



Daily Bible Habit

The Acts Of The Apostles

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Focus Points...*For Acts 4*

Stop And Consider...

- * Peter and John's remarkable Spirit-empowered boldness before Jesus' executors; and
- * The emboldened commitment by the thousands of converts to the cause of Jesus Christ.

Look...

- * At the Sanhedrin's totally ineffectual state of bewilderment and inability to stop anyone boldly preaching Jesus' name; and
- * At the remarkable sacrifice of heart, soul, mind and possession shared by the believers for the benefit of the those in need.

Listen...

- * To Peter and John as they stand their ground against the most powerful force in Judaism; and
- * To the believers' joy as they gather together in prayer and rejoicing.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, sometimes I underestimate the power which You give to believers like me. As I read Peter and John's bold confession before Jesus' executioners, help me to see that my fear is an unacceptable excuse to deny You before others. Embolden me to speak, empower me to witness, and embrace me daily in Your grace that I may share Your name always in every circumstance. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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Commentary:

The chapter division at Acts 4:1 does injustice to the flow of the entire narrative of the healing of the crippled man which began in Acts 3:1.

As Luke noted, Peter's bold preaching regarding Jesus' resurrection caused two things:

- 1) the number of Christian converts to swell to over 5,000:
and
- 2) it caused great disturbance in the Temple courts.





Because of this, the temple guards seized Peter and John, holding them in jail until a proper hearing or inquiry was held the next day.

The inquiry, led by the High Priest Caiaphas and others from the high priest's family, was eerily reminiscent of Jesus' trial. Led by some of the same people, the questioning was equally eerily familiar. "By what power or what name did you do this?" they asked.

Of course, the point of the question to Peter and John (as with Jesus), was to elicit the charge of blasphemy. Found guilty of blasphemy, the High Priest could find "legal" basis to execute Peter and John and finally put an end to the "Jesus of Nazareth Problem."

Peter and John were familiar with this line of questioning. This line of questioning echoed similar hostile inquiries against Jesus during His final days immediately prior to His crucifixion (cf. Matthew 21:27; et al.). Jesus awed the crowds with His responses. "Filled with the Holy Spirit," Peter and John proceeded with an awesome response that would have made their Lord proud.

"It is by the name (i.e. "authority") of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." Acts 4:10 (NIV)

Their unbridled, shameless witness—and the presence of the healed man—befuddled and immobilized the Sanhedrin. Brought to a paralyzing standstill they wondered, "What are we going to do with these men?" (4:16). Deciding they could not punish the apostles—they could not risk a Jesus vs. Barabbas scenario that would decidedly turn against them—they decided to command them to desist from preaching.

Boldly and unqualifiedly defiant, Peter and John, even after further threats, refused to follow their gag order...and told them so as directly and forthrightly as they could.

Returning back to the believers, everyone marveled at how God had brought the Sanhedrin and the Jewish leaders to cower down before the name of Jesus. God had turned the tables. David's prophecy that the Anointed One would triumph over rulers and kings was fulfilled—right there—before their very eyes (cf. Psalm 2:1-2).



Energized by the remarkable advancement and triumph of the Kingdom of God, the believers prayed that even more powerful works might be done in Jesus' name. They were "on a roll." The momentum was in God's direction, something the earthquake appeared to affirm. "Filled with the Spirit," a term often used by Acts to describe a special boldness to proclaim the Word of God, they celebrated God's remarkable working (4:31).

Having detailed the bold witness of early believers, Luke's attention turned to the nature of their fellowship in Acts 4:32. The believers were united in "heart and mind" *and* possessions. Imagine the scene if all believers—5,000 or more at this time—sold all they had and gave the proceeds for anyone with need (4:35). Imagine the impact this would have on all who lived in and around Jerusalem!

The mention of Joseph Barnabas, a priestly member of the Levites, serves at least three functions.

- * *First*, it serves as an introduction to Barnabas. It was Barnabas who first introduced Saint Paul to the church (cf. Acts 9:27).
- * *Second*, the introduction of Barnabas set the stage for a marked contrast between what he did with the proceeds of his land against Ananias' and Sapphira's dishonest offering in Act 5:1ff.
- * *Third*, it marked in a most unmistakable way, Barnabas' remarkable faith and qualifications to be a leader with Peter, John and the other apostles.

Acts 4 marked the rise of many remarkable witnesses for Jesus. Peter, John, the healed cripple and Barnabas. The Lord was providing believers. But, more importantly, the Spirit was providing leaders. The Kingdom of God was advancing. With the Spirit's power, nothing could stop it now.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, fill Your church today with boldness like that of the early apostles. Give us the courage to speak the name of Jesus, even to those who might oppose and threaten us. Help us by Your power to grow in witness, prayer and sacrifice for Your kingdom. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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