

Episode #1127 Acts 4 Part 2-Obey God, Not Men

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. The Sanhedrin arrested Peter, John, and the healed lame man and left them in prison overnight. Now, they drag them before their council and demand to know what power or authority they used in performing this miracle, though they refuse to name what they did.

III. Peter, John, and the Sanhedrin. Acts 4:5-22.

- A. Verse 10. Peter now brings God's accusation before them. They crucified Jesus Christ, God raised Him, and proof of this is this healed lame man standing before them. When we remember that "Christ" and "Messiah" are the same word (John 1:41), we realize that Peter is boldly declaring to the Sanhedrin here the One they killed is their Messiah.
- B. Verse 11. Psalm 118:22. These men were the builders of Israel, trying to restore it to its former glory. We must credit them with earnestly seeking to do this. They had considered the Lord Jesus Christ as a possible part of their building, John 3:2, yet they decided He had no place in what they wanted to build. God, however, had made Him the chief cornerstone, by which all other stones are placed and measured!
- C. Verse 12. Salvation has to do with deliverance, but also preservation and blessing, which is what they hoped for Israel to experience. Again a form of *sozo* is used here. Strict interpretation demands that we understand Peter here as speaking of national salvation. However, I will not object if anyone takes this statement by application and applies it to personal salvation as well. It is certainly true that if we are going to be saved individually, there is no other name by which it can be done. This man was saved in the Lord's name, and no other name can save anyone. Only the name of Jesus can save a man from sickness, can save an individual from sin, can save Israel, or even save the Sanhedrin! Romans 11:26, all Israel will yet be saved. For us too, there is no other name by which we can be saved.
- D. Verse 13. Unlearned and ignorant simply means uneducated and ordinary men. Not of the scholastic class. They lacked the affectation that marked the learned class of that day. Yet they had been through the school of Christ! Most people who stood on trial before these powerful men probably acted frightened and intimidated. Yet Peter and John acted like they were putting the Sanhedrin on trial! This astonished them, and for a time, their amazement outweighed their anger. They took further knowledge of them (*epeginoskon* in Greek) and found they had been with Jesus.
- E. Verse 14. The formerly lame man's presence standing on his feet was enough to give eloquent testimony that all that Peter was saying was true. All he has to do is stand there and that is sufficient testimony. They cannot say a word against this, therefore.
- F. Verse 15. They order them to go out of the court so they can confer in private. But not private from the Spirit of God! They had not expected to be on trial! The Sanhedrin find themselves in a very embarrassing situation. They cannot argue with Peter, but sadly they do not admit their guilt and yield to God either. They have no answer, therefore. The Greek for "council" is *sunedriou*, from which we get "Sanhedrin."
- G. Verse 16. They cannot deny a miracle everyone knows about, yet they have kept these men in prison overnight and have to save face somehow.

- H. Verse 17. Since they cannot deny the miracle, they decide to attempt to stop its spread. They think they can severely threaten Peter and John, in spite of the fact that they have shown no fear of them! They say “this name,” refusing to say the Lord’s name, like many Jews still do today.
- I. Verse 18. They follow their plan. The Holy Spirit through Luke writes the Name they wouldn’t speak. The translation fails to show the summary nature and the strictness of this order. In the Greek we see it was a sweeping charge not to say a word or teach any in the name of Jesus. These apostles were ordered to cease being apostles, these witnesses to cease witnessing, and these evangelists to cease evangelizing. They seek to nullify the Lord’s Own orders to them.
- J. Verse 19. This was the perfect answer. In God’s sight, the Sanhedrin are the ones on trial, and He will judge their answer. This verse establishes a principle for us: when governments or any human authority give orders contrary to the orders of God, we are to obey God alone rather than the government. Thankfully, in our country, we usually don’t have to worry about such commands, yet. We can be thankful that we live in a country where men cannot stop our testimony. There are those who only believe in freedom of speech when you agree with them, and not if you disagree.
- K. Verse 20. They boldly state their conviction, and are ready for any consequences this may bring. The Sanhedrin now will be judged by how they respond to this.
- L. Verse 21. The Sadducees would have much preferred if the apostles obeyed them rather than God! They must let them go, however, because this miracle was too well known for them to get away with anything here. The people were wiser than their leaders in this!
- M. Verse 22. The whole examination ended in failure for the Sanhedrin. The man’s age when he was healed was part of the reason people were so impressed. He had never walked for forty years, and now walked like he had been that whole time, and leaped as well. If you have ever seen a baby learning to walk, you will realize the miracle in this! The Sanhedrin come out of this trial humiliated, while the apostles are exalted. God’s government was working on the apostles’ side!

IV. Conclusion: The apostles Peter and John gave testimony to the Sanhedrin they could not deny about Jesus Christ. They tried to threaten them into silence, but they chose to obey God rather than men. Who holds our loyalty: God or human beings? May we ever give our first loyalty and obedience to the One Who made us and Who died for us.