

Acts of the Apostles - Acts 4:1-22

Introduction - Watching the New testament church grow from a few disciples gathered with the resurrected Jesus to what is now thousands, should be an encouraging picture for us.

- As we have walked through this book, written by Luke, we have been **encouraged by their obedience** to this command that He has given to them to be His “witnesses”.
- Today, we will see their continued obedience as Peter and John are facing opposition, **they do not let their obedience waiver to the commission given to them by Jesus.**
- There certainly **continues to be lessons for us to learn** from these followers of Christ.

Transition = The Message - As the New Testament Church continues to grow, it is becoming more identifiable by its actions and its message.

READ ACTS 4:1-22

Review - there are **four identifiable marks** of the church that continue to become clear for us as we study this New Testament Church.

- We may need to admit, **some of these identifiable marks, are repeats** of what we have seen before, in previous chapters, but as we study we will see those things repeated that were of significance for the New Testament church.
- **The identifiable marks of the New Testament church has seen some significant changes** over the decades and generations, yet there are some things that have not changed,
- It is on these **non-changing identifiable marks that we should spend our time considering.**

Transition - First, we will see that a constant in the life of the church has been opposition against the work of the church. And so in these first few verses, we find...

A People Facing Opposition. (1-4) - The religious of the day **did not believe** the message of Jesus, **so they stood in opposition** to the preaching and the teaching of these Disciples.

- **While we might not expect for the disciples to experience opposition from the religious, we can't lose sight that they receive opposition from those who are religious.**
 - Being a religious Jew had nothing kindred to being in a relationship with Jesus.

- As it is now, **sometimes we do experience opposition from the world, but it is the religious with nothing kindred to a relationship with Jesus that we most often experience opposition.**
- **It is the religious with poor Gospel understandings and little maturity that stood and still stands opposed to the Gospel commission given to the church by Jesus.**
- **I am reminded of William Carey**, one of the greatest missionaries to date - as he too **experienced opposition from the religious**, some with poor Gospel understanding concerning his desire to spread the gospel.
- As William Carey gave his plans to leave and spread the Gospel to other lands he spoke to some religious men, William Carey was actually told, *“Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine!”*
- In another instance he was told, *“We have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them.”*
- **It may be that our greatest opposition today is this same mentality that somehow it is not our responsibility to be obedient to the Lord's command. “Be my witnesses”**
- **This idea, that we somehow have no responsibility to the command of Jesus, is a great fallacy of the immature within the church today that illegitimately raises its head as opposition to the fulfillment of our mission as the body of Christ.**

Transition - We can not forget that we have but one simple message to communicate to the world, to be witnesses of, even in the midst of opposition, whether it be from the world or the “religious” - It is a simple message as is detailed by the Disciples.

A People With A Simple Message. (5-12) - It was the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that had been spoken to the lame man that had allowed him to walk - and now Peter continues to proclaim that it is this name, the name of Jesus, that can offer their salvation as well. **READ VERSE 10-12**

- The simplicity of the message of Peter to those that were there that day **seems almost too elementary to us.**

- And yet, **it is the basic elementary understanding of the work of Jesus, a child like faith in HIm that is the way to our salvation.**
- Peter and John had been with Jesus throughout His ministry, they were in fact Disciples of Jesus - **they knew that the expectation of Jesus for a salvation experience was belief in His work.**
- This remains a simple message for us today, one that we still carry with us, the simple message of the work of Jesus Christ.
- Peter helps us **be reminded of the message that we carry and the message to which we are witnesses.**
 - **Verse 10** - Jesus was Crucified - God raised Him from the dead - and by His name we are made well!
 - **This is in summary, the Gospel message that we all have embraced, or the message that the Spirit is drawing you to embrace, even now!**

Illustration-"Just say Jesus"

- Yes, it is **a simple message that carries with it an impact that grants life today and eternal life for you into eternity.**
 - **This is the message that the New Testament church carried.**

Transition - even though there was opposition, the simple message of the Gospel continued to be proclaimed because Peter and John were bold...**but only because they were Spirit filled.**

A People Spirit Filled. (13-17) - The results of the Spirit filling of these disciples was a certain boldness.

- **The remainder of this chapter details the boldness that came to the disciples.**
 - **We know that this boldness is a result of being Spirit filled** - Paul tells us that we do not have the Spirit of timidity, but of power.
- **But, it is not only boldness that comes when the Holy Spirit comes upon us.**
- The ability to fulfill the commission that is given to us also comes when we are given the Holy Spirit.
- **Something that we must recognize here is that it is the authority that is given to us by Jesus in the presence of the Spirit that allows us to be obedient to Him, in all things - but especially in the communication of the Gospel.**

- **Acts 1:8** - “you will receive power then the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”
- **Matthew 28:19** - “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...I am with you always to the end of the age.”
- It is **this Spirit filling that allows us to see men repent, and so it is this Spirit filling that should be our dependence as we move into our world to spread the Gospel.**
- **As a people of God** - we must become a **Spirit Filled - Spirit Dependant people** if we are to see the change in people from the Gospel!
 - **The means to accomplish this is itself the Gospel - and a growing maturity in our faith so as to grow bold and obedient to this command.**

Transition - These New Testament Disciples, though they faced opposition were boldly proclaiming the simple message of Jesus. They were, all on a singular mission - it was a mission of obedience.

A People With A Singular Mission. (18-22) - It seems that the measure of obedience for these disciples was determined only by what was appropriate to God and not other men.

- **As we move forward as a church - we must determine to have this same mind - that it is our hope and our mission to seek only the words from Him and obedience to Him.**
 - **Regardless of what that means.**
- There is in this passage an obedience regardless of the cost for Peter and John.
- **They were more concerned with obedience to that which they had seen and witnessed than they were their own safety, security and comfort.**
 - **This is where we must determine to stretch ourselves. We must also determine that obedience to God is more important than any other obedience that we might be tempted to follow.**

Conclusion - As we move forward as a church - as we walk together for our future - Even if we face opposition - Will we be found as a people on a singular mission, sharing the simple message of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit?

- This must be our goal - This must be our call - this must be our focus!

How Do We Respond?

- **First**, today my call to you is simple - I want you to get out of your seats, to walk to the altar and to pray for our church.
 - I want you to pray that God would make us an Acts 4 church!
 - I want you to pray that God would make your pastor and Acts 4 pastor.
 - I want you to pray that God would make you an Acts 4 Disciple.
- **Second**, I want you to make the decision to join our fellowship - If you have been waiting to do that - Today is the day.
- **Third**, some of you still need to make the decision to follow Jesus, or to follow through in baptism. Today is the day.