

Peter and John: Fearless in the Spirit

Acts 4:1-22

- **Since Jesus' ascension to the Father the Apostles and the followers of Christ lived under the fear of being persecuted by the Jewish religious authority.**
- **They were fearful as they waited for what God would do next. They would spend their time in hiding with the doors locked.**
- **Jesus sent the Holy Spirit which is recorded in Acts 2.**
- **From that moment on the followers of Jesus were bold in their proclamation of the gospel.**

- **For the next three centuries the New Testament Church faced severe persecution from the Roman Empire.**
- **They were thrown to wild animals, crucified, beheaded, turned into human torches, and tortured.**
- **There were countless martyrs during this time, and countless more ever since.**

- **One of the most unnerving things that troubled the tormentors of Christ's followers is the calmness and serenity they displayed when facing death.**
- **Their goal is to destroy the church; however, persecution only purified and strengthened the church and that resulted in growth.**
- **While we see an uptick in physical persecution in our culture here in the United States the enemy has settled for a more subtle means of persecution.**

- **MacArthur states, “Satan’s attacks have become much more subtle...aiming for the ego, selfish pride, need for acceptance, or status. Satan has largely destroyed the spiritual effectiveness of the church without having to kill the individual believers in it.”**

- **Context: Peter and John find themselves standing before the religious leaders because they had healed a man at the temple gate. This provided a moment when they boldly preached the gospel to the Jews in the temple. Their message, along with the miracle of healing, prompted the religious leaders to seize them.**

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¹And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

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⁵ On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,

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¹⁰ let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

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13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

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17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened.

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22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

I. Be submissive, understanding that God is in control.

- **Peter and John did not resist being arrested, nor did they resist when standing before the Sanhedrin.**
- **They were convinced that God was in control of their circumstances, and that they were being presented with an opportunity to preach to the Sanhedrin.**

I. Be submissive, understanding that God is in control.

- The point of this hearing was to determine if Peter and John were to be accepted as men who had a message from God due to the miracle they had performed.**
- The question they asked is “by what power, or in what name, have you done this?”**
- If they answered in a manner that satisfied the court, they would be accepted as being messengers of God. If they did not satisfy the court, they could be lawfully stoned to death.**

I. Be submissive, understanding that God is in control.

- Although Peter and John trusted the Lord to have purpose in this situation, we must not make the mistake of believing there was no real danger.**
- Likewise, we as followers of Jesus may find ourselves in situations that require us to trust God's plan in the face of real danger.**

II. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,...

- The only way that Peter was able to give his powerful defense was by the Holy Spirit.**
- The only way that you and I can face persecution triumphantly is if we are indwelled by the Spirit, receiving His enabling grace.**

II. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 12:11-12

¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

II. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- Being “filled” refers to one yielding his or herself to the Spirit’s control.**
- This “filling” happens as you and I walk in obedience to God’s Word and His Spirit.**
- By yielding to His control His power is unleashed.**

II. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- Luke is teaching that yieldedness to the Spirit is key to successful handling of persecution.**
- If a person is Spirit-filled, persecution will simply drive him or her closer to the Lord.**

III. Be aggressive in God given opportunities.

¹⁰ let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

III. Be aggressive in God given opportunities.

- **Peter went on the offensive, which communicates that submission is not the same as cowardice.**
- **He points out the absurdity of the Sanhedrin putting them on trial for an obvious godly act of healing a sick man.**

III. Be aggressive in God given opportunities.

- **Because they had asked by who's authority they had performed this miracle, Peter answers them in a way that puts his accusers on trial.**
- **“By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.”**
- **Peter places the Sanhedrin, those responsible for the execution of Jesus, on trial by proclaiming the truth concerning the Christ.**

III. Be aggressive in God given opportunities.

- **Like Peter and John, we must refuse to compromise on the gospel so that we don't offend those who stand to be condemned to hell.**
- **We must be devoted to the truth and trust the outcome to the Lord.**

IV. Be obedient to God no matter the cost.

18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

IV. Be obedient to God no matter the cost.

- **The Sanhedrin witnessed two things:**
 - **The boldness of Peter.**
 - **The healing of a lame man.**
- **They could deny neither.**
- **So, they threatened Peter and John to no longer teach in the name of Jesus.**

IV. Be obedient to God no matter the cost.

- **Peter and John appealed to a higher authority than the Sanhedrin, God.**
- **There is a Judge greater than the Sanhedrin and they must obey Him.**
- **While believers are to obey civil authorities and government, we must obey God first.**
- **If the lower authorities ever demand anything in violation to God, His Word, and His will we have permission to disobey.**