

Acts Ch 4:1-12

“Encountering Opposition”

Ch 4 is one of those unfortunate ch breaks because it picks up right at the highpoint of a certain happening. You recall that Peter and John were headed to the Temple at the hour of prayer and as they were approaching the gate called Beautiful, there sat a beggar who was over 40 yrs old who'd been lame from his mother's womb. and For as long as he was old enough, everyday someone had brought him and laid him there at that gate that he might beg for alms, ask for money, hoping that someone would perhaps help him out. For him it began as no different than any other day, him in desperate need, crying out for help, seeking the things of this life to sustain and satisfy him. But as Peter and John approached that gate, he asked those guys for help and Peter said, “Look at us.” He gave them his undivided attention and Peter said, the answer isn't in the silver of this world, but in the Savior of this world, “Silver and gold I don't have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” Peter reached down grabbed him by that outstretched right hand, jerked him up and immediately the man was healed, made perfectly whole. So he starts jumping up and down, shouting at the top of his lungs, praising God and all, he'd never walked a day in his life and now here he is able to run, leap, and all the rest. So he's doing just that, which as you might imagine began to cause quite a stir, multitudes of people begin to gather around, and they begin to recognize this guy as the one who's been begging all these years, and they're stunned, it's a miracle! Peter seeing what's taking place, utilizes the happening of the miracle to proclaim the message of the gospel.

In essence he says, “You guys think that the raising up of this guy is something, let me tell you about the resurrection, the raising up of Jesus Christ The fact that this miracle was done shouldn't be a big deal to you, we serve a God of miracles, He parts the Red Sea, provided miraculously for 40yrs while the nation wandered in the desert etc... What you should be celebrating is the fact that Jesus Christ came to this earth, laid His life down on the altar of the cross and 3 days later He arose from the dead and the forgiveness of sin is available to all who will but trust and place their faith in Him. You killed the Prince of Life, but God raised Him from the dead, and we're witnesses of that fact, and it's the faith that comes through Him that has given this man perfect soundness.”

That's the offer we all have in Christ, perfect soundness, complete wholeness, maybe you're lame, leading a life that's broken, riddled with guilt, and confusion, perfect soundness can be yours through faith in Jesus Christ

Peter says, “You murdered Him, but you did it in ignorance, you'd never willfully reject your Messiah, now your ignorance doesn't *eradicate* the guilt, but it does *mitigate* the circumstance. Therefore repent, come to Christ, be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presences of the Lord.” and He's sharing with them the word of God, warning them of the personal responsibility that each one will bear in rejecting Jesus Christ

But sharing with them the fact that in Christ God wants to bless your lives in turning away every one of you from your iniquities. God wants to work righteousness into our lives through the person of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit; to turn us away from iniquity, and toward Him and His will for our lives. The bible tells us, *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”* Titus 2:11-14 and It’s right in the middle of all this that we come to ch 4, which basically outlines in this way.

#1 In Vs1-2 we have, “The Irritation”, up to this point the disciples have been *enjoying favor*, now for the 1st time they’ll encounter *frustration*. We see them meet up with opposition and resistance, and they’re opponents are greatly *irritated* with what’s going on. #2 In Vs 3, “The Incarceration” as Peter and John are arrested. #3 In Vs 4 we have, “The Multiplication” the apostles might be bound, but the word of God is by no means bound, so even though they’re temporarily removed from the scene, the Word of God they’ve shared is impacting lives in their absence. #4 In Vs 5-7 begins “The Interrogation,” then in Vs 8-12 we have #5 “Peter’s Proclamation” as he testifies before their supreme court. From there we see in Vs 13-18 we see, #6 “Further Cross Examination/Stipulation” #7 Vs19-22 is, “The Apostle’s Negation/Repudiation” of the stipulation. Followed by #8 “The Liberation” of Peter and John as the council frees them. #9 In Vs 24-30 we find, “The Supplication” how it is that they disciples respond to the resistance and opposition they’ve encountered. #10 Vs 31, “The Demonstration” after their prayer, God gave to them a tangible demonstration of His affirmation regarding their supplication. #11 Vs32-35 We see great “Cooperation” as the body of Christ was ministering to one another, loving one another and meeting the needs of one another. and Finally #12 out of all that cooperation there’s one specific example of “Exemplification” that’s drawn to our attention. One man who is highlighted as an example of what was going on.

So as we fall into the flow and step into the scene, the Spirit through Peter has performed a miracle, he’s been sharing with the people the message of Jesus Christ and the reality of the resurrection and we read in the 1st 4 vs of Ch 4.

Vs1-4

This is really the 1st bit of opposition that the church has encountered since its inception and the 1st bit of persecution they’ve come under since the crucifixion of Jesus Himself. But the favor couldn’t last forever because Jesus had told them, *“Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”* John 15:20 Meaning that there will generally be 2 basic responses to the message of the gospel, those who receive, and those who resist, or reject. and The receptive ones aren’t always the ones that you’d suspect; likewise the ones who resist the message are often just as surprising.

At times of those who resist they may become hostile towards the message because you're bringing to them light, but the bible says that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. and They like to do what they do under the cover of darkness, and even as there were those people who had a problem with Jesus in His day, there will be those who have a problem with Jesus *in you* in your day. That's what's happening here, Peter is just sowing the seed of the Word of God, some hearts are receiving it, others are rejecting it, being hard, fallow, or stony, consumed with the cares of this world and the desire for other things. and Anytime the Word of God is shared there will be similar results, the hearts of some will be *sliced open* and their lives will be changed, while the hearts of others will be *seared shut* and they'll reject the message.

Both are happening here, and you'd think the results might be just the opposite. That those who would perhaps reject the message would be those who didn't know the Word, so it perhaps would be foreign, strange to their ears and difficult to palate. But having those who were supposed to be students of the Word in their midst; it would be like an epiphany, the lights would come on and they'd open their hearts to the Lord as the One the scriptures had foretold of. But the reality is that just the opposite is happening, and so often it's just this way.

People who aren't familiar with the bible are open to learning what it says, as to where those who think they've already got a grip on it become unteachable. Some of the hardest people to convince of their need for Jesus are religious people who believe they already know what the bible says. Which is one of the barriers we face in this part of the country, there's a lot of people who were raised in church who've never had a life changing personal encounter with Jesus Christ but because they've been around what the bible says all their lives they think they're ok. But it doesn't matter how much scripture one can quote, if they don't know Jesus it doesn't do them any good.

Here in vs 1 the Sadducees come on the scene, they're the religious/political power at this point in Israel. Now in the gospels you'll find the Pharisees as the primary opponents of Jesus, because they were caught up in legalism, traditions, and extra-biblical works related righteousness trips that the Lord was always challenging. But in the book of Acts, it's the Sadducees that surface as the primary opponents of the gospel, why? Look at vs 2 (Read).

The central most fundamental aspect of the gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ But the Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection. Acts 23:8 tells us, "... *Sadducees say that there is no resurrection -- and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.*" and They used all sorts of faulty logic to try and prove their position, one day they sought to trap Jesus in just such a scenario, leave the book of Acts and turn quickly to the gospel of Matthew Ch 22 (Vs23-33).

You see the Sadducees only consented to the 1st 5 books of Moses as Scripture, so Jesus drew right from what they'd recognize to verify and illustrate to them the reality of the resurrection. But now you see why they were so irritated with the apostles, they rejected the entire premise of the resurrection, (they were materialist at heart) but now here the apostles are teaching the resurrection of Christ, and how that He's the 1st fruits of the resurrection which means that the hope of the resurrection is a reality for all who believe in Him. Now this undermines the entire position of the Sadducees, so what do they do, they have them incarcerated and put on trial.

It's not that the investigation is wrong, there's a bit of a mob like commotion that's happening, Peter and John seem to be at the center of it, it's their responsibility to maintain the peace of the Temple, so they're searching out the situation. No problem there, it's what they do when they have the facts that's the problem. You remember that it was 3:00 in the afternoon when Peter and John went to the Temple and now it's evening so they had to wait until the morning to carry out the trial because night trials were illegal. When did they try Jesus? At night, but what we notice in vs 4 is that even though there was opposition, a bit of *speculation* on the behalf of the religious authorities, none of that stopped the *multiplication* of the Word of God bringing *salvation* to the people. Paul put it to Timothy like this, "*Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.*" 2 Tim 2:8-9 There's just no incarcerating the word of God, it's still spreading, impacting lives, saving souls, even though Peter and John are sitting in prison. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 souls were saved, on this day another 2,000 were added to the Kingdom. You know God's using your life when you've given 2 bible studies and the church has gone from 120 to over 5,000. and It mentions "men" here so this # may not be an altogether accurate reflection that includes women and children, but what I want you to see is that it wasn't the *miracle* that caused people to believe, or that brought salvation to the people. It was the *message*, they *heard the word* and believed. It's the Word of God that will change people's lives, not my opinion, not even the miraculous, only the *Word* of God has within it the ability to pierce the human heart and draw them by the *Spirit* of God, into a relationship with the *Son* of God. Because the Word of God is alive, and it's the seed that buds forth life in us.

The book of Heb tells us, "... *the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*" Heb 4:12-13 It has this way of reaching down into the deep recesses of our hearts and exposing what's really there regardless of what we say, or the front that we put up before one another. We read where the Lord said in Isaiah, "*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*" Isa 55:10-11

That's what's happening here, God's Word has been sown, its been sent into the hearts of the people and its bringing forth fruit whether Peter and John are there or not. Be encouraged with that, because there are times that God may use you to sow His Word into a certain life, or # of lives, but you may never personally see the harvest of that seed, but God's going to have His way regardless. and If you've moved on, or perhaps not seen that person in sometime, that doesn't mean that what God has shared with them through you was pointless, your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Some plant, some water, but its God that gives the increase, that seed is still germinating and permeating in that person, or those people, and perhaps we'll never know the fullness of the extent that God has used our lives until we find out on the other side, but that's ok, its our responsibility to simply be available to the Lord, and faithful to the task He's committed to our trust. Eternity will bear the results.

Vs5-7

If you recognize a couple of those names there in Vs 6 it's because those are the same Annas the high priest and Caiaphas that indicted Jesus at His trial. So don't think this is some mock opposition, all hype, all bark and no bite kind of a situation here, this is some serious opposition they're encountering. and There's no way I can know but I would imagine their inclination was to think that this trial was going to end in a manner that reflected Jesus'. As far as they're concerned their very lives are on the line here, and right off the bat the question that begins the interrogation is, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Remember that the idea behind "the name" is the person and power, or character of an individual. and Recognizing them as just a couple of average Joes with no real backing or authority by any recognized leader they're in essence demoralizing them by saying, "What gives *you* the right to do this, by who's authority have you acted?" No doubt it's a lead question just like they so often sought to trap Jesus in because the law stated, *"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' -- which you have not known -- 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst."* Deut 13:1-5 So signs and wonders aren't always indicative of God, and this is a question that's putting them under the gun, "Who are you wanting us to turn towards? By what name have you done this?"

Vs8-12

Underline that vs, notice that right before Peter began to speak we're enlightened to the fact that Peter was "filled with the Spirit." How was that known? It was indicated by his boldness to speak out so candidly.

This is the same Peter that denied the fact that he even knew Jesus 3 times, and now here he is speaking out boldly in the name of Jesus, and there's just no way that in and of himself, or for that matter we in and of ourselves have the boldness in the face of potentially hostile opposition to make a stand for Christ. That's only going to happen by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, remember Satan's estimation of man in the book of Job? "*Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.*" Job 2:4 I'd say that's pretty accurate, and as far as Peter is concerned his very life is weighing in the balance right here, say the wrong thing and you're a dead man. and You can believe that what he said, they didn't want to hear. But what did Jesus say? "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Acts 1:8 So the power to be a witness to Christ comes directly from the Holy Spirit, so Peter was filled fresh with the Spirit before he began to speak. Which brings up a good point, the baptism of the Holy Spirit may be a one time deal, Pentecost only happened once. But we need to be filled fresh with the Spirit over and over again, consistently, and persistently for the service that Christ has called us to. Yesterday's filling won't suffice for today, "and of His goodness we receive, and grace for grace." We exchange everyday, grace for grace, the grace we needed yesterday won't get us through today, its grace for grace. and Just like that we need to be filled fresh with the Holy Spirit for each act of service we're called to.

Here we see the Holy Spirit give to Peter the words to confound them and turn the tables on them. Jesus had said, "*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*" Matt 10:16-20 and That's what's happening here, now does that mean we should never study, never prepare, just take the pulpit and let it fly, no! That's the remove that principal from its context and can get you in some serious doctrinal trouble. Jesus was saying that when it's crunch time, and your life is on the line for My sake, regardless of how the matter turns out I'm going to make sure that you have the words to say to testify according to My will in the matter. and I love the logic that the Lord gives Peter here to bring this thing into its proper context. He says, "Are you trying to tell me that we're on trial for a good deed done to this helpless man? Is that what this is *really* about, the fact that for 40 yrs this guy was a helpless beggar, and now he's been made perfectly whole? In that case let it be known to you that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom *you* crucified, whom *God* raised from the dead, by *Him* this man stands before you whole." Then he grows even more bold in vs 11 when he says, (Read).

So he lays out the gospel, (notice that every time Peter speaks about Jesus its in the light of the resurrection) “you crucified Him, God raised Him from the dead.” and He says, “You guys who are responsible for the spiritual demeanor of the nation have rejected the very Messiah you claim to await. The single most important aspect of all you claim to stand for, the culmination of the Law and the Prophets you have cast aside, Jesus Christ Himself.” and He caps it off by saying, once you’ve rejected Him there’s nothing else available to you regarding the hope of salvation.

Vs12

That’s pretty clear, Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*

John 3:16-18

There is no salvation in *any* other; Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except by Him. There is no other name, that is, no authority, no power on earth that can save your soul from eternal destruction outside of Jesus Christ You say, “Well that sounds pretty narrow.” It’s incredibly narrow, Jesus said, *“...narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* Matt 7:14 and Sincerity isn’t enough to save, Muslims are sincere, Buddhists are sincere, there’s lots of people who are sincere, but they’re not saved. Because there is no salvation in any other, you must be saved through faith in Jesus Christ Jesus alone is the door and He opens that door to all of mankind, so though its exclusive, the offer is inclusive to everyone who will but call upon His name. and This is the point of missions, it’s the point of being salt and light, because everyday people are leaving the planet with out Jesus Christ and eternity is an awful long time and what we decide now about Jesus determines our eternal destiny. Be a willing vessel through which God can give people that opportunity to hear the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and make the clear cut decision to receive Him or reject Him. We’re just the messengers, what they do with the message is up to them, but God help us to be clear about the message, that His kingdom might increase, and people might be saved.

They’ve encountered opposition; next week we’ll see how they overcome that opposition.

Perhaps you’re here today and you’ve never really heard the gospel message cut and dry, that Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross, gave His life for the sin of the World, and on that 3rd day He arose from the dead offering redemption to you in His name, the forgiveness of sin. You need to know that salvation is by Christ, and Christ alone, being a good person doesn’t cut it, praying every night or simply coming to church won’t do it. Believe me if there was another way, Jesus wouldn’t have gone to the cross, it’s the only way. and If you want to receive Jesus Christ, be forgiven of your sin, and be given everlasting life, than I want to invite you to open your heart and receive Him today.