

Acts of the Apostles

Session 4 - Bold Believers

Acts 4:1-31

Acts 4:1-12

To put this passage in context we must look back at Acts 3. Peter and John healed a man who had been crippled from birth. In those days a person who was disabled had little means to support themselves other than begging on the street. This man asked Peter and John for some money but they gave him something far greater. They healed him in the name of Jesus (vs. 6). The Bible often speaks of the power of Jesus' name. We are to live by his name, pray in his name, and proclaim the good news by the authority of the name of Jesus.

After healing the man, Peter preached the gospel to all of those that had gathered. This upset the Jewish leaders. They thought they had dealt with the Jesus problem once and for all, but now his followers were speaking openly, declaring that he had risen from the dead, and calling people to believe in him. Annas and Caiaphas were the first two to question Jesus after he had been arrested, and now they, along with the Sanhedrin, demanded that Peter and John tell them "by what power or what name did you do this?"

Peter, speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, declared that the authority to perform the miracle and preach the resurrection come from Jesus. Peter quoted Jesus in Mark 12:10 who was quoting Psalm 118:22-23. The capstone of a building was placed on the top to symbolize its completion. Jesus is the capstone of God's plan of salvation because he brought to completion what was begun with the law and the prophets. (These verses in Psalm 118 precede my favorite verse - "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.")

In Acts 4:12 Peter states a key principle of Scripture - **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."** In our culture today, and even among some churches, the idea of "universal salvation" has become popular. It is the belief that because God's nature is to love (1 John 4:8), he will not condemn anyone for their sins regardless of whether or not they believe in Jesus. And since God would not allow anyone to be sent to hell, there is no such place. And since there is no hell there is no need to believe in the devil as the embodiment of evil. But Scripture is clear that salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 3:36, 8:24, 12:48, 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:11-12,

Acts 4:13-22

After hearing Peter's testimony the Jewish leaders conferred with one another about what to do with them. They could not deny the miracle because the man who had been healed was right there with them. So they decided to issue a gag order - "warn these men to speak no longer in this name." In response, Peter and John turned their own teaching against them. The Jewish people were taught that obedience

to God must be a priority over obedience to men. Peter and John used that teaching to justify their refusal to obey the gag order placed on them by the Sanhedrin.

Acts 4:23-31

After being released, Peter and John went to the other believers and shared their experience. As a result they prayed a bold prayer. They acknowledged the opposition that was against them and the persecution they faced, and made an unusual request. If I were in their situation my first thought would be to ask God for protection and safety. But that is not what they prayed for. They asked God to enable them to speak with great boldness and to continue to work through them by the power of the Holy Spirit. And God answered their prayer in a mighty way. The place where they gathered shook, the Holy Spirit filled them and they "spoke the word of God boldly".