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Finds Confidence In The Authority of Christ Acts Chapter 4

The church. That is what Acts is really about, is not it? The birth of the church, the beginning of the church, the life of the church. The church comes alive in the Book of Acts. We know of a few places in the book of Matthew in which the name “church” is used, which is an interesting phenomenon because the church had not existed during the time of the Gospels or the time in which they were recording those particular incidences. Nevertheless, when Matthew was written, the church was already in existence. We also know that in these particular passages where Jesus Himself actually references the church, He was prophesying and declaring that this church was going to come into being. One of the passages that we often look at, of course, is Matthew 16 where Jesus is talking about the

fact that many people are calling Him by many different names. He turns to His disciples and says,

(Matthew 16:15) “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”

Then Peter makes that wonderful profession of faith.

(Matthew 16:16) “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

(Matthew 16:17) “And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”

(Matthew 16:18) “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

He tells them this before the church existed. We also know that in Matthew 18 He references what is understood now to be church discipline. He says,

(Matthew 18:17) “If the person refuses to listen to them (i.e. continues to sin), tell it to the church...”

There are a couple of snapshots of the church in the Gospels prior to that point. This is a new word in the vocabulary of God's people. We see the church being the very vehicle which God had ordained to be the greatest of all creation. In fact, Colossians (1:18) gives us clarity in this and really describes the church as not only the body of Christ, but as the body of Christ that will reign over all of creation (Revelation 5:10). So the church, though seemingly small and insignificant and not even talked about in the Old Testament to a degree, is now the greatest. It puts a different spin on (Matthew 20:16) “So the last shall be first and the first last.”

The church has been elevated to that highest place. But one of the passages that we make reference to, if you will turn with me, is found in Colossians. Hard to imagine, is it not? The church is perceived by the world as probably the most insignificant of all institutions; and yet, to God, all of creation will be subject to the

church. Colossians tells us about our Lord and Savior in verse 15.

(Colossians 1:15) “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”

(Colossians 1:16) “For by him, all things were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

(Colossians 1:17) “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

But it does not stop there, does it?

(Colossians 1:18) “He is also head of the body,…”

What?

(Colossians 1:18) “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”

(Colossians 1:19) “For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,”

(Colossians 1:20) “and through him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

(Colossians 1:21) “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—”

He goes on and says,

(Colossians 1:22) “if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.”

In Ephesians, Paul reemphasizes this and reiterates that God has chosen the church. If you look with me in

(Ephesians 1:20) “which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,”

Watch verse 21.

(Ephesians 1:21) “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

Watch verse 22.

(Ephesians 1:22) “And He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church,”

(Ephesians 1:23) “which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

That is why He makes mention in

(Ephesians 3:9) “and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;”

It is the church that will bring to light the administration of God to all creation. In other words, the superior position is the church. In

(Revelation 5:10) “You made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

He describes the church as literally reigning with Christ. Yes, sir. Remember that there would not have been a church building built until sometime later. It is an interesting point. When we come to the beginning of Acts 1, we see the people meeting in an upper room. If you were to go to Acts 12, we see that Peter is arrested and imprisoned; then the church begins praying for him. It actually uses the word church in Acts 12:5, saying that they were praying for him. This relatively new word will be used quite substantially throughout the Book of Acts.

(Acts 12:5) “So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church of God.”

Subsequently, Peter is miraculously released from prison by an angel.

(Acts 12:12) “And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who is also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.”

Where is the place where the church was praying? In Mary's house. In Mary's house. Right. Absolutely. This then really becomes the pattern. In fact, I will give you another example of this from Paul's writings in

(Romans 16:3) “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,”

Romans 16:4) “who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;”

(Romans 16:5) “also greet the church that is in their house...”

Priscilla and Aquila hosted a church in their house. Mary had a church in her house. It seems to be a

pattern. In fact, if you look with me in Colossians--I know you are just right there--Chapter 4 of Colossians, what does it say?

(Colossians 4:15) “Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.”

There is a church in Nympha’s house. The same thing is true as you read the little book of

(Philemon 2) “...and to the church in your house.”

How necessary is it to have all those ornate trappings in order to worship? Obviously, it is not necessary. The church was the grandest and most alive when the Spirit of God was moving at its zenith. And there were no ornate buildings. Groups of believers were all meeting in homes. It is one of the fallacies that everything has become so professionalized. Man tries to say that you need something special in order to talk with God. But God says, “Wait a minute. I broke down the barriers. I want you to talk to me in your house.” We see a

wonderful pattern that is developing in the early church. Their focus is a relationship with God. That is what it is. It is the heart that is ushered into worship. It is not about the building or the place. In fact, Paul will actually rent a place in the school of Tyrannus to meet as he goes into the realm of Ephesus; he rents space in a school building. Does that sound strange? Heard that before? Been there, done that. It is not like somebody came up with a new idea. Now when we come to Acts, what we are talking about is the birth of the church. I think it is important for you to feel these pages so you can identify with them. If you only have those first four chapters of the Book of Acts to describe what a church is about, how would you describe a church? I remember at a very early stage in my ministry just going through Scripture and searching for what a church is supposed to look like. Why? Because so much of what we have tried to make churches look like are really not even a close facsimile of what the church really is like. Consequently, when we go through Acts, what we are

seeing is the foundation of the church being laid, which means that the boundaries are being established. It is clarifying the walls of the church. What is the church? Paul makes some great statements as he writes in several passages about it. I am going to ask you to turn to a few passages tonight just so you can see them. Look with me in 1 Timothy, a famous passage in which he declares a doctrine of our confession. Look with me in 1 Timothy 3 as he virtually tells Timothy why he is writing this particular letter to him. Timothy is the pastor of the church.

(1 Timothy 3:14) “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;”

(1 Timothy 3:15) “but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”

Should it surprise us that he makes reference to it as a house--the household of God--which is the church of the living God? Watch the end of the verse where again

he is clarifying—"the pillar and support of the truth." What is the church about? It really does not get that complicated. We are to guard and protect the truth, the doctrine of our faith. We build on our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. What we see in the Book of Acts, what I am hoping that you see, is this living organism that is coming into being. If you go all the way back to Genesis 2, I just want to remind you of the picture that was and has always meant so much to me. Why did God create things the way He created them? We know that God could have snapped His fingers. He could have breathed. He could have simply wished it and everything would have instantly been. Instead, we see things being created in stages. We see things happening over days. He is declaring 24 hour time limits before there is even a sun. Have you thought about that? There was morning, and there was evening. There was morning one day, and He has not even created the sun yet. He is already giving us these time limits. The same is true when we see Him bring about

the man and then bring about the woman. If you look with me in Genesis 2, without getting into too much depth about it, it says this:

(Genesis 2:21) “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.”

It is an operation. It is an operation that is telling us a story. God could have easily gone, “Poof!” Or He could have made a woman appear beside the man. Or maybe made her out of clay, too. He did not want to do that because he was telling us a story. If you look with me in Ephesians 5, Paul goes into some depth to explain the relationship between the husband and the wife. Most of you are familiar with this passage, but let me just read it:

(Ephesians 5:22) “Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord.”

(Ephesians 5:23) “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

We are seeing a very clear analogy here. Right? I mean, the parallel is striking. Christ and the church, husband and his wife. Or you could say Adam and Eve.

(Ephesians 5:24) “But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”

(Ephesians 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

Here again, he continues with the parallel all the way through.

(Ephesians 5:26) “so that He might sanctify her...”

Watch this phrase here.

Ephesians 5:26) “...having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,”

I want you to hang onto that thought because we are going to come back to that. What is the job of the husband? To make sure his wife is clean, to put it simply. Husbands, you are responsible for your wife (as a spiritual leader). That is very clear in this passage. The husband is responsible for the “washing” of the wife. Now, hang onto that thought because we are going to talk about the washing of the water. It is directly tied to the Word.

(Ephesians 5:27) “that He might...”

and here is His responsibility (Ephesians 5:1, 28-29),

(Ephesians 5:27) “...present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

It seems like we just keep switching back and forth. In some cases, you are not even sure. Is he talking about the husband and the wife, or is he talking about the church and Christ? Paul would say, “Yes, that is what we are talking about because they are the same. And,

in fact, his statement will be this, as he comes to the end of this passage:

(Ephesians 5:32) “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the **church.**”

(Ephesians 5:33) “Nevertheless, let each individual among you also love his own wife as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”

It is almost like the husband-and-wife explanation is an afterthought, although we perceive it as taking center stage. In Paul's mind, the church is at center stage. In other words, all these things have been created for the purpose of the church. It is a pretty wild thought. What we see at the very beginning there in creation is selflessness or the sacrifice that is being foretold of the husband to bring about the life of his wife. His wife (or the church) will be born, therefore, out of blood. His wife (or the church) will come about because of His (Jesus) own shedding of blood. It is the picture that the Book of John gives us, and appropriately so, of Jesus hanging on the cross. There was probably some debate

amongst the soldiers on whether His legs should be broken. We know that the prophecy is that not one bone should be broken. We will pick up in Verse 32:

(John 19:32) “So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him;”

(John 19:33) “but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.”

(John 19:34) “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.”

(John 19:35) “And he who has seen has born witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.”

It is an interesting passage because what it is telling us is that a relationship is being born out of sacrifice, and that relationship is coming out of blood and water. It is the bride of Christ that is being born from the side of Christ. The picture that we see in Genesis is a prophecy

of what Christ will do. He will lay down His life for His bride, and His bride will come to life by virtue of Him offering His body for her. John will take this a step further in First John. If you turn with me to:

(I John 5:3) “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”

(I John 5:4) “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.”

(I John 5:5) “Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

(I John 5:6) “This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.”

And then he will put all three together—the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

(I John 5:7) “For there are three that testify:”

(I John 5:8) the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.”

These three bear witness. Now I want you to go back to Ephesians chapter 5, and I want you to see something.

(Ephesians 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives **just as** Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

Husbands, love your wives. We know, according to the text, that the wife is supposed to submit herself to the husband. Now it seems as if the husband has the responsibility to love his wife, and his job is to “sanctify” her. That sanctification, if I read this right, is a purification that comes out of washing her with the water of the Word. Are we reading that right according to verse 26? What exactly does that mean? Well, to some guys, I think that it means that you sit your wife down and read the Bible to her. “We are going to get you clean today. You know, you should be doing this. Are you clean yet? Because I am getting tired of reading all these chapters.” That is not the washing of the water

with the word. In fact, the word in the passage is *logos*, which is the very word that we know that John uses to describe Christ Himself. The picture is that the word of God is the message of His selflessness, and it is that sacrificial life that cleanses your wife. If you begin to live the life of Christ, you will find the birth of a true wife who will love you. It will begin to set her apart as a very unique mate because she will perceive your care for her, and it will begin to cleanse her heart. She will see a love that she has not seen ever before. Then that love that is so sacrificial will begin. I mean, is that not why your heart was changed when you came to the cross? You saw the love of God. You saw that God so loved you with this love that is so pure, so clean. His love cleanses me. The word of God that is coming is not a word that is spoken, but a word that is witnessed by the Spirit of God as a sacrifice that is being made. This is the reason why, if you look with me in verse 25, that 25 precedes verse 26.

(Ephesians 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

Husbands, love your wives **just as** Christ also loved the church and spilled out His blood for her that she might be born. What Scripture is telling us is that the only way that true washing happens is when the water follows the blood. If you go back to John, the only way that true washing can come is if the sacrifice comes first.

Cleansing always comes out of the sacrifice, and that is where the washing comes. The Spirit of God begins to work in that and bears witness that this is true.

(John 15:13) “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

How do I know it is true love? “Greater love has no one than this...” The Spirit bears witness. That is true love.

You know that person will sacrifice for you. They will give for you. The wife is sanctified when she sees this happening. Because of this, the church is born.

Because the church has seen the sacrifice, we stand

back in adoration. We go, “how could He love me this much?” “*Amazing love.*” We sing the song. “*How can it be that Thou, my God, hast died for me?*” What is it that motivates you to serve Him? See? The love of Christ compels me. It is nobody's twisting (my arm). That is why John says in First John 5 that we obey Him. Nothing He tells us to do is burdensome. I want to do it. The church begins to move in this vein. The church is born, and it is born by the blood and now the water and now the breath of God. The church has been born out of the side of Christ. The body of the church is just laying there until God breathes life into His bride. Revelation chapter 19 tells about that final day in which Christ is coming. The marriage supper of the lamb is all set. We have that wonderful day on which the bride and Bridegroom meet together. That is why the Book of Acts will begin with the hope for the return of Christ. They are expectantly awaiting Christ’s return. John will say (I John 3:3) ”And everyone who has his hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Paul will say,

(II Timothy 4:8) “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.”

It is that longing that we have, and that is what we see at the very beginning of the Book of Acts. We see the bride longing for that union with the bridegroom. In the Book of Acts chapter 2, we see the life breathed into the church. How does the church then respond? Acts chapter 3 is very clear that the whole church is focused on talking about the bridegroom. If you were to walk up to a bride and ask, “Are you marrying this guy because he has a lot of money?” If she really loves him, she would respond, “I am insulted that you would ask that.” So immediately within the text that we looked at last week in Acts chapter 3, the whole issue of money has no part in the worship of God. It is taken out of the picture. As Peter says,

(Acts 3:6) “...’I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene...”

We do not have any silver or gold. But let me tell you Who we are going to talk about. The whole focus of the worship of the church is clearly defined in the Book of Acts chapter 3, which is what we talked about last week. The body that is true to Christ is what we see being clarified.

What we are going to see in chapter 4 is the body of Christ having Christ as their authority because Christ is head of the church. Right? Christ is head of the church. Who is the authority over the church? Christ. We are going to take our cues from Him. We are going to take our commandments from Him which is an interesting phenomenon as you go to chapter 4. What you see is that there are very intimidating forces converging upon the church. It is like the church has just been made alive. All of a sudden, these nefarious forces are coming upon them and saying, "You have to do what we tell you to do." The bride is saying, "I cannot do it. I can only do what my husband tells me to do. I am subject to Him." So that is what we are going to read in

chapter 4. The Book of Acts chapter 4 is about the unfolding of the church and the authority over the church. What we are going to see is authority clearly defined in the church. The church is not under the government. We do not submit to the government. Now we want to obey every law we can, but there might be some laws that the government might tell me to obey that I am going to refuse. In the Book of Acts chapter 4, if you look at the very beginning, it is a segway from the healing we talked about in chapter 3. It is at this point that we deal with this whole authoritative issue. In other words, this church, this body, has been born. Now who is in charge of this body? We are going to find out. We come to:

(Acts 4:1) “As they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees came upon them.”

What an interesting group because what you have are those in high positions of religious power and authority plus the captain of the temple guard. He is basically

and fundamentally brute force. Let us look at the different kinds of force represented. The Sadducees have political power. The Sadducees are becoming greatly disturbed because the disciples were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus' name the resurrection from the dead. Of course, that is the focus of the church. Let me just say this. If in fact a church is going to be found guilty of anything, this is it. Unfortunately, churches have been found guilty of many bad things which should never have happened. That is discussed in the Book of First Peter. Peter says (See I Peter 2:19-20), "Look, let none of you suffer as an evildoer because if you do, you deserve it." But he says, "If you suffer for doing what is right, in this you ought to rejoice. And if you suffer for proclaiming the name of Christ, the glory of God rests upon you." If the church is ever to suffer, this is the reason. As a church, we should glory in this. It is not something we should sue about. If the church suffers for proclaiming the name, do not get a lawyer. Have choir practice because this is

the time to praise God. This is not the time to defend yourself. It is a fully misunderstood concept because we believe that it is a privilege to suffer for the name of Christ. You and I both know that God has called us for this purpose. God has actually called you to suffer for His name. People argue, “That is not true, pastor.” It is true. Turn with me to the Book of First Peter. Some things you just have to quote. First Peter chapter 2. I am glad that Peter put this in his letter because his statement is very clear.

(I Peter 2:13) “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution whether to a king as the one in authority,”

(I Peter 2:14) “or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.”

I want you to honor the king. It is not that the church should be dishonorable or disrespectful at all. In fact, if we are arrested by a policeman, we ought to shake his hand and say, “Congratulations. You are doing a good

job. You are doing exactly what they are telling you to do. You are a good man.” That is what we ought to say. “Can I help you with the cuffs? I do not want you to work too hard.

(I Peter 2:13) “Submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to the king as the one in authority,”

(I Peter 2:14) “or the governors sent by him for the punishment of the evildoers and the praise of those who do right.”

(I Peter 2:15) “For such is the will of God that by doing right, you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

(I Peter 2:16) “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves of God.”

(I Peter 2:17) “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

Then he goes on to say,

(I Peter 2:18) “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.”

Now Verse 20 is where authority is defined:

(I Peter 2:20) “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if, when you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”

Now watch verse 21 in case you did not know what you were called to:

(I Peter 2:21) “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His footsteps,”

He even tells us how we are to suffer, which means if you get arrested, you cannot start arguing with people. The passage says,

(I Peter 2:22) (Christ,) “Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth,”

(I Peter 2:23) “and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;”

(I Peter 2:24) “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live in righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

Let us say that you are arrested. What did you do? You were just proclaiming the Name. Right? Did you do anything wrong? No. They claim that you are a criminal. Right? Look again at the verse above.

(I Peter 2:22) (Christ,) “Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth,”

What did He do? He has given us the example to follow. Now let us turn our attention to

(I Peter 4:1) “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourself also for this same purpose, because He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”

Obviously, God has called us for the same work. We truly are called to suffer for righteousness. This is found throughout Scripture. In the Book of Acts, we will see the apostles tormented. We will also see them respond with a praise night. They will gather around and say, “I am just so thankful we were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.” Can you picture Jesus going to the cross with a lawyer? Can you picture that? I cannot picture Him trying to get some sort of defense. In fact, when He had an opportunity to defend Himself, He did not do so. The church, His bride, is going to be following His example. They are not going to acquiesce to what the world tells them to do. The world is telling them, “We do not want you talking about your husband.” “I am sorry. My husband is the reason that I live. He gave His life for me. I would not exist without Him. I am going to talk about Him. I am not going to be ashamed of Him.”

(Acts 4:3) “And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.”

No one wants to be arrested. What would you do in order to avoid arrest? Would you stop talking about Jesus? No talking about Jesus anymore. This is terrible press. Think about this. “How terrible! Who would want to come to church on Sunday? Who would want to come to church? Everybody is being arrested.”

However, the opposite happened. If you look with me in Verse Four, what happens? What happens?

(Acts 4:4) “But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

The church grows stronger under tribulation. Why? Because we are born of blood. This is exactly what Peter will say in First Peter chapter One.

(I Peter 1:18) “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,”

(I Peter 1:19) “but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

We are born of blood. Our heart moves. You tell us we cannot talk about Him? That just ignites us. The Roman Caesars were troubled. They would bring the synod together and discuss the blood. This is an actual quote: “The blood of the saints has become the seed of the saints. The more we shed their blood, the more they grow.” It was one of the most frustrating things to the Romans. They did not know what was happening. Let us return to today’s passage,

(Acts 4:5) “On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;”

(Acts 4:6) “and Annas the high priest was there and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.”

These are all the guys who helped crucify the Savior, so this is not a good bunch to go up against.

(Acts 4:7) “When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, ‘By what power, or in what name, have you done this?’”

I love verse 8. Here again, if I could just get you to see the body of Christ in this, it is like he takes a deep breath. Here we go.

(Acts 4:8) “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of the people.’”

What comes out is the Spirit of Christ Who says, “I cannot stop talking about Him. You want me to be ashamed of Jesus?”

(Acts 4:9) “‘if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,’”

(Acts 4:10) “‘let it be known to all of you and all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health.’”

Then he throws out the Nazarene. “You think I am afraid to call Jesus the Nazarene My Savior? I am not afraid. He is the reason we are standing here. He is the resurrection and the life!” Peter really speaks out, and

the message is so unilateral. He boldly declares that there is no other name given among men whereby you must be saved. You can almost feel like the more he talks, the more powerful the message becomes. Where is this authority coming from? I am going to tell you where it is coming from--the Spirit of God. It is the breath of God within the heart of the church that knows that He gave His blood for her, and the church cannot keep quiet. What does “being filled with the Spirit” look like? I can tell you. Look at verse 8 again. What does it look like? You cannot be shy about Jesus Christ and be filled with the Spirit of God at the same time. It is impossible because the Spirit of God is always going to breathe out Jesus. Always. It is always going to happen. Let us jump down to verse 13.

(Acts 4:13) “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.”

What do they observe as they look at Peter and John? That's right. This guy has papers from somebody else. He has a higher authority. He has documentation that seems to trump their positions and their leadership, and he is not afraid. He goes at them and says, "I know you guys have authority, but we cannot stop talking about ours. Look at

(Acts 4:18) "And when they summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

(Acts 4:19) "But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge.'"

Peter immediately appeals to the highest of all authorities. Another way of putting it is, "We just got orders from God. He says we cannot listen to you." Sadly, the church often is very shy and backs away from lawsuits because its people are afraid of what might come about. If we lose everything we have, so what? It is actually a great advantage to not have a lot.

But if we lost everything we had, so what? That is what we are called to do, is it not? What you see is the loyalty of the church and the authority that this bride has. She says, “I am submissive of one husband and only one, and I am not going to keep quiet about Him. He has already told me what to do. I am going to do what He tells me.” Their response is to realize that they can do nothing with these people. Then they release them and their companions who then gather together with the body of Christ. I like verse 24.

(Acts 4:24) “And when they heard this, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord and said, ‘O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them,’”

Can you just imagine that the same passage comes into their minds as Psalm 146:6. And you know what this reminds me of? It reminds me of that passage in Genesis 2:1. Why is it that the nations are trying to beat up God? Is that not stupid? Why do the Gentiles rage? It is interesting that the quote uses the word *ethnos*

which means the different nations. It literally throws the Jews and their leaders in with the heathen. It says that if they are not accepting Christ, they are just as much a heathen as the Gentiles are. It really does lump them all together.

(Acts 4:25) “who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?’”

(Acts 4:26) “The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers gathered together against His Christ.”

Against His Anointed One. Why would they do that?

(Acts 4:27) “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus whom thou did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel,”

He puts them all in the same bag. You are all heathen. At this juncture, would you be saying, “Tone it down, boys, tone it down.” However, they are getting louder. You can hear that the choir is getting louder. More are

added to the choir. It started with only Peter. Now everybody is singing the same tune. You are beginning to ask what is happening? I like the way that it ends in verse 31:

(Acts 4:31) “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

What does being filled with the Holy Spirit look like? It seems as though you are not shy about proclaiming Christ. Is that what it looks like to you? How does that end? With boldness. With boldness. They look at Peter. They see his confidence. Where did that come from? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. And as it says,

(Acts 4:32) “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed anything that belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”

(Acts 4:33) “And with great power, the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”

(Acts 4:34) “For there was not a needy person among them,…”

A lot of people say that this is proof positive that the church really should live as a commune. That is not what this text is about at all. Let me tell you what it is about. Let me tell you why the people are doing this. You know what has just happened? They ticked off the “social security” agent because, as you well know, the blind man’s parents were very skittish about even admitting that their son had been healed by Jesus. They were afraid they might be thrown out of the synagogue. That is the equivalent of “social security” (government financial assistance). If the temple closes down and closes off to anybody that does not follow the Jewish tradition, the widows are not going to be cared for. The poor are not going to be cared for because that is what the alms go toward. We are talking about those big

buckets that the Pharisees like to announce that they are putting a lot of money into. Those funds represent “social security” (government financial assistance) for those widows in that particular region along with the poor and the needy. In order to come to the temple for aid, they would have to submit to the authority of the temple. The people realize that they will no longer be allowed to receive these alms. To that, they say, “We are out of here.” The church realized at this juncture that their people were not going to get another dime from the temple. The people are so unified that they are going, “You know what? It does not matter. I have some extra stuff. I have some extra land.” The church begins to pull together. They say, “You do not have to worry as a poor person. It does not matter. We were never meant to depend on the synagogue. We were meant to depend on God and one another. We are going to live that way” And you can see the boldness of the church, the bride coming alive, a new authority, a new social security. Their trust is in God, not in the government,

not in these other forces. If you look at verse 35, you see that they are laying all these things at the apostles' feet. What they are saying is, "Look, we trust you to mete this out the way that it needs to be meted out. We know that you do the right thing. We know that those who are in need will be taken care of." But it does not matter what happens. It is very hard to fight an entity that says it does not matter. We are going to need your house. It does not matter. The time is coming when the Antichrist will say, "You cannot buy or sell." There will be some who will say that it does not matter. "I cannot deny my Lord and Savior." They will begin to celebrate. If you look with me at the end of chapter 5, we will end with this particular passage.

(Acts 5:40) "They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and then released them."

(Acts 5:41) "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

(Acts 5:42) “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

Things just grew stronger. Their faith grew stronger. That is why James will say,

(James 1:2) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

Why? Because you are just going to get stronger. A true believer will always get stronger. If you know somebody who loves you deeply and then somebody threatens you about them, that will not make them run. That will make them dig in, and they will stand behind you. That is exactly what happens in the church. As we go through the Book of Acts, I hope you are seeing the breathing of the Spirit of God and how the Lord is calling out His people to be very different.

Prayer

Father, we want to thank You for this Book of Acts. Help us to better understand the business of the apostles and their work to lay a foundation to build the church. We see the bride of Christ taking her form, the blood being sacrificed, the breath being breathed, and the loyalty being established. We see the authority over her and the confidence that she has, which cannot be taken away. We give You thanks. In Jesus' name, amen.