

# Acts Chapter 4: Persecution Begins

## I. Persecution

- **Whenever God is working be sure Satan is scheming**
- Exemplified throughout NT in Jewish Religious leaders against Church
- Out to crash the party; poison the time of refreshing and joy in HS

1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

- In the middle of leading people to Jesus, Life, Love, Light
- Religious leaders greatly disturbed: Why?
  1. Taught people
  2. Preached Jesus
  3. Resurrection from the dead [Why Sadducees were disturbed]

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

- Grabbed Peter and John in front of the crowd
- Spent night in jail

4 **However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**

- Many heard the word and believed
- Church Total: 5000 men plus woman and children
  1. Heard
  2. Believed
  - 3. Added**

**Ephesians 1:13** In Him [Jesus] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise

- Heard/Believed/Added
- Saul of Tarsus?

**SUMMARY: Arrested:** After offering Salvation religious leaders power [Satan's power] was threatened. Boys arrested. Word does not come back void. Hearers see and count the cost:

**Luke 14:25** Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

- Love for Jesus must be such that makes our love for anyone else pale in comparison
- If not...you cant be His disciple

27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

- **Bear the cross:** Carrying instrument of your own death.
  1. Humility
  2. Taunts of world
  3. Selflessness
- If not... you cant be His disciple

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— 29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'?

- **Counting the Cost**
  1. Losing job
  2. Losing friends
  3. Losing your mask
  4. Repenting from sin
  5. Torment of fighting temptation
- If not...you cannot be His disciple
- We must be warriors...are we ready...many are falling:

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

- **Forsake all that you have**
  1. Pride
  2. Self-promotion
  3. Self-Centeredness
  4. Hopes/Dreams
- If not...you cannot be His disciple

**Bear the cross, Count the cost, forsake all...  
determine that "in Christ" you will finish this race and win**

- Losers are those who did not first count the cost...**good for nothing:**

34 "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

- **Victory of endurance.** Sweet. Not perfection but consistent; i.e. ability to maintain a particular standard or repeat a particular task with minimal variation
- Not dedication *to* Jesus but LOVE *for* Jesus. Not promise keepers but promise believers. Jesus is the promise keeper

**Philippian 1:6** [I am] ...confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ

**SUMMARY: Persecution:** Boys were arrested mid-sermon. Even so many were saved after watching what may be their own future.

## II. Courage

5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

- Religious leaders and family circle around Peter and John

**"By what power or by what name have you done this?"**

- Open Door!

**Luke 21:12** But before all these things [Tribulation] , they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

- **Occasion for Testimony:** Okay

8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

- Peter filled with the Holy Spirit equals Boldness! Not a one-time event.
- This healing was done in the Name/Power of the **risen Christ Jesus**
- Is that all you wanted to know?

11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' [Psalm 118:22]

- **Cornerstone:** First foundation stone set. Perfect in form
- **Jesus is that Perfect Stone:** Observed/rejected as not true...by YOU builders
  1. Miracles
  2. Healing
  3. Deliverance
- **Conviction leaves 3 Choices:**

1. Repent and Turn to God
2. Rebel and turn away for God
3. Make no decision [Decision to reject what God is doing in your heart] Religion

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- By the Name/Power of Jesus is physical healing
- By the Name/Power of Jesus is Salvation... and in NO OTHER NAME under heaven

**John 14:6** "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

If you wish to believe that all are saved or that there are many roads to heaven or that you can take the best of all faiths and blend them into one, fine, believe so and bear the consequences; but please do not claim this is the teaching of the Bible. [Guzic]

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

- Realized they had been with Jesus
  1. Saw boldness
  2. Spoke the Word of God with Power
- Perceived uneducated/untrained:
  1. No Seminary but spoke Word of God Boldly
- Been with Jesus; i.e. like Jesus. We are the only Jesus people will see below heaven

14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

- See the Healed man leaping, jumping and praising God
- Jesus promised...

**Luke 21:15** ....I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

- **Nothing to say.** Even Sadducees did not try to disprove resurrection

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

- Command them to leave circle and they huddle in

## **What are we going to do with these guys?**

1. Notable miracle has been done

2. It has been done through them
  3. Evident to all [Evidence to all]
  4. We cannot deny it
- Conferred among themselves? How do we know what was said?
  - Luke heard from Saul of Tarsus what was said? God working in his heart?

17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

- **Still think they are in authority!**
  1. Severely threaten them
  2. If you speak "in this name" your going to get it
- Fully expected that this would end the problem!

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

**Romans 13:1** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

- **Submit to every governing authority:**
  1. No authorities exist that are not appointed by God
  2. Resisting authority is resisting God
  3. Authority is responsible for the power lent to them by God
- God's authority takes precedent: **You will be My witnesses!**

## **Should we listen to you more than God?**

21 So when they had further threatened them, they **let them go**, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

- **Threatened them again but afraid to physically punish:**
  1. All the people glorified God for the healing of the lame man [end goal]
  2. He had been laid at the Temple for decades [40 years old]
- Leaping and Praising God with everyone else

**SUMMARY: Name of Jesus: Healing, Boldness and Salvation**

**Time of Refreshing for all the people who put their faith in the**

## Name above all Names...Jesus Christ of Nazareth

### III. Prayer and Sharing

- Peter and John let go...

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

1. "By what power or by what name have you done this?"
2. "Do not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus"

**V2** Chief Priests and Elders were "greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead"

- **Persecution proclaimed:** This is it! Its coming down!

24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 25b 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.'

- **Fear of Persecution in America?**

In the Western world, Christians rarely face persecution. Satan instead has attacked us with worldliness, selfish pride, a need for acceptance, and status. The martyr can impress unbelievers with his courage and faith; the self-centered, compromising Christian is despised by the world. [Guzic] [It is coming]

- **Fear of Persecution should drive us to Prayer:**

1. Begin with praise as Jesus taught: Here praise of God the Creator

This word Lord is not the usual word for "Lord" in the New Testament; it is the Greek word despotes. It was a word used of a slave owner or ruler who has power that cannot be questioned. They prayed with power and confidence because they knew God was in control.

2. In on accord

- **Fear of Persecution should drive us to the Word of God:**

1. Drive us to the Word of God: Here Psalm 2
2. Confirmation that this is not an accident...

27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

# God's purpose is in this!!!

- Prayer continues with supplication: First praise then supplication:
- Daily Bread: Practical needs for now:

29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all **boldness they may speak Your word**, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

- **Look at their threats**
- **Request:** Boldness to speak Your Word?
- Healing, Signs and Wonders done in the Name of Jesus

## We can be bold in the face of difficulty if we know God is with us

**Exodus 33:11** ....the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

**14** [God said to Moises...] "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." [Moses said to God...] "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. 16 For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us?"

- **Emanuel:** God with us.
- **John 1:14:** The Word became flesh and dwelt among us!

We can be bold in the face of difficulty If we know God is with us and we are with God

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

- Prayer for boldness was a prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit!
- Ask for things that will bring MORE confrontation not less. But also Salvation.

**SUMMARY: Prayer:** Praise and Supplication

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

- **One heart and soul**
- Never heard..."stop that's mine"
- Had all things in common under Jesus

## Regarded people more than things! [Guzic]

33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

- Back at it

- Preach the primary thing the religious leaders were disturbed about: Resurrection
- Great grace was upon them as they did God's will

34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

- **Sharing:** No one hungry, without necessities
  1. Sold houses and land
  2. Brought money to the Apostles feet [submitted to God given authority]
  3. Apostles distributed money as needs arose
- God later clarified Church distribution:

Paul's directions are that the church must discern who the truly needy are (1 Timothy 5:3). If one can work to support himself, he is not truly needy and must provide for his own needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:11). If family can support a needy person, the church should not support them (1 Timothy 5:3-4). Those who are supported by the church must make some return to the church body (1 Timothy 5:5, 10). It is right for the church to examine moral conduct before giving support (1 Timothy 5:9-13). And the support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living (1 Timothy 6:8). [Guzic]

- The early church just gave and gave:

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- Barnabas begins: Son of Encouragement
  1. Encourages by example
  2. Feet to his faith

**James 1:27** Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

- Jesus smiled at His new bride...

**With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.**