

**5/17/15**

## **Acts 4:1-12**

### **A Costly Lifestyle**

*And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, **2** greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. **3** And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. **4** But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. **5** On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, **6** with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. **7** And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” **8** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, **9** if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, **10** let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well. **11** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. **12** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

Richard Niebuhr was the lesser-known brother of the renowned liberal theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Both brothers were raised in the church but abandoned Christian orthodoxy in their college years and went on to be major players in moving the mainline church away from Biblical faithfulness.

What has resulted is a Christ-less Christianity found in many denominations even now. In his book, “Kingdom of God in America” written almost 80 years ago, Niebuhr said, “Americans want a God without the wrath that will bring men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the work of a Christ without a Cross.”

He didn’t mean to be prophetic but he could’ve just as easily been writing about the church in America today. The crucified, resurrected Christ has always been offensive. From the very beginning Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:23, “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the gentiles.” Don’t be surprised when people don’t appreciate, like, or agree with your faith in Christ. Gospel living has always been costly. We see that played out in the text in front of us.

In Chapter 3, Peter and John have just been conduits of God’s healing grace and the miracle drew a crowd. Peter did what any good preacher does with a crowd: he preached the Gospel message. V 4 tells us that 5,000 men had come to Christ but

something else happened as well. Peter's forceful and convictional preaching put him at odds with the world around him and started 2000 years of Christian living as uneasy exiles in a world that doesn't love God. We are finding out more and more that

## **Gospel Living Is a Costly Lifestyle**

Here's something else to think on: you can arrest the Apostles, but you can't arrest the Gospel, a Gospel that is: accomplished by the Father, centered around the Son, empowered by the Spirit, and explained by the Word.

The Gospel always confronts the culture. So how do we live a Gospel lifestyle even though it can be so costly?

### **We Rely On the Spirit**

I mean the Holy Spirit, the third person in the trinity, and He empowers us. Let me show you where I get this.

Let's pick up in v. 7 and read 7 & 8. *And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"* **8** *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,"* Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter already received the Holy Spirit just like every believer does when you are born again as a believer in Christ.

This in v. 8 is something different. This is a moment of divine empowerment for the need of the moment. Remember now, Peter had been in this particular judgment hall before. The last time he was in this situation, his courage left him, his resolve broke under the pressure of a servant girl.

This time was different. What does it say in v. 8? Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit*. Being filled with the Holy Spirit brings an influx of courage at a critical hour. And we are going to need it. Do you remember what Jesus told the disciples about the coming persecution and how to rightly handle it? Luke records it for us in Luke 12:11-12: "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Jesus gives these instructions again in Luke 21:12-15: "They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. V. 13. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. V. 14, settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict."

The Bible indicates that a yielded-ness to the Holy Spirit is the key to handling pressure, pain and persecution. The picture here of Peter (all through the book of Acts) is that that persecution press and pain just drove him closer to the Lord.

How then do we know we are filled with the Spirit and ready for whatever tomorrow brings? I'd like to ask a couple of rhetorical questions to help you reflect on whether or not you are filled with the Holy Spirit:

1. **Do you have a greater love for Christ?** Are you wanting to be conformed to his image. Do you want, as Paul said in Philippians, "To know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering"? If not, you aren't fill with the Holy Spirit.
2. **Do you have a greater love for God's word?** Are you reading, meditating, and enjoying God's word? Is He speaking to you through His Word? Are you praying through His Word? Don't keep your Bible closed and tell me God's not speaking to you. Open the book!
3. **Has praying become more important?** Have you realized your need for God's grace in your life? Are you seeking His wisdom and provision and intervention?
4. **Are you more and more concerned with the Lost?** Does it bother you to pass your neighbors and know they are going to Hell? Do you increasingly long to be on mission, to reach the unconverted?
5. **Do you increasingly hate the sin in your own life?** Do you seek more and more, as John Owen said, "to be killing sin" or will sin be killing you?

Gospel living is a costly lifestyle. Rely on the Holy Spirit...

### **We Trust the Suffering of Christ**

When I say suffering, what I am saying is that we believe Christ is enough. In this passage, Peter declares a Gospel that is as wide as the world, as deep as our sin and, in v. 12, is as narrow as no other name. In v. 10 Peter gives doctrinal clarity:

1. Jesus of Nazareth – Real man
2. You killed – died for sinners at the hand of sinners
3. Whom God raised from the dead – Victory of Death, Hell & Grace
4. Jesus – He has the power to save

He is enough. Notice what Peter says in v. 11, "this Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone." Here's what Peter has done. He reached into Psalm 118 to declare you can build your life on Christ. He's the stone. Isaiah 28:16 says "I am the one who has laid a foundation in Zion – a stone – a tested stone – a precious stone – a sure foundation. Whoever believes will not be in haste."

I Peter 2:8 tells us that Christ is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Samuel called him "my Ebenezer, Stone of Help." At one point near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus himself quoted Psalm 118:22-23 just like Peter did in Matthew 21:42 when Jesus said to them, "Have you never read the scriptures? The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is a reminder when all the world around you is crumbling, when your heart is broken, money is gone, and kids have hurt you...when the world is scary. All you have to do is listen to Glenn Beck on Fox News. When you are nervous about life it's good to read our old hymn from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, "*How Firm a Foundation*." The last stanza says:

*The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to its foes.  
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.*

Come to Christ, a sure foundation.

It is costly, but we rely on the Spirit, trust the suffering of Christ, and bring glory to the Father.

*(Pastor prays)*