

Acts 4:1-37: THE CHURCH UNSTOPPABLE

Introduction

As we get to Acts chapter 4, Luke introduces us to another significant factor that impacted the early church: persecution. Until now, the church has been on a roll; they've experienced a massive move of the Spirit, powerful preaching, exciting church life, and miracles. Now things are beginning to have a different turn. In our previous study, we examined what is probably the first miracle by the apostle after the resurrection of Jesus. Surprisingly, the healing of the lame man and Peter's preaching created negative feelings among the Jewish religious leaders. Peter and John were arrested and questioned, and threatened by the Jewish leaders.

However, even in the face of enormous pressure, Peter, unperturbed, seized the opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the same rulers. It is also important to note how the early church responded to this threat to their lives and existence. They responded in prayer but with a different kind of prayer, probably different from what one would expect or what we would have done today. Luke concluded this portion in a very inspiring way by letting us know that instead of dampening the disciples and weakening the church, the persecution strengthened the church and brought the best out of them.

Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage, Acts 4:1-37

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

Think Through the Following Questions

1. Who are the rulers, elders, and scribes? And what do you see as the motivation behind the leaders' questioning of Peter and John?
2. Verse 13 describes the observation of the rulers, elders, and scribes about Peter and John's boldness. What do you think Luke is trying to bring to our attention here, especially referencing their connection with Jesus?
3. Where did the courage of Peter and John come from?
4. From verses 23-30, what lessons can we learn from how the apostles and their companions react to the threat against them? Has anyone in the team experienced or known anyone who has experienced persecution for the sake of the gospel?
5. How did God respond to their prayer, and what is the significance of that?
6. What were the effects of the persecution and the threat on the early church?
7. Discuss the elements of the life of the early church described in verses 32 to 37. Do you think we can practice some of those things today?

Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?