



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Acts 3:1-4:31

The Church in Jerusalem, Part 1

It is the summer of AD 33. The infant church in Jerusalem grew rapidly. As we saw at the end of chapter 2, this church was a joyful, united community of believers. They experienced little persecution at first, but that did not last. The religious and political leaders turned on the church. Persecution would now be a defining element of the infant church. In addition to remarkable growth, the Jerusalem church manifested unity, power and authority. Its leaders, Peter and John, exhibited boldness in proclaiming the Gospel, but that boldness produced persecution. They would need to choose—would they obey God or would they obey human authority?

The Healing of the Lame Beggar, 3:1-10

Peter and John were preaching on Temple Mount, near the Beautiful Gate, where a lame beggar asked for alms. Peter cannot offer him alms but something much more eternally significant: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." As they entered the Temple, he was "walking, leaping and praising God." Jesus continued His work doing Messianic miracles through His Apostles; their ministry extended His vindication and His presence. The New Covenant era had begun—Jesus' Spirit exposed its power!

Peter's Second Sermon, 3:11-26

As Peter responded to their astonishment at this Messianic miracle, He proclaimed that their God, the God of the Abrahamic Covenant (v. 13), "glorified his servant Jesus, [Isa. 52:13] whom you [4 charges:] [1] delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you [2]denied the Holy and Righteous One, [Isa. 53:11] and [3] asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you [4] killed the Author [archontes= source, prince, originator, ruler] of life, whom God raised from the dead." It was faith in the name of Jesus that explained this marvelous miracle on Temple Mount—the heart of Judaism!

Peter then launched into a proclamation about Jesus based on the OT Torah. This revolution was actually very old, rooted in promises that go back to the beginning of God's work in this world. The result of Peter's sermon was two-fold:

- The spiritual leaders of Judaism arrested Peter and John, 4:1-3
- 5000 more placed their faith in Jesus, 4:4 [Note the progression in Acts: 120 in 1:15; 3,000 in 2:41; 5,000 in 4:4. Thus, approaching 10,000]

Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin, 4:5-22

After their arrest, Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrin; in effect, they were put on trial before the supreme religious Council of 1st century Judaism. The Sanhedrin was perplexed. It was clear that they were uncertain about how to respond. From Acts 4:13-22, these leaders reached three conclusions:

1. Peter and John spoke with boldness (v. 13);
2. These leaders could not deny that a miracle had occurred (vv. 14-15);
3. These leaders feared the spread of the Gospel message about Jesus, so they ordered Peter and John to cease speaking about Jesus (vv. 16-22). Peter and John refused to do so, but the Sanhedrin nonetheless freed them.

Peter and John Apply Psalm 2, 4:23-31

Peter and John gathered with several Jerusalem believers and prayed with them. In 4:23-26, they affirmed God as Creator and thus the Sovereign Lord of history. By using Psalm 2:1-2, where the enemies of God are depicted as warring against God and His Messiah, they applied this Psalm to the leaders who crucified Jesus. Amazingly, they then petitioned God for greater boldness to speak and for Him to empower them to continue performing Messianic miracles—to heal and perform “signs and wonders.”

God responded tangibly to their prayers (4:27-31): [1] An earthquake; [2] a filling with the Holy Spirit; [3] greater boldness. In the midst of increased persecution, God confirmed that He was further empowering His revolution.

As you pray and reflect on this passage in Acts, answer these questions. Write them down and review them frequently.

- One of the key terms of chapter 4 is boldness. Have you ever prayed for boldness in representing Jesus?
- Peter and John obviously combined boldness with heroic faith. Which comes first - faith or boldness? Why does heroic faith yield amazing boldness? How would you describe your faith?
- Opposition and persecution seemed to increase the faith of the Apostles. Why?
- As you represent Jesus in this dark world, will you commit to prayer, deeper faith and increasing boldness for Him?

Dr. Jim Eckman