

Acts 4:13-6:7 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Let's recap our study so far . . .

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| C. Peter & John Arrested | Ch. 3:1-4:31 |
| 1. A lame man healed | 3:1-10 |
| 2. Peter preaches | 3:11-26 |
| 3. The arrest & trial | 4:1-22 |

We left off at v. 12 last week, where Peter wraps up his response to the Sanhedrin -
4:12

What a difference between Peter here and the man who stood warming himself in the courtyard of the high priest, vehemently denying he even knew Jesus!

13

We covered these verses in considerable depth a couple Sundays ago in the message "Used by God."

14-17

There was no way to deny the miracle, so they decided to exert raw, unreasoned power and just demand on pain of punishment, the Apostles stop spreading their message about Jesus.

The essence of *insanity* is a failure to accept reality.

Think about it – these guys **KNOW** this is a miracle worked in the name & by the power of Jesus Christ.

The sane thing to do would be to follow the dictates of reason & believe.

Instead – they forbid any more mention of, look at the end of v. 17, "the name" – they won't even say it themselves! That's nothing less than **INSANE!**

18-20

The Sanhedrin's origin lay in the selection of the 70 elders God anointed to assist Moses in the governing of Israel.

Their bottom line responsibility was to represent God in all things.

So Peter puts an interesting challenge to them – should the Apostles obey God or man?

The answer was obvious – God.

The miracle of the lame man's healing validated the Gospel's claim that Jesus IS God -so how could they be silent?

Peter confronts them with the shocking truth – by commanding them to silence, the Sanhedrin was going against the very purpose for their own existence.

21-22

The Council was furious & would have beaten them if they could – but they had no legal basis to do so, and knew they couldn't get away with it because there were witnesses.

If those witnesses hadn't been there, they would have beaten Peter & John.

Later they do!

4. Report to the disciples 4:23-31

23-31

Peter & John returned to the rest of the Apostles & believers and reported one what had happened.

This was their first official encounter with the Jewish high council who'd issued a stern warning that prohibited them doing the very thing Jesus had commanded them to do.

There was simply no option for them.

They had to obey God even though they knew it would get them in trouble with the authorities.

Take careful note of how they sought to make sense of what they were experiencing by looking to God's Word.

Jesus had made it abundantly clear to them that following Him would mean the world's hated & opposition.

They were not to run from it, but were to bear it patiently & with grace, just as He had.

In their prayer, they never asked for less conflict or an easier time; they asked for the strength to endure.

When we face trials, we can either ask God to *ease the pressure*, or we can ask for the wisdom, skill, & strength to overcome.

The question is if we want to escape or conquer.

What do you want to be – a victim or victor?

D. Love, Unity, Threat

Ch. 4:32-5:16

1. Koinonia

4:32-37

32-37

There were many that were doing so, but Joses, nicknamed 'Barnabas' is singled out because he'll play an important part in the story later.

Luke tells us that at this point in the life of Jesus' followers, the grace of God was so evident, so manifest, it had radically altered everyone's priorities.

One of the most widespread & powerful hindrances to spiritual growth is materialism; the love of wealth & possessions.

But God's grace was so abundant at this time, materialism had lost its grip on the hearts of the people.

One another were MORE IMPORTANT than *stuff*.

So everyone viewed their personal possessions as a part of the community.

They came to see, not only themselves as in intimate relationship with God & one another, but because of that, all their stuff was part of that too.

Because love & respect were the mutual bond, there was no concern about abuse of this sense of community.

It was a voluntary, joyous sharing of life and all that life includes.

Now – for decades, Communists & Socialist have tried to claim these verses as proof the original church was of their political mindset. That's ridiculous.

Under Socialism & Communism, the State owns everything & participation in the system is mandatory, not voluntary.

While it's God's grace that enabled the early church to be a community, Socialism & Communism makes the State God. There's no grace!

There is simply no connection between what we read here & Communism-socialism.

And, several commentators have suggested that while what we read here is a marvelous example of love, it might not be a good example of wisdom.

A bit later, the church in Jerusalem will be so poor, Paul has to go about Gentile churches raising relief for them.

Some commentators believe if the wealthy members of the Church had invested instead of giving all their wealth away to charity at this point, it might have meant more provision for the needy later.

2. Hypocrisy 5:1-11 – Covered a couple Sundays ago.

3. Power & unity 5:12-16

This was the large flat expanse at the southern end of the temple platform.

There was a long colonnade hall there which could accommodate a large crowd & would make a great place for teaching since large numbers of people could hear.

It became a central meeting place for the disciples as they gathered to hear the Apostles.

13-14

Those 2 vs. seem like the opposite.

What Luke means is that after the death of Ananias & Sapphira, pretenders, mere hangers-on, people who'd before been content to just stick around for the show & the novelty of something new distanced themselves now.

The gig was up. It was time to decide – all in, or out.

Those who were *in* took the step of full faith and joined the movement. But the lookie-lous backed away.

This purifying of the ranks of the followers of Jesus resulted in a greater measure of the grace of God to work in power –as seen in v. 15.

15-16

This was just an amazing time when the Spirit of God was moving in a powerful way, bringing wide scale healing & deliverance.

What God was doing was facing all Jerusalem with the truth that Jesus was Messiah, & the Church was His new Covenant People.

Just as the Exodus had been a time of dramatic miracles, showing God's favor on Moses as the mediator of His covenant with Israel, now was also a time of dramatic miracles showing Jesus was the Mediator of the New Covenant.

E. Official Opposition Renewed Ch. 5-17-42

1. The Apostles arrested & tried 5:17-32

17

Why weren't they filled with rejoicing that so many were being healed & given new lives?

Because the healing came in a name not part of their party/group.

18

On what charge? Preaching in Jesus' name, which they'd forbidden.

But was THAT ruling a just or legal one? No!

19-20

The officials can lock them up, but that doesn't mean they're going to stay there – not if God chooses otherwise.

So an angel comes, opens the prison door and sets them free.

He then commands them not to run & hide but to go right back to where they'd been arrested and do what they'd done that gotten them arrested in the first place.

21-24

They had no idea where the Apostles had gotten off to.

Clearly they'd escaped – and they couldn't have done that without inside help.

And of course, having escaped, they'd be long gone, probably hightailing it north to their homes in Galilee – beyond the reach of the temple police.

25

This would first *mystify*, then *infuriate* the Sanhedrin.

Why would the Apostles NOT run & hide so they could escape punishment?

Then, they're doing WHAT? Preaching? Not only didn't they run, they went right back to what got them in trouble in the first place.

26

Who do the common people who have no political interest in all this support? The Apostles.

The Sanhedrin know they have to walk carefully because the people are in solid support of the Apostles and sees what they're doing as little more than political & religious jealousy.

But notice that the Apostles went without the need to be forced.

They knew they had to obey God but that the Sanhedrin was the civil authority and as much as they could, they obeyed them.

We'll come back to this in a bit because it's an important point.

27-32

Peter's words are neither defiant nor disrespectful.

He's simply explaining why he & the others are preaching in Jesus' name.

2. Gamaliel's wise council 5:33-42

33

Furious is literally "cut in two."

It's an idiom for a conviction so deep it lays a person's heart bare and leaves only 2 options left: **Repent or React.**

The Sanhedrin **reacted** to the pain of conviction by attacking what they perceived as the source of their discomfort.

34-39

Gamaliel is a well known figure who's gone down in Jewish history as one of their premier rabbis & scholars.

He was grandson of the great rabbi **Hillel**, one of the most important theologians in all Israel's history.

He was a beloved leader and was Paul's mentor.

He gives sound advice to the council here.

He points to 2 examples of false messiahs who'd a while before started popular movements in Israel. When they died, both movements fizzled because

their leaders were mere men.

We know nothing of Theudas, but Judas of Galilee is well documented.

He raised a revolt against Rome in 6 AD that was quickly put down & led to Israel being reduced from an independent nation to a mere province of the Empire.

Following Judas' death, his followers evolved into the *Zealots*.

Gamaliel said if this new movement was like previous attempts, purely human, then it would come to nothing & the Sanhedrin's best posture would be to sit back and let it die of natural causes.

BUT – if it was truly of God as the Apostles contended, then the worst thing the council could do would be to oppose it.

Either way, their wisest course would be to pull back and see what happened.

40a

For disobeying their earlier command.

40b-41

They didn't whine & complain about their treatment. They didn't grumble about God's failure to protect them.

THEY REJOICED THAT THEY SUFFERED SHAME FOR HIS NAME!

I read that & am really convicted! I have a tendency to avoid sitches were I'm going to be shamed for being a follower of Jesus.

And when I'm rejected, I get all sad & dejected. I need to man up!

I want to be more like this. I *need* to be more like this – that when I'm hammered for being a Christian, I rejoice & not mope. Anyone else?

What we're *ashamed* of speaks volumes about who & what we are.

The apostles were *shamed* by the Sanhedrin, but they weren't *ashamed*.

They felt no shame when shamed.

7 year old Sally steals a cookie. Her mother catches her & says, "Shame on you."

If the cookie means more to her than mom's opinion, she'll feel little to no shame.

But if the relationship with mom is important to her, she'll indeed feel shame.

The threats & shame of the Council meant nothing to the apostles because they were sold out to Jesus.

What *shames* you? Of what are you *ashamed*?

The answer to that speaks volumes about your priorities & values.

One of the signs our culture has slid so far into a moral cesspool is that nothing makes us *blush* any more.

Subjects that a few years ago would have been considered *shameful* to speak about in public are now the plot line for Reality TV.

Howard Stern is a cultural icon who can command a multi-million dollar contract on satellite radio.

It seems that today, the only taboo subject, the only thing that people hesitate to mention, is the Name of Jesus

42

Take careful note of this.

- 1) They submitted gladly to the beating,
- 2) Then turned right around and went out to do the very thing they'd been

forbidden.

[Show how true submission to God means deference & submission to unrighteous men.]

F. A New Problem & Solution Ch. 6:1-7

We covered this last Sunday but there were some parts of it we need to fill in tonight.

6:1-6

What I didn't have time to mention Sunday is that all 7 of these men the Church selected have Hellenist names.

The believers recognized that the complaint was legit though unintended.

It reflected a bias that needed to be overcome and the solution was to put men in charge of overseeing the distribution who'd been Hellenists.

7

How the Church handled this problem so impressed the priests, they converted.

As leaders they knew the great challenge there is in leading wisely.

The Apostles had handled this potential crisis so skillfully, the priests were able to see it for what it was – another example of the superiority of Christ.

It convinced them the new movement was true & right and they became believers.

Many people think that in order to really excel as a believer, they need to become a pastor.

Not so – God wants them to excel as a believer in whatever their calling & vocation is.

Scientists need to see scientists who are Christians who excel at their research BECAUSE they believe.

Salesmen. Contractors, Car-dealers, Artists, Musicians. Teachers. Truck drivers.