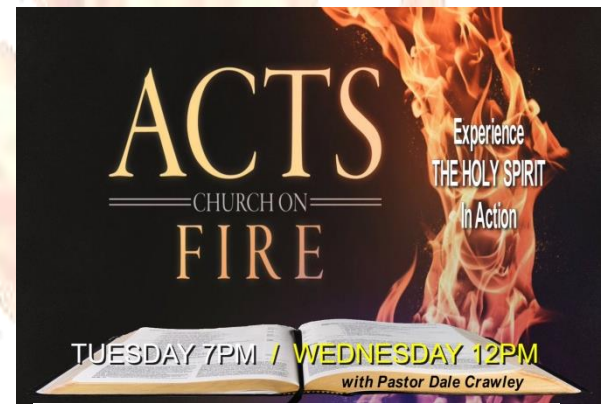


ACTS 4 – “PERSECUTION ... PRAYER ... and POWER!”

When I read this chapter in the Book of Acts I think of “*The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*” — (Walt Disney’s version) ... I see Mickey Mouse as the sorcerer’s apprentice, using magic powers to do his work. And then, when Mickey tries to put an end to it ... it only grows and grows!



October 8th – 9th, 2019

So it is with the gospel. Jesus came to Israel as her Messiah. There was a moment in time when Jesus’ kingdom appeared to be appealing, but it wasn’t long before Israel’s leaders decided they wanted to have nothing to do with Jesus, or with His kind of kingdom.

Finally, they succeeded in putting Him to death. “*That’s that!*” they must have said to one another. ***But that wasn’t it!*** First of all ... there was the problem of the empty tomb. Then there was the problem of the apostles, transformed by Pentecost. And now, there was the problem of a well-known beggar, crippled for more than forty years, who was healed “***in the name of Jesus***” ... the One the Jews of Jerusalem rejected and put to death. The harder they tried to “lay to rest” Jesus of Nazareth, His claims and His teachings, the more the matter multiplied!

THE BEGINNING OF PERSECUTION

5000 are saved at the preaching of Peter’s second sermon, but the apostles are arrested and imprisoned. The reason given for their arrest is that they preached the resurrection (v. 2). The apostles are brought to trial before the Sanhedrin to explain the power or name they used in healing the lame man. Peter answers by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:19-20) ... and presents Jesus as “***the only way of salvation***” (John 14:6)... and ***His Name*** as the name of power and salvation (Romans 10:13).

THE COUNCIL’S REACTION (13-22)

A. What the Council Saw ...

- 1) The boldness of Peter and John
 - a. Perceived as uneducated and untrained men
 - b. Realized as having been with Jesus
- 2) The man who had been healed ... “*standing*” with Peter and John against whose healing nothing could be said.

B. What the Council Reasoned ...

- 1) A notable event has occurred, evident to all, none could deny
- 2) To prevent further spread, to threaten the apostles

C. What the Council Did ... They commanded Peter and John ...Not to speak at all, or teach anymore **“in the name of Jesus”**.

PETER AND JOHN'S REPLY ... Shall they listen to the council or God? They cannot but speak ... what they have seen and heard!

PRAYER FOR BOLDNESS

The apostles after being reprimanded by the Sanhedrin return (v.23) to the company of the early church ... and report all that had been said to them. **The new church went to prayer**, quoting Psalm 2:1-2. Notice ... they did not pray for cessation of persecution, but for courage to speak the Word of God (v. 29). Also notice ... the power of prayer (vv. 30, 31), also the high plane of spirituality of the early church.

THE CHURCH GOES INTO PRAYER (24-31)

A. Addressed to the Lord God ... Creator of all things ...

B. Asking for all boldness in the face of such threats ...

- 1) That His servants may speak His word.
- 2) That His hand might stretch out ... to heal, to do signs and wonders through the name of His holy Servant Jesus!

C. THE ANSWER

- 1) **The place in which they were assembled ... was shaken**
- 2) **They were “all filled” with the Holy Spirit**
- 3) **They spoke the word of God with boldness!**

POWER IN THE CHURCH

A. THEIR UNITY (32)

- 1) The multitude of believers were of **one heart and one soul ...**
- 2) None claimed their possessions as their own; they had all things in common.

B. THEIR GREATNESS (33)

- 1) With **great power** the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Jesus.
- 2) And **great grace** ... was upon them all!

C. THEIR LIBERALITY (34-37)

- 1) None among them **lacked** what they needed
 - a. For all who possessed lands or houses sold them ...
 - b. The proceeds were laid at the apostles' feet ...
 - c. Distribution was made ... as each had need.