

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 7

PETER AND JOHN RESPOND



Scripture Text: Acts 4:23-37

Our last lesson told how the Jewish rulers threatened Peter and John and commanded them not to teach or speak in the name of Jesus. Keep in mind that **Acts 1:8** is fulfilled in these lessons.

In today's lesson we get a firsthand look at the response of these people of God to the threats of the religious leaders of that day. We can learn the following points from their example. They desired God's glory first. They went to their own people and prayed together as their first recourse. They had no self-pity or self-interest. They kept in view their essential purpose of spreading the Gospel. The saints were in unity. They desired unity with the will of the Father. The Holy Spirit controlled all. We can add to the number by following the way of the early church. Thank God for those who are speaking the Word of God with boldness!

MEMORY VERSE: *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.*

—Acts 4:29

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—**Romans 15:1-11** Mutual helpfulness.
- Tue.—**1 John 3:1-12** Obedience in action.
- Wed.—**Galatians 6:1-10** Forbearance and helpfulness.
- Thu.—**2 Corinthians 9:1-11** Cheerful service.
- Fri.—**Isaiah 41:8-20** The Divine Helper.

Devotional Reading: **I John 4:7-21** The source of love.

Agreement in Prayer

Acts 4:23-28 Being let go, they went to their own company—the church, those who could agree with them in prayer—and reported all. The saints received the news with a desire to do more. **They lifted up their voice**—they prayed as one voice in unity—to God. They praised and honored God. They asked His help. They acknowledged God as Creator of all. They reminded God that this opposition was foretold in **Psalms 2:1-3**, so there was no cause for surprise. The rulers' action was primarily against Jesus. Hence, no self-pity was proper. The Crucifixion was recalled. Jesus' example was their way of meeting persecution.

Their Prayer

Acts 4:29-30 Grant . . . that with all boldness they may speak thy word that God would continue to stretch forth His hand to heal, that signs and wonders may be done. How? **By the name of thy holy child Jesus.** They asked for boldness to do that which had angered the priests and elders—that it be done in the name of Jesus. These essentials must be kept up in spite of all opposition. There must be a blending of our wills with God's will in order to have prayer answered.

A Quick Answer

Acts 4:31 When they had prayed, the place was shaken. They did not have to wait long. God sent a miracle to show His presence. They were in shape to pray—in the Spirit. They prayed in the will of God. God

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wanted them to have their desire. The building shook. **They were all filled with the Holy Ghost**—not an infilling, but a refilling. He lived in them, and he made Himself felt. He controlled. They felt that leaping of the heart that saints know, an upsurge of fullness of the Spirit. **They spake the word of God with boldness**—as they had prayed to do, as God wanted.

It is noteworthy that these brethren prayed, not for protection, but for help to go on spreading God's Word. They did not lose sight of their purpose, their number-one business. Some today, for lack of encouragement, because of opposition or slighted feelings, the attraction of entertainment or lesser pursuits, lack of vision, and, most of all, lack of the power of the Holy Spirit, have turned from the spread of the Gospel. We **MUST** not lose sight of the one vital work of the church.

A Deepening of God's Love

Acts 4:32-35 Those **that believed**—the church—**were of one heart and of one soul**. Their unity went deeper than outward agreement only, or likeness of opinion. Their hearts and souls were one. One Spirit in all made all one. **They had all things common**—shared equally. Their unity included their possessions. We are not commanded to hold possessions in common. It was optional (**Acts 5:4**). The practice was never generally followed through the New Testament. It would require an all-saved group. There must be a common Spirit before common goods can succeed. This was before God had appointed pastors for His people. In our day, God has given true pastors to lead the saints in helping those among them who have need. (See **Romans 12:13**.) **With great power**—the power that Jesus said the Holy Spirit would bring—**gave the apostles witness of the resurrection**—as they had prayed to do. **Great grace**—the unmerited favor of God, the life of God—**was upon them all**. **Possessors of lands or houses sold them** and laid the money **at the apostles' feet**. They trusted each other. **Distribution was made** by the Apostles according to the need.

A Gift From the Heart

Acts 4:36-37 **Joses . . . surnamed Barnabas . . . (The son of consolation)**. To be given this name in a group, all of whom were filled with the love of God, was indeed a high compliment. He was a Levite. Levites were of the tribe of Levi and helpers of the priests in the temple worship. They were members of the Sanhedrin, or court of the Jews. Barnabas came from Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea. He sold his land and placed the money in a fund to be distributed by the Apostles.

JUST A THOUGHT

Civilization without Christianization is a curse to any people.