

## 11. Peter Spoke of the Importance of Obedience to God

In our last topic, we saw that Peter was able to speak the Word of God with boldness because He was filled with the Holy Spirit. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children come to a clear understanding that it is only as they are filled with the Holy Spirit that they will be able to speak the Word of God with boldness. In our topic today, we are going to see that Peter provides an example of the importance of obedience to God.

In Acts 4:13-16, we read, “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. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, ‘What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*.’” In these verses, we see the importance of helping our children realize the importance of spending time with Jesus. We see that Jesus will change and transform their lives.

The word translated “realized” means *to know or to fully understand*. The boldness of Peter and John forced the religious leaders to understand the changes that Christ had made in the lives of Peter and John. Many years later in 1 John 4:18 John wrote, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” Even though these were the very men that had condemned Christ to death, because Peter and John were filled with the Holy Spirit instead of depending on their own strength, the love of Christ had cast out any fear.

The Jewish religious leaders had seen this man laying at the Beautiful Gate for many years and knew that he was unable to walk. Now, he was standing with Peter and John. They had seen him walk into their presence. As a result, the religious leaders knew that they could not punish Peter and John for their good deed to the man since many of the people in the city of Jerusalem had already heard about this miracle. That was why the religious leaders ordered the temple guards to take Peter and John out of the council while they decided what they should do.

Once Peter and John were taken out of the place where the religious leaders were meeting, the leaders began to talk about what to do. They had to admit to themselves that a notable miracle had been done. They also recognized that word had spread quickly around the city of Jerusalem about this miracle so that the people also knew what had happened to the man. In fact, the religious leaders recognized that they could not deny this miracle. In this case, they could not pay money to a few soldiers who would agree to tell a lie for the money as they had done when they paid the soldiers to say that the disciples had stolen the body of Christ while the soldiers slept. At the same time that they knew that they could not deny the fact the man had been healed by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, neither were they willing to admit that the miracle had happened.

Acts 4:17-20 says, “‘But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.’ And they called them and commanded

them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’” Here, we see that the religious leaders realized that the only thing they could do was try to prevent any more people from hearing about the miracle.

As a result, the religious leaders decided that they would severely threaten Peter and John and tell them that they were not to speak or teach any person about Jesus any more. Christ had warned the disciples that they would face opposition. In John 16:2-3, Christ told the disciples the night before He was crucified, “They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.” Here, we see the real problem of the religious leaders. They did not know either the Father or Christ. When people do not know God, they will often oppose any message about the resurrection of Christ.

The religious leaders called for Peter and John to be brought back into their council. Then they commanded them and told them that from now on they were not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. We have already seen that Peter and John were filled with boldness. 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.” As a result, Peter and John did not fear these men who had condemned Christ to death just a few months earlier. However, because these men were the Sanhedrin, Peter and John also knew that they were to obey them unless their leaders told them to disobey God.

That provided them with a clear opportunity to help the religious leaders understand their first priority was to God. As a result, they answered the religious leaders, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Here, we see an important lesson for our own lives. When we are forced to make a clear choice between obeying God and obeying the leaders of the world, we need to realize that our first responsibility is to obey God and be prepared to take the judgment that may come from political leaders.

Daniel demonstrated this same purpose of heart when the king of the Medes and Persians signed a law that said that anyone who prayed to any god or man for thirty days except the king would be thrown into the lion’s den. Daniel 6:10 says, “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.” Daniel did not try to hide his prayer. He opened the windows so that those who opposed him could see him praying. He did not fear the king but determined to obey God rather than to obey the king. Peter and John followed the example of Daniel and told the rulers that they were going to obey God rather than to obey the religious leaders. In the same way, we want to show our children by our example that our first priority is always to obey God if we are forbidden to speak in the name of Christ.

Peter and John told the religious leaders that there was no way for them to remain quiet. They had spent three years learning from Christ. They had to keep telling the things that they had seen. They had to keep teaching the things that Christ had taught them. Instead of beginning to speak about Christ secretly, Peter and John explained to the religious leaders that they must obey God rather than men. Sometime later, they were again arrested. We see their response when they were beaten for preaching about Christ. Acts 5:41-42 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” In these verses, we see that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ because He first suffered for us. They continued to speak in the very temple where they had been arrested.

Acts 4:21-22 says, “So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.” Here, we see that the religious leaders made one more attempt to cause fear in the hearts of Peter and John by threatening them again. Their response is found in their prayer in Acts 4:29-30 where we read, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” Their response was just to pray that the Lord would continue to give them boldness to speak the Word.

The religious leaders knew that they could not stop Peter and John from speaking about Christ because the religious leaders were afraid of the people. The people recognized that a great miracle had happened. As a result, the people were all giving glory to God for what the Lord had done in the life of the crippled man. The leader also knew that the people would turn against them if they punished Peter and John for this good deed. The Lord had changed Peter and John as well as healed the man that was crippled and the religious leaders could not deny that change. Acts 3:2 says, “And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple.” The man had been crippled since birth. Here, we see that he was now over forty years old. As a result, the religious leaders realized that they had to let Peter and John go free.

We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example that we are obedient to the government that God has placed over us unless that government forbids us to speak in the name of Christ. However, when any government would try to forbid us to speak about Christ, we want to show our children by our example that we ought to obey God rather than men. This will provide our children with an example of the fact that we are to make it our first priority to be obedient to God in all situations. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to practice obedience to God.