

Brookland Baptist Church
Bible Study
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Lecture XII

May 4, 2022

The Book of Acts
Acts 4:13-31

Acts 4:13

13 The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men who had had no special training. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

Christ had originally chosen the Twelve so that they “might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority” Here that purpose reached fruition. Peter and John, fishermen by trade, had never received formal theological or rhetorical training in the rabbinical schools; they were ordinary men who had had no special training. Yet their testimony before the members of the council was astonishing. Peter and John were bold, composed, confident, and undaunted in their defense. As the apostles stood there with the healed cripple, speaking with authority, the members of the Council recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. Their boldness was possible only because they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:14-15 -

14 “But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the council had nothing to say.”

15 “So they sent Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves.”

Although the evidence was overwhelming and irrefutable (changed lives and a healed man), the religious leaders refused to believe in Christ and continued to try to suppress the truth. We shouldn't be surprised if some people reject us and our positive witness for Christ.

Acts 4:16-17 –

16 “What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can't deny they have done a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it.

17 “But perhaps we can stop them from spreading their propaganda. We'll warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again.”

The Council was in a quandary. The apostles had performed an undeniable, widely publicized miraculous sign. The masses were gravitating toward this new sect. How could the religious leaders save face in light of the obviously healed man, discourage further teaching and healing in the name of Jesus, and preserve the status quo? Their solution was to order the apostles not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again. It seems as though they thought that their power and position could convince these men to be silent.

Acts 4:18 -

18 “Then they called them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.”

Because Peter and John had not broken any laws and were enjoying popular support among the people, the Jewish Council's best attempt at damage control was to summon the apostles and try to scare them into silence with vague warnings. They were simply ordered not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19-20 -

19 “But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.”

20 “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

These men had indeed “been with Jesus,” and he had completely transformed their lives. They had lived with him; they had witnessed his resurrection; they had experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit. And so, they said, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” To have obeyed the Council's command would have been to disobey God.

When we make the daily decision to do what is right, when we stand up boldly for Christ against a hostile crowd, people take notice. They look closer at our lives and listen more carefully to our message.

Acts 4:21-22 -

21 “After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened”.

22 “For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.”

Stunned by the courage of Peter and John and fearful of their popularity among the masses, the religious leaders could do nothing more than give further threats and then let them go. One would think that these “religious” leaders would be thrilled that the people were praising God for what had happened. But that was not the case.

Acts 4:23 -

23 “As soon as they were freed, Peter and John found the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said.”

Peter and John were released. As soon as they were released, they sought out their fellow believers. Peter and John were not depressed, discouraged, or downcast. Neither were they stricken with fear and trembling. They were not suggesting the Church withdraw into a hole and keep its message to itself. They had been imprisoned and tried by the Supreme Court itself, threatened and warned, but they were not defeated and silenced.

Acts 4:24 -

24 “When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.”

The Church could do but one thing: it triumphantly lifted its voice to God in prayer. But note: the prayer was triumphant and united “with one accord.” The triumph of the Church is seen in the points of its convictions throughout the prayer. The “one accord” means they prayed with one mind and one spirit. They focused and concentrated upon what was being prayed. Their minds were not wandering about. They were not half-heartedly praying, some praying and others thinking about their own affairs. They were “all of one accord,” zeroing in on God and His wonderful care and provision. It is such group prayers that God hears and answers.

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Acts 4:25-26 -

25 “You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?’”

26 “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.”

There was a conviction of man’s futility and God’s plan or providence. The thought is that men will do evil. Men will persecute believers and attempt to stamp out the gospel and the Church. But they will fail, for God has a plan, and He will overrule and carry out His plan. Men will oppose God. God, through David, foretold their opposition in Scripture. (Psalm 2:1-2).

1st -The heathen, that is, the lost of the world, “rage” (ephruxan): to neigh, stomp the ground like a fierce horse; to act untamed, haughty, unruly.

2nd - The people, that is, the worldly, “imagine vain things”: to be anxious over empty things; to focus one’s life, time and energy upon meaningless possessions and material things, the empty, unsatisfying things of the world.

3rd - The kings and rulers stand up and gather together against God and His Christ, the Messiah. They stand against; stand in an opposite direction; stand in opposition and hostility to God and Christ.

4th - The prophecy was primarily fulfilled in the death of Christ. Men stood against God’s “holy child Jesus”; they gathered together against Him and killed Him. But God overruled and raised Him from the dead.

Acts 4:27 -

27 “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.”

Herod was Herod Antipas, appointed by the Romans to rule over the territory of Galilee. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor over Judea who had bowed to pressure from the mob of Gentiles and the people of Israel in Jerusalem. All of these had conspired against Jesus, God’s anointed. When Jesus was brought to trial, the Jewish Council had, without concern for justice or their own laws, found a way to sentence him to death. Evil men and people still stands and gathers together against God, His Messiah and His Church, but to no avail. God’s will and purpose still marches on. He overrules all the meanness and persecution of evil men. He sees to it that the glorious message of salvation is not stopped, the Word of God is not bound. He causes it to be spread and to save all who hear and will believe.

Acts 4:28 -

28 “In fact, everything they did occurred according to your eternal will and plan.”

While it seemed that Satan had gotten the upper hand when the Son of God was crucified on the cross, in reality, everything occurred according to God’s eternal will and plan. The believers declared that God is the sovereign Lord of all events; he rules history to fulfill his purpose. What his will determines, his power carries out. No army, government, or Council can stand in God’s way.

Acts 4:29-30 -

29 “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.”

30 “Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

It’s interesting to take note of what they did and did not pray for; they did not pray for evil men to be destroyed, for the persecution to stop, for God to allow them to stop witnessing until things quieted down. Rather they prayed for boldness, for more courage to bear testimony, no matter the abuse and opposition. They asked to be fearless, for God to remove their fear.

The Church desperately needed its fear removed, and it wanted a strong courage to get about its business of witnessing. The Church was asking God to concentrate and focus upon the persecution; to deal with it and to overrule the enemy; to give whatever was necessary to endure through it all.

Their need was also for power to heal, and for signs and wonders, for a demonstration of God's power to prove their claim, the claim that God's Son did come to earth, God's Son did die, God's Son did arise. And that God's Son was exalted to the right hand of God. To prove more importantly, that God's Son was still active and working in men's lives today.

Acts 4:31 -

31 "After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God's message with boldness."

God's answer of the apostles' prayer was both swift and powerful. When the building shook, the believers realized that God had not only heard their prayer, but he also was pleased with it. The believers received a fresh filling with the Holy Spirit, which renewed their courage to go out and preach God's message with boldness, just as they had requested.