

A Study of Acts : Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION.

- A. In our study of Acts 3, we saw six important events:
 - 1. The healing of the lame man is a specific example of God confirming the word through the use of miracles.
 - 2. Peter declared to the people the glorification of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. Peter convicted the people of their sin. Peter instructed the people to repent and be converted.
- B. In Acts 4, we will see the rulers objecting to Peter and John preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. We will also see a prayer for strength as well as the unity among the brethren.
- C. Let us begin our examination of Acts 4.

I. PREACHING BRINGS OBJECTIONS.

- A. The priests, the captains of the temple and the Sadducees took Peter and John into custody because of what they were teaching concerning the resurrection. (Acts 4:1-4)
 - 1. The religious leaders were great disturbed because of Peter and John's teachings. (v 2)
 - 2. Despite Peter and John's arrest, many believed the words they taught. The number of men who believed came to five thousands. (v 4)
- B. The religious leaders questioned Peter and John as to by what power or name had they healed the lame man. (Acts 4:5-7)
- C. Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke to the rulers. (Acts 4:8-12)
 - 1. Peter answered the question by saying, "*that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.*" (v 10, NKJV)
 - 2. Peter quoted by Psalms 118:22 when he said, "*This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'*" (v 11, NKJV)
 - 3. Peter then told the rulers that salvation could not be found in any other name. (v 12)
- D. The rulers instructed Peter and John not to preach the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:13-22)
 - 1. The rulers marveled at Peter and John's boldness, especially considering they

were uneducated and untrained men. The rulers also realized that they could say nothing against the healing of the lame man. (v 13-14)

2. The council conferred and came to the conclusion that it was necessary to command Peter and John not to speak in the name of Jesus. (v 15-17)
3. When the council ordered Peter and John to cease their preaching, Peter and John replied, "*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" (v 19-20, NKJV)
4. The council released Peter and John without punishment because they people had God the glory for the miracle. (v 21-22)

II. THE DISCIPLES PRAYED FOR BOLDNESS.

- A. Peter and John returned to their fellow disciples and told them of what had happened. The disciples praised the Lord. (Acts 4:23-28)
 1. They acknowledged God being the creator of all things. (v 24)
 2. They acknowledged the prophecy which foretold the rulers turning against the Lord and His Christ. (v 25-28)
- B. The disciples prayed for boldness. (Acts 4:29-30)
 1. The disciples asked the Lord to provide their boldness "*by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.*" (v 30, NKJV)
 2. Basically, the saints would be bold because they would have confidence that the Lord would confirm what they were preaching. (Cf. Mark 16:19-20; Hebrews 2:3-4)
- C. The Lord answered the disciples' prayer for boldness. (Acts 4:31)

III. UNITY AMONG THE BRETHREN.

- A. The brethren were of one heart and one soul. The brethren provided for the needs of other brethren. (Acts 4:32-35)
 1. The brethren had all things in common (regarding their possessions.) The brethren were willing to sell their possessions so that other saints would not lack. (v 32)
 2. The apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Christ. Grace was upon all them. (v 33)
 3. They provided for one another. All the brethren who owned lands and houses sold their possessions and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles. The

apostles distributed the funds as people had need. (v 34-35)

- B. Barnabas sold his land and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. (Acts 4:36-37)

IV. KEY POINTS.

- A. The rulers arrested Peter and John for preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:1-4)

1. This seems to be the first instance of opposition which the brethren faced since the death of Jesus Christ.
2. Even to this day, depending upon where you live and who you try to teach, preaching Jesus and the resurrection will not always provoke a favorable response.
3. We must not allow such unfavorable reactions to hinder our efforts to teach Jesus.

- B. Peter and John gave a defense to the rulers for their preaching the name of Jesus Christ. This is the first of many instances. (Acts 4:8-12)

1. Peter and John stood ready to give a defense to the rulers. It was Peter who would later write, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”* (1 Peter 3:15, NKJV)
2. In their defense, Peter and John did the following:
 - a. Confessed Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead.
 - b. Showed that the rulers fulfilled prophecy by rejecting Jesus Christ.
 - c. Declared that salvation is found in no other name but the name of Jesus Christ.
3. The question for us is this: Are we prepared to give a defense for the hope that lies with us?
 - a. Do situations arise in your life where people question you because of your choices?
 - b. When you choose to put God first and therefore say no to sin, then yes, people may question you. Can you explain your choices from the Bible?
 - (1) Do not say, “That’s what my religion believes.”
 - (2) Do not say, “That’s the way I have always believed.”
 - (3) Do not say, “We made the choice because we wanted to be

different from the world.”

(4) Say, “I made the choice I did because the Bible says . . .”

(5) Say, “God said, . . .”, quoting Bible passage or pointing them to a teaching in a specific Bible passage.

C. Peter and John said that they could not help but preach the things they had seen and heard. (Acts 4:19-20)

1. Each and every Christian should possess this same attitude of willingness and determination. We should also stand ready to preach or teach the things we have “seen and heard” in the Word of God.
2. This level of personal evangelism is much more than good influences and being nice to people. This level of personal evangelism requires you to talk to others about the things you have “seen and heard.”
3. Work to make opportunities to study the Bible with other people.
 - a. Begin by inviting friends, family members, and even strangers to worship services and Bible classes. Speak favorably of the church to them. (If you speak negatively, do not ever expect them to visit with you.)
 - b. Offer to enroll them in our Bible Blueprint Bible study course. We can come to their home, mail them the study, or they can take the study online at www.lawtonchurchofchrist.com.

D. The saints prayed for boldness. (Acts 4:23-31)

1. The word which we preach should be the same word preached by the saints in the first century. We are to be preaching the word recorded in written form.
 - a. If we are preaching the true Word of God, then we will be preaching a Word already confirmed by miracles, signs, and wonders.
 - b. We know longer need signs and wonders to give us boldness. Our boldness should come from our confidence in the written Word.
2. Just as the apostles prayed for strength, so too can we. However, we should realize that of all people, we should be bold. Consider the following passages:
 - a. Proverbs 14:26: “*In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge.*” (NKJV)
 - b. Proverbs 28:1: “*The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the*

righteous are bold as a lion.” (NKJV)

- c. Ephesians 3:12: *“in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” (NKJV)*
 - d. Hebrews 4:16: *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (NKJV)*
 - e. Hebrews 13:6: *“So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (NKJV)*
 - f. 1 John 4:17: *“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” (NKJV)*
- E. The unity of the brethren and their willingness to help one another is manifested in this chapter as it was in chapter 2. (Acts 4:32-37)
- 1. Many times, we will appeal to the closeness of the brethren in the first century.
 - 2. However, look at the level of commitment on the part of the brethren to one another. They were willing to sell their houses and their lands so that they could meet the needs of the brethren.
 - 3. How great is our commitment towards helping other brethren? Consider the attitude expressed in Philippians 2:1-5a.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Remember the key points seen in our study:
- 1. The rulers arrested Peter and John for preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Peter and John gave a defense to the rulers for their preaching the name of Jesus Christ. This is the first of many instances.
 - 3. Peter and John said that they could not help but preach the things they had seen and heard.
 - 4. The saints prayed for boldness.
 - 5. The unity of the brethren and their willingness to help one another is manifested in this chapter as it was in chapter 2.
- B. In chapter 5, we will see lying Christians punished, the church continuing to grow, and the imprisonment and release of the apostles.

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