

- 1) Any comments, or questions, from last time?
- 2) I left you with a couple of questions last time.
- 3) There was obviously a massive change in mindset of these first 5000 or so Christians.
  - a) Their expectations of the Messiah, as we have discussed many times, was totally different from what they walked away with that day.
  - b) They were a people who had suddenly come to the realization that the promises of the God they had worshiped for generations had now been fulfilled.
  - c) There is a lot for these folks to process now.

***Again, think about that for a minute.***

***Do you think that our experience in coming to the Lord is as drastic a change as theirs? Why? Why Not?***

***Does it make the job of a new Christian easier or harder to be of a lesser mind change than we see them have?***

**Acts 4:1–4 (NIV)**

- 1) Here we have an interesting display of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Based on what we are told here, Peter’s sermon and he and John’s teaching had been going on for 3 to 4 hours by this time.
  - a) They arrived and started at around 3 in the afternoon – prayer time – now it is evening.
- 3) The result was pretty spectacular.
- 4) First, one might think their arrest by the priests, captain of the guard and Sadducees would have been a deterrent to anyone believing but, obviously not!
- 5) Instead, because of this healing and sermon and assumed teaching, as we just discussed, their number grew to 5000.
  - a) We do not know that all these were present but this may be seen as a result of this sermon.
- 1) That’s great! However, here comes what maybe their first encounter with real trouble for the apostles.

**Acts 4:5–6 (NIV)**

- 2) O.k. Peter what are you going to say to these high ranking officials. You know what they did to Jesus so, what's it going to be? Confrontation or Run for the hills?
- 3) Perhaps he was just going to “wing it” so to speak.
- 4) As I was thinking about this I wondered if Peter remembered what Jesus had told them earlier.
  - a) If perhaps he and John had been discussing it over night while they were in prison.
- 5) There are two scriptures that give Jesus' words to them on this they likely were thinking of these as and if they did discuss their appearance in the morning.

### **Matthew 10:19–20 (NIV)**

### **Luke 21:12–15 (NIV)**

- 6) Well, knowing Peter, I doubt if he would be one to run for the hills regardless of whether he remembered what Jesus had said or not.
- 7) He probably, deep down inside knew from the two sermons that he had already preached that it was going to be fine. So, he begins...

### **Acts 4:8–12 (NIV)**

- 8) Well, I guess there is no doubt now how Peter decided to proceed – basically, come on Holy Spirit let's go! NO HOLDS BARRED NO PUNCHES PULLED!

### **Acts 4:13–22 (NIV)**

- 9) This last comment regarding the man's age is interesting – from most sources I looked at, the average lifespan in Jesus' day was 35 years. (much younger than I had always thought)
- 10) There are some interesting facts that can help us get a better picture of the seriousness of what is happening here.
- 11) First, at their arrest, we have the Captain of the Temple Gard, the Sadducees, and the priests.
  - a) As I am sure you recall, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.
  - b) Additionally, according to at least one commentator they really did not expect or accept the idea of a “real Messiah”.
  - c) They considered the concept to be more of an idea – not a real person who would actually intervene in history.

- d) We have here also, the Captain of the Temple Gard – he was a Sadducee as well.
  - e) It is likely that the priests were also Sadducees.
- 12) It doesn't take a lot to understand why Peter and John would have been in deep trouble.
- a) Here they are, standing in the temple proclaiming a resurrected savior.
  - b) They are preaching in total opposition to the teachings of the Sadducees on both counts.
  - c) Not only that, but since these men were obviously at least part of the leaders that Peter was speaking of, he (Peter) was directly blaming them for the death of the Messiah (which they did not believe in to begin with).
- 13) Given all that, it is not a surprise at all that they arrested them in order to silence them immediately.
- 14) So, in jail overnight and off to the Sanhedrin in the morning.
- 15) More folks who would be totally against what they were preaching.
- a) Annas, the Sadducee figure head of the Sanhedrin.
  - b) Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family – again Sadducees.
  - c) Are you starting to see a pattern here?
- 16) Now we get down to it. You would think that in this case, this powerful body would say simply you have broken law XXX and therefore we are sentencing you to YYY.
- 17) But wait a minute – what law XXX – there is none!
- 18) So, it comes down to them deciding they really could do nothing – because of the people, and the fact that they knew the people knew of the miracle.
- 19) So, they put the question to Peter:
- “By what power or what name did you do this?”
- 20) Peter then (if I can paraphrase a bit) gets a little sarcastic and smart mouthed with them:
- “Oh, you mean us being kind to the crippled man and healing him – that thing? In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – you remember him, the guy you crucified?”
- 21) The reaction of these folks is not unusual, for us or them, if you find somebody that nails you and you have no come back just dismiss them as being ignorant and go on with life.
- 22) This is basically what they do when they decide among themselves...
- 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.
- 23) Again, they can't really do anything serious. They could beat them, have them flogged, throw them in jail for a while longer but they really see no way that any of that would stop them.

24) So - threats, and more threats!

25) I personally think we see Peter through the Holy Spirit is at one of his finest points here.

26) He knows that they are on the ropes so he takes one last shot in his answer!!!!

“Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

27) These leaders are between the rock and the hard place – no real crime with a defined punishment,

a) Peter and John’s miracle was known, and the people were excited and happy about it.

28) Round one to the “unschooled, ordinary men”!

29) There is a quote attributed to a bishop of, I assume recent times, which I think is very interesting and puts a little perspective on what is happening here and will continue to happen throughout our study of Acts.

30) This bishop complained that he didn’t seem to be having the same impact as the first apostles.

‘Everywhere St Paul went there was a riot. Everywhere I go they serve tea.’

31) This I think speaks volumes regarding the opposition and problems that the early church leaders – the apostles, preachers, teachers, and others faced in their lives.

32) People then were more polarized – threatened – and as such were more likely to react more dramatically or even violently to the Gospel message than today – especially in our environment.

33) Today, we worry about being uncomfortable speaking to people about Christ.

34) Even when we do talk to people about Him, we worry about someone saying “I’m not interested” and think when that happens we have failed.

35) The entire way these early Christians taught and presented the gospel is totally different from our situation, at least in our communities here in the good old US of A.

**Agree / Disagree?**

**Notwithstanding the miracles, should it be?**

**We all can not be Peter, John, or Paul – BUT – honest answer, does this speak into your life – do you feel an urge or a twinge of desire to share more?**

**If not, for you personally, what is missing – what is the factor that stops us?**

**Acts 4:23–31 (NIV)**

1) Prayer! First and foremost at this point for all who were there.

- 2) One must consider, I think, that the reason they were so moved to prayer at this moment was thankfulness.
- 3) However, the thrust of the prayer was entreaty – entreaty to God to allow them to speak and witness even more boldly.
- 4) These men and women were on fire. They obviously were filled with the Holy Spirit and had already informed these leaders that they would not cease preaching and teaching Jesus.
- 5) They knew as surely as they had done this that they would never be able to do it alone.
- 6) They wanted to assure that the mightiest force in the entire universe – God the Father was going to stand with them in their efforts.
- 7) They prayed powerfully for this and it is important to look squarely at what this is:
  - a) First, by praying the verses from Psalm 2 they acknowledged exactly what their situation was.
  - b) Second, their prayer was not for protection from these forces – instead it was for:
    - i) Boldness – the ability to proclaim boldly what the Lord put on their hearts.
    - ii) Healings, signs, and wonders – they wanted God to, through them, present signs of healings and other miracles – not so they would be glorified but so that people would see God’s power and believe in His Son.
    - iii) All in the name of Jesus!
- 8) If I may be so bold as to say so, verse 31 is God saying AMEN!

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

- 9) N.T. Wright makes the valid point that the devil is always trying to thwart our Godly plans and efforts.
- 10) We may not have the chief priests and leaders of the Sanhedrin threatening us but we are definitely on Satan’s radar.
- 11) We are absolutely in need of God’s strength and help to fight off Satan’s destructive efforts.

***12) Keeping in mind that we are talking about struggles on behalf of Jesus and our witnessing for Him...***

***Should we pray with this fervor, desire, and conviction?***

***Do we have circumstances that warrant that?***

***What are some?***

***Further, do these struggles have to be about big things?***

***How about our personal day-to-day struggles on behalf of Jesus?***