

Wherever the Gospel is Faithfully Preached..., Part II

Text: Acts 4:1-22

Continued from last time...

9) [Read verses 13]: Seeing the confidence and certainty of the Apostles, and recognizing that they were uneducated men, who had been with Jesus, the Sanhedrin was blown away. Their own artificial, man-centered, self-righteous, self-driven zeal, shattered to pieces, in the face of these lowlife fishermen, who spoke with a level of confidence and authority that spun their heads in circles. These men really believed what they were saying. The risk they were taking; the directness and certainty of their speech; their tone of conviction...stunned the scholarly ilk, which surrounded them. Such is the power and work of the Spirit, who perfects God's praise, out of the mouths of babes!

And the Sanhedrin had no valid argument to offer in their own defense. They don't give one; they merely threaten with violence, because the evidence, which supports the argument and conviction of the Apostles, stands there right before them. The smoking gun; the bloodied knife; the video footage is right there!

10) [Read verse 14]: The evidence was undeniable! The testimony of divine power literally stood in their midst! How do they answer these two unschooled men of conviction? Well first, they must buy some time. They must convene and formulate some kind of a plan to deal with this urgent matter. They cannot very well admit their wrong; they would then have to humble themselves and bow the knee to this Jesus. They would then have to forfeit their own love of power, praise and respect, and be as one of those "sinners." But they cannot argue against the facts, so what do they do?

11) [Read verses 15-17]: "What do we do, men? We cannot deny the obvious. Everyone knows that a miracle has taken place here; indeed, a very powerful one...the man has been lame from birth (for 40 years)! We'd be better off trying to convince the people that Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny are real, than denying the obvious here. So, what do we do? We cannot simply let them do what they are doing either; for that would cause the people to question our wisdom, especially since we just condemned this Jesus to death! We have to stop the bleeding here, before it gets any worse!" "Well, we have no valid argument of defense; we

have no case against them, so we must resort to aggressive measures. Let's severely threaten them; let's tell them that we will have them tortured and put to death, if they continue to teach in the Name of this Jesus! Let's tell them that they are to speak to no one in this Name, anymore! Indeed, if they value life, they will give heed to our commands.

[The religious leaders, whose primary focus was on this life, could hardly comprehend the reality of dying for their faith]

12) [Read verse 18]: They follow through with their plan, and threaten the disciples (and we will find them adhering to this plan in the times ahead---5:40; 7:54-60). And how will the Apostles respond to these severe threats?

13) [Read verses 19-20]: Again, clearly a sign of a Holy Spirit driven boldness! Where God is close to the heart, He is feared above all else! "You judge among yourselves whether we should obey you, over God. But having witnessed all that we have witnessed, we cannot but proclaim the truth! Woe to us if we preach not the Gospel!"

14) [Read Verses 21-22]: They threaten them some more, but then they let them go, because they had no justifiable cause for punishing them. Any attempt to do so, would bring them in great disfavor with the people, who have been glorifying God for the miraculous healing that had taken place. The former lame man, being forty years old and forty years with this malady, was too great a testimony to the fact that this was of God! Imagine punishing these men for such a righteous cause! How could they explain themselves? Better off waiting for another opportunity, as they had done with Christ, so they could maintain the favor of the people, and sustain their pride and self-serving desires.

II. Concluding Thoughts

Immediately following this, the Apostles gather with the brethren, and call a prayer meeting, in order to pray for boldness, in light of the opposition and threats that have come upon them, from the religious leaders.

1) Consider that wherever the Gospel is faithfully preached, opposition will exist.

2) The Word of God will *always* retain its power to save and convert, but we need the boldness to proclaim it! Recognize our need of the Holy Spirit for boldness

and biblical accuracy/discernment. Recognize the need to pray! This is the pattern given us in the early church!

[Natural fear of man; natural inclination to be driven by the physical senses...etc--We need boldness; we need God dependence; We need self-abasement;; we need to pray!]

AMEN!!!