

*Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.*

Philippians 3:13-14 THE MESSAGE BIBLE

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First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #232

## **THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

### **Chapter 4**

#### **Peter and John Are Put into Custody**

1. Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them.
2. Being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
3. And they laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.
4. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

This chapter is a continuation of the events surrounding the healing of the lame man. As you may remember, this miracle happened at the Beautiful Gate, which was a gate that led from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women. In the Court of the Gentiles anyone from any nation could come as long as they acted with decency, and thus this was the most crowded and busiest part of the Temple complex. People entered the Temple in this area to worship, to learn, and to sightsee. This was the place where the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals had their booths. Therefore, it was the place which would afford the most publicity of anything happening there. Surely the lame man was positioned there so that the most people would pass by him as he begged for money.

The captain of the temple was the right-hand man of the priest, and one of his jobs was to keep order. The Sadducees were few in number but rich in wealth and power and influence. They were very annoyed by all of these events concerning the lame man because they did not believe in resurrection, and this was the very thing that Peter and John were proclaiming. Also, the Sadducees were cozy with the Roman government because they wanted to keep their wealth and influence. The Romans were very tolerant of them, but one thing the Romans would not tolerate was public disorder and riots. The Sadducees saw Peter and John as insurrectionist who would promote civil disobedience and thus the Romans would take over and demote the Sadducees' status. That is why they arrested Peter and John so readily.

In spite of the religious leaders' objections to this miracle, many heard the word that Peter preached and believed, adding another 5000 men to the church.

### **Peter Preaches to the Sanhedrin**

5. And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,
6. As well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.
7. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"
8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:
9. "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,
10. "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.
11. "This is the *'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'*
12. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved."

This group of men was the Sanhedrin, which was the "board of directors" or great council of the Jews. Seventy members made up the Sanhedrin, plus the High Priest, who was the president of the group. This group violated law after law to get Jesus crucified. He was crucified because of envy (Matthew 27:18).

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, courageously speaks to this group, knowing that they could put him and John to death, just like they had put Jesus to death. Barclay says of Peter, "When we read Peter's speech and remember to whom it was spoken, we recognize one of the world's great demonstrations of courage. It was spoken to an audience of the wealthiest, the most intellectual and the most powerful in the land-and yet Peter, the Galilean fisherman, faces them rather as their judge than as their victim. Further, this was the very court which had condemned Jesus to death. Peter knew that he was taking his life in his hands."

This passage reminds us of the prophetic words that Jesus spoke to His disciples and to us in Mark 13:9-13: *Take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten,*

*and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed among all nations. But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what you shall speak, neither do you premeditate; but whatever shall be given you in that hour, that speak you; for it is not you that speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother shall betray brother to death, and the father, his son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

Peter's response must have brought stinging conviction to the Sanhedrin. They knew that these men, Peter and John, as they themselves said, could not have done this miracle in their own strength but must have done in the name of someone else who had to be alive. What was the big deal about the Name? The Sanhedrin knew that behind a name was a person. All the Old Testament prophets had done signs and wonders in the Name of the Lord God. Peter and John were doing miracles in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

#### **Sanhedrin Commands Peter Not to Preach**

13. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.
14. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.
15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,
16. Saying, "What shall we do to these men? For indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.
17. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."
18. So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.
19. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.
20. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
21. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.
22. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Verse 13 is a powerful statement. These unbelievers were awed that uneducated and untrained men could be so bold. Why were they so bold? Because they had been with Jesus, and the Sanhedrin even recognized that fact. How would you like for people to recognize that you had been with Jesus? We become like those we live with and in whose presence we spend the most time.

Verse 14 states a truth that is so important. Men cannot deny personal testimony. This was definitely a miracle and no one could explain it away

Verse 19 is a statement we should always remember. Are we going to do what the Lord wants us to do or are we going to please men? Unfortunately, many pastors slowly gravitate towards the latter and are afraid to preach with boldness the truth of the Word because so often they don't want to offend people, even though they know the truth of the Word.

### **Apostles' Prayer for Boldness**

23. And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.
24. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them.
25. "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: *'Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things?*
26. *'The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.'*
27. For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together
28. "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.
29. "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,
30. "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."
31. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Notice that Peter and John did not go to the synagogue full of unbelievers but they went to their own company, the people who had like faith in Jesus. Even with the support of the family of believers, however, there is coming a day when we will need to regularly pray this prayer for boldness. Even now,

many signs are in the land, which suggest that our freedom to practice the Christian faith is being eroded. We must stand up and be counted for the Lord. When we totally surrender to His lordship, we will have the power of prayer that will shake the place where we pray.

### **Early Church Voluntarily Shares**

32. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.
33. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.
34. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold.
35. And laid them at the apostles' feet, and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
36. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,
37. Having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Unity is one of the most powerful things we need to see in our group if we expect the Lord to command the blessing. Unity is one of the things the enemy fights most against because he knows from experience that when God's people come together in one accord and in one heart and one soul, mighty things will happen.

No one was forced to give. No one gave a ten minute appeal for money-an appeal made to make people feel guilty. Everyone who gave, gave cheerfully and voluntarily. The irony in these verses is that these people gave not knowing that in just a few years Jerusalem would be desolated and the Jews scattered so the land would be worthless and useless.

Barnabas is one of the great men in the early church. How we need men and women, boys and girls, like Barnabas now in this hour of discouragement and depression! Who have you encouraged in the Name of Jesus today?

Notice that the first recorded deed of Barnabas was the selling of his property and the sacrifice of the money to the common fund of the first Christian community. Acts 11:24 tells us that he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. What a wonderful testimony of a Christian believer!

I've Come Too Far to Look Back  
Nancy Harmon

I've come to far to look back  
My feet have walked through the valley  
I've climbed mountains, crossed rivers,  
And desert places I've known  
Now I'm nearing the home shore  
Heaven's angels rejoicing  
Heaven's angels are singing  
I've come too far to look back.

I've come to far to look back again  
There is nothing behind me  
All the treasures I used to love  
Have all faded from view  
There's a new day ahead for me  
All my heartache is over  
For I left it at Calvary  
Where my new life began.

Look around, there's no happiness  
There's no reason for living  
Life will give you a broken dream  
Full of sorrow and fear  
Turn around, don't look back again  
Face the new day before you  
Place your heartache in Jesus' hand  
He can mend broken dreams

CHORUS

I've come too far to look back  
My feet have walked through the valley  
I've climbed mountains, crossed rivers  
Dessert places I've known  
But I'm nearing the home shore  
The redeemed are rejoicing  
Heaven's angels are singing  
I've gone too far to look back.