



**The Overcomers Christian Fellowship International
Plymouth, Headquarters. United Kingdom.**

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DATE: 18/05/15. "ACTS OF THE APOSTLES" CHAPTER FOUR.

MEMORY VERSE: Acts 4:29 "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word".

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER.

- 1) To study the beginning of the persecution against the church, and the reason for it.
- 2) To note the apostolic response to persecution, and continued progress of the church in Jerusalem.

OUTLINE

I. THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF PETER AND JOHN (1-12).

A. BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL (1-12)

1. Peter and John taken into custody
 - a. By the priests, captain of the temple, and the Sadducees.
 - b. Who were upset by their preaching in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
 - c. Kept overnight until the next day.
 - d. The number of those who believed came to be about five thousand.
2. Their appearance before the highest authority in Jewish affairs called
 - a. Jewish Council (The Sanhedrin) comprising of -the rulers (chief priests & priests with an official role or status in the synagogue- e.g. Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander,); elders (those in lay-leadership who were often drawn from wealthy aristocratic families); & scribes (legal experts, often Pharisees). It was patterned on the court of Moses (Numb.11:16-17) & had 70 members & a presiding chairman who co-ordinated its activities.
 - b. Peter and John challenged to explain by what power or name they have acted.
3. Peter's response as led by the Spirit.
 - a. Were they being judged for doing a good deed to a helpless man in making him well?
 - b. It was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth he was made whole
 - 1) Whom they crucified
 - 2) Whom God raised from the dead
 - 3) Who is the stone rejected by the builders, and has become the chief cornerstone - **Ps.118:22.**
 - c. There is salvation in no other name under heaven.
The arrest, imprisonment and trial of John & Peter provide an opportunity to tell about the power of Jesus.

Questions:

1. Explain the role of the Jewish Council during the time of Jesus' ministry in line with John 11:47-53; & Matthew 26:59.
2. Who are the Sadducees and Pharisees- Acts 23:6-8; Luk.5:21-30?
3. "All religions lead to God". How does verse 12 affect our response to this claim in terms of energizing our evangelism & enriching our worship?
4. How can we support those who are persecuted for their faith around the world?

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B. THREATENED & WARNED NOT TO TEACH BUT SET FREE (13-22)

1. The council's reaction
 - a. What the council saw
 - 1) The boldness of Peter and John.
 - a) Perceived as uneducated and untrained men.
 - b) Realized as having been with Jesus.
 - 2) The man who had been healed
 - a) Standing with Peter and John.
 - b) Against whose healing nothing could be said.
- b. What the council reasoned
 - 1) A notable has occurred, evident to all, none could deny it.
 - 2) To prevent further spread is to threaten the apostles.
- c. What the council did
 - 1) Commanded Peter and John
 - 2) Not to speak at all or teaching in the name of Jesus.
2. Peter and John's reply
 - a. Shall they listen to the council or God?
 - b. They cannot but speak what they have seen and heard.
3. Peter and John released
 - a. Upon further threatening.
 - b. Finding no way of punishing them,
 - c. Because of the people, who glorified God for what had been done
 - d. For the man who was healed was over forty years old.

Questions:

1. **Why are we so frightened about what people will think of us or say about us when to say the truth on issues according to the Word of God? How can we overcome this?**
2. **Do you need a degree or professional qualification to be a leader in your Church according to verses 8, 13b & 19 ?**
3. **What is your definition of a good sermon, i.e. "one we agree with"? Why is this dangerous? What are the characteristics of a closed mind?.**

II. THE PRAYER FOR BOLDNESS (23-31)

A. PETER AND JOHN RETURN (23)

1. To their brethren
2. To report all that had been said to them.

B. THEIR PRAYER (24-30)

1. Addressed to the Lord God, Creator of all things
 - a. Who prophesied by the mouth of His servant David
 - b. Of the nations' rage and plotting against His Christ
 - c. As fulfilled by Herod and Pilate, by Gentiles and Israel
 - d. Who did according to His predetermined purpose.
2. Asking for all boldness in the face of such threats
 - a. That His servants may speak His word.
 - b. That His hand might stretch out.

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- 1) To heal, to do signs and wonders.
- 2) Through the name of His holy Servant Jesus.

C. THE ANSWER (31)

1. The place in which they were assembled was shaken (a divinely timed earthquake!).
2. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. They spoke the Word of God with boldness.

The early apostles feel two conflicting emotions: joy because of the healing miracle, & frustration, with a little fear, at the response of the Sanhedrin. These two responses dictate the shape of their prayer using Psalms 2 - praise & thanksgiving (vv.24-28), followed by petition (vs.29-30).

Question: What should be the mode of our prayers when we face persecutions?

III. THE PROGRESS OF A SHARING AND COMPASSIONATE CHURCH (32-37)

A. THEIR UNITY (32)

1. The multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul.
2. None claimed their possessions as their own; they had all things in common.

B. THEIR GREATNESS (33)

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

C. THEIR LIBERALITY (34-37)

1. None among them lacked what they needed.
 - a. For all who possessed lands or houses sold them.
 - b. The proceeds were laid at the apostles' feet.
 - c. Distribution was made as each had need.
2. The example of Joses
 - a. Called Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, by the apostles
 - b. A Levite of the country of Cyprus
 - c. Sold land, and laid the money at the apostles' feet.

Questions:

Jesus told the "rich young man" to sell everything he had (Mark 10:21). Does this passage teach that every Christian should do the same? How can we apply the lessons of these verses to our lives today?

SUMMARY

The first case of persecution against the church is described in this chapter. Peter and John are put into custody because their preaching on the resurrection of Jesus disturbed a number of the religious leaders (in particular the Sadducees who denied any resurrection, **Mt.22:23; Acts 23:8**). In spite of this, the number of men who believed came to be about five thousand (**1-4**).

After a night in jail, Peter and John are brought before the council, including the high priest and members of his family. Challenged to explain themselves, Peter proclaims the healing was done by the name of Jesus Christ, the very one they crucified yet whom God raised from the

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dead and who has now become "the chief cornerstone-**Ps. 118:22**, and in whose name alone salvation is now available. Amazed at Peter and John's boldness, and unable to deny that the lame man had been healed, the council sends them outside and confer among themselves. They decide to prevent the spread of the apostles' doctrine by threatening Peter and John not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus. The apostles respond that they must speak what they have seen and heard. The council, unable to do anything more at this time because of the people, simply threaten the apostles once again and let them go (**5-22**).

Returning to their companions, Peter and John report what has been said. Prayer is offered, asking for boldness in view of the persecution foretold in **Ps. 2:1-2**, and for signs and wonders to continue in the name of Jesus. At the conclusion of the prayer, the place where they prayed was shaken and all were filled with the Holy Spirit, emboldening them to speak the Word of God (**23-31**).

The chapter ends with a description of the continued growth of the church, with the oneness of the brethren and the empowered testimony of the apostles to the resurrection of Jesus. The great liberality continues, meeting the needs of the saints. One example in particular is noted, that of Barnabas, whose work is featured later in the book- **Acts 11:22-30; 13:1-15** and whose liberality stands in stark contrast to what takes place in the next chapter (**32-36**).

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER.

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) Who came upon Peter and John while they were speaking? (1)
- 3) Why were they upset with Peter and John? (2)
- 4) Why did that upset them? (Mt.22:23; Acts 23:8).
- 5) What did they do with Peter and John? (3)
- 6) How many men had come to believe in Christ? (4)
- 7) Who joined the rulers, elders and scribes on the next day? (5-6)
- 8) What did they ask Peter and John? (7)
- 9) What name did Peter give them? (8-10)
- 10) What had the religious leaders done? What had God done? (10)
- 11) What else did Peter say about Jesus? (11-12)
- 12) What did the religious leaders see, perceive, and realize about Peter and John? (13)

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- 13) What could the religious leaders not deny? (14)
- 14) After Peter and John were put out of the council, what did the council confer among themselves? (15-17)
- 15) What did the council command Peter and John? How did they respond? (18-20)
- 16) After threatening the apostles some more, why did the council not punish them further? (21-22)
- 17) Once released, what did Peter and John do? (23)
- 18) What did they then do? (24)
- 19) What Messianic prophecy did they refer to in their prayer? (25-26)
- 20) Who were mentioned as a fulfilment of opposing God and Christ? (27)
- 21) In their opposition against God, what had they actually done? (28)
- 22) In their prayer, what did the apostles ask of God? (29-30)
- 23) What happened in response to their prayer? (31)
- 24) What manifested the oneness of the believers at that time? (32)
- 25) What manifested the greatness enjoyed by the church at that time? (33)
- 26) What manifested their love and generosity at that time? (34-35)
- 27) Who was singled out as an example of their liberality? (36-37)

PRAYER POINTS:

- (1) OH LORD MY FATHER, MAKE ME FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK, IN JESUS NAME.
- (2) I RECEIVE THE COMFORTING ANOINTING AND POWER IN THE HOLY GHOST, TO DO EXPLOITS FOR THE LORD, IN JESUS NAME.
- (3) I TAKE THE SHIELD OF FAITH TO QUENCH EVERY FIERY DART OF THE ENEMY, IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

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