "For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed."

The temple leaders had forty years to help this man, and they did not.

Now, that he is walking after so long a time, this not only gives power to the ministry of Peter and John, but discredits these religious leaders in the temple.

Acts 4:23 "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them."

“Chief priests”:

A small group within the Sanhedrin (see note on verse 15), composed of former High-Priests and members of influential priestly families (see note on Matt. 2:4).

“Elders”:

See note on verse 5.

Now, we see Peter and John returning to the other disciples to draw strength from each other, and to report to the others what opposition is out there.

This is the beginning of the followers of Jesus being persecuted.

This looks to me, as if the people who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders in the temple are turning down these new workings of God.

They fear it might do away with temple worship, and in turn, cause there to be no need for them.

These temple leaders, up until this time, have enjoyed being put up on a pedestal by all of the temple worshippers.

They do not want to lose their position of importance regardless of whether these miracles are of God, or not.

These apostles have gone back to their fellow servants to pray to God for strength and guidance.

Verses 24-30

Both Peter and John’s experience did not frighten or discourage the other disciples, but exhilarated them.

They took confidence in God’s sovereign control of all events, even their sufferings.

Furthermore, they were comforted that the opposition whom they were facing was foreseen in the Old Testament (verses 25-26).

Acts 4:24 "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:"

“Lord”:

The Greek word is an uncommon New Testament title for God that means “absolute master” (Luke 2:29; 2 Tim. 2:21; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4; Rev. 6:10).

This prayer to God was from an inspired powerful group (filled with the Holy Spirit).

These people are still in agreement, only God can cause this one accord.

These disciples have not only accepted Jesus as their Savior, but have also, made Him their Lord.

He gives the orders; they just carry His orders out.

Notice how at the very beginning of this prayer, they glorify God.

You can easily see also, that the Scriptures have been quickened to them as well.

They are recalling Scriptures that David spoke of the non-believers that were around them in the next verse.

Acts 4:25 "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?"

“By the mouth of thy servant David”:

See note on 1:16.

In the events of recent days, the disciples saw a fulfillment of (Psalm 2:1-2), which they quoted.

We see that people, who are already set in their ways and have already made up their mind that God is a certain way, are not eager to hear the good news of the gospel.

They have studied for years the bad news of the law.

The law was threatening and this grace was promising.

They were not ready for this, and they became very angry.

These people, spoken of in this prophecy of David's, were self-centered, full of vanity, and had no intention of listening, even if it was good news.

Acts 4:26 "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ."

This is speaking of people of all degrees of authority who oppose Christianity.

Possibly this meant both the civil and religious leaders, probably the same crowd which had crucified Him.

They have no intention of admitting they made a mistake.

Acts 4:27 "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,"

“Child”:

Greek pais, verses 27, 30, would be better translated “servant” in this context.

Even now, many of the same people are still rejecting Jesus as the Christ risen from the dead.

This prayer is addressed to the Father as all prayers should be and that is why Jesus is spoken of as His Holy Child.

Acts 4:28 "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

“Thy hand and thy counsel”:

God has written all of history according to His external plan.

The crucifixion of Jesus was no exception (see note on 2:23; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5-11).

We see here, that the heathen mentioned (in verse 25), includes, Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, and people of Israel who rejected Jesus.

All of these people had a hand in destroying Jesus.

Acts 4:29 "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,"

This is a cry for help.

Of course, the Father is already aware of the threatening's.

They have never stopped all through the years.

If you are living for Jesus, the world hates you.

This prayer is not so much to get God to stop the threats, as it is a request of Jesus' followers to be able to speak the uncompromising word with great boldness in the face of the threats.

Acts 4:30 "By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."

“Signs and wonders”:

See note on 2:19.

“Holy child”:

See note on 3:13.

The gifts of the Spirit of God to the believers are given severally as you will.

1 Corinthians 12:11: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Read all of (1 Cor. 12:11), and it will explain the gifts of the Spirit of God that believers in Christ Jesus can have operating in their lives.

Each gift must be received by the person desiring it.

Notice these disciples (in verse 30), want these gifts to be operating in the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The signs and wonders are to cause people to believe.

Acts 4:31 "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."

“Was shaken”:

As on Pentecost, a physical phenomenon indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit (see the notes on 2:2-3).

“Filled with the Holy Ghost”:

See notes on verse 8; 2:4.

As with Peter (in verse 8), so now the whole body of believers experiences a renewal of the controlling influence or filling of the Spirit (see the note on 2:4).

When the Spirit of God is present, old structures are shaken, lives are changed, and people are strengthened anew to speak of the things of God.

My own personal belief is that, there is one baptism in the Holy Ghost, but many fillings.

Sometimes we get weak in the Spirit and we need God to breathe life into us afresh.

When Peter had said earlier in his ministry that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the Living God, Jesus told Peter that the Holy Spirit had revealed this to him.

No one can speak powerful messages for God except the Holy Spirit reveals it to them.

The boldness comes from God.

Verses 32-35

“All things common”:

See notes on 2:44-46.

Believers understood that all they had belonged to God, and therefore when a brother or sister had a need, those who could meet it were obligated to do so (James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17).

The method was to give the money to the apostles who would distribute it (verses 35, 37).

Acts 4:32 "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."

We see here, that all of these disciples became as one big family.

They shared their worldly goods that God had entrusted them with.

In the first part of (verse 32), it says one soul; I believe this means that they were all walking in the will of God.

They had made Jesus Lord and had given their will over to His will.

Acts 4:33 "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

“Witness of the resurrection”:

See note on 1:22.

“Great grace”:

This means “favor” and carries a twofold meaning here:

- (1) Favor from the people outside the church. Because of the believers’ love and unity, the common people were impressed (2:47); and
- (2) Favor from God who was granting blessing.

We see here, that the boldness they prayed for came.

The resurrection was a high point of argument with many of the Jews who did not believe in life after death.

This grace was not only God toward them, but them toward others, as you see in the next verse.

Acts 4:34 "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,"

This is concern for each other to the utmost.

You must remember, they were expecting Jesus back just any minute, and they did not want to be caught up in worldly things when that happened.

Acts 4:35 "And laid [them] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

This way no one suffered, everyone who gave up jobs to work for God, at least had their necessities met.

Acts 4:36 "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, [and] of the country of Cyprus,"

“Joses ... surnamed Barnabas”:

Luke introduces Barnabas as a role model from among those who donated property proceeds.

Barnabas was a member to the priestly tribe of the Levites and a native of the island of Cyprus.

He becomes an associate of Paul and a prominent figure later in the book (9:26-27; 11:22-24, 30; chapters 13 - 15).

“Cyprus”:

Barnabas was from Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia, located some 60 miles west off the Syrian coast (see note on 13:4).

Acts 4:37 "Having land, sold [it], and brought the money, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet."

“Having ... land, sold it”:

The Old Testament prohibited Levites from owning property in Israel (Numbers 18:20, 24: Deut. 10:9), but that law was apparently no longer in force.

It is also possible that the land was in Cyprus.

Notice in all of this, that they were not required to do this.

These were freewill offerings of what they had.

This is not necessarily the pattern our churches should take today.

This is just what these people were led to do at that time.

It was possibly the only way the church could begin, because those who work for God have no time to make a living for themselves.

This unselfishness on their part gave Christianity a real foot-hold.

Without their unselfish generosity, the church would have taken longer to put together.

This was not commanded of them to do by the Lord.

This was from their loving hearts.

Even today, the good news of the gospel could not go forth, if it were not for people who are willing to give much more than is expected of them to win a lost world.

The followers of Jesus Christ have always paid, so that the unbelieving world might be saved.

This Barnabas (seldom mentioned), was truly a man of God who gave all to the work.

This son of consolation means to me, that he preached or exhorted the Word of God.

He was certainly one of the unsung Heroes of the Bible.

This was the same Barnabas who travelled with Paul later.

Acts Chapter 4 Continued Questions

1. Who threatened Peter and John not to preach about Jesus Christ and His resurrection?

2. Should we always obey government rules?
3. Who did Peter and John tell them they would obey?
4. What two things must Peter and John speak?
5. After they had threatened Peter and John again, what did they do to them?
6. Why did they not punish them?
7. How old was the man who was made whole?
8. Where did Peter and John go when they were released?
9. Why do you suppose these temple rulers would not admit this healing was of God and that they had made a mistake about Jesus?
10. What did they do as soon as they were with the other disciples?
11. What is the first thing they do in this prayer?
12. What has the Spirit helped them recall?
13. What had David said?
14. In verse 26, who was gathered against the Lord?
15. Who are the heathen spoken of here?
16. Who should all prayers be addressed to?
17. Whose name should you pray in?
18. In verse 29, they ask God to grant them what?
19. The signs and wonders are to be done in whose name?
20. What are the signs and wonders for?
21. When they had prayed, what happened?
22. What are some of the things that happen when the Spirit of God is present?
23. Why would they be filled with the Holy Ghost again?
24. What does being of one soul mean?

- 25. What happened to their personal belongings?
- 26. What great power gave the apostles witness of the _____,
- 27. When they sold their houses and land, what did they do with the money?
- 28. What did the apostles surname Jesus?
- 29. What does his name mean?