

10-4-20 What Do I Do?

Acts 4:1-22

We live in a day and time where we will face trials and persecution. You don't even have to be a "religious nut" to come under some persecution. Just ask a Detroit Lion, or Cleveland Browns fan what it's like to be a fan of those teams.

We are living in times that no matter what side you take in a situation, choice, belief, even certain foods.

Today we are going to look at **Acts 4:1-22**, we are going to see Peter and John in a bad spot. They had just healed a paralyzed man, he sat daily outside the Temple begging for money. Then he walked with them as they entered the Temple, he was walking, leaping, and praising God. I wonder if this was the first time, he had been inside the Temple he sat outside of everyday?

I imagine him skipping around in the background as Peter preached Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. What are some things we can learn in these verses?

There is one interruption and many applications. Peter and John were putting their lives on the line for preaching the truth about Jesus and because he did so, he was going to face persecution, the likes that most of us have never dealt with or ever will.

But I believe that God's Word has the answers to everyday matters just as it has answers to life and death ones. God is love and is interested in every part of our lives.

So, what do we do regarding trials/persecution?

I. Expect Opposition (4:1-7)

- After the lame man started leaping, Peter began preaching. This made the religious authorities anxious, as we see in **verses 1-2**:
- These three groups came together in a show of force. The priests were the ones who were supposed to do the teaching, so they were threatened. The captain of the temple was the chief of the temple police and oversaw keeping order. The Sadducees denied the supernatural and the resurrection. They were loyal to the Roman government, they were committed to the status quo, and they only followed the first five books of the Bible.
- The phrase "**came upon them**" means, "they burst upon them suddenly with hostility."
- **Verse 2 says, "being greatly disturbed"** they were mad, aggravated.
- When God is at work, Satan goes to war! Where the gospel advances, the Devil attacks.
- **Verse 3 says, "they laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening."**
- **Read verses 5-7**
- The next day, the Sanhedrin, which was like the Jewish Supreme Court, put them on trial and demanded in **verse 7: "By what power or by what name have you done this?"**

- When we are obedient to following God's call, Word, there will come trials/persecution. When you stand up for what is right, there will be trials/persecution. It can come in at you so hard that it can cause you to second guess yourself.
- And it doesn't have to come directly from any certain stance. You can be doing your best to live for God and get hit from left field. It could come from family members.
- If you live for Jesus and try you best daily to honor him, trails and persecution will find you. How many times has a believer take a biblical stance to be attacked not only for their belief, but in other areas of their life?
- Don't lose sight, **look back at verse 4. (Read it)**
- Even while Peter and John are imprisoned, the Word of God is setting captives free! The gospel leads to the conversion of some and confrontation from others. BTW, it's the Word that caused people to believe, not the miracle of the man being healed.
- We must continue to call people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to be saved. We must stand on the Scriptures as the full and final revelation of God, no matter what others think of us or do to us.

II. Stand Firm in the Truth (v.2, 10)

- **Verse 2, "they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."**
- **Read verse 10**
- The truth of the resurrection pulsates through the Book of Acts and the preaching of it provoked trials and persecution.
- Look at one example in **Acts 17:30-32,**

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

- We must continue to stand firm in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. The resurrection is His sacrifice for sin and was accepted by God the Father. He is alive and active, able to help us in time of need. The Resurrection also demonstrates the power Jesus has over death, sin, and Satan!

III. Rely on God's Spirit, The Holy Spirit. (verse 8)

- **Read verse 8**
- It's interesting how the filling of the Spirit is linked with the sharing of one's faith. Jesus first told the disciples to wait to witness until the Holy Spirit had given them power to do so in **Acts 1:8**

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- To be filled with the Spirit means to be fully surrendered to the Spirit. It doesn't mean we get more of the Spirit, but the Spirit “gets more” of us.
- Peter is experiencing what Jesus predicted in **Matthew 10:18-20**.

“And you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

- The filling of the Holy Spirit gave Peter boldness, which is quite a contrast to the disciple who denied the Lord and was afraid of a little maid in a courtyard just weeks earlier.
- As followers of God, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit if we're going to have any fruit in our lives.

Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” Are you surrendered fully to Him? Have you confessed and repented from all known sin in your life?

IV. Share the Good News of Jesus at Every Opportunity. (verses 9-12)

- **Read verses 9-12**
- This is a direct quote from **Psalm 118:22**. Jesus quoted this same verse in **Matthew 21:42**.
- The cornerstone is the most important stone in a building. If this stone is straight the whole structure will be straight. Everything must line up with this stone for the building to be strong.
- In a similar way, you and I are to build our lives on the foundation of Christ and to make sure everything we do lines up with the Lord.
- Jesus is called the Stone in **verse 11** and in **verse 12** we see He is Savior: **“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.”** This claim was radical then and it remains so today.

I see four elements of salvation that Jesus alone offers:

- **Universal.** The offer of salvation is available for everyone.
- **Exclusive.** There is no other way to be saved except through Jesus. Salvation does not come by Buddha, Confucius, Mohammad, Gandhi, Mary, or any other plan or person.
- **Certain.** You can be sure of your salvation once you are saved.
- **Emphatic.** This is a command to be saved. The word “must” mean it's a compelling necessity.
 - There is hope, healing, forgiveness of sins, and salvation in the name of Jesus Christ. **Luke 19:10** says, **“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”**

V. Spend Time with Jesus (v. 13)

- In verse 13 the religious elite had a difficult time figuring out how these uneducated and uncultured Christians could be so bold:
- **Read verse 13**
- The word “boldness” means to have the freedom to speak frankly and without reservation. This was astonishing because to be “uneducated” literally means they were “unlettered or illiterate.”
- To be “untrained” tells us they had no official religious training. I’m reminded of what Moses said about himself in

Exodus 4:10: “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”

- The religious leaders recognize it’s not what they know, it’s who they know! It’s as if Jesus has reappeared in these men because their lives lined up with the Lord.
- **Mark 3:14** tells us the reason Jesus picked the disciples: **“And He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and He might send them out to preach.”** They were to be with Him and then witness for Him. The same is true for us.
- Are people astonished when they look at you? Do they wonder how you can be so bold and gracious and kind? Do they conclude it’s because you’ve been with Christ?

VI. Don’t Quit, Keep Preaching Jesus! (verses 14-20)

- After the leaders recognize the disciples reflect Jesus because they have a relationship with Him, they try to think of ways to silence them.
- **Read verses 14-18**
- I love what Peter said in **verses 19-20**
- It was in this spirit Martin Luther stated his commitment to Scripture alone, which teaches salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone
- John Bunyan, who wrote Pilgrim’s Progress, who was put in prison for 12 years for preaching the gospel. He was told he would be let out if he promised not to preach again said, “If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the grace of God. If I lie in jail till the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never conceal the truth which God has taught me.”
- This takes me back to **Jeremiah 20:9**. The prophet is tired of speaking up and being shot down, so he considers shutting down. But that doesn’t last too long: **“But if I say, ‘I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,’ then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.”**
- We will not go quiet about Christ, will we? Will you keep speaking even when you’re told not to?

VII. Give All Glory to God (verses 21-22)

- This literally reads, “For all kept on glorifying God.” Because the people were praising, the leaders couldn’t punish them!

Psalms 115:1, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.

- The man had spent his entire life crippled. Left out front of the Temple, how many religious people walked by him each day? How many gave words of encouragement but never stopped to help?
- Then one day, two servants of Jesus stopped by and not only healed him but offered him and anyone that would listen freedom from Judgment to come.

Conclusion

Expect Opposition (4:1-7)

Stand Firm in the Truth (v.2, 10)

Rely on God’s Spirit, The Holy Spirit. (verse 8)

Share the Good News of Jesus at Every Opportunity. (verses 9-12)

Spend Time with Jesus (v. 13)

Don’t Quit, Keep Preaching Jesus! (verses 14-20)

Give All Glory to God (verses 21-22)

I don’t know what you are facing today, but I know when I look to God’ Word for the answers to what I am facing, the answer is found there.

I can’t even imagine the what the tension in that Temple felt like that day. I am amazed by the boldness of Peter. To read how Peter navigated this situation, compared to how he denied Jesus 3 times weeks earlier. Wow!

The power of the Holy Ghost is still alive and available to all of God’s people. We are living in exciting, and terrifying times.

The more we try and live as a testimony of Jesus, the more trials and persecution will come against us.

We need to be resolved, know opposition is coming, stand firm in the truth, Rely on the Holy Spirit, Share the good news, Spend time with Jesus, Don’t quit preaching, Give all the glory to God.

Let’s put that to work this week.