

THE PROFIT OF PERSECUTION

ACTS 4:1-12

Text:

Introduction:

As we study the book of Acts and the early days of the church, there seems to develop a very noticeable pattern of activity for the new Christians:

- Prayer (vs. 3:1)
- Power (vs. 3:6)
- Preaching (vs. 3:16, 19)
- Persecution (vs. 4:1-2)

Often we want the power and the results the early church enjoyed, without prayer and especially without the persecution.

Note:

1. THE PERSECUTION OF THE APOSTLES (VS. 1-3)

Acts 4:1-3

¹ And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, ² Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

A. The Sudden Interruption

As Peter was preaching the temple authorities came upon them, not approving of the Gospel message being preached.

- The Pharisees were there because of where Peter was preaching and the Sadducees were present because of what Peter was preaching.

B. The Sadness of the Interruption

- It is always tragic when men reject Christ.
- Imagine the anger the religious leaders felt when they saw the people focused on a couple of humble fishermen than themselves.
- You can expect some interruptions when you're trying to preach the Word of God.

2. THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD (VS. 4)

Acts 4:4

⁴Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

A. The Persecution Was Futile in Stopping the Gospel.

Even though the apostles spent the night in jail, the persecution they experiences had no effect on the power of their message. There is nothing man can do to hinder the designs and purposes of God, and the preaching of the Word.

Isaiah 55:11

¹¹So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

B. The People Heard the Gospel and Were Saved

Note: Many which heard were saved

- Our priority is to lift up Christ
- You may get a door slammed in your face; you may be rejected; your motives may be questioned; but keep proclaiming the Word of God.

3. THE PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES (VS. 5-12)

Acts 4:5-12

⁵ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, ⁶ And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred 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 ye done this? ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, ⁹ If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; ¹⁰ Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. ¹¹ This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. ¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

A. The Gathering Opposition

The Sanhedrin gathered just west of the Temple. They were composed of seventy-one members who served as a court to determine religious issues. The High Priest was the President.

B. The Issue of the Opposition

They objected strongly to preaching the name of Jesus Christ.

The opposition to His name continues today. Several cities have recently been challenged about praying in Jesus name and meetings.

C. The Message of the Apostles

1. Spirit-Filled Preaching

As Jesus had promised the disciples, the Holy Spirit was with them to help prepare them to respond when they were questioned.

Luke 12:11-12

¹¹ And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and *unto* magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: ¹² For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

2. Bold Preaching

They knew that they were in danger, yet they spoke boldly.

The temptation to downplay the Gospel message to avoid offending anyone is alive and well in our politically-correct day, but it must be rejected. We need the same courage the apostles showed to speak the truth lovingly, but without compromise.

3. Christ-Centered Preaching

- Jesus was the Stone set aside

Jesus was rejected of set aside as unfit by the religious leaders.

- Jesus is the Head of the Corner

The resurrection of Christ proves His worthiness. He is now the corner stone.

Ephesians 2:19-20

¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;

- Jesus is the only way of Salvation

The word salvation refers to deliverance of the soul from destruction.

Matthew 1:21

²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

- There is no other Name, there is no other person or act of propitiation whereby we must be saved.

1 Timothy 2:5-6

⁵For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; ⁶Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Close:

The secret to church growth is not found in the latest trendy music or in changing the service to accommodate the “seekers.” Like the fisherman in the early church, we are simply common people with an uncommon Saviour! As we are faithful to proclaim the Gospel, the Holy Spirit touches hearts and produces a harvest. Persecution and trials will come, but let us not be weary in well doing and be true to the Saviour.

When suffering comes, rejoice in the fruit God will ultimately bring from it.