

Bible Study June 30, 2021

ACTS 4 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

Peter and John before the Council

¹While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees.

²These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. ³They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning. ⁴But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

⁵The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. ⁷They brought in the two disciples and demanded, “By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?”

The rulers, elders, priests, and teachers of religious law made up the Jewish high council (the Sanhedrin)—the same council that had condemned Jesus to death (Luke 22:66). It had 70 members plus the current high priest, who presided over the group. The Sadducees held a majority in this ruling group. These were the wealthy, intellectual, and powerful men of Jerusalem. Peter and John stood before the same council that Jesus had.

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of our people, ⁹are we being questioned today because we’ve done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? ¹⁰Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,

‘The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.’

The “cornerstone” unites the two walls at the corner of a building, holding them together, and helps to stabilize the building’s foundation. Peter was saying that the Jews had rejected Jesus but now Jesus had become the cornerstone of the church (see Psalm 118:22; Mark 12:10; 1 Peter 2:7). Without him there would be no church, because it wouldn’t be able to stand. Without Jesus overcoming sin and death and rising from the dead to sit next to God in heaven, Christianity is meaningless. But because Jesus died for our sins, we can be forgiven and one day stand in God’s presence in heaven.

¹²There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

¹³The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures.

They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say. ¹⁵So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves.

Knowing that Peter and John were untrained, the council was amazed at what being with Jesus had done for them. Changed lives convince people of Christ's power. If you came to Christ as an adult, one of your greatest testimonies is the difference others see in your life and your attitudes after believing in Christ.

¹⁶“What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can’t deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it. ¹⁷But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus’ name again.” ¹⁸So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Although the evidence—changed lives and a healed man—was overwhelming and irrefutable, the religious leaders refused to believe in Jesus and continued to try to suppress the truth. Don't be surprised if some people reject you and your positive witness for Jesus. When minds are closed, even the clearest presentation of the facts can't open them. Don't give up! Continue to love these people, share with them how God is at work in your life, and ask God for wisdom before every conversation you have.

¹⁹But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? ²⁰We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

At times, we may be afraid to share our faith in Christ because it might make people feel uncomfortable or reject us. But Peter and John's zeal for the Lord was so strong that they could not keep quiet, even when threatened. If your courage to witness for God has weakened, pray that your boldness may increase. Remember this promise Jesus made: “Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

²¹The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God ²²for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

The Believers Pray for Courage

²³As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. ²⁴When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—²⁵you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

‘Why were the nations so angry?

Why did they waste their time with futile plans?

²⁶The kings of the earth prepared for battle;

the rulers gathered together

against the LORD

and against his Messiah.’

²⁷“In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. ²⁸But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. ²⁹And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. ³⁰Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

Boldness is not reckless impulsiveness. Boldness requires courage to press on through our fears and do what we know is right. How can we be bolder? Like the disciples, we need to pray with others. To gain boldness, you can (1) pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to give you courage, (2) look for opportunities in your family and community to talk about Jesus, (3) ask God to demonstrate his supernatural power in equipping the people of your church to serve, and (4) start where you are by being bolder in small ways.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

³²All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. ³³The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them ³⁵and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

³⁶For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. ³⁷He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.