

## Acts 4:1-31 Spiritual Warfare 101

Last week in our study in the book of Acts we looked at v.1-13 as we saw the beginning of the persecution that came against the Church.

A)The Sadducees arrested Peter and John after a lame man was healed

B)And Peter was telling everyone the Risen Jesus did this.

C)We noted last week that Opposition shouldn't surprise us -

1)because Whenever Jesus is working in a city, a life, a church - SATAN OPPOSSES

D)And because Jesus told us to expect persecution:

- Don't be surprised when the world hates you - it hated me first.

E)Then we spent the rest of the morning looking at how Jesus manifested himself in the midst of opposition - Listen online

Today we are going to make our way to V. 31 - but for the sake of context I want to begin reading in V. 1 again

Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done 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."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

**Pause and Pray**

**One of the primary objections to Christianity is the idea that Jesus is the only way of salvation.**

A)Rubs people the wrong way.

B)Plus, it's just an unspoken rule in our society that you don't tell people that their religion is wrong.

C)Our culture says: **If you want to be considered a civilized, educated person:**

1)They don't say anything that would imply that your belief system is superior to someone else's.

D) You can be sincere about your beliefs, but don't be too excited about it, **and don't try to convert others to it.**

1) That is the message our culture constantly puts forth

**E) Note this is not a new controversy. People sometimes think that.**

**We see the apostles here in Acts 4 are in trouble and facing opposition for the same reasons**

A) **But The apostles are not in trouble because they privately believe** that Jesus rose from the dead,

B) **But because they have shared that with others -**

1) and up to this point in the book of Acts at least 5,000 people believed them

C) **And have become followers of Jesus as well.**

**The title of our message today is Spiritual warfare 101**

A) **See We are in a battle and the way the Sadducees came against the apostles**

B) **Gives us insight into how the enemies of Jesus come against us today**

C) **So I want to look at 4 ways that the Sadducees came against Peter and John**

D) **Then we will spend the rest of our time looking at V.22-31 to see how the early church responded to this opposition**

1) This will give us insight into how we need to respond to the opposition that comes against us - **sound good?**

**E) We see the first way the Sadducees came against Peter and John in V.3**

**They Physically laid hands on them/ AND not to pray! ☺ - No this was a physical attack**

A) **Now in our country - Christians are not being attacked Physically - very much**

B) **But it is happening in other countries all of the world**

C) **There are at least 50 countries in the world today where Christians are Physically harmed for their faith**

**Open Doors ministry has reported that Martyrdoms rose by more than 1,000 from the prior year, as that 5,898 Christians were killed for their faith.**

**Another new high was registered in the number of Christians abducted, with the total of 3,829 representing an increase of 124% over the prior period.**

- Nigeria accounted for 66% of the total, number of Christians abducted followed by Pakistan at 26%

**By far the largest category to change was total was displacement,**

- with 218,709 Christians forced to leave their homes or go into hiding for faith-related reasons

**D) So we are not facing that type of persecution here in the USA -**

1) but if the Lord tarries his coming - we might get there - unfortunately

**We need to remember to Pray for our persecuted bros/sisters  
So first thing we see they laid hands on them**

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> way that the Sadducees opposed the apostles was to question their authority in V.7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"**

A) **Now That is something - that happens to Christians a lot today - and this is what it looks like:**

B) **People will say to us: What gives you the right to tell me who I can love or sleep with or marry.**

C) **What gives you the right to tell me what I can do with my Body**

D) **What gives you the right to tell me - what Gender I am?**

E) **Who do you think you are to tell me that Jesus is the only way - and what I believe is wrong?**

F) **You must think that you are better or smarter than everyone else?**

**Now most Christians don't go around claiming to be better or smarter than everyone else.**

A) Most Christians are not going around attacking people who don't believe the way that they do. -

B) Some might - but that is not the norm

**We are told in John 3 - the darkness hates the light because the light exposes their evil deeds.**

A) Sometimes when we are simply living our lives for Jesus -

B) It has a way of convicting those around us

C) It is not that we are smarting or claiming to be

**Our text - Is Peter claiming to be Smarter?**

**No. In fact, the text goes out of its way to point out that they weren't that smart.**

A) This kind of cracks me up - Luke wrote the book of Acts - and Luke was a doctor which meant he was smart.

B) Luke is friends with Peter and John - but Luke points out that his friends were **not really that bright** - V.13 they **and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men,**

C) You wonder if Peter and John reading this later - said - to Luke

**D) Bro was that really necessary - did you really need to write that 😊**

E) To be fair - Worth noting that - Luke added they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

1) Best compliment someone can give you.

**But there's no presumption in Peter here to superior intelligence.**

A) Peter simply says V. 20 **for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard**

B) In other words, "This has nothing to do with us being smarter. -

C) Peter knew when it came to education this group of guys he was talking to were the elites of education

1) Much learned - Massive IQ's

**Peter says: You want us to be quiet but we can't because we are testifying to what we have **Heard:****

A) John 14:6 **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

B) Jesus said He was the only one who could save someone - Bring eternal life

C) We are just repeating what He said - and we are just **testifying to what we have seen:**

**D) This is what we saw: You guys Killed Jesus - but God raised him from the dead!**

**So Peter's claim (and our claim) that salvation is only found in Jesus**

A) Has nothing to do with believing we are intellectually or morally superior!

**B) It is because Jesus rose again from the dead we just believe he is who he claimed to be -**

C) Everything hinges on the Resurrection

**We talked out this last week - V.11 Peter refers to Jesus as the Cornerstone - **Most important stone in the building****

A) Foundation stone - the Reference stone - everything else is built off of

B) We pointed out how Jesus is the reference point for Life - for Living!

C) So when questions come up today or people are confused about life - we point to Jesus

D) Eternal life ?- **Jesus said - it is found in me**

**Jesus already answered the questions that our culture is most confused about -**

A) Marriage - Jesus said - Man and woman

**B) Gender: Male and female**

C) When does life begin - Jesus affirmed what the Bible says -

1) that Life begins at conception - that there is a BABY being formed in the womb

**Does that mean that we think we are smarter or better than everyone else?**

A) NO - we are just repeating what Jesus said

**But still some would argue, “Well, I just don’t like anything that is exclusive**

A)Anything that puts other people on the outside...” Not right

B)Let’s be honest- All secular ideologies are exclusive.

C)Everyone has a line for who is in and who is out.

**For example: In most Secular colleges and Universities today -**

A)if you believe in Creation instead of Evolution -

B)Considered to be simple minded - unintelligent - not very smart

C)Or If you are not pro-choice - if you are not for free sexual expression - we are done with you -

**D)We are right and you are wrong**

1)ALL EXCLUSIVE

**So the secular ideologies being espoused today in our society are exclusive**

A)But the gospel of Jesus is a different kind of exclusivity...

B)Because the gospel teaches that our acceptance with God is not based on anything about us...

C)Not our moral track record, our education, our race, or our political viewpoint.

1)God gives salvation as a gift to all who will repent (**turn from their sin**) and who put their faith in Jesus

**I love how Tim Keller says it: Christianity is the most inclusive exclusivity that there is.”**

A)See When you truly believe JESUS for salvation, -

B)You’re not arrogant, or Judgmental because you realize that you are NOT accepted

1)because of your good works,

C)Or because you figured out truth because you were smarter than everyone else.

**See You were lost and on your way to hell - and God found you -**

A)You were in bondage to sin - addiction - bitterness - God freed you

B)You were lame and messed up because of your sin - paralyzed in it and God healed you.

**C)When we realize It is all about God’s Grace - I didn’t do anything to deserve this -**

1)That humbles you.

D)It makes you a gracious, loving and forgiving person, because that is what God has been to you.

In October of 2007, the Amish community in Lancaster, Pa. experienced a tragedy.

A gunman who was “**mad at God**” took over an Amish school... sent out all the kids except for 10 girls and lined them up next to the chalkboard.

**2 of the girls offered to have themselves shot for the others.**

A)The gunman at that point shot all 10, one by one, in the head, and then killed himself.

B)(5 of the girls survived which is how we know the story.)

**C)In the aftermath of this tragedy, the parents of one of the little girls who died got into their buggy and drove to the house of the shooter**

1)They went up and knocked on the door/ the wife of the shooter answered -

2)She was startled to see them there - knowing her husband killed their daughter

**This is what They said to the wife... we’re not here for revenge;**

A)We have lost our daughter; but your children have lost a father and you have lost a husband.

B)We’re here to grieve together.”

1)Isn’t that amazing! -

C)Even the cynical journalists said something supernatural, and divine was happening there

**Now Think about this: Amish people are a really fundamentalist group -**

A)Some would even call them legalistic

B) Many Amish don't live with the modern amenities we are used to no phones - cars - tv - etc

**But let me ask this question: Where did these girls get the idea to offer to die for their friends?**

A) Where did the parents get the idea to forgive their killer and his family?

B) Here's where. Even in a fundamentalist group like the Amish,

C) They have at the center of their faith like we do a Man who died on the cross for our sins

1) Because he loved people who didn't love him back - He gave himself for people who hated him;

D) To pay the price for their sins and then he rose again - to give life to everyone who believes in him

**When you realize that measure of Grace that God has given to you -**

A) You want to show that grace and love toward others

B) You have compassion on others - even those with the hardest hearts

C) Because you realize - **Except for the grace of God there go I**

**So the Sadducees came against them Physically -**

A) They questioned their authority

B) Note the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ways the Sadducees sought to oppose the apostles.

➤ V.17 They threatened them V.19

➤ V.18 They tried to silence them

**The world around us is trying to threaten us and silence us.**

A) Cancel culture - is a sign of the end times - Front and center when the Anti-Christ comes into power

B) We live in a culture today where Christians are being Canceled out of Jobs -

1) for standing for Jesus and their beliefs -

C) If the Lord tarries in his coming it will get worse

**How did the early church respond to this opposition?**

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things?

26 The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.'

27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

**The First thing they did was to remember that God is Sovereign V.23-28**

So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made EVERYTHING V.28 You do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

**They understood that the opposition that came against Jesus and was NOW coming against them**

A) This was all part of God's plan. - Jesus told them to expect it -

B) They realized what we often forget - that God ordained that living for Jesus and his Kingdom - 1) **in a secular society - Was not going to be easy.**

C) Jesus told them: <sup>33</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

D) Tribulation comes with the Territory - Part of God's Sovereign plan

**What would change about your perspective if you saw everything in your life—both good and bad—**

A) As sovereignly ordained by God, - It was given to you for the purpose of God's mission?

**B) It is really a question of do we really believe that Jesus is on the throne?**

1) Something bad happens—you lose your job. Your health takes a downturn.

**C) When those things happen Our first reaction is usually always shock and sorrow - human nature**

1) But what if our next reaction was

**“God, you gave me this disability, this loss, this disease, to help further your mission.”**

A) And what would happen if WE asked the question in those times

**B) Lord how do you want to leverage this situation to further Your mission?”**

**C) How do you want to use this in my life for your glory!**

**D) What would happen if we surrendered our lives as platforms for God to be glorified in?**

**E) What would happen if we truly believed - that the Bad things - as well as the good**

1) Were all a part of God's Sovereign plan?

**Speaking of the Good things: What if you get blessed in some way - talent - money resources**

A) But instead of thinking - I did this - I earned this - My smarts - my ingenuity - I pulled this off deal

**B) What if we truly believed that what the Bible says is true - that everything is given to us as a gift from God**

1) So we said: Lord I realize you haven't given me these things - to simply make my life easier -

2) Or so I can BUY cooler stuff

**C) But this is all a part of your sovereign plan so that my life can bring you glory -**

1) so I can impact your mission/KINGDOM - Show me how?

**D) Imagine how different our approach to life would be if we truly believed that God was Sovereign**

**The First thing they did was remember that God is Sovereign**

**A) 2<sup>nd</sup> thing they did was pray for Boldness V.29**  
29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

**First, notice that in the face of danger, what was instinctive reflex? prayer.**

A) What would ours have been? What would mine have been?

**B) We probably would have said: “OK. New rule.**

1) Peter and John can never be together again at the same time...

**C) Or what we need is a security detail for those two men of God**

**I wonder if some today would say: “You know, we better rethink the message.**

A) Clearly, this ‘you killed Christ and you got to repent because he's the only way of salvation’ is **not working well.**

**B) Let's lead with the prodigal son story from now on—people liked that.”**

**C) That probably would have been the first reaction or instinct of some today**

**What was their first instinctive reflex - PRAY**

A) **LISTEN:** When you are walking with the Spirit, prayer is your natural reflex,

**B) Because you realize how dependent you are on the Spirit for everything.**

**C) IT IS LIKE BREATHING - COMES THAT NATURALLY -**

1) to people who are walking in the spirit and living dependent on the spirit

**I love this Prayer - Give us Boldness**

A) Isn't boldness what got them into this mess?

**B) What do we typically pray for in persecution, or pain? -**

1) Typically, we pray for protection. Or deliverance from the pain.

**C) I'm sure they wanted those things.**

**But before they prayed for a positive outcome around them, they prayed for faithful spirit within them... REPEAT**

A) They prayed that they would be bold for the gospel regardless of the outcome.

B) They asked God to help them respond in faith whatever the situation.

C) Don't pray for your burdens to get lighter pray for a stronger back

**3rd thing they did was to Pray that God would continue to manifest his presence and power.**

**30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."**

A) It was an declaration of their dependency on Jesus - we can't stand on our own -

B) We can't reach our community on our own.

C) We need you to stretch out your hand to heal -

D) We need you to manifest your supernatural power in signs and wonders

This prayer was also an expression of their Desire for more! - Do more Jesus - Manifest yourself

Note the result:

**31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.**

**As we close today: Ask you this question**

A) Do you Desire more of Jesus in your life? In your marriage? Family? Ministry?

B) Cry out to Him Manifest himself in your life  
1) **SHAKE US LIKE THAT BUILDING**

C) Boldness to Share - tell him

D) Fresh filling of the Holy Spirit - TO STAND