

Acts 4

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Tape #8093
By Chuck Smith

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to another church that had growing problems, Acts chapter four. Now this portion of the book of Acts is just a continuous story and one chapter actually flows into another. So the fourth chapter, it begins with the words, ¹*Now as they spoke to the people,* You have to know the background of the people they were speaking to and who was speaking. You see just starting at chapter four, it says now as they spoke to the people. Who spoke to whom? So going back to chapter three, we find that Peter and John were going into the temple for the afternoon hour of prayer which is three o'clock in the afternoon. As they were entering through what was known as the Beautiful gate of the temple, there was a man who regularly had his post there. He was a beggar. He was lame and he sought alms from Peter and John. So Peter said look at us and he turned, no doubt holding out his hand, expecting to get a shekel. Peter said we don't have silver or gold, but what we do have we'll give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise to your feet and walk. He took the man by the right hand, lifted him to his feet and immediately he was healed. He received strength. And he began to walk and he began to jump up and down. As the people standing around saw this and as they saw this man walking into the temple with Peter and John, jumping up and down. No doubt, squealing too with excitement, drawing attention, they said isn't this the lame man who has been lying there at the gate all these years? It sure looks like him. How is it that he is walking? Let's find out. And so a crowd of people gathered on that portion of the temple that was called Solomon's Porch, a very large area. They began to look at Peter and John with a sense of awe, worship, reverence. When Peter observed how that they were looking at him, he said you men of Israel why do you marvel at this? Why do you look on us as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? And he began to preach to them the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is through faith in Him that this man has been made whole. And he again spoke of the death of Christ and of His resurrection. So he mentions the things which God had before shown by the prophets that the Messiah would suffer, Jesus fulfilled those prophecies. So he called on them to repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord! And Jesus is going to return according to all of the promises.

So while he was speaking, *the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,* The high priest and the house of the priests were Sadducees. It was a religious sect of the Jews that did not believe in resurrection. They did not believe in Spirit. They did not believe in angels. They were the materialist in their day. There was a constant religious argument going on between the sect of the Pharisees and the sect of the Sadducees. But the Sadducees, being materialists, didn't believe in life after death. They didn't believe in resurrection. This life is all you get. So they went for all they could get. The house of Caiaphas the high priest had little booths set up in the outer courts of the temple where they sold certified sacrifices, "approved" sacrifices. They had tables where they would exchange the people's Roman coinage for the temple shekel, that they might give to God. But it was a tidy little business. They were raking a huge profit. They had become extremely rich.

But their main thing was that there is no resurrection. There is no Spirit. There are no angels and when Peter and John were preaching the resurrection and more or less proving that through the miracle of this man born lame was now walking used that as the platform for sharing the fact that Jesus was risen from the dead. ²*being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* They came upon them and they were grieved, upset, that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. They were really angry over this.

³*And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody* (arrested them and put them into prison) *until the next day, for it was already evening.* So these events happened between three o'clock in the afternoon and the evening, the miracle, the teaching of Peter, the arrest of Peter and John and the lame man.

⁴*However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.* Interesting in those days when they took a census they only counted men. Women didn't count. So they would never count women. There were about five thousand men. Notice that when Jesus fed the multitude, it only told you the number of men that were fed. They just didn't count women.

⁵*And it came to pass, on the next day, (or in the morning) that their rulers, elders, and scribes,* Now they've got everybody. This includes the Pharisees also. This is the whole religious counsel, the Sanhedrin. The rulers, the elders, the scribes. ⁶*as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, (just who John and Alexander were, we don't know) 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?"* Deuteronomy chapter thirteen (Deuteronomy 13:1-5) speaks about if a prophet or dreamer of dreams comes and if he says something that comes to pass or if he works a wonder among you, if that prophet or dreamer of dreams leads you to worship any other god, he is to be put to death. This question was designed for self incrimination, that they might be able to pronounce on them a sentence of death. By what name, by what power have you done this?

⁸*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit,* Now in our last lesson in Acts chapter three, we were looking at the traits and characteristics of the men that God used. The purpose being that all of us desire to be used of God. We realize that we have only one life. It will soon be passed. It's only what we do for Christ that is going to last. So we want to serve God. We want to do something lasting and worthwhile for God. So we were looking at the characteristics of the men that God used. We saw that they were men of prayer. We saw that they were men of faith. We saw that they were men of the Word. And now we see another characteristic. They are men who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to his disciples you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You will be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and in the uttermost parts of the earth. The power of the Holy Spirit is upon them, they are now going to bear witness of Jesus Christ, just as Jesus said. Now this isn't natural for Peter. This assembly of the high muckety mucks of the religious world intimidated Peter, before he was filled with the Holy Spirit. It was outside of this counsel of men when Jesus was being tried by them, that Peter denied his Lord three times, so intimidated was he by these religious leaders. Now he is not standing outside, he's standing in the middle of them and his life is on the line. They have asked the question, by what power, by what name did you make this man walk? So Peter filled with the Holy Spirit. What a difference the filling of the Holy Spirit makes in our lives. Transforms us, empowers, us.

And he said to them, *"Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,* In that Peter is just sort of showing how ridiculous it is to arrest us just because a lame man is able to walk! I mean that's pretty lame. It's because a good deed has been done to a lame man. That here he is on trial. He has been arrested, has been put in jail overnight because of this. It shows how really absurd the whole situation is.

Then Peter went on to say, ¹⁰*let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, (I want the message to go not only to you, but to all 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.* You want to know by what name, by what power? It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified. Whom God raised from the dead. Again, as we pointed out earlier as we have been coming through Acts, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the central message of the early church. Every time they preached, the subject was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The fact that Jesus is alive! Probably it would well to have little open tombs that we used for necklaces rather than crosses. He is risen! That is the

message of the church! Yes, He was crucified, but He is risen! The message of the risen Lord! Even by Him does this man stand before you whole.

And referring to Jesus, he goes back to the Psalm (Psalm 118:22), ¹¹*This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, (They were the religious leaders, they were the builders of the religious community.) 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."* The exclusive claims concerning Jesus Christ! It is only by Him that we can be saved. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus said I am the door to the sheepfold, anyone who tries to come in any other way is as a thief and robber. So Peter is saying nor is there salvation in any other for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved! In quoting Psalm 118, and recognizing that it was a reference to Jesus, it is then interesting to go back and to read the context of this prophecy concerning the Messiah in Psalm 118. I recommend that you do that just as a background to this particular prophecy. There is a story, an interesting story concerning the building of Solomon's temple. As you remember in the Scriptures, the stones were all quarried off site and were brought to the site of the temple. They were carved in such a way that they interlocked and they didn't use any mortar. So in the building of the temple there was no sound of hammer or trowel because the stones were quarried elsewhere and brought and laid in place.

Now when we built the youth camp, we built it out of logs. The logs were ordered from Missouri. Back there at that mill in Missouri, they had the plans for our buildings. They cut all of the logs back there, notched them, and shaped them. Then they numbered them. When they sent them out to us, they were in piles. On the end of it was a number and by the number we knew exactly where the logs fit into the buildings. So it was an interesting thing, you have your plans there. You get the log, for example, that's 12N2, you know, and you know where that goes in the building. So we put the buildings together with logs that were milled and cut elsewhere. Ours was just to get them stacked and get the bars through and so forth. An interesting thing.

Well that's much the way Solomon's temple was built, only not with logs but with stones. They were quarried, brought to the site, and all, labeled where they would fit in and so forth, so that the builders had the plans of the architect, the numbers on the stones. They knew just where they went in the wall. But the story goes that a stone came which they didn't have any marking on it. They didn't know where the thing went. And so they thought, well, they've made a mistake at the quarry and they've sent this stone that doesn't seem to fit anywhere. So they cast it aside and over the time, the years of the building of the temple, weeds grew up and all, covered the stone. So that when the temple was completed all they needed was the chief cornerstone. So as the story goes, they sent the message to the quarry that you haven't sent the chief cornerstone yet. And the quarry said yes, it is on our records as having been sent. So there was this big dispute over it until finally someone came across this stone in the bushes. They realized the stone that the builders had rejected was actually the chief cornerstone of the building.

Now there is this prophecy concerning Jesus. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the work of God. It is marvelous, the Psalmist said, in our eyes. So Peter is using this concerning Jesus. You are the foolish builders and you have set aside the chief cornerstone. But He has become the head of the corner and neither is there salvation in any other!

¹³*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled.* Now let me say that I think they had three false perceptions of Peter and John. First of all they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men. They marveled. I don't believe that they were unlearned and ignorant. I believe that Peter and John had a better working knowledge of their Scriptures than they did. After all they had had three years or more of private tutoring by Jesus. They were in a seminary that wouldn't quit. They were with Him all day long, into the evening, listening to Him teach

and expound the Scriptures and open up the Scriptures like no one could. They had the author with them, teaching them, instructing them. As you go through the book of Acts, again here Peter quoting from Psalm 118, but all the way through, every time Peter spoke, he was quoting their Scriptures. When we get over into the seventh chapter we'll see how Stephen was so conversant with the Scriptures. He begins to rehearse the Scriptures for them and their history. They were far from unlearned and ignorant men. True, they didn't go the University of Jerusalem. But like someone said when you don't have an education, you have to use your brains. So they were far from ignorant.

Secondly, it says, *And they realized that they had been with Jesus.* It was a misperception to think that their relationship with Christ was past tense. **They were with Jesus!** He said where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst. They just didn't see Jesus, but He was standing right there with them! I wonder if the world takes knowledge of the fact that you've been with Jesus. How wonderful it is to be with Jesus!. But it wasn't past tense. It was a present experience. They were with Jesus.

¹⁴*And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.* Now they had a dilemma because they were beholding the man, which was healed, standing with them. So they couldn't say anything against it. I mean, how can you say anything against it? He's standing there! You can't say, he's still lame. He's standing there. So they could say nothing against it. I think that probably one of the greatest needs in the church is the witness of lame men who are standing whole. I speak of that in a spiritual sense. I think the thing that has caused so many people to be drawn to Calvary Chapel is that God has made so many lame people whole. People whose lives were so totally messed up. People whom the world had written off. But to see them now whole, to see them out ministering, seeing them pastoringxz cv some of the largest churches in the United States. It is hard to say anything against it. When you have a child who has destroyed his life in drugs, really spaced out. When the psychiatrists say there is no hope they will never be sane, you might as well just forget that he's your son. When you sit in the congregation and see him ministering to thousands of people, what can you say against it? You can't say anything, you just have to rejoice at what God has done! Pastor Chuck received the most precious letter from Mike Macintosh's mother, rejoicing at what God did in Mike's life here at Calvary Chapel. The transformation and all. Her thanking us for the part that we had in seeing Mike healed and transformed. What can you say 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 (everybody in Jerusalem knows about it!)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."* So that's the third mistake that they made! To think that they could quiet them by a strong warning and rebuke. You can't quiet men who are filled with the Spirit and walking with Jesus Christ. There is no way you can quiet them! To think that you can silence them with threats, they were making a big mistake. They did not perceive the truth about these men.

¹⁸*And 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."* In other words, we don't have any intention of obeying your command. You cannot silence us with your threat. We must listen to God. Now in a sense, this was civil disobedience because they felt that the laws of God were superior to the laws of men. You've told us not to speak. God has told us to speak. Now whether it is right for us to listen to you or to listen to God, you might have your own judgment, but as for us, we have no intention of listening to you more than to God. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. We cannot be quiet about this.

You remember the prophet Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 20:9) God told him to go down and speak. The people became angry and incensed. He was arrested and thrown into the dungeon. He was discouraged and upset. Here I am obeying God and look what happened to me. Down in this miserable dungeon, cold and damp, dark. I hate it. That's the last time I'm speaking for God, you know. If that's the way He treats His servants who love him, forget it. I'm not going to speak anymore in His name. But then Jeremiah said, His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not! Now this is basically what these disciples are feeling. It's in our bones, man, we've got to speak. We can not help but speak the things that 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.* Watch that closely! All men glorified God for what had been done. They began with an attempt to glorify Peter. When the miracle first happened they were looking at Peter, but Peter diverted their attention from himself and pointed them to Jesus. God uses men who do not take glory to themselves but who will point men to Jesus. The net result is that people were now glorifying God for what was done. And Jesus said, let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they glorify your Father which is in heaven. And when people begin to glorify God for what is happening then you know you are doing it the right way. When they begin to come up and pat you on the shoulder and tell how wonderful you are, then something is wrong! Look at yourself. You are standing in the wrong place. And so they glorified God!

²²*For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.* ²³*And being let go, they went to their own companions (from a hostile environment to a friendly environment) and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.* They reported all the threats. They are going to throw us in jail. They are going to do this and that, you know, if we dare to speak anymore in the name of Jesus.

²⁴*So when they heard that, (the report of the threats and all that were made. The magistrates and the orders that were given) they raised their voice to God with one accord* I think that here again we have an important key in our struggle with the worldly powers that often times that are antagonistic toward righteous causes. It didn't say that they all got together, painted signs, and went down and protested in front of the temple, but they went to God. They took it to prayer. I think that when we see injustices in our world, that we can actually do much more through prayer than we can through public kinds of demonstrations. So I am not really one to picket, to carry signs. If you want to get together and pray about it, hey, I'm ready. But I hesitate towards some of the militant types of operations that go on. It is much better to pray. They prayed. It was definitely wrong, the threats that were made to them. It was definitely wrong, so they are praying about it. And their prayer, I think it is a great model for prayer. First of all, the address. Notice to whom they addressed their prayer. *and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them"* Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them. What a great address! And when you just put that address on the prayer the battle is already over. From whom am I asking for help? The Lord who made heavens and earth and the sea, and all that is in them. I mean that puts things in perspective. My problems that were looming so great that I really couldn't see beyond them! I was being buried by them! They were overwhelming! But I'm coming to the God who created the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. Yes, it's too much for me, but hey, it's not even the move of a little finger for Him! So you begin to get the things in perspective when you realize that One we are calling upon for aid. When Jeremiah was discouraged because it seemed overwhelming, (Jeremiah 32:27) He said, Jeremiah, I am God. Is there anything too hard for me? See it in perspective. That happens when you put the right address on the prayer. Suddenly things are in perspective.

²⁵*who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:*
'Why did the nations rage,

And the people plot vain things?

*²⁶The 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 Lord, you knew all about this over a thousand years ago. This isn't a surprise to You. This hasn't caught You off guard. You know all about the circumstances. You've known all about these circumstances. A thousand years ago You wrote about them. They're now happening! You realize that God is in control. He is in control of the circumstances that I am going through. He knew all about them before I was ever born. He's not caught by surprise. He's not taken off guard. God spoke about this a thousand years ago through David. So the recognition that God is in control. He's knows what's going on in the situations in our lives. What comfort that brings to realize that God knows! God understands!

So they were gathered together *²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.* Lord, this is coming right down according to Your plan. That which Your purpose determined, they did! They gathered together against Your Messiah, just like You said they would. These men had that awareness of God's sovereignty. They did not look at the cross as some out of control experience, but as something that God had ordained, had determined and planned.

²⁹Now, Lord, (Interesting, you see, they didn't just rush in with their petition. They took time, first of all to worship. I think that prayer should always begin with worship. Just a time of quietness before the Lord, recognizing the greatness of God, the One we are coming to that we are coming to for help and for aid. And to realize that God has got it all in control. He knows what is going on. That just gives me the strength. And then to bring God the petition.) *Now Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,* Lord, help us to do the things that they threaten us not to do. Give us the boldness, Lord, in the face of these threats to speak Your word.

³⁰by stretching out Your hand to heal, (Continue, Lord, to give evidence to the word. Stretch forth Your hand and heal. Lord, perform more wonders and signs before them, showing that Jesus is alive and risen from the dead.) *and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."*

³¹And 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. So it was a powerful prayer! The place was shaken and God answered and they spoke the word of God with boldness!

Now we get a little insight on the early church. *³²Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul;* (They were bound together. There was the koinonia, that beautiful fellowship. Their hearts were bound together.) *neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.* But they shared all things. There was a common sharing of the wealth of the church.

³³And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. (Again the resurrection, the heart of the message of the early church.) *And great grace was upon them all.* Oh, what a great combination! Great power and great grace!

³⁴Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; (This was having all things in common.) *for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵and*

laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. So there was the common sharing of their wealth.

³⁶*And Josès, who was also named Barnabas (which means son of comfort or son of consolation) by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.* Now this just gives us an introduction to Barnabas. We will meet him later. When Paul the Apostle is converted and he comes back to Jerusalem, the church fathers are leery of his conversion. They don't know if he belongs to the Massada or what. They are leery of him. They are really not cordial and accepting of him. So he left and went home to Tarsus, which is now in Turkey. There he was just living a quiet life making tents. But when a Gentile church began to develop in Antioch, Barnabas realized that Saul would be a great one to minister to these Gentiles because he had a good understanding of the Gentile culture having grown up in Tarsus. So he went to Tarsus to find Paul and he brought him back to help minister to the church in Antioch. And then later when the Holy Spirit spoke to those in the church in Antioch and said separate Paul and Barnabas for the ministry, where I have called them. They fasted and prayed and then they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and the Spirit sent them forth. They went first of all to Cyprus, the first missionary journey, the first stop was Cyprus, which was not foreign at all to Barnabas because that is where he came from, the island of Cyprus. So that was the first stop on their missionary journey. Then they went over to the area that was familiar to Paul, over into the area which is the present day Turkey.

So this just gives us a brief introduction to Barnabas, well named by the disciples. The son of consolation or encouragement, because he was bringing parties together. He was being used to bring Paul to the Apostles in Jerusalem and to breach that fear that had caused them to separate themselves from Paul. It is interesting that later on Paul and Barnabas had their differences. As we move further into the book of Acts we will look at the differences that came between this son of consolation and Paul who became separated over the dissension that arose between them.

Now here again we have a mention of their selling of their goods and having a common treasury for the distribution for all of the funds. No where do we find where God commanded this. This was something that was probably done spontaneously. It sort of caught on so that many of them began to do it, but no where was it commanded or required that they do this. But there is often a sort of follow the leader kind of thing that happens. It is quite possible that it was just people being caught up in the emotion of things, did this out of emotion rather than directed by the Holy Spirit in doing it. Because, as I said, these chapter are really connected. As we move into the next chapter we find that some problems developed as a result of this practice. Later on further problems would develop. One of the first counsels had to deal with the problem of the distribution of the church's welfare program. And later on they were broke and in terrible financial straits. Communism just doesn't work. This was an experiment with the right motives and all but still it just didn't work. And like the present day communism in Russia they ran into financial woes in their endeavor for this experiment. See, you have to keep getting new ones in. It sort of a Ponzi or pyramid scheme. When you run out at the base it's all over. So that Paul ended up going to the Gentile churches to collect offerings for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. We'll look at this more fully next week as we see the problems that began to develop in the church over this early attempt at communal living. We'll look at that more fully.

Father, we thank You again for the power of Your Holy Spirit in our lives. The power to bear witness of Jesus Christ. And Lord, as we see how in the early church You manifested Your power. You demonstrated the resurrection of Jesus before a skeptic world, so Lord we desire to see Your power in these days. Lord we pray that our hearts, our lives might be brought into total harmony with your heart. So that You can do those things that You are desiring to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The prophet said to King Asa (2 Chronicles 16:9) “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. I pray that your heart might, this week, be in harmony with His. That God might be able to show Himself strong on your behalf and accomplish His purposes through your life. The witness of His love to a sinful world and the provision that He has made for their salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ! So may it be a blessed week and may the Lord give you many opportunities to share your faith and your love for Jesus Christ with a needy world in which we live. God bless you.