

Acts 4:1-12

Christian Persecution

Introduction:

Courageous Christianity is what is in view in Chapter 4, of Acts. When there is a faithful witness of the gospel it won't be long before the devil and his cohort's state their opposition. Gordon Keddie remarks in his commentary on Acts, "The pattern was set for all history to come. The New Testament church has proclaimed Christ as the risen Savior against a grumbling groundswell of opposition, which from time to time has erupted into a volcanic torrent of persecution for the Lord's people. Paradoxically, this has not issued in defeat, but has occasioned the most notable victories for the Lord's cause and kingdom, wrought in that unconquerable fortitude with which the Lord endows his people."

I. Facing Persecution – v. 1-6

A. First recorded persecution

1. A long list of persecutors
2. Jewish officials

B. Satan's forces

1. Be on the alert – I Pet. 5:7-9
2. The accuser of the brethren – Rev. 12:10

C. Why were all these rulers upset?

1. Because it was a threat to their authority – John 7:45,46
2. Because they taught about the resurrection of Christ – cf. 3:15; **Turn To: Acts 23:6-10**; John 11:25. (Acts 1:22; 4:2,33; 17:18; 32; 23:6,8; 24:15,21; 26:23)

D. The World's Tactics

1. We should not be surprised – John 15:18
2. The power of wealth
3. The power of the governments and courts
4. The use of intimidation – v.3, 13
5. The blindness of unbelief – (Martin Lloyd Jones)

E. The Power of the Holy Spirit – Heb. 6:4-6

1. Unbelief does not face the facts –
2. The Word of God is not bound – II Tim. 2:9-10
3. The Word of God remains forever – I Pet. 1:23-25 (Justin Martyr)
4. We must not fear the world's intimidation – (John Calvin)

II. Handling Persecution

A. Our Defense against the persecutor:

1. Speaking the truth boldly – v. 10
2. The Lord stood with Paul – II Tim. 4:16,17

B. Our Offense:

1. Peter tells them they were guilty in crucifying Jesus.
2. Peter tells them the Christ you murdered is not dead – Rom. 1:4; 6:5; 8:11
3. Peter tells them God's purpose was established in spite of their opposition – v.11; Psalm 118:22
4. Peter tells them Jesus is the only of Salvation – v.12; Matt. 7:13,14

