

SESSION FIVE
ACTS NOTES CALVARY METHODIST CHURCH
C Pinkney - - THE FIRST PERSECUTION

Opening scripture reading: 1Cor.2:1-12 (Paul references ministering in the Power of the Spirit)

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God

We read previously of the first miracle performed by Peter and John, the healing of the lame man at the temple. (Acts 3:1-10)

A: Now we see in these verses that they are beginning to do the things that the Lord had commanded in the great commission. B: Note that this healing prayer is not directed to God but spoken to the sick man as a “command.” C: Peter and John are clearly full of faith in Christ's ability to heal. “In Jesus' name” is the way healing was directed.

Preaching in Solomon's Portico Acts 3:11-16

Peter addresses the people who were witnesses of the healing. Peter uses this testimony of what he has seen the Lord do through the Holy Spirit. (You shall be witnesses of Me!) The miraculous is a calling card for the Gospel message. John 3:11 *“Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you (unbelievers) do not receive Our witness.”*

(R 1:11-16) Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. 12 So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 16 And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

A. Paul takes this and every opportunity to teach and explain how the Works of the Messiah Jesus are continuing now through his believers. Now he has a chance to preach the pentecost message again, to a wider audience.

B. Every demonstration of the power of God draws more interest and 2000 more are called to become disciples. Numbers are added to the growing body of believers.

C. The Pharisees and Jews soon have great concern over any continued interest in Jesus the crucified messiah and will move quickly to try to quench this movement.

(R 3:17-26): Peter is now teaching those Jews who witnessed the miracle. Again preaching the risen Messiah and the promise of new life and hope in him.

“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,[a] 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’[b] 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold[c] these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’[d] 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

Chapter 4: Trouble in Jerusalem

The Religious Authorities Strike Back (Peter and John Arrested)

(R3 CHAPTER 4 1-4)

Vs 1-4 - **1** 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 and 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, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

Peter Addresses the Sanhedrin - - No longer a friendly audience. The Rulers of the Jews are furious.

(R 5: C 4: 5-12)

5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. **6** Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men 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 of the people and elders of Israel: **9** If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, **10** let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole. **11** This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ **12** Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

A. This chapter introduces the continuing theme of opposition by the religious authorities. This resistance is ongoing and grows more intense with each passing testimony of the Messiah's miracles done through his simple unlearned disciples. Stephen later testifies at his day of martyrdom, that this religion has always opposed the Holy Spirit throughout its history.

B. The priests were mainly of Sadducean stock to whom the doctrine of the resurrection was anathema. However, the guilt situation was a sore and sensitive one since the decision of the Sanhedrin had been described as murder. Primarily it is Christ’s resurrection which is proclaimed and the principle of resurrection is also proclaimed.

C. V. 4 indicates that the total of *men* who believed now reached 5,000. This amounts to an explosion of men and women being drawn to the new faith. The Sanhedrin (vs. 6–7) must have virtually been that which tried Jesus. Imagine how they must regard their status being questioned and scrutinized.

Peter’s Third Address - - Peter now gives an accounting to the Rulers of the Jews. He lays the blame for the death of Messiah directly at the feet who should have realized his coming. The Jewish disciple's mindset still is

framed by the mindset of the hope of a Messianic kingdom in the near term and the failing of the Jewish rulers to receive him.

(READER 6: 4:8 - 12) 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 cripple and are 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** He is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. **12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

A. Peter’s special endowment of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 21: 14f.) enables him to speak authoritatively to this assembly of the highest ranking authorities. Such a task might otherwise over-awe a ‘simple’ person. Firmly claiming a *good* deed has been done, he attributes the miracle to Jesus ACTS: The man healed is present (v. 9). The good then (in Jesus) has been rejected by those who should have discerned God’s Chosen One.

B. The rejected Stone is a theme of the OT (Psa. 118: 22, Isa. 28: 16), and Jesus had already used it (Luke 20: 17–18, Mark 12: 10f., Matt. 21: 42). *The headstone was that which held the two walls together and over which the whole temple had its structure. ‘in which all the nations are one’* (I Cor. 3: 11, Ephes. 2: 20).

C. **V. 12** The claim for Jesus to be the Saviour as unique it is now a calm statement of fact held by those born of the Spirit –

D. ‘By what name?’ is powerfully given. ‘Saved’ of course refers to the total release from sin and the complete healing of the sinner, and this would relate to the resurrection.

READ 13- 20 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized 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. “Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. **17** But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men 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, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. **20** For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Conflict

4: 13–20 No less a miracle than the healed man (here standing) is the transformation of Peter and John. They give no timid answer, but being in formal debate and discussion they acquit themselves admirably. They speak as did Jesus. The Sanhedrin has its mouth stopped (v. 14) because of the powerful evidence of the healed man who is present. It is notable that they cannot (and do not) deny the resurrection of Jesus, although they do not believe it. In v.17 we need not think of them believing that there is efficacy in *the Name*, but rather that the Name incites, inflames and enlarges the new ‘sect’. It also hangs back to the judgement decision of the rulers, now seen to be wrong. The answer by Peter to their prohibition to use the Name is both strong and authoritative. Politely they refuse to desist from using Jesus’ Name. When Peter says ‘we cannot but speak Of what we have seen and heard,’ he is including the fact that what is preached is wonderful, ACTS: a Commentary 34 ACTS 4:21–32 necessary, and in itself the motivation for utterance.

READ C:21 -31 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’ Prayer **23** On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all

that the chief priests and 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 heaven 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 take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.[c]'[d]*

27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people[e] 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 miraculous 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.

4:21–31 The report of the two apostles to 'their own' (ie. Other apostles, close friends, etc.), is not a criticism of the Sanhedrin but a statement of the critical situation. The immediate corporate prayer in unison is in itself a remarkable fact. The address of God as 'Sovereign Lord', ie. 'Lord. Almighty,' is to His omnipotence as Creator and therefore One able to do all things. The *immediate* use of Psalm 2, stated to be prophetic, suggests that the early church, as it were, saw these Messianic events through the 'lens' of Psalm 2. That is they saw Jesus as the King, the Son, the Anointed One of that Psalm, and the rulers and the people as the rebellious. Psalm 2:7 and Matthew 3:17 would have been linked. The great point here is the Sovereignty of God, already stressed by Peter in 2:23 (of. 3: 18). Whilst the Psalm is applied to situations of the rebellious people (the Jews) and the rulers – Herod and Pilate, plus the Gentiles – it is not limited to them. Moreover the use of 'holy servant Jesus' (vs. 27 and 30} suggests the whole Messianic outreach of Psalm 2: 8ff. The prayer itself is offered in unison (and unity) and has astonishing results. The place is Visibly shaken and the group is again filled with the Holy Spirit. They were filled in one act (aorist) but 'were going on' (imperfect) speaking the word of God with boldness because this was what they had done before. They did not pray for a filling, but received it. They were not necessarily lacking filling, but the affusion was (evidently) necessary, being both a sign and an enablement.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

READ 32 – 37 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. **33** With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. **34** There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales **35** and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. **36** Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), **37** sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Commentary C4:32–37

A. These verses show the degree of intimacy and the fellowship of like minded and separated for the reality of a new kind of people whose entire focus is upon God. This state is related to the Spirit of love and fellowship. The unity of the Spirit worked out in the loving concern of all as brethren. The grace of God overcame the possessiveness of the rich and greed of the poor.

B. None were needy; the principle was 'distribution...to each as any had need.' It was not equal distribution of wealth. The trust of the apostles was also admirable although the apostles themselves do not seem to have been the distributors. In vs. 36–37 Barnabas is well-described as to race, country and disposition no doubt with his later appearances in the book in mind. Barnabas has been introduced and typifies the high level of fellowship and true love (unfeigned love) a consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit. Such a level maintained would be dynamic and winning. Such Satan would view with alarm

and deadly opposition.

ACTS 5: READ - - 1-11

God deals with sin and deception for the first time in the “Age of Grace?”

Questions to be considered:

1. Were Ananias and Sapphira true believers and spiritual reborn?
2. The time was the first of the age of the church “The age of grace” Where was the grace?
3. Do you suppose that Satan was at work to destroy this mighty move of God?
4. What spiritual gift was displayed here by Peter?

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. **2** And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. **3** But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? **4** While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. **6** And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?”

She said, “Yes, for so much.”

9 Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out.” **10** Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. **11** So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.