

What kind of church do we want to be?

Small Group Notes 13th June 2021

ACTS 4:1-31

Peter and John before the Sanhedrin

⁴ The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

⁵ The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: 'By what power or what name did you do this?'

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: 'Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is

“the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.”^[a]

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.'

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ 'What are we going to do with these men?' they asked. 'Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.'

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, 'Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

The believers pray

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

“Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the Lord
and against his anointed one.”^{[b] [c]}

²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Starter question:

If you were able to hear the sermon last Sunday, did anything stand out or make you think differently?

Sermon Reflection

Peter and John ask God to heal a man crippled from birth and miraculously he is healed! As result, they get the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus, that he is the only way to be saved with a crowd in the temple courtyard, and find themselves in front of most of the jury who tried and condemned Jesus to death. They are threatened and told never to speak in the name of Jesus again. They go back to the others and share what has happened.

Question 1: Have you ever shared your faith and been rejected or attacked for it? What happened?

Question 2: How did it change your relationship with that person / those people? (e.g. areas of conversation you avoid, impact of friendship, etc)

Sermon Reflection

As Peter and John share what has happened, the gathered church realise that there is now a significant decision for them to make – will they obey the authorities and keep silent or continue to make Jesus known? And so they pray. Read the prayer again if you like - Acts 4 v24-30) They pray three things. First, they remember it is God who is in charge, not the authorities who are trying to silence them. Second, they ask that God would allow them to speak boldly and finally they ask that He would stretch out His hand to heal and perform miraculous signs.

Question 3:

In what ways do you think we stay silent, either as a church or personally?

Question 4:

What would speaking boldly look like for us as a church?

Question 5:

In what way do you think you could speak boldly and to whom? Its perfectly ok if the answer to that is ‘I do not know’. There is a possible next step in question 7.

Question 6:

In the same line of thought, what would it look like if God answered the prayer ‘Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus’ here in Dorking? Is it feasible? Possible? Something you could pray and for whom?

Sermon Reflection

V31 tells us *'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.'* Boldness does not come from positive self-talk but comes from the Holy Spirit. Healing similarly is a gift of God, but we do need to ask both for boldness (and opportunities) and pray God would meet needs (healing and wholeness) when we see it

Question 7:

In your weekly routine, where could you ask God for boldness to share or look for an opportunity to pray for healing? (It could be going to the shops, work, family members)

Conclusion

Could you nominate someone in your home group to pray the prayer the followers of Jesus did in this passage holding in mind that place or person you shared in question 7. It's a big prayer – just check in that you feel comfortable praying it!

²⁹ Now, Lord, enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'

If you can and feel comfortable, be quiet and still and listen as a group for a minute or two. You may find a verse from scripture comes to mind, an old friend to contact, a picture, a sense or emotion. Share those as a group at the end and pray if appropriate.

Final Question:

If you could **take just one thing away from today** for you to apply personally, what would it be?

Thanks small group leaders – so grateful for your time preparing, supporting and leading your groups.