

Persecution and Praise

Acts Chapter 4

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Act 4:1 1) Persecuted for Preaching vs 1-22

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple {guard} and the Sadducees came up to them,

Act 4:2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Act 4:3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

- The Sadducees were the ruling party in the religious court (Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes & Herodians)
- Sadducees were political power. They did not believe in:
 - Angels or Spirits
 - Resurrection
 - After life
- The Sadducees believed in the first 5 books of the Bible (the Torah) They believe in the Scriptures but do not allow them to shape their lives. They conveniently do not believe in an afterlife so they do not need to be accountable for actions in this life now.
- So they were upset that these disciples were preaching the resurrection from the dead.
- H.A. Ironside points out the difference between resurrection of the dead and resurrection from the dead is upsetting so some. OF THE DEAD means all who died will be raised. FROM THE DEAD means that some will be raised away from others who will remain in a death.
- Peter and John were thrown in jail for the evening.

Act 4:4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. .

- This was an effective message Peter preached.
- An effective message is one that moves people
 - 5000 men were saved.
(some teach that 2000 were saved to the previous 3000 from Acts 2:41 The issue is the words "came to be" implying adding to, but not necessarily. The KJV does not read this way and there is not an implied problem.)
 - The Sadducees were angered
- We can expect that as we bring a true gospel message there will be both responses.
 - Examples of Trouble
 - a) Acts 7:54 - 8:1 Stephen put to death
 - b) Acts 12 Peter again arrested
 - c) Paul 1st missionary Journey through Asia. (Perga, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe) in derbe he was stoned and left for dead. Tarsus, where he was from was just miles away. He could have quit, went home. But he didn't. He went back the way he came preaching and encouraging the saint along the way.
 - d) Persecution promised
 - 1) Mar 4:17 Parable of stoney ground
 - 2) Matt 5:11 Blessed are you when men revile or persecute you.
 - 3) 1 Peter 4:12,13,14 "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy [are ye]; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."
 - Examples of Triumph
 - a) Acts 2 Peter Preached 3000 saved
 - b) Acts 4 Peter preaches again 5000 saved
 - c) Acts 8 Philip in Samaria
 - d) Acts 8 Philip w/ the Ethiopian
 - e) Acts 9 Saul Converted
 - f) Acts 10-11 Peter to Gentiles
 - g) Acts 16 Paul has 1st convert in Europe (Lydia)

Act 4:5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;
Act 4:6 and Annas the high priest {was there,} and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

- RULERS, ELDERS, SCRIBES a powerful bunch of people. The Sanhedrin.
- Annas was the High Priest appointed by Israel.
(this office was a lifetime appointment) Israel looked to Annas as the high priest
- Caiaphas was High Priest appointed by the Romans.
(he was the son-in-law of Annas, high priest until 17 - 36 AD)
- Both of these were involved in the trial of Jesus

Act 4:7 When they had placed them in the center, they {began to} inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"

- Picture this. 2 fishermen in front of the Great Sanhedrin. 70 of the most educated, powerful religious men in Israel.
- This is a GOOD QUESTION. We all should ask these questions. These religious leaders ask the right question and are doing their job.
- Deut 13:1-5 *"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn [you] away from the LORD your God,"*

Act 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

- Last time Peter was around these priests (John 18) they had arrested Jesus and were questioning Him. Peter was following at a distance (even at a distance in his heart). It wasn't the priests that confronted Peter. A servant girl asked, "Did I see you with Him?" And Peter caved and fearfully denied Christ.
- This time scripture says Peter is 'FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT"
 - Same Man; Same priests, the difference is the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - Peter is going to answer the question correctly this time. Peter is going to answer the question boldly this time.
- What does it mean to be filled?
 - Greek word "pletho" filled or fulfilled (complete) or wholly taken possession of
One picture is to fill up like a glass of water until it overflows
Another picture is one of singleness of mind. Being consumed with one thought.
We have all met someone that no matter what topic is brought up, these people always will come back to the same thought. (Cars, Golf, Music, Motorcycles, Health, Their Kids, Jesus)
 - What are you consumed with? Yourself, Things, Jesus? Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - We have seen Peter By the Fire, Filled with Fire, and now Under Fire. (Focht)

The confrontation is 72 to 3 (Peter, John, Holy Spirit)

Act 4:9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

- "If" we are put in jail and on trial for doing good... Peter is stating the ridiculousness of the accusation.
- "If" Then I'm going to tell you Jesus.

Act 4:10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by this {name} this man stands here before you in good health.

Act 4:11 "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, {but} WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER {stone.}

- Peter's answer to their question ("by what name") is Jesus the Messiah.
- But he adds to the answer information which is not user friendly. It isn't seeker sensitive. It is the truth "YOU CRUCIFIED, REJECTED BY YOU"
- Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 and applies it to the chief priests and Israel

- A story circulated in Israel in this day that as they were building the temple the stone masons had ordered all these stones to be delivered from the stone carvers. As they were laying stones, the workers came across a stone that was different in size and shape. It didn't quite fit what they were working on. So they took to stone and rolled it down the hill rejecting it and considering it useless. The day came when it was time to finish the temple and place the Cap Stone that they could not find an appropriate stone. They called the stone cutters and told them. The stone cutters replied that they had sent the stone already and insisted that it was there. When the workers calculated the dimensions someone realized that they had earlier seen the stone and had rejected it. They had retrieved the stone and placed it in the place it was meant to go and the work the builders were building was complete.

Act 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

- Peter is not allowing any other options. "NO OTHER NAME"
- This was the controversy. This is still the controversy. Luke 21:12 "they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake."
- This is a narrow and intolerant, but if one has a problem with this narrow intolerant truth, they have lost perspective. The proper perspective is that there is A WAY to be saved. Do people cry foul when there was developed a polio vaccine? Did they cry "No, there must be other cures!" "There can't be only one cure." Of course they didn't say this. They took the cure. There is only one cure for our sin. It is in the Name of Jesus and Only Jesus that men must be saved.

Act 4:13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and {began} to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Act 4:14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.

- What did the Council see?

- Their Confidence	They were bold, clear, reasonable
- They were uneducated and untrained	Yet they shouldn't be (untrained like them)
- They had been with Jesus	But because they had been with Jesus, They were.
	<u>Can you be convicted of being with Jesus?</u>
- Seeing the healed man	And that is why a good thing was done.
- The Answer JESUS left them dumbfounded.
- Romans 3:19 "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

Act 4:15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they {began} to confer with one another,

Act 4:16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

- Where did Luke get this private conversation? Some years later there would be a Pharisee who was an ambitious angry zealot who would get saved and Luke would accompany him as he shared the gospel in all the world. This man was Saul or Paul of Tarsus.
- In the silent conversation of their own heart they cannot deny the good that is done.

Act 4:17 "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name."

Act 4:18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

- Here is an incredible satanic attack on the early church. The weapons our enemy uses are not new or inventive. They are the same weapons. The church today is under this same threat.
- You can teach and do good, but "DO NOT TEACH OR DO GOOD IN JESUS NAME"

Act 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

Act 4:20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

- 1st Peter and John answered by posing a problem to them. Should we obey you, those who are in authority over us, or God who is authority over you and us.

- The second problem is with conforming to the ruling is that they are instructed to not speak concerning themselves and what they have experienced.

Act 4:21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;
 Act 4:22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

- They had to let them go because they were doing too much good.
Their message had to be accepted because their works were acceptable.
- Matt 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
- 1 Peter 2:12 "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe {them,} glorify God in the day of visitation."
- Romans 15:5-6 "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Act 4:23 **2) Praise, Prayer & Proclamation** vs 23-37

When they had been released, they went to their own {companions} and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

- Peter & John after being threatened and released go to their own
- There is already a separation forming between Christians and Jews.
 - They went to their own (They recognized a difference)
 - It was antagonistic from those who did not believe in Jesus (v 21 they threatened them)
 - The bottom line of the difference is JESUS.
- Jesus said, "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against [their] parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Matt 10:21-22)
- Observation: The world is very accepting of Christianity as long as Christianity is working in social projects. (Habitat, Feeding Poor, Disaster Relief Work) And we should be involved in these things. But if Christianity speaks to morality, sin, forgiveness, or Jesus, the world will strike to silence the church. But this too is our task; to have a voice in our world.
- Being Distinct vs Conforming
- Should we Separate Ourselves? NO but realize that this separation is there, and in the worlds view it is antagonistic. We need to reach out beyond this separation and be not divisive yet not conform so as to bring Jesus to others.

Act 4:24 And when they heard {this,} they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM,

- When Persecution came they prayed.
- Their Prayer begins with Praise. **FIRST they acknowledge who God is.** Not ourselves, Not Rome, Not the Religious Counsel. But the one who made heaven and earth. This is always a good way to start prayer or any service. Maintaining the proper perspective of things or the proper order.

Act 4:25 who by the Holy Spirit, {through} the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?

Act 4:26 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE

GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'

- **SECOND they remember the Scripture.** It speaks of persecution from unbelievers and rulers. They recall that persecution was foretold in scripture and that it shouldn't be a surprise.
 - It is evident that the Scriptures played such an important role in the lives of Christians. Here are just a few examples of their use of the Scriptures' guidance in the early church from what we have seen so far in the book of Acts:
 - A) when replacing Judas with Matthias. Acts ch. 1
 - B) when the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Acts ch. 2
 - C) when Peter preached the 1st time. Acts ch. 2
 - D) they devoted themselves to teaching. Acts ch. 2
 - E) when Peter preached the 2nd time. Acts ch. 3
 - F) when Peter gave his defense to the Sanhedrin. Acts ch. 4
 - The Holy Spirit opened up the Scriptures to believers to see Jesus. They now can see the eternal plan.
 - Psalm 2 is quoted here. An interesting note in Psalm 2 shows that the nations, kings, rulers, people counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed one. Yet in verse 3, the Lord laughs. The God who created the universe and hung the stars and called things into existence is being challenged by mere flesh. It is rather silly when you think about it. God is not threatened.

Act 4:27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

Act 4:28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

- **THIRD they focus on Jesus.** He was persecuted according to God's plan. They know that Jesus our Lord is acquainted with our trials and grief.
 - Isaiah 53:3 *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."*
 - Hebrews 4:15 *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin."*
- Notice verse 27 lists those who were against Jesus. (Herod, Pilate, Gentiles, Israel) All sinned.
- All these things happen according to God's purpose and preordained plan. Same is true today with all the difficult / fearful things happening in our world today.

- After these three things **FOURTH they make their request.** Why? Because it changes our perspective on helps us to pray as we ought.

Act 4:29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

Act 4:30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

- Where is the request for deliverance from persecution?
 - They only ask that the Lord would note their trouble.
- They ask that they can speak the Word with confidence.
NKJV = *"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,"*
NLT = *"And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give your servants great boldness in their preaching."*
The Message (Peterson) = *"Take care of their threats and give your servants fearless confidence in preaching your Message."*
- They ask that people will be touched and amazed.
(Notice whose hand is extended to heal and perform signs and wonders)
- They ask that Jesus will be exalted.

Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and {began} to speak the word of God with boldness.

- The place where they were was shaken
 - We want to know the place will shake before we come to pray. They came to pray first.
- They were filled with the Holy Spirit
 - A refilling / refreshing. This does not negate the Day of Pentecost. This is a fresh and new.
 - You will see a fresh filling coming upon the believers throughout the book of Acts.
- They Spoke the Word of God with boldness

- boldness = Freedom of speech unreserved Without ambiguity without rambling
- Ephesians 3:8-21 Paul tells us
 - He should, we should preach, or make known Jesus
 - That in Jesus we have boldness that we should "faint not"
 - Paul prays that believers would be strengthened
 - Strengthened by knowing the Love of Christ and by being filled with the fullness of God.

Act 4:32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one {of them} claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

Act 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

- The principal thought here is found in 31: THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
 - Spoke the Word with Boldness
 - Unified of One Heart and Soul
 - Unselfish - with Property believed that all they had was the Lord's and they were just stewards of what was in their possession.
 - Power in giving testimony to resurrected Christ.
- Below in verse 34 + 35 give more detail as to what they did with their property and verse 36 + 37 give an example of someone who held this practice.
- Why did these believers sell homes to give to those in need:
 - Because there were some in Jerusalem who believed during Pentecost and stayed to learn more concerning Jesus the Messiah. Yet they had no means to provide for themselves.
 - Because of a belief that Jesus return was soon coming and that they didn't need homes.
 - Because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they had a compassion for others greater than that of having security in property.
- The Holy Spirit brings to the church Unity. 3 main passages concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit:
 - **Romans 12:4,5 +10** Unity surrounds gifts. *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another... [Be] kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"*
 - **1 Corinthians 12:4-7 + 11-14** Unity surrounds gifts. *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.... But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."*
 - **Ephesians 4:1-6 + 12,13** Unity surrounds gifts. *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all.... For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"*

Act 4:34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

Act 4:35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

- This generosity is not mandatory or is it a church project. It was a move of the Spirit found in the heart of each believer. You do not see offerings as the centerpiece of the church or a measure of a persons spirituality. This was not commanded by God except that each believer felt the leading of the Holy Spirit to do this.
- Gave to Apostles for them to distribute.

Act 4:36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

Act 4:37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- This Joseph was a Levite. The church had received persecution from the religious leaders and here is a Levite who became a believer.
 - Acts 6:7 "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
- The Apostles called him Barnabas (Son of Encouragement)
 - Mentioned 25 x in Acts 5 x in the Epistles
 - Goes to Paul and encourages him in ministry
 - Barnabas before Paul but allows Paul to develop to then lead
 - Keeps confidence in John Mark when he had failed
 - so much so he stands up to Paul
 - He sells land and gives money to the church for others need.

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