

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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The Holy Spirit has Peter and John Arrested!

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The arrest of Peter and John ([4:1-4](#))

The captain of the temple: This refers to the police force of the temple precincts. The captain, together with the priests and the Sadducees, all came together to arrest Peter and John. There had likely been threats that this might happen; there would typically be warnings (4:21 mentions "*further* threats"). This was designed to intimidate Peter and John.

Being greatly disturbed: The Sadducees would be "greatly disturbed" that Peter and John were teaching the about Jesus' resurrection from the dead; they did not believe in the afterlife or the resurrection.

From the standpoint of the members of the Sanhedrin, this seemingly extreme move was intended to put an end to this "movement" that, normally, should have been pretty easy to quash. Consider the condition of the church at this point:

- They were relatively small, especially the core group
- They were inexperienced in leadership, and few had any real experience organizing anything, let alone a religious uprising
- They were not militant
- They were at odds with centuries-old traditions and institutions. Opposition to them included:
 - Priests and the Sadducees
 - Elders and scribes
 - The high priest
 - The captain of the temple

Of course, all this opposition did not slow the Holy Spirit down at all! More people started following Jesus, not less.

Peter and John brought before the Sanhedrin (4:5-7)

By what power or by what name have you done this? The ideas behind “by what power” and “by what name” are virtually the same. In Jewish thinking, the power resided in the name, because the name represented the character of the person.

Peter’s third sermon (4:8-12)

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit: Here we go again! Peter was filled with the Spirit again, evident in his supernatural boldness, and his ability to speak the gospel directly to the heart of the matter.

If we are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man: The tone of Peter’s reply here shows that he was not intimidated by the setting, though humanly speaking, he *should* have been intimidated! This was, after all, the same court that sent Jesus to His crucifixion.

This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders’: Quoting Psalm 118:22 was entirely – perfectly – appropriate. Jesus was rejected by men – by these leaders – but was exalted by His Father.

Nor is there salvation in any other: Now we’re getting into revolutionary territory. Peter didn’t merely proclaim Jesus as *a way* of salvation, but as *the only way* of salvation. The idea that there is no salvation in any other, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved was and still is hard to accept for many, but is plainly true.

Humanly, instinctively, man’s natural response is: “Shouldn’t I save myself?” No. If you are going to be rescued, if you are going to be made right with God, Jesus is the only one capable of doing it.

Reaction to Peter’s sermon (4:13-22)

Uneducated and untrained men: In hindsight, we might disagree with the opinion of the Jewish leaders judging Peter and John. But in fact, they *were* uneducated in that they, like Jesus, had no formal rabbinic education according to the customs and standards of the time. However, they *were* educated in two more important ways: they knew the Scriptures, and they had actually spent time with Jesus, arguably the best seminary education on Earth.

This is not to minimize the importance of education; God has clearly used many highly educated people throughout the history of His people. In the Bible we have Moses,

Daniel, and Paul as examples. The likes of Augustine, Martin Luther, and Billy Graham are just a few historical post-Biblical examples. It is just as wrong to think that formal education disqualifies someone for effective service as it is to think that it automatically qualifies someone for effective service.

Note that the Jewish leaders did not make any attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. If it were possible to do so, this would have been the time. They simply could not.

And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. Well, what *could* they say against it?! This miracle was witnessed and even examined by skeptics, and stood up as a genuine miracle.

They conferred among themselves: Luke probably found out what the Sanhedrin discussed among themselves because a member of that Sanhedrin later became a Christian: Saul of Tarsus. Acts 26:10 gives us reason to believe Paul (Saul) was a member of the Sanhedrin to cast his vote against the early Christians.

We don't have textual proof that Paul was there, but it's amazing to think that, if true, we could say that Peter and John were preaching to a future apostle, and the greatest missionary the church would ever see. It is an example of the truth that we have no idea how greatly God can use us.

So that it spreads no further among the people: Their fear of the preaching of Jesus was rooted in their own sinful self-interest, not in any desire to protect the people.

And now, the rest of the story ([4:3-37](#))

We cannot but speak: Peter and John must speak of the things which they had seen and heard. They had to, not only because of the inner compulsion of the Holy Spirit, but also because of the words of Jesus, "You will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem...."

Finding no way of punishing them, because of the people: The Jewish leaders were completely unmoved by an obvious miracle from God, yet they responded to public opinion, showing that they cared more about man's opinion than God's opinion.

They all glorified God for what had been done: This whole situation started out looking pretty bad. Peter and John were on trial before the same court that sent Jesus to Pilate for crucifixion. It was meant for great evil, but when it was all over, see what God did. This was another foreshadowing of the truth of Romans 8:28!

This unity experienced by the church following this incident was a wonderful evidence of the work of God's Spirit among them. Because of their unity, they regarded people more important than things. This unity is not conformity, where everybody is exactly

alike. It is not even organizational; we should not force everyone into the same denomination. Instead, they recognized God's ownership of everything; it all belonged to God and His people. Because God had touched their lives so deeply, they found it easy to share all things in common.

All things in common: It is not accurate to see this as an early form of communism. Communism is not *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*). Whereas Communism says, "What is yours is also mine; we therefore take it and reallocate it for the good of all", *koinonia* says, "What is mine is God's, therefore I'll share it with you in joy and gratefulness to Him."

...All who were possessors of lands or houses sold them: The Greek tense here (imperfect) does not mean that everyone sold their property at once. Rather, it was an ongoing practice, where from time to time it was done under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost there was a large number of those who believed, and many of them were from distant lands. Lacking permanent homes and jobs in Jerusalem and Judea, those who stayed to learn more about being followers of Jesus needed special support from the Christian community. There is no commandment or law here regarding how to express Christian generosity; rather it is an early and remarkable example of that generosity. It is in this way that we meet Barnabas, Paul's future travel companion

Unfortunately, this generosity of the early Christian church soon began to be abused. Later the Paul taught regarding who should be helped and how they should be helped. Paul's directions were that:

- The church must discern who the truly needy are (1 Timothy 5:3).
- If one can work to support himself, he is not truly needy and must provide for his own needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:11).
- If a family can support a needy person, they should (1 Timothy 5:3-4).
- Those supported by the church make some return to the body (1 Timothy 5:5, 10).
- It is right for the church to examine moral conduct before giving support (1 Timothy 5:9-13).
- The support of the church should be for the most basic necessities of living (1 Timothy 6:8).

With great power: This is both the result and the root of the attitude in the previous verse. Acts 4:32 shows they put God first, people second, and material things third.

Gave witness to the resurrection: Notice again the central place the resurrection of Jesus held in the message of the first Christians. They preached a resurrected Jesus. When we're at our best, our churches do the same!