

10. Peter Spoke the Word of God with Boldness

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize the opportunities that Christ opens for them to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ with others. We want them to be able to clearly explain to others that each person has the opportunity to repent of sin and turn to Christ and enjoy the blessing that Christ has promised. The Jewish religious leaders did not like the fact that Peter and John shared the message of the death and resurrection of Christ with the people. As a result, we are going to see in this topic that the religious leaders put them in jail.

In Acts 4:1-4, we read, “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.” The priests were the ones who were responsible for the offering of the sacrifices in the temple. The high priest and his relatives were the ones who were in charge of everything that went on in the temple. The captain of the temple was the Levite who was in charge of the temple police.

The priests together with the Sadducees were very upset because Peter taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees were upset because they did not believe in any kind of miracles including the resurrection of the dead. The high priest and his relatives were very upset because the high priest was the one who had condemned Christ to death just a few months earlier. Now, Peter was teaching the people that Christ had been raised from the dead. Since it was too late to gather the Sanhedrin (the seventy men who ruled the Jews), these men took Peter and John and kept them as prisoners until the next day.

Meanwhile, the church continued to grow as more people repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ. Every day, more people were placing their faith in Christ. As a result, we see that the number of believers had now reached a total of five thousand. As we saw in Acts 2:46-47, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Of course, this was part of the reason why the religious leaders were fearful because as more people became followers of Christ the religious leaders were afraid that they were losing their power over the people.

Acts 4:5-7 goes on to tell us, “And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, ‘By what power or by what name have you done this?’” Here, we see that the next morning the Sanhedrin along with other religious leaders all gathered to question Peter and John. These were the very men who had condemned Christ to death and turned Him over to Pilate just a few months earlier. These were the same men who had paid the Roman soldiers a large amount of money to get them to deny the resurrection. Matthew 28:12-14 says, “When they

had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, “His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.” And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’” The religious leaders did not want the people to believe that Christ had risen from the dead.

As a result, the religious leaders now feared the teaching of Peter, John and the other disciples. The religious leaders were only concerned about their own power. That is the difference between religious leaders and godly spiritual leaders. Religious leaders are without true faith and only try to protect their power over people. Godly spiritual leaders love God and want people to know how to come to God by faith in Christ. Peter had told the people in Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” The religious leaders knew that any of the people who did repent would begin to follow Christ and the religious leaders would lose their power over those people.

As a result, the religious leaders now asked Peter and John the question, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” We have the answer to that question in Acts 4:8-12 where we read, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the “stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.” Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’” Here, we see that although the religious leaders did not realize it they had asked the very question that God wanted Peter to answer.

The first thing that we notice is that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit as He answered this question. Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” Here, we see that we are commanded to keep on being filled with the Spirit. This means to be under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. This will happen when we have confessed all sin and are depending on the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Here, we see that when we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will speak the Word of God with boldness. That was exactly what happened as Peter spoke to the religious leaders that had condemned Christ to death.

Because Peter was being guided by the Holy Spirit and speaking the Word of God with boldness, the Holy Spirit gave him the words to immediately turn the situation around and put the religious leaders on trial as he said, “If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well...” (Acts 4:9) The Holy Spirit led him to point out that the deed was a good deed. It was done to a helpless man and it caused the man to be completely healed. As a result, the religious leaders had Peter and John on trial for doing a good deed.

Peter said that all who were gathered there that day as well as all of the people of Israel could know that the man was healed by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Peter said that this was the very

man that they had crucified and that God had raised from the dead. These very men had admitted their responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ when they said in Matthew 27:25, “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’” As we mentioned above, these very men had paid the soldiers a large sum of money to deny the resurrection of Christ. God had raised Christ from the dead and these men knew that He was alive. Peter said that it was by the name of Jesus of Nazareth that this man now stood before them because Jesus Christ had healed him.

Then, Peter quoted from Psalm 118:22. Psalm 118:22-23 says, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” When the temple at Jerusalem was being built by Solomon, the materials were prepared at a different location and brought to the temple site. One day, a stone was brought to the site and the builders could not determine where it could be used so they rejected it. Later, they found out that it was the chief cornerstone, which was the stone that determined how every other stone was to be placed. Peter is here saying that the Jewish religious leaders had done the same thing when they rejected Christ who is the very One by whom we all must be saved.

In fact, Peter went on to point out that Christ is the only One who can save people from the power and penalty of sin. Christ could pay the penalty for sin because He was without sin. That is why His name is the only name under heaven by which men must be saved. Christ said in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” Christ had earlier said in Matthew 7:13-14, “‘Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.’” The Jewish religious leaders now had to choose whether or not to enter the narrow gate. We will see that none of them made that choice that day.

Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Here, we see that because they were filled with the Holy Spirit Peter and John were able to speak with boldness. It did not matter that they did not have the formal training that was given to religious leaders in the Jewish rabbinical schools. The key to their boldness was the fact that they had been with Jesus and He had given them the Holy Spirit so they were able to speak the Word of God with boldness. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that this is also the key that makes it possible for them to speak the Word with boldness. Christ has given them the Holy Spirit so that as they yield to Him they will speak with boldness. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to yield to the Holy Spirit.