



*Acts of the Apostles*  
**A DEEP DIVE INTO THE BOOK OF ACTS.**

**WEEK 4**

CLASS BY PASTOR GLYN NORMAN

## Acts 4:5-31 Stop That! Opposition from the Jews

v6 Opposition to early Christianity was from the Sadducees.

v7 The apostles are called upon to account for their actions, and should have been somewhat on the defensive, but use the opportunity to aggressively witness and evangelize.

### **v8-12 Peter's defense and witness**

v8 Peter is filled with the Spirit as he called upon to explain their actions. Jesus predicted this:

“But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.

This will result in your being witnesses to them.

But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves.

For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

Luke 21:12-15

There are other examples in Acts of people being inspired and filled with the Spirit as they speak the word of God:

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 7:55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Acts 13:9,10 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said,

“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?”

Peter's defense is basically:

1. This was an act of kindness!
2. It was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

v11,12 Saved...meaning wholeness, both physically and spiritually

### **Two Christological Motifs:**

#### *1. The rejected stone*

Wordplay between stone (eben) and son (ben). Quoting:

Ps. 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;

Jesus is the rejected stone who becomes the capstone (placed on the summit of the Jerusalem Temple to complete it).

#### *2. Salvation*

“God’s salvation” and “salvation” in Isaiah are designations for the expected Davidic Messiah. Peter is addressing the Sanhedrin, who would have known this messianic designation, and they will make the connection. He doesn’t soften the idea, or compromise in his preaching. They realize the implications and forbid him to use the name.

### **v13-22 The Apostles Warned and Released**

v13,14 illiterate or uneducated? Uneducated. Theological discussion required rabbinical training, and people of the land were thought to be unable to carry on such debates. The judges are amazed at the quality of their biblical argumentation and can find only one possible explanation: these men had been with Jesus, who despite his lack of official rabbinic authority, had taught as one with authority (Mark 1:22) – and they take note of this. It seems as though something of his authority had transferred to the apostles, especially since they, like Jesus, are backing this up with miracles.

John 7:15 The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?”

Mark 1:27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching —and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . .”  
He said to the paralytic,

“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Mark 2:10-12

v15-17 Three things that arise from the council's response:

1. They would have denied the miracle if they could, but the evidence was right there
2. They were not open to being convinced either by the miracle or by argument
3. They felt the need to stop the apostles' activity and teaching, and issue a ban

v18-20 The ban is imposed, and provides a basis for future charges if they disobey it...which they do.

Acts 5:28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

### **Some features of this story:**

1. *An anointing with the fullness of the Spirit* (v8)
2. *Courage.* (v13) They continue even in the face of threats and are not intimidated.
3. *The desire to use every opportunity to share the gospel.* They could have tried just to get off the hook, but instead they turned this around into a witnessing opportunity.
4. *The nearness and similarity to Christ of Peter and John.* They spoke with boldness, performed miracles, and knew the Scriptures.
5. *Loyalty to God.* They chose to obey God even if it meant disobeying the most powerful people of the time (remember what happened to Jesus when he upset them?)
6. *Confidence in the Gospel.* They claimed they had no choice but to share what they have heard and seen (v20) – the facts about the life, death, resurrection, ascension and teaching of Christ. (see 3:14-15). This is the heart of the basic kerygma (proclamation) of the early church.

**Question:** At a conference I attended at Mosaic Church in Los Angeles, the pastor Erwin McManus said "We have no stories because we have no journey." What he meant by this is that we have no powerful stories about how God has worked through us, because we are not living a journey where we take risks for God and see him come through for us. How true is this of your life? When was the last time you took a risk for God, and how did it turn out?

## **v23-31      The Church's Praise and Petition**

v23-30      A spontaneous outburst of praise, psalms and petition. The title used for God is *despota*, from which we get the English word despot, but which here means "Sovereign Lord."

The structure of the prayer comes from:

1. *Hezekiah's prayer in Isaiah 37:16-20*

Isa. 37:16 "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

2. *Psalm 2:1,2*

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

3. *A reference to Jesus' passion according to the terms of Psalm 2.*

See how the different groups are identified:

“the kings of the earth” = King Herod

“the rulers” = the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate

“the nations” = the Gentile authorities

“the peoples” = the people of Israel

4. *A prayer for divine enablement in their current circumstances.*

Note that this is not a prayer for relief from oppression and judgment, but for the power to keep spreading the word with great boldness through the name of Jesus.

**Question:** Suffering in an age of aspirin.

In the book of Acts, only 3 chapters do not mention persecution. These days if a church or an individual suffers, we tend to pray that they will be delivered from their troubles. Here the prayer is that in the midst of the troubles, the person/church will be empowered to testify to God. When you face trials – do you more often pray for deliverance, or that God will use you in the middle of the trials? What difference in attitude might you have if you prayed the second option?

v31 A sign of God's approval at their prayer and their attitude, and as a sign of his power, the building is shaken and they are filled with the Holy Spirit. Note again the link between the Holy Spirit, and the power to witness (Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1-6...)

Beware romanticizing the early church and seeing it as just huge numbers being converted, miracles, amazing unity and Spirit-filled leadership. It was also persecution, problems, ego issues, sexual immorality, dissension... (See 1 Corinthians for examples, and consider that most of the letters written in the New Testament are to try and sort out problems.)