

## Acts 4

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- I. 4:1-4 Arrest

- A. 4:1-2 *Sadducees* did not believe in the resurrection, closely tied to the priesthood and to the governing Romans.
- B. 4:4 *many of those who heard the word believed* This is the result of Peter's preaching in the last chapter. Notice that people had to hear the word in order to believe it.

*Romans 10:14 (NKJV) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

*Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

*men ... five thousand* With women and believing children can we safely double this?

- II. 4:5-12 Confronting the Council

- A. 4:5-6 The same guys that tried Jesus. See John 18.
- B. 4:7 *By what power...?* They are trying to catch them in their words.
  - i. Deu 13:1-5 commands death to anyone who would do some miraculous act in order to turn the people of Israel to any other gods.
- C. 4:8 Key Phrase: *filled with the Holy Spirit* Here and in v.31
- D. 4:10 Peter again puts the attention squarely on Jesus – as in Chapter 3.
- E. 4:11 See Psalm 118:22 The rejection of Christ was fulfillment of prophesy.
- F. 4:12 This is a harsh truth, but a soft, soothing deception would be much worse on the day of judgment. Only Jesus has the power to save our souls.

*“The exclusivism of Christianity goes against the grain of our religiously pluralistic society. ...Christians preach an exclusive Christ in an inclusive age.” – John MacArthur*

*Illustration: Church near my house with new monument (sculpture, sign?). Bible verses next to words from Gandhi, Mother Theresa, etc. Much wisdom in these quotations – better off in this life if you lived by them. But what about the next life?*

*Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV) "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

- a) What Peter says reveals the value of any belief system. Will it save you from sin and death? Where will you stand on judgment day if you fully buy into it?
- The best of human wisdom or human effort will never settle the account of our sins against God.
  - What can wash away our sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

### III. 4:13-22 The Council Responds

- A. 4:13 A good life verse. It wasn't their lack of education or training that made them special – that made them ordinary – it was their time spent with Jesus.
- B. 4:13 *boldness* freedom, unreservedness in speaking, cheerful courage. Also 4:29,31  
*untrained* The Greek literally says “idiots” – but the meaning has changed a bit. The point is these are working class guys preaching confidently to the nation's rulers and religious elite. How could they do that? They had been with Jesus.
- C. 4:14 A transformed life is powerful evidence for the power of God.
- D. 4:15 Peter and John were sent outside. How, then, did Luke find out what was said in the meeting? Possibilities: Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and even Saul of Tarsus.
- E. 4:16-18 They don't even consider believing in Jesus as Messiah, though they are completely stumped by the miracle. They only want to keep the apostles quiet.
- F. 4:19-20 How different from the Peter that denied Christ just a few months back!

And how tragic when religious people force others to choose between obedience to God or to them! Peter has been backing his points up with Scripture (their Scripture!) all along.

### G. Application: The Risk of Obedience

*2 Timothy 2:8-9 (NKJV) Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.*

- Compare with Jeremiah in the king's dungeon, Daniel in the lion's den or his friends in the fiery furnace, all the early Christian martyrs who refused to deny Christ.
- They were persecuted because they wouldn't stop preaching, wouldn't stop praying, wouldn't bow down before idols and wouldn't deny Christ.

*"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." – Tertullian*

IV. 4:23-31 Prayer

A. We might entitle this section *How to Respond When Persecution Hits Home*

B. 4:24-28 Most of the prayer consists of remembering that God is in charge. It's His world. He made it; He rules it.

- i. Compare 4:25-26 with Psalm 2.
- ii. Even at the crucifixion, earthly rulers were merely fulfilling God's plans.
- iii. God's right to rule is important in an environment of hostility toward the Gospel, because in such an environment the persecutor is in a state of rebellion against God.

*"The apostles were well aware of the strength of the opposition, but they believed that God not only ruled, but over-ruled." – Herbert Lockyer*

C. 4:29-30 They now make three short requests:

- i. **that God would look on the threats of the council** They wanted God to deal with their persecutors in whatever way He saw fit. How much better that was than taking things into their own hands.
- ii. **for boldness in speaking** interesting, in light of the fact that it was boldness that got them into trouble in the first place.
  - a) Why boldness? Jesus had commissioned them to go preach the gospel. They now feared that they might somehow fall short in that assignment. They didn't want the persecution to cause them to timidly shrink back
  - b) What's your biggest fear? How does it compare with their fear of disobedience?
- iii. **that God would work more miracles** Why not? They had just seen the results of Jesus using Peter to heal the lame man. They were hungry for more.
  - a) Not a morbid interest in the miraculous, but a pure desire to see Jesus glorified.

D. 4:31 Results: shaking, filling with the Holy Spirit, and **boldness**

V. 4:32-37 Fellowship, etc.

A. 4:32-33 Some results of the Holy Spirit's work: Unity at the deepest level, great power, great grace (favor), generosity.

B. 4:36-37 *Barnabas* We'll hear a lot more about him later.

C. The devil hates what is happening here. We'll see how he begins trying to destroy them in the next chapter.