

Acts Chapter 4

With the opening of Acts Chapter 4, we see Peter and John, the apostles of Jesus Christ, being arrested by the temple guards, priests, and Sadducees. Many of the people that had heard their message believed, however, so although they were taken, God had accomplished his purpose that day.

With the coming of the next evening, having spent the night in jail, Peter and John are brought before the “rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest”. Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly proclaims Jesus Christ to all the men gathered. Arguing with him was futile, they realized, because not only did these unschooled men speak with knowledge and authority, but an undeniable miracle had been done among the people. Knowing that there was nothing they could do, they commanded them to stop preaching the gospel, and let them go. Peter responds with a comment that makes it clear, he has no intention of stopping.

Peter and John's actions then cause other believers, to pray for the same boldness. Psalm 2 is quoted in a prayer (Psalm 2 has a messianic bent in this prayer's interpretation), and at the end of the chapter it is reported that all these new believers in the Church, unanimously decided to share all of their possessions with one another.

There are several principles, found within the text of this chapter, which is applicable to the world today. One such principle is the way in which Peter and John proclaimed the Gospel. Notice the similarity between their proclamation in the public, and their proclamation before the council. The message they deliver is exactly the same. They did not try to soften up their message before the council, nor was there any “political correctness” to be found. In both instances, they honestly spoke the words that the Holy Spirit led them to speak. This does not necessarily mean that they were not nervous or afraid as they stood before the council. There is nothing in the text that makes one believe that the apostles were “supermen” who were immune to fear. They were most assuredly human, and surely they felt fear. But God does not leave one to fight his battle for him. We are *His* instruments. As they opened their mouth in obedience, Peter and John were “filled with the Holy Spirit”. This was the source of their strength. God was faithful, and accomplished his purpose, just as He always does.

This brings us to principle number two. Notice the reaction of the other Christians, upon hearing of what had transpired. In verse 29 they pray “And now, Lord, behold their threatening: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word”, Peter and John's uncompromising attitude served to

instruct their fellows in a manner which words could never do. This is true throughout the world today. People follow those individuals who believe in their cause strongly enough, that they would die for it. This type of attitude, though rare, is what is desperately needed in the Church today. It is the attitude that spawns revival, inspires ministries, and brings the Gospel message to proliferate throughout the land. Indeed, God uses this principle, the idea that “persecution begets growth”, throughout the book of Acts, the Early Church, and throughout history. It is a recurring fact of the last two thousand years, that growth of the Church has been greatest through times of trouble.

In fact, this boldness in the face of danger, and the subsequent prayers of the Church, brings to light yet another timeless principle. That of giving; notice verse 32, where it states “*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*”. This is a perfect demonstration of the heart changing power of the Holy Spirit, as well as an instruction to all those who call themselves Christian, yet cling selfishly to their earthly possessions. Oh, what an example for our society today! How often have local church’s been destroyed by the “me” attitude of culture. How many so called “Christians” today are pumping out book after book, describing how a Christian can serve himself, his spirituality, his purpose, do his “thing”! How different is this outlook that says “I will sell all that I own, so that I may serve my “brother”. Look at the giving heart of Barnabas! Why do we not see this more in our churches today?

Boldness, steadfastness, and unselfishness; these are ideas clearly portrayed in these passages, and throughout the book of Acts. ? What has *happened* to these qualities in the Church? Where is the power of the Holy Spirit? We would do well to examine ourselves, in light of passages such as these. Most local churches are devoid of such ideas; indeed, they have become a type of “faith country club”, where people come to get spoon fed the scriptures, and talk to others about there golf game, instead of the Gospel of Christ. Where are the people boldly proclaiming Christ’s resurrection on the streets today? Where are the Christians such as are demonstrated here, who say, “I give ALL that I own, just give me more of Jesus!”