

UNSTOPPABLE

THE GOSPEL CAN'T BE CHAINED

ACTS

Acts 4:5-22

The Persecution Met

- Be Submissive (vv5-7)
- Be Filled With the Holy Spirit (v. 8a)
 - The filling of the Spirit occurs when the believer walks in obedience to the Word and Spirit. Yielding to His control releases His Power in the believer's life.
- Be Aggressive in Seizing Opportunities (vv. 8-13)
- Be Obedient to God at All Costs (vv14-22)



◆ Submissive:

- ◆ Peter and John offered no resistance during their arrest, nor did they resist when arraigned before the Sanhedrin.
 - ◆ The Sanhedrin was the ruling body of the nation (under the ultimate authority of the Romans)
 - ◆ In the Old Testament, when a miracle was performed, they were to examine the miracle, and if it led people away from God, the nation was responsible for stoning him.
 - ◆ They demanded to know by what power or in what name the apostles had healed the lame man. A Name represented authority, making Peter and John look like Rebels since they had not given them authority to act. Whatever their reason for preaching, it opened the door for Peter.

◆ Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- ◆ Peter faced persecution triumphantly because he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke 12:11-12 tells us that Christ had told the disciples that “when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say”
- ◆ Ministry and witness depends on the filling of the H.S.
- ◆ Filled here means that Peter yielded control to the Spirit. He did not become filled with lengthy prayer or an emotional experience. The filling of the Spirit occurs when the believer walks in obedience to the Word and Spirit. Yielding to His control releases His Power in the believers life.
- ◆ A Spirit-filled, uncompromising church will be uncomfortable in the world, since it will be a rebuke to it. It will, however, be a powerful, victorious church. Peter and John confronted the world head-on, with a boldness and eloquence that caused their opponents to marvel. They were victorious because they were Spirit-filled.

◆ Be Aggressive In Seizing Opportunities

- ◆ Peter displayed great courage and went on the offensive. Submission is not cowardice. He began by indicting them for the incongruity of putting him and John on trial for healing a sick man.

- ◆ Since they asked...he told them his desire was for all people of Israel to know that by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they crucified, but God raised from the dead- the beggar stood before them in good health.
- ◆ By pointing out that they executed Jesus but God raised Him up, Peter showed them to be the enemies of God. Peter refused to compromise the gospel by deleting what would offend the Sanhedrin.
- ◆ Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 - Not leading them away but preaching the Old Testament saying Jesus was the stone which was rejected by them, the builders or leaders of the nation.
 - ◆ While they rejected him God made Him the corner stone through His resurrection and exaltation.
 - ◆ Peter gives them a chance to repent
- ◆ The exclusivism of Christianity goes against the grain of our religiously pluralistic society. A chapel built at the North Pole in February 1959 by the men of Operation Deep Freeze 4 typifies the prevalent attitude today toward religious belief. The structure contained an altar, over which was hung a picture of Jesus, a crucifix, a star of David, and a lotus leaf (representing the Buddha). On the wall of the chapel was an inscription that read “Now it can be said that the earth turns on the point of faith.”
- ◆ Christians preach an exclusive Christ in an inclusive age. Because of that, we are often accused of being narrow-minded, even intolerant. Many paths, it is said, lead to the top of the mountain of religious enlightenment. How dare we insist that ours is the only one? In reality, however, there are only two religious paths: the broad way of works salvation leading to destruction, and the narrow way of faith in the only Savior leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13–14). Religious people are on either one or the other. Sadly, the Sanhedrin and all who followed them were on the broad road to hell.
- ◆ While Peter failed to soften the hearts of the leaders. They were impressed that these uneducated and untrained men could argue so effectively from the Scriptures. Two Galilean fishermen powerfully and successfully argued their case before the elite Jewish supreme court. Realizing that they did exactly what Jesus had done.
- ◆ The attempt to silence the apostles' teaching had given them a priceless opportunity. They boldly seized it and proclaimed the gospel to the highest officials of the nation.
- ◆ Face persecution with the boldest proclamation of the truth.
- ◆ BE OBEDIENT TO GOD AT ALL COSTS
 - ◆ This caused them to be in an impossible situation. The presence of the healed man standing with them put the Sanhedrin in an impossible position. At the moment, the Sanhedrin had nothing to say in reply.
 - ◆ After asking them to leave they realized they realized that Peter and John broke no laws and ably defended themselves with OT scripture. Punishing them would be risky, with a noteworthy miracle having taken place through them.
 - ◆ Sadly, though they could not deny it, neither were they willing to accept it. They were a living illustration of our Lord's words in John 3:19 that “the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.”
 - ◆ The Sanhedrin was reliving its worst nightmare. And tried to tell the apostles not to spread it any further among the people/
 - ◆ Peter and John answered they would refuse to obey. Is it right in the sight of God to give heed to men rather than to God?
 - ◆ While denying their order that treated them with respect.
 - ◆ One obvious way for the Sanhedrin to escape their dilemma would have been to deny that Jesus rose from the dead.
 - ◆ FF Bruce: It is particularly striking that neither on this nor on any subsequent occasion (so far as our information goes) did the Sanhedrin take any serious action to disprove the apostles' central affirmation—the resurrection of Jesus. Had it seemed possible to refute them on this point, how readily would the Sanhedrin have seized the opportunity! Had they succeeded, how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed!

Acts 4:23-37

Praying for Boldness

The church responds to opposition with prayer, unity, and generosity.

**When pressure rises,
God's people should
pray, not panic.**



1. Throughout church history, Christians were thrown to wild animals, crucified, turned into human torches, and tortured in all the cruel ways evil men could devise. Uncounted thousands of martyrs met their deaths with a calmness and serenity that unnerved their tormentors.
2. The modern church rarely faces physical persecution.
 1. Satan's attacks have been far subtler. C.S. Lewis says, "Satan's persecutions today aim at the ego. They threaten our 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. In fact, letting believers live self-centered, complacent, indolent, worldly lives is more effective in keeping people from being attracted to the Christian faith than killing them. Martyrs are respected for the strength of their character; compromisers are despised."
 2. The early church was attacked multiple times: Acts 3, 5, 7, 8, and 12.
 3. Jesus said in John 15: If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
 4. Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim 3: Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Peter added in 1 Peter 2:21: You have been called for a purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.
3. Christians who love godly, Christ-centered lives will inevitably come into conflict with the satanic world system, and the day may soon come when believers will be physically persecuted, tortured, or even martyred, as the world escalates its hatred of the true gospel.

Acts 4:23-37

The Persecution Met

- Be Committed to Fellowship (v23)
- Be Thankful (vv24-48)
- Be Desirous of Greater Boldness (vv29-31)



◆ Be Committed to Fellowship

- ◆ Went to be with people probably from the original group that met in the upper room to receive comfort and encouragement
- ◆ Primary benefit of persecution is that it results in greater solidarity. Persecuted believers naturally draw together for mutual support.
 - ◆ Acts 4:32-35 describes the unity that resulted from this initial outbreak of opposition.
- ◆ One reason for the disunity in today's church is the lack of external pressure and the false unity being attempted through compromise and indifference toward true doctrine, only confrontation by the truth.
- ◆ If we confronted the world system more aggressively, the resulting opposition would drive us closer together and enrich our mutual dependence. That real unity marked the early believers.

◆ Be Thankful

- ◆ Peter and John returned not in a state of fear and dejection but of exhilaration
- ◆ This comfort came from knowing the opposition the OT foretold.
- ◆ Predestined - to determine beforehand. God is the supreme historian who wrote all history before it ever began.

◆ Be Desirous of Greater Boldness

- ◆ They prayed for boldness, and God granted them the fullness of boldness that they desired. While they did not speak in foreign languages, they did speak in their own language with power.
 - ◆ The church had successfully faced its initial trial of opposition. Instead of succumbing to the temptation to compromise the gospel, it became even bolder. The persecution also drew the congregation closer together and closer to their Lord.
 - ◆ This was a recurring theme in Church History: opposition only made the church grow stronger.

Acts 4:23-37

The Sharing of the Saints

- Spiritual Participation (v32a)
- Strong Preaching (v33)
- Sharing Practically (vv32b, 34-35)
- A SAMPLE PERSON (v36-37)



♦ Spiritual Participation

- ♦ The basis of their shared life was twofold:
 - ♦ First, they were preoccupied with ministering to each other.
 - ♦ Intent on meeting each other's needs, they had no concern for gratifying their own desires.
 - ♦ Second, they were focused beyond themselves on reaching the lost world with the truth of the gospel.

♦ Strong Preaching

- ♦ Apostles never suppressed the truth to avoid offending the authorities.
- ♦ Today, unbelievers must be offended at the point of their sin, or they will never come to Christ. Unbelievers' very existence is an affront to God; certainly we must risk affronting them to let them know that.
- ♦ Grace was upon them. 1) It can refer to the approval of the people. Common people were impressed by the believers' love and unity. 2) It had God's favor, a fellowship characterized by loving unity and evangelistic outreach, and received God's blessing.

♦ Sharing Practically

- ♦ This passage illustrates an important pattern for giving in the local church. The donations are placed in the control of the spiritual teachers, who are then responsible before God for their use. Too often, people want to give only if they can specify how the money is to be used. That kind of self-serving giving fails to understand the delegated spiritual authority of God-ordained leaders and may often merely seek the applause of men.

♦ Sample:

- ♦ Barnabas: he sold land, which the OT prohibited Levites from owning property (A law they would have known but probably not enforced). While this is not the focus, the focus was that he sold the land and, out of a loving heart, gave that money to the church. PURE LOVE, not for attention but for the simple blessedness of giving.

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