

Acts – Church on the move

Chapter 4 v 1 – 31 Handling persecution

Peter and John are arrested, imprisoned and tried. They speak in their own defence. They take the opportunity to declare the Gospel and the power of Jesus. On being released, having been threatened not to speak again about Jesus, they leave with a parting shot. We see how they join their fellowship for prayer, and even greater boldness comes in sharing the Gospel.

BY THE NAME OF JESUS v 1 – 12

Notice in v1-4 – rejection and reception. (v2 many disturbed-v4 many believed)

v1-2 How do the religious authorities feel about what has happened? Why?

v5-7 Look at the list of those present. How would you have felt facing them?

v8 Peter is faced with this formidable audience -but he is strengthened by the Holy Spirit . How different is Peter from the courtyard experience (Luke22v54-62). How has this come about?

v8-11 Peter does not focus on the healing but on Jesus. What may we learn from this?

v12 Peter here declares –‘One way, Jesus Christ’. See Jesus words in John 14v6.

In what ways are we ever tempted to alter the message to avoid rejection?

What present day issues that we face could we turn to sharing the Gospel?

CONVINCED BUT NOT CONVERTED v 13 – 22

v13 ordinary people with extraordinary courage. What exactly are the religious authorities amazed at? Surely this is a result of spending time with Jesus.

v14 They agreed a miracle had happened – yet they did not believe in Jesus.

Is this a case of ‘seeing is not believing’?

v15-17 Good to listen in to their ‘pow-wow’ –and hear their reasoning.

How do the authorities respond? Why do they respond like that?

v18-22 The authorities have decided –we don’t like it, so stop it!

Think of what they are saying ‘We want to silence those whom God has commissioned to preach the Gospel’. Remember Acts 1v8. How do Peter and John respond? (v20)

Are we more concerned about the opinions of those around us –than of God?

Are we forced into silence about Jesus by our culture, or the media, or the opinions of those we know?

PRAYER WHILE FACING PERSECUTION v 23 – 31

They do the best thing –share with their fellowship then turn it over to the Lord in prayer.

Look through their recorded prayer v24B to30., see how it develops. What may you learn from this? What is the main focus and request of their prayer?

A summary - Awe v24, Argument v25-28, Asking v29-30 Answer v31

Do our prayers argue from the great and sovereign purposes of God?

Does a sense of weakness make our praying self-centred - -or does it send us to pleading for boldness to exalt Jesus?

Consider our prayer life - - when life is threatening, it is absolutely essential and right for us to run to God our Heavenly Father for help. We need to start with Who He is and remind ourselves that He is Sovereign. This then leads us to pray in line with what His will is for us, and the way He wants us to go. God surely answered their prayer!!

In closing read James 5 v13A and 1 Peter 5 v 6 and v 10-11.

D.J.

PRAYER TOPICS:

Outreach opportunity - -Harvest Supper – Saturday 5th Oct at 7pm

Harvest Thanksgiving Services – Sunday 6th Oct.

Leadership – Elders, Deacons and Trustees