

Courageous
April 3, 2016
Allen Power

Acts 4:1-13

Opening: Let's set the scene. You can follow along in Chapter three. It was three in the afternoon. Peter and John were going to the temple for the daily prayer meeting. Simply going to pray. But nothing was simple for Peter and John anymore. As they made their way they encountered one of the many panhandling beggars who lined the way into the temple. He was a "regular." Crippled from birth; his friends carried him to his favorite spot every day.

As Peter and John passed he asked them for money. He was so frantic in asking everyone that the beggar didn't even make eye contact with anyone. Peter stopped. Verse four -- *⁴ Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, * get up and* walk!"*

⁷ Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. ⁸ He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

⁹ All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God.

¹⁰ When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! ¹¹ They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John. ¹

As the amazed crowd surrounded them, Peter saw an opportunity and began to speak: *¹⁶ "Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes. ¹⁷ "Friends, * I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance. ¹⁸ But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things. ¹⁹ Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.²*

What a miracle! This man was over forty years old and today he walked, no, leaped, for the first time. What a message! This Jesus who heals also saves us from our sins! This was tremendous! No, this is bad. It was bad for the bosses of the temple. These crazy fishermen are stirring things up around here!

Look at Acts 4:1–2 (ESV)

¹And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

- Let's do some observation: **who are the “bad guys” in this scene?**
- **What does the term “captain of the temple” tell you about the situation?**
- The temple had a security force. The captain of the temple guard was responsible for maintaining order in the temple.³ The priests brought some “muscle” to deal with these rebellious teachers!
- **What made them so annoyed? Why would talk of the resurrection have riled up the Sadducees?**
- The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, or for that matter, angels or spirits. They were also loyal to the Roman government; focused on wealth; and didn't want to “rock the boat.” Peter and John were shaking up everything for the Sadducees.⁴

³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

- While they were leading Peter and John away in handcuffs, they had to step over the five thousand men repenting at the altar!
- A truth to take home: You can lock up the messengers; but you can't lock up the message!

- Another truth: Critics and cynics can try to deny the Holy Spirit's work, but you can't hide it from true believers who see it, feel it, and respond to it.
- This large response wasn't just a victory in evangelism; God used it to influence the outcome for Peter and John. We'll see that in a minute.

⁵On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.

- These were the highest-ranking religious leaders of the Jewish faith.
- Annas was the former high priest who the people still considered the leader of the temple even though his son-in-law Caiaphas was the current high priest.
- **Where have we bumped into Annas and Caiaphas before in the New Testament?** (John 18:13-24)

⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

- There was no debating the miracle; it was obvious. Their concern was where the source of the power that made it happen. **Where have we seen this same scene played out in the New Testament?** (Matthew 21:23)
- Like any prosecuting attorney, these temple leaders were asking a question for which they knew the answer; they wanted it on the record.
- In the temple the day before Peter had proclaimed: ¹⁶And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. - Acts 3:16 (ESV)
- Peter was not intimidated by their accusation. In fact, HE indicts THEM:

Acts 4:8–10 (NLT)

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, ⁹are we being questioned today because we've

done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? ¹⁰ Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,* the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.

- Verse eight: Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. This continues the theme we've been discussing in Acts. **When does the Holy Spirit come into the soul of every believer? How do we know Peter already had the Holy Spirit living inside him?** (John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8) ⁵
- Peter already possessed the Holy Spirit when the religious leaders confronted him and John. This verse says he was "filled" with the Holy Spirit. **What does that tell you about how the Holy Spirit was working in this situation and how He works in believers today?**
- Warren Wiersbe tells us: *Note that Peter was again filled with the Spirit (see Acts 2:4) and would experience another filling before the day ended (Acts 4:31). There is one baptism of the Spirit, and this is at conversion (1 Cor. 12:13), but there must be many fillings of the Spirit if the believer is to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:18ff).*⁶
- Then Peter boldly preached a gospel message to those who had Jesus' blood on their hands:

¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- Verse twelve should be a memory verse for every believer!
- Robert Jeffress, Pastor of First Baptist Dallas has a new Book: "Not All Roads Lead to Heaven." He states: "...*the single greatest stumbling block for nonbelievers coming to faith in Christ is the issue of exclusivity.*"⁷
- Sadly, even church-going believers doubt that Jesus is the only way. Jeffress cites a recent Pew research study that "...*revealed that 70 percent of Americans with a religious affiliation say that many religions – not just their own – can lead to eternal life. 'That's easily explained', someone might argue. 'Almost*

everyone in America has some religious affiliation, whether they are genuine Christians or not. But surely the statistic among evangelical Christians, who are known for their belief in the Bible, is different.’ Not by much. A 2008 poll of thirty-five thousand Americans revealed that 57 percent of evangelical church attenders believe that many religions can lead to eternal life.”⁸⁹

- The first defense of the faith believers must give is verse twelve. There is no other name by which we can have eternal life! Jesus is the only way.

¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

- That last sentence jumps off the page to me. “They recognized that they had been with Jesus.” What about you and me? Are we recognized as bold defenders of the faith who live in the power of the Spirit of God?
- A little discussion: **In what ways can it be intimidating to think of having to be bold in defending the faith you have in Jesus?**
- When it comes to boldly defending our faith, God uses the same method He uses in every part of the Christian life. He takes care of the supernatural part and we have to do our part. **How does God do the supernatural part?** (Hint: it’s emerging as the theme of this study in Acts!) So, **how can we do our part to get ready to defend our faith?**
- Over three years day to day with Jesus, the twelve apostles got a “Masters” degree (see what I did there?) We need to earn one as well.
- Susan’s term for teaching your kids: “A teaspoonful at a time.”

Jesus spoke:

Matthew 10:16–20 (ESV)

Persecution Will Come

¹⁶“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to

bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

- So what happened to Peter and John? We said earlier that the large crowd of new converts had an influence on the outcome.

Acts 4:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ ...“What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.”

- You hear those words in the halls of power in our world today. What do we do with these Christians? Let’s warn them to speak no more in this name.

Acts 4:23–24 (ESV)

²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

Acts 4:29 (ESV)

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

Acts 4:31 (ESV)

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) tells us...

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

- In today's world followers of Christ had better be pursuing our "Masters" degree in defending the faith? Are you working on yours?
- You only get it through time with the Master and in His word.
- You get it day by day, a "teaspoonful" at a time. Classes are enrolling today. Don't miss your chance to prepare to make a defense for Him.

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ac 3:4–11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ac 3:16–19). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 362). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 362). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Blum, E. A. (1985). John. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 343). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. John 20:21-22 - So **He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.** The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God's creative work in making Adam (Gen. 2:7). Now this post-Resurrection "breathing" was a new kind of creative work for they would soon become new creations (Eph. 2:8–10). This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later. John MacArthur says since they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, this was a "pledge" that the Holy Spirit was to come."

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 416). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

⁷ Not All Roads Lead to Heaven – © 2016 by Robert Jeffress – Baker Books

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2008/12/18/many-paths-to-heaven/>
<http://www.pewforum.org/2008/12/18/many-americans-say-other-faiths-can-lead-to-eternal-life/>
<http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/05/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>