

**"Dealing with Opposition"**

**Part 1**

**Acts 4**

**Introduction:** Many times we have talked about how believers who live for the Lord will ultimately face opposition. Last week in our study of Acts we stopped as Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin and were threatened for proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ.

**Notice Acts 4:17-21**

This was an attempt by the enemy to place them under a blanket of fear to cause them to stop preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This has always been a tactic of Satan. In order to silence God's people he will do his best to instill fear in them. Let us notice a few times when the enemy tried to use fear.

Remember what was said when Elijah came out of hiding and met Obadiah?

**1 Kings 18:7, 13**

*<sup>7</sup> And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?*

*<sup>13</sup> Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?*

The prophets were killed because their message was hated and the killing of the prophets was to deter anyone else from proclaiming the Truth, namely Elijah. We see the enemy's attempt to use fear in Acts 12 also.

**Acts 11:21**

*<sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*

**Acts 12:1-2**

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

*<sup>2</sup> And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

Fear has always been a tool of the enemy and here in Acts 4 the enemy is attempting to use fear again to silence the disciples of Jesus Christ. They are threatened with physical harm if they do not cease from preaching in the name of Jesus.

**Application:**

Fear is still a tool that Satan uses today, and he will do all he can to instill fear to keep God's people from walking in obedience. How are we to deal with the fear that the demonic world brings upon us?

**Matthew 10:27-28**

*<sup>27</sup> What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

*<sup>28</sup> And **fear not them which kill the body**, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Notice what Paul wrote to Timothy because he was concerned about Timothy being overcome with fear.

**2 Timothy 1:6-8**

*<sup>6</sup> Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*

*<sup>7</sup> **For God hath not given us the spirit of fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

*<sup>8</sup> Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;*

Paul was in prison, and he was concerned that Timothy may be fearful to exercise his gift thinking the same thing may happen to him.

Let us now see how Peter and John managed the threats.

**I. The Apostle's Prayer**

**Notice Acts 4:23**

We will get to their prayer in a moment but first there is something very important to see within this verse. Notice closely where they went when the enemy cast a fiery dart of fear at them. "THEY WENT TO THEIR OWN COMPANY." This means they gathered together

with other believers. They knew there was strength in numbers, and they knew that there would be encouragement from those who were like minded.

**Application:**

This is so very important for us to see. When we are opposed or threatened for our stand for the Lord we should seek to gather together with God's people.

**Hebrews 10:21-25**

*<sup>21</sup> And having an high priest over the house of God;*

*<sup>22</sup> Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

*<sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

*<sup>24</sup> And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

*<sup>25</sup> Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

The writer of Hebrews knew the importance of gathering with fellow believers. He is writing to Hebrew believers that were being tormented with fear and he knew that God would use the other believers for encouragement and comfort.

We too need to understand that when we are in a spiritual battle and the enemy is shooting the darts of fear it is then they we especially need our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. God is the God of all comfort.

**2 Corinthians 3:3-5**

*<sup>3</sup> Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

*<sup>4</sup> Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

*<sup>5</sup> For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

God comforts us that is true, but we need to understand that His comfort often comes through His people. Notice what Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica who were facing severe persecution.

**1 Thessalonians 5:8-11**

<sup>8</sup> *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

<sup>9</sup> *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

<sup>10</sup> *Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

<sup>11</sup> *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

I show you all of this to help us all to understand when we stay away from church and away from God's people, we are missing so much of what God desires for us to have.

Now let us get back to the prayer in Acts 4.

**A. The Petition**

We are going to skip ahead to see what it was which they prayed for and then we will back up and examine a few other points.

**Notice Acts 4:29-30**

They prayed for two major things. They prayed for boldness, and they prayed that through them the mighty hand of God would work to save souls. They never once prayed for the opposition to be removed nor did they pray that God would give to them an easy path to walk. Their main concern was that the Gospel would go out and that people would be saved.

**Application:**

Within this petition there is a lesson for our lives. The lesson that we need to grasp is that the salvation of souls is far more important than you and I having an easy life. We need to understand that sometimes our testimony is far more powerful when we are in the valleys and the storms of life. Sometimes we are a much better testimony when we are under oppression. This can be understood because it is easy to live the Christian life when all is well, but it is more difficult when we are under attack which means when we do our light shines brighter. We could understand it like this; it is much easier to act like a Christian than it is to REACT like a Christian.

When I consider the petition of the apostles here in Acts 4, I am also reminded that the easy path is not always the best. We might think it is but that is because we get so focused upon ourselves and not the needs of others. It is rare to find a believer who is willing to put their desires aside to minister to the needs of others.

Paul names two men who were willing to set their desires aside to minister to the needs of others.

**Philippians 2:19-21, 25-27 30**

<sup>19</sup> *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send **Timotheus** shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.*

<sup>20</sup> *For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.*

<sup>21</sup> *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

<sup>25</sup> *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you **Epaphroditus**, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

<sup>26</sup> *For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.*

<sup>27</sup> *For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

<sup>30</sup> *Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.*

Now let us get to the apostle's prayer.

**B. The Foundation of the Prayer**

These people did not just speak words to be heard not did they speak words of emptiness.

**Notice Acts 4:24**

The word "LORD" here is different. It is the Greek word "despotes." It was a word used of a slave owner or ruler who has power that cannot be questioned. They prayed with power and confidence because they knew God was in control over all of creation. This is very similar to Jeremiah's prayer in Jeremiah 32.

**Jeremiah 32:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> *Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:*

<sup>18</sup> *Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,*

<sup>19</sup> *Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:*

<sup>20</sup> *Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day;*

**Conclusion/Application:**

The apostles faced their opposition understanding that God was ruler over all the world. When we face the trials and the difficulties of life, we would do much better if we truly understood who our God is. He is greater than anything that we face. He promises to be with us at all times and He will equip us for whatever we face. Fear should have no place in our lives because of who our Heavenly Father is.

**Isaiah 40:28-31**

<sup>28</sup> *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

<sup>29</sup> *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

<sup>30</sup> *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:*

<sup>31</sup> *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*