

The Life & Teachings of Paul #2

Acts 2–4

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We've now come to Acts 2:14. Peter is standing in the middle of a large crowd. The crowd is for the most part, Jews. People who lived in Jerusalem. But also largely composed of people who had been born elsewhere, although Jews. They had been a part of the diaspora, they were scattered around the world. But they had now returned to Jerusalem and were living there. They were at this time in Jerusalem synagogues of people who were from different countries. And consequently would speak the language with which these people were born, and with which they were most comfortable. So there were synagogues of the Cretans I'm sure. Synagogues of the Libyans as a result of this. It's rather an interesting side light of history.

All of these people are now gathered around Peter. And Peter begins with what has to be considered the first apostolic sermon, the first really preaching of the gospel by one of Jesus's own disciples, after his departure. Peter verse 14, standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice and said to them. You men of Judea, and all you who dwell in Jerusalem. Be this known unto you, and listen to my words. For these are not drunken as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Thus follows a very comprehensive quotation out of the second chapter of the book of Joel. It's interesting to think about the apostle's perspective on prophecy when you come to something like this. Because Peter sites what is essentially an end time prophecy. And he says this which is taking place here today, is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

Let's listen to what Peter has to say and see if we can understand what he is driving at. "And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out my spirit in those days. And they shall prophecy. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath. Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable Day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now that's the totality of what Peter quoted out of the book of Joel. And its interesting in its content because, it seems to imply that Peter felt that he was living in the time immediately preceding the day of the Lord. Now it is obvious from all of the New Testament scriptures. Paul's letters give these indications as do others. That the early apostles did not know that they had 2,000 years of history stretching out after them. In

which the church would develop, grow, scatter, be persecuted. Incredible fallacy's, incredible heresies would develop. They just didn't know these things.

They had no assurance that Jesus Christ would return in their lifetime. Nor did they have any hint that he would not. And every indication is that they felt that Christ's departure began a period of preparation that would probably culminate in a reasonably short period of time. In his imminent return, in the Day of the Lord and all the heavenly signs that were connected with it. And so when Peter stands up and says this is that. Well it's difficult for us to know after 2000 years exactly what Peter had in his mind. But he certainly understood Joel's prophecy to be an end time prophecy. Well, was Peter wrong? Well, no. No, he wasn't wrong because we have in interesting illustration here of the principal of duality of prophecy. Many biblical prophecies actually have two or more fulfillment's that are recorded even in the Bible. You can see indications of course of say the first and the second, or you can see the first and the hint and then the suggestion of the second. I won't go into detail on many of them, but this is one of those cases where what actually happened on the day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. when the Holy Spirit fell upon these people.

This was, to use the theologians term, a type of what was to take place at the very end time. And so Peter was correct in saying this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. It was a pouring out of Gods spirit. It was a time of prophesying, a time of preaching, a time of visions and a time of dreams. But, it was not the time of the day of the Lord. But they didn't know that, in this sense that no man knows the day or the hour of Christ's return. It's very evident that Peter had to preach as he saw signs taking place that the time was near. To his credit, he includes the heavenly signs showing that he understood that more had to happen then merely a group of people speaking in tongues and prophesying. To indicate that the day of the Lord was right there upon them.

Another interesting part of this sermon is found in verse 21 where Peter makes the statement. And it shall come to pass that whomsoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Well, that's interesting isn't it? Because the implication is that there was a time when whomsoever might call upon the name of the Lord would not necessarily be saved. In other words, not just anyone and everyone could call upon the name of the Lord. Now you could of course look at this as a kind of doctrine that only a few people now in our age are being saved, and the vast majority of mankind will be saved at the time of the end. But when we look at this verse in the context of Acts, when we look at this verse as something that Luke wrote to his contemporaries to try to include a part of Peters sermon that would help them understand what was going on. This whomsoever takes on a little different meaning at least from Luke's perspective.

What he would see in this was the contrast between Jew and Gentile. That there was a time when only Jews that is Israelites, and a broad spectrum of Israelites were even offered salvation. For salvation was of the Jews. But the time is going to come when salvation is not limited to the Jews. But whomsoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be

saved. And that's basically the meaning of this statement. Now having quoted the scripture, Peter now passes on into a direct address to the men who were gathered around him. And it's an important statement in many perspectives. Not the least of which is their awareness of Jesus Christ and his ministry. And then ultimately of the consequences of that. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Verse 22. You men of Israel hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs. Which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know. Now, the miracles of Jesus were not done in a corner. And you have to know that the news of the day was replete with examples, illustrations, rumors, whatever you may call it of Jesus's miracles because he did one after another. And they were miracles of the most astonishing kind. You can imagine the kind of conversations that went on the evening after he healed a man blind from birth. You can imagine how that word spread throughout that city. So when Peter used the words, as you yourselves also know, well they did. They had heard all the stories of Jesus's miracles. Some of them had seen people who were healed by Jesus. Some of them had reached out and touched them. Some of them had carried conversations with a man who had been dumb, unable to speak until Jesus loosed his tongue and enabled him to talk. So they knew, oh yes they knew.

Now it's also important to notice that Peter saw the miracles of Jesus has an approval of God. He was a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs. They were given as an evidence that God was behind Jesus. Not the only evidence to be sure, for Jesus himself said that the only sign as such that would be given to a sinful and adulterous generation was the sign of Noah. But that's another subject. Continuing in verse 23. Him, that is Jesus, being delivered by the determinant council and foreknowledge of God. You have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Another verse pregnant with meaning. In the first place Jesus's death was not an accident. His delivery up to death was not an accident. It was something that was a part of the plan of God. It was the determinant council, that is the pre-determined plan, the foreknown and intended event. In fact, we are told that he was the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

So that death of Christ, his sacrifice for us was ordained right from the very beginning. So Peter says, you then have taken this one who was approved of God among you. And who had been delivered up by Gods deliberate plan, his foreknowledge and with complete understanding of what was going to take place. But you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Now there were people there who had nothing to do with the death of Jesus. There were people there who had not nailed the nails through his hands. They had not forced him to carry that stake through the city streets. They had not fastened him to it, they had not lifted it up into the air. They had not even been present at the crucifixion. How do you think they felt sitting there looking at Peter and hearing him say you, looking them right in the eye and saying you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and have slain. That's a pretty sobering thought, isn't it?

Because what Peter is doing is, he is laying the death of Jesus Christ, the guilt, the responsibility, the actual slaying of him on the hands of every man that was there whether they had anything directly to do with it or not. Now I think that is something that all of us have to think about. For fundamental in the teaching of the apostles is that we, all of us, by our sins have crucified the son of God. He continues. Whom, that is Jesus, God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death. Because it was not possible that he should not be held by it. For David speaks concerning him, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad. Moreover my flesh shall rest in hope. Because you will not leave my soul in hell. Neither will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life. You shall make me full of joy with your countenance." Now here's a Psalm very familiar to Peter's listeners. They were not surprised by this statement at all for many of them had doubtless memorized lengthy sections of the Psalm's. And these words were very familiar to all of them from David.

But Peter has to explain some things to them that they may not have first understood. First of all, realize that the statement, you will not leave my soul in hell. The word hell means the grave, and it was understood so by all of his listeners there. They were not thinking of some terrible place of eternal torment when Peter used the word Hades. Of course he used the Aramaic equivalent of it, or the Hebrew word. Which would have to do purely with the grave or the place of the departed dead. Not Gehenna, or a place of fire or flame. All right, you will not leave my soul in hell. Now he says, men and brethren let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David that he is both dead and buried and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Now this is an interesting scripture from a lot of perspectives. Not the least of which is the fact that many Old Testament scriptures make it clear that David is going to be in the kingdom of God. I mean, there is not much question about that anywhere.

And yet, he doesn't say that David was dead and buried, he said David is, in the present tense, dead and buried. The implication is that David is still dead. Not that David is somewhere else while his mortal body molds in the grave. He continues, David is dead and buried and his sepulcher is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath to him. That out of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. He seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ. That his, that is Christ's soul was not left in hell, that is the grave. Neither did Christ's flesh see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted by the right hand of God and having received of the father the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has shed forth this, this manifestation of the Holy Spirit which you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens. But he says to himself, the Lord said to my Lord, sit on my right hand until I make your foes your foot stool.

Now, that verse has got to give pause to those people who believe in the immortality of the soul. And who believes that every man who has ever lived goes either to heaven or hell immediately at death. Because they can only conclude that if David did not go to

heaven then David went to hell. Then you've got the problem in fact, that David was a man after Gods own heart, he was a very special man. He's going to be in the kingdom of God. He's going to be ruling over Israel in the resurrection. Oh it's just too much. But of course this scripture along with many, should give a person pause when it comes to the question of the immortality of the soul. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. What stunning words, what stunning words. First of all the accusation, you have crucified. The awareness that this man who was standing here speaking before them was speaking with considerable authority. For he was obviously and unlearned man. And yet he was obviously speaking with incredibly intense conviction. And they were faced already with a manifestation of the gifts of Gods Holy Spirit and the speaking in tongues. And possibly even to the extent that Peter was addressing these men in one language or another, and maybe more than once saying the same thing in different languages to impress upon their minds.

They could not avoid what they had seen. They knew about the miracles of Christ, they knew about his ministry. They knew about his crucifixion. They knew that they were themselves in some way, in Peters eyes, implicit in that crucifixion. Small wonder that Luke records, now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do? And here comes that cleanest, simplest, most straightforward admonition to a sinner who has come to realize that he is a sinner. It's not complicated. It's not difficult. It's very plain. Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children. And to all who are a far off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort saying, save yourselves from this from this untoward generation. Oh it was a much longer sermon than this.

This is the core of it. This is the heart of it. And of the whole sermon, the whole message, the ultimate core is verse 38. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Later he will make the statement, repent ye therefore and be converted. And that is in chapter 3 and verse 19. There is just a very subtle difference between these two words, repent and be converted. Repent in the Greek comes from a word, actually it is a combined word of the prepositional form meta, which means with or in a combined form to change. And the word noieo which means basically to perceive with the mind. Change what is perceived with the mind, of a change of heart, a change of mind. The word for covert basically means to turn yourself back. In other words if you are walking down the road and then you remember you've forgotten something, and you turn back to return to your home to pick it up you have "converted." In the simplest possible usage of the word.

So what Peter is saying Acts 3: 19, repent and be converted is, change your mind and turn yourself around. Not difficult to understand is it? It might be a little difficult to do, but the word repent in most usage contains or includes the meaning to be sorry. To feel remorse for what you have done, and it involves not merely the emotional response, but also a

deliberate decision to make a change in your life. So when they said, men and brethren what shall we do? Peter didn't ask them to climb Mt. Everest, he didn't ask for penance, he didn't ask for lengthy things of restitution or anything of the sort. He said, change your heart and your mind, turn yourself around in your mind and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. For the remission of sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children. And to all who are a far off even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort saying save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls. Now that was a sermon. But of course we all understand that it wasn't just the sermon, it was the entire picture. The entire package. These people had seen a notable miracle performed. They had seen the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Then coupled with this the very powerful sermon by Peter. The call to repentance. They did repent and what a change it made in their lives. And they, that is these 3000 souls continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine. And in fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers. And fear came upon every soul. And many wonders and signs were done by the apostles, and all that believed were together. They had all things common, they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need.

Now you don't need to make the mistake here of assuming that this was a practice that would always be followed by Christians in all generations. That the Christian religion in other words would always be a communal religion. Nothing could be further from the truth. What this is simply saying is that these people who were there, and it was an unusual time. And it was a once in a lifetime experience. They wanted to prolong the experience and they followed this practice for that reason. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple. Breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Acts 3: 1 Now Peter and John went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer being the ninth hour. This is rather interesting of itself, because of the implication that the church was still going to the Temple at the routine hours in which the Jews normally went to the Temple for prayer. It's hard to realize sitting way down here in the 20th-century that the early church, I mean were talking about early church. Really had not made much of a separation of itself from Judaism. They were still pretty dependent upon the synagogue and upon the Temple. They went to the Temple specially for prayer. Today that thought would not even cross most of our minds if there were Temple.

We would think in terms of praying by our bed. We would think in terms of praying in our study at home. We would think in terms of praying hither and yon or maybe out in the woods somewhere. We would not feel any more efficacious prayer would be made in the Temple then anywhere else. But that was not the thinking of Peter and John. And I think that it's important for us to realize that. That the Christians in this point and time still went to the Temple, and the Temple still formed a very central part of their worship. And in

fact they often made use of the services of the priesthood in various aspects of the things that the priest did. So they were a long way from being divorced from the Temple. Nothing that Jesus said was really divorcing them from it. Nothing that Peter or John taught was going to change that. It was still very much a fact of life. And of course later on we will find even the apostle Paul himself availing himself of the services of the priesthood in the Temple.

So be careful not to divorce yourself too much from the mind of these people and what they were doing. And where we are in time and what's going on. Because the issues that we argue about as 20th-century Christians were not issues to these people. Many of them had never crossed their mind, they had never had to face certain questions that we have later on had to face. And I'm afraid consequently many times we have manufactured answers for these questions, where there is no question. Where they never saw a question and where indeed there really was no need for the answer. We have constructed theologies' which supposedly are a fundamental understanding of the way things are. Which make absolutely no sense in the context of Peter and John going up to the Temple to pray.

Now as they made their way up toward the Temple, there was a man sitting up there who had no idea who they were. Had no idea that they were Christians, much less apostles. That they had any miraculous power at all. He was just a man who put himself here because these were religious people going by on the way to the Temple. And religious people were a little more likely to be giving or to give alms to a lame man. Then was some businessman. I guess that's the way he thought. Anyway, this is where he was. And we're told a certain lame man from his mother's womb, this man had never walked in his life. He laid there daily, they carried him up there. And he laid daily at the gate of the Temple which is called beautiful. To ask alms of them that entered into the Temple. Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the Temple, asked an alms, he put out his hand and he said alms, alms, alms for the poor. And Peter, fastening his eyes on him with John said, look on us, and he gave heed expecting to receive something from them. And Peter said silver and gold have I none but such as I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood and walked. Entering in with them into the Temple walking and leaping and praising God. And well he might. Can you imagine? He had never walked. Not only were his feet and ankles and legs lame, the muscles would have been atrophied before they had never been exercised.

Not only was there lameness and no muscle tone. No nothing there. But even the patterns in the brain that must be learned, to walk, to run, to leap, the coordination, those were not there. When this man was healed, the muscles, the tissues, the sinews, the joints, the nervous system, even the patterns in the brain were put there. How could you not leap, how could you jump and charge about the Temple running and feeling what this felt like. And shouting at the top of your voice in praise of the one who had done it for you. For indeed he had no idea himself of what this was all about. I'm sure he knew that God had healed him. And he certainly had heard Peter when he said in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up walk. Oh to be in that position. What a remarkable thing to have happen to you. Now all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was he

who had sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the Temple. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. And as the lame man who was healed held Peter and John, I expect he did hold them. All the people ran together to them to the porch that is called Solomon's. Greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it he answered to the people and said, you men of Israel why are you marveling at this? I wouldn't want to second guess Peter in this regard but that question seems a little funny to me. Why would they not marvel at what they saw?

But he says, why are you marveling at this? Or, why do you look at us so earnestly. As though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his son Jesus. Whom you delivered up and denied him in the presence of Pilate. When Pilate was determined to let him go. But you denied the Holy one and the just and you desired a murderer to be granted to you. And you killed the Prince of life whom God has raised from the dead where of we are witnesses, we saw him alive after his resurrection. And in his name, through faith in his name has made this man strong whom you see and you know. Yea the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now brethren I understand that through ignorance you did it, as did your rulers. Through ignorance you crucified Christ. Through ignorance your rulers crucified Christ.

But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets' that Christ should suffer. He has so fulfilled. Repent you therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. This call is the call that goes out to every man who has experienced the conviction of sin. It involves two things. It involves repenting, that is being sorry, that is a change of the heart and the mind. And being converted which means turning around, it means turning your steps. It's not enough to say, well I'm sorry for what I did and I've had a change of heart. You must actually turn your steps around, you must make decisions, you must take action on the things that you are and have been doing. This is required if you are going to be able to say yes you've repented and been converted. And he shall send Jesus Christ, verse 20, which before was preached unto you. Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of his prophet's since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me. Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which shall not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Now this is a direct citation from Deuteronomy 18 and about vs. 15 and 19. And it shows quite clearly that Moses was himself a type of Christ. We've all known quite long that David was a type of Christ because so many of his Psalm's focused directly on Jesus, upon his ministry, on what he was to do and is to do. What is not as widely recognized is that Moses also was a type of Christ. And that the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 vs. 15 and 19, of a prophet being raised up like Moses would be fulfilled in Christ. And the statement it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed. And there have been a lot of prophet's sent to Israel, and Israel

had killed the prophet's and stoned them. And at long last the prophet like Moses had been sent, and unfortunately many souls had refused to hear him.

Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. You are the children of prophets' and of the covenant which God made with our fathers saying unto Abraham, and in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning every one of you away from his iniquities. And the word iniquities simply means lawlessness. It's *anomia* in the Greek, the negative put in front of the word for law. So simply, Jesus has spoken to bless you in turning you away from your lawlessness.

Now in chapter 4 verse 1. And as they spoke to the people, the priests and the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees came upon them. Here they were, they were standing there, they had healed this man, there was a crowd of people gathered around and Peter was just preaching the gospel to them. And as they were speaking to them, here comes some officials onto the scene. They heard all the noise and they heard the racket and here they are. And we're told that as they came upon them that they were grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Because indeed this was quite a threat to the status quo. They had not been able to quite handle this thing about Jesus. And of course his resurrection from the dead was being talked about everywhere. And they were trying their best to quell it with every type of explanation rumor that you can imagine. And now having worked so hard, having gotten Jesus dead and out of the way they thought. Now they are faced with a problem that these men are not only coming around and preaching the resurrection of the dead, they are healing people to back up what they are saying. No wonder they were grieved.

They laid hands on them, they put them in hold until the next day for it was late in the evening. Howbeit many of them that heard the word, believed and the number of the men were about 5000. I sort of visualized you know, a handful of people. You know, 20 or 30 people having gathered around Peter and John. Five thousand people, they had to be standing up where they could be seen and heard. And I would have to assume that the priests and the captain of the Temple had to be a little bit careful about charging in there. Five thousand people heard this. It came to pass on the morrow that their rulers and elders and scribes. Annas the high priest, Caiaphas and John, Alexander and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst they said, by what power or by what name have you done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said to them, you rulers of the people and elders of Israel. If we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole. That is interesting the way Peter starts this. He doesn't start off by straight forwardly answering their question. He starts off with the fact that here was a man who was impotent, who was lame from his mothers, unable to walk. Everyone knew him. He had been there since he was a child. People passing up and down the streets knew him by sight. He was familiar to all of the people who went to the Temple. They knew all about him.

And so Peter first of all starts out by saying, now look if you are going to examine us by what means this man who is impotent, that you all know, now stands over here and can leap and walk and run. If you want to know that, be it known unto 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. Even by him does this man stand here before you whole. Man that must have been tough. That must have been tough for those religious leaders standing there to handle. And all of the people were hearing these things, they heard about Jesus, they knew that he had been crucified. And while they may have doubted the resurrection from the dead, there was nothing they could say about this man who was standing there whole, healed of his disease. They were stuck with the fact of the resurrection.

And Peter said this is the stone which was set at naught of you builders which has become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. Now that is a shocker. There is no salvation some other way. There aren't fourteen ways of salvation. You can't get to heaven by all sorts of different routes' as people would like you to believe. He said there is salvation in no other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And you talk about posing a problem for many people. Not only then by even now. Who try to understand God's wisdom and Gods judgement and Gods Justice. In the salvation or non salvation of people around the world.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men. Now that's not meant to be an insulting statement, it's just that they were fishermen. They had not been well educated. They had not studied under the great rabbi's. They had not had a formal education so they were ignorant of many aspects, but they had to marvel. Because here they could stand and speak and talk and were extremely effective. For even though Peters words have been translated, the power of them still comes through. So they looked at them, they perceived that they were unlearned, that is that they were uneducated. They marveled and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. They had actually been with him, they had seen him known him and so forth. And beholding the man who was healed standing with them. Because he was right there with them. If you were that man where would you be? Would you be standing on the opposite side of the accusers? Or would you be distancing yourself from these men? Or would you not just stand up there with them? Saying no no, these men are the ones who spoke the words when I was healed. Beholding the man healed standing with them, why they could say nothing against it.

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council. They conferred among themselves saying, what shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest, that's plain to all them that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it. Now that's remarkable isn't it? But that it spread no further among the people, let us straightly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. What do you do with that? How do you handle that? They decided to use the oldest

technique that's ever been used, I guess by man in religion, fear. They decide, lets threaten these people with something. Lets scare them a little bit. Let's make them afraid, and let's tell them that they not speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus. Which means that they can no longer go up and down the streets and take a beggar or a blind man or someone that is sick or infirm or a leper, and reach out and touch him in the name of Jesus and have him healed right from the very moment. They can't do that anymore. We don't want any more people healed around here. In fact we don't want to hear the name of Jesus spoken at all.

It's a tragic thing that almost inevitably in the history of man, whenever there has been a religious establishment, it may be anything from a religious hierarchy in some Protestant church. Or it may be the Roman Catholic hierarchy. It may be anything. In this case it was the Jewish hierarchy. Whenever it's established, anything that is a threat to the status quo has to be perceived as evil. As bad. As wrong. Anything that comes on the outside, or anything that comes in from the outside, it doesn't arise out of the religious movement itself, has to be suspect from the word go. And here is the stunning admission, that a notable miracle had been done. That they could not deny it. The miracle was done in the name of Jesus Christ. And instead of just waiting to see whether they could do it again. Instead of just waiting to see was really in it or not. Instead of just standing back and saying well, you preach in Jesus's name, let's see if you are right. Let's see if it'll stand up. Let's see if it'll stand the test of time. They were afraid. They were just plain afraid. They were afraid of losing support. They were afraid of losing people. They were afraid of losing control.

It's funny but you can almost count on it, that anytime people are using fear in an attempt to control people. Trying to make people afraid so that they will do or not do certain things. It is almost inevitably because they are afraid themselves. Afraid of losing control. Afraid of losing people. Just afraid, it doesn't make too much difference I guess of what they are afraid of. But just mark that down and remember it, don't ever let it get away from you. When someone tries to make you afraid, it is because he is afraid himself. If you can just understand what he is afraid of you're way ahead of the game.

So they called them. Verse 18. And they commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. What do you do with that? Well Peter and John answered and said to them, well whether it be right in the site of God to listen to you more than unto God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and we have heard. For Peter, saying don't speak in the name of Jesus was like telling him don't breathe. Open your eyes but don't see. Open your ears but don't hear this sound. It was not possible for Peter. The spirit of God was in him. He was full of it. If you tried to plug it up it would be like a bottle, it would explode. There was no way that Peter could not. When he said we cannot, he wasn't kidding. He wasn't using a figure of speech. He wasn't saying well I could keep my mouth shut but I aint going to do it. No no, when he said I cannot, he meant exactly what he said. He had no choice. He didn't seem that excited about it really. It was just one of those things and there are moments in your life of calm determination, of calm certainty. That

even under the most dire threats you really have no choice, and at a moment like that you can calmly say, I'm sorry but I have to do what I have to do.

So when they had further threatened them they let them go finding nothing how they might punish them because of the people. For all the men glorified God for what was done. They were tremendously excited by it. For the man was above 40 years old on whom this miracle of healing was shown. Forty years, and from a child he had been there at the Temple. Begging, trying to get money, trying to stay alive. Simple thing to be expected of a man in that day and that time. And being let go, they went to their own company. And they reported all that the chief priest and elders had said to them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said Lord you are God. You have made Heaven and earth and the sea and everything that is in them. Who by the mouth of your servant David has said, why do the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The Kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord. And against his Christ. For of a truth against your Holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentile's and the people were gathered together. For to do whatever your hand and your decision had determined before to be done. They quoted a Psalm, but then they came back around and said these men raged and made all this noise and have gone storming out to do what you had decided long ago was going to be done. And now Lord behold their threatenings. And grant unto your servant's that with all boldness they may speak your word.

By stretching forth your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of your Holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled. Oh what an experience that must have been. To have gone through this kind of persecution, to have seen a man healed. Just take him by the hand and lift him up and a forty year old lame man is healed. Lame from his mother's womb. To be threatened in this way, and to feel the calm assurance that there is no point in worrying about what these men are going to do. Because I have no choice I must preach. And to go together with the church to raise up a heart felt prayer. And as you said amen at the end of the prayer, to feel the foundation's of the building in which you stand begin to shiver, and to rumble. And the whole house around you shake with the power in the presence of almighty God.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they spoke the word of God with boldness. Wouldn't you? And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. And neither said any of them that ought of the things that he possessed was his own. But they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostle's witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.

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