

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 4 by Chuck Smith 28JAN23

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January memory verse Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

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Chapter 4

Now as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead ([Act 4:1-2](#)).

The Sadducees, who were the spiritual leaders in those days... the priesthood was mostly made up of Sadducees... the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, in angels, or in spirits. So they were very upset over the preaching of the resurrection. That's the thing that got them upset. There was a big argument, religious argument going on among the Jews between the sect of the Sadducees and that of the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees did believe in a resurrection; they did believe in spirits. And when Paul the apostle, later on was brought before the counsel, he realized that he had Pharisees there and he had Sadducees there.

And so he used that to free himself. He said, "I'm here today and I'm accused because I believe the scriptures that there is a resurrection from the dead." And all the Pharisees said, "Well, there's nothing wrong with that." And the Sadducees all got upset and they all began to argue with each other. They had a big commotion, and Paul walked out while they were fighting each other. Smart move. So the Sadducees came upon them and they were upset and grieved because through Jesus they were teaching the resurrection from the dead.

And they laid their hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day: for it was now eventide ([Act 4:3](#)).

This whole thing all started in three o'clock in the afternoon and it was now evening, so they threw them in jail overnight.

Howbeit many of the people which heard the word believed; and the number of men was about five thousand ([Act 4:4](#)).

So there was quite a evangelistic service that day.

It came to pass on the morrow, that the rulers, and the elders, and the scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas ([Act 4:5-6](#)),

These men that we were introduced to before in the gospels, who stood in judgement against Jesus Christ.

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and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them [that was Peter and John and the lame man] in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have you done this? ([Act 4:6-7](#))

Now, that question was no doubt asked by a shrewd attorney who knew the law. For in the law it declares that if someone comes and does a sign or a wonder before the people so that all the people are amazed at the wonder which is done, and if that person should seek to cause you to worship any other than Jehovah God, that person shall be put to death; he is a false prophet. [Deuteronomy 13](#). So, by what power or by what name did you do this? Now

Peter could've said, "I take the Fifth Amendment. I can't be required to testify against myself." Because they had the Fifth Amendment in their law. It was recognized you could not force a man to testify against himself. Peter could've taken the Fifth, but he didn't. He took rather the opportunity to share Jesus Christ with these fellows. And knowing that the question was a leading question, and knowing the consequence of telling the people another name other than... well, he actually, he told them of the name of Jehovah God, because he said it's through Jehovah-shua.

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel ([Act 4:8](#)),

My what an august body; they're all gathered here today, all of the leaders, all of the religious leaders, Annas and Caiaphas and the whole crew, all gathered here today.

If we this day are examined because of the good deed done to the lame man, by what means he is made whole ([Act 4:9](#));

In other words, he is pointing out, "Isn't this sort of ridiculous? This whole furor and fuss has been created because there had been a lame man who had been lame for about forty years and now he is standing here, his feet are straight, and he's standing up here with us. Is that what you're charging us for? Is that your charges that you're bringing against us? Because we made this man to be whole? What a peculiar thing to get so upset about."

Be it known unto you ([Act 4:10](#)),

Now, you want to know?

and all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ([Act 4:10](#)),

And I imagine that he really drug it out to press it in, Yeshua Cristos.

whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole ([Act 4:10](#)).

"You want to know how it happened? This is it. How does that grab you?" Straight on. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which has become the head of the corner ([Act 4:11](#)).

Now, [Psalm 118](#), a glorious Messianic Psalm, which they all knew to be a Psalm of the Messiah, declares that, "The stone which was set at naught of the builders, the same has become the chief cornerstone. This is the work of the Lord; it is marvelous in our eyes. This

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the day that the Lord hath made and we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" ([Psalm 118:22-26](#)). And they knew that this was a Messianic Psalm, and when Peter starts to quote it, they know exactly what he's quoting. And they know that it is a psalm concerning their Messiah. And he said, "You guys are it." He is the stone that was set at naught by you builders, but he has become the head of the corner. And neither is there salvation in any other ([Act 4:11-12](#)):

Ho ho, that's heresy in the Jewish language. To them there was salvation through the sacrifices that they were offering. And today with them there is salvation through the good works that they do. But Peter boldly proclaimed to them "neither is there salvation in any other." Take note of that. In a day when there is more pressure for us to become more liberal in our thinking, when we are accused of being narrow and bigoted, the Bible declares that, "neither is there salvation in any other." You cannot be saved by chanting the "ohhhmmm" while meditating on your navel. It just won't do it. Oh now, doesn't that sound narrow and bigoted? Because think how sincere that person is who is out there going "ohhhmmm." Neither is there salvation in any other.

for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved ([Act 4:12](#)).

The divine imperative, the *must*. There's no other way by which we must be saved. Jesus is the way. He said, "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to eternal life" ([Matthew 7:14](#)). "Strive to enter in at the straight gate" ([Luke 13:24](#)). When people say, "Ooh, you're too narrow, Smith." I think, "All right! I'm on the right path." "Oh, you need to be on the broad path. You need to be more liberal, accept other religions and other faiths." "Neither is there salvation in any other."

Now when they saw the boldness ([Act 4:13](#))

And hey, Peter was bold, wasn't he? This was the same crowd that he was standing outside when Jesus was facing them. And he was standing outside warming himself when the maiden said, "Aren't you one of His disciples?" And he said, "No, not me. You've made a mistake, lady." "Oh, I'm sure you're one of His. I think I've seen you with Him." "No, no, no, not me." And the soldiers said, "Oh, yes you are one of His; you're a Galilean. You've got the accent." And he began to swear and curse and say, "I don't know the man!" What a different man. How can you account for the difference? It's accounted for right there in the scripture, "But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 4:8](#)). "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses unto Me" ([Acts 1:8](#)). And here is Peter being a witness unto the power of Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin and the whole crew, all of the rulers and the elders of Israel. And Peter is boldly declaring to them that they made a terrible mistake. They crucified the Lord of glory. They are the builders prophesied who set at naught the chief cornerstone.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men ([Act 4:13](#)),

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Now this is the first...many times the outsiders have a misconception of the Christian. Here we find two of three misconceptions. "They perceived," their perception was wrong. They perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men. They did not have their degrees from the Hebrew University, but they were far from unlearned and ignorant men. They had had three years of private tutoring by the greatest Master who had ever lived. Far from being ignorant and unlearned, they were probably the most scholarly of the whole group. They knew the scriptures so well; they had such a vast comprehension of the Word of God. So that was the first misconception.

but they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus ([Act 4:13](#)).

The second misconception. Because they put their relationship with Jesus in the past tense. What they didn't know is that Jesus was standing right beside them prompting them in what to say.

Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in the midst of them" ([Matthew 18:20](#)). Jesus had said, "They are going to bring you before the counsels. Don't take any forethought what you're going to say, but in that hour the Spirit will give you the words to say." Jesus said, "Go into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature, and lo, I am with you always." And to think that had been with Jesus was wrong; they were walking with Jesus into the temple when they were walking in to pray. The presence of the Lord was with them throughout their life, even as the presence of the Lord is with us. And He is there for us to call upon Him at any time when we're in trouble or when we need help.

The name of Jesus and the power that's in that name is just as effective today as it was in that day. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so, the second misconception is that they had been with Jesus. They were with Jesus at that moment. But this I like:

Beholding the lame man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against them ([Act 4:14](#)).

What can you say? Here's this guy, his legs are straight, he's standing up there, and he's smiling, and he's standing! What can you say? You can't say anything against it. Here is evidence that you can't deny. You can't deny the power of the name of Jesus when this guy is standing there just smiling so big and you know the condition he was in all of his life. What the church needs today is more lame men standing whole in it's midst. That's the kind of evidence that cannot be denied. And thank God for that evidence here. So many of you were so lame as the result of your sins. Messed up with drugs, with alcoholism, with sex, and you were living such a lame life. But having come to Jesus Christ, He washed away all of the crud and the filth of the past and now you stand with the children of God, whole. People who used to know you as you were, see you as you are now, and they can't say anything because of the dramatic change that is quite obvious. You're standing there whole. What can you say? It works. What can you say against it? There's nothing you can say when you see the lame

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standing whole. There's nothing that can be said against it. That is always the most powerful witness that the church can have, lame men standing whole in the midst of it. And all of us who were so lame at one time, now made whole through the power of Jesus Christ. How glorious.

But when they had commanded them to go outside of the council, they conferred among themselves, and they said, What shall we do to these men? for that a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to everyone who dwells in Jerusalem; we can't deny it ([Act 4:15-16](#)).

"We can't say, 'No, the man isn't walking.' Everybody in town knows what's happened now. We can't deny the miracle. What are we going to do? What can we do to these fellows to keep it from spreading any further?" So they said,

In order that it not spread any further among the people, let us strictly threaten them, that they speak from now on to no man in this name ([Act 4:17](#)).

They're not to make mention of this name again. Now, this is the third mistake that they make. Thinking by threats that they could shut them up. That they could stop them from their witnessing by their threats and beatings. That was the third mistake they made. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God you're going to have to judge for yourselves ([Act 4:19](#)).

You know, whether or not you are going to listen to God or to man, that's something you're going to have to judge for yourself.

[But as for us,] we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard ([Act 4:20](#)).

So they threatened them, "Now don't speak anymore in this name." And he said, "Hey, whether it is right for us in the sight of God to hearken to you or to God, whether a man should listen to God or man, that's something that every man should judge for himself. But we know for us, we've got to listen to God. We've got to obey God; we must obey God rather than men. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

There is a time when, as a child of God, if the laws of the land should be at variance with the law of God, as a child of God, I must hearken to God rather than to man. God's law over my life and God's Word over my life is supreme.

I am deeply concerned with the apparent government's infringement upon our liberties. I am deeply concerned when the government padlocks a church in Nebraska because the pastor feels a religious conviction not to register his school with the state. That bothers me.

You say, "Well, the pastor was wrong." Maybe? Yet, when the state begins to exercise power and authority over a man's genuine religious convictions, that is a dangerous trend. I

am deeply concerned with that movement on foot among the humanists within the government to silence the voice of the church. The humanists who, so many of them, are the editors of the magazines and newspapers who are speaking against the freedom that the church has enjoyed from the states' intrusion into it's activities.

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A recent editorial in the Santa Ana Register was aimed against the churches receiving tax-exempt status for the properties where the people worship. That editorial bothered me, because it made an assertion that by being tax exempt that we were really being supported by the government. That's idiocy. The church is doing a tremendous welfare work among its people. If the church wasn't doing that work, it then would become the burden of the government. Many of you people were a burden on the government until your lives were transformed by Jesus Christ. The government is making much more off the church than it would make in taxes of the churches' properties.

I do agree that if a church is engaged in businesses, or if the church has properties that are used for something other than the worship of God, if they are used for commercial purposes and all, I do agree that these properties should be taxed. I think that that's only right. But to tax the church properties that are used completely for that worship of God, I feel to be wrong and an infringement. And there is that movement on foot today to take away all tax exemption from the church as far as their properties are concerned. I feel that's dangerous. And should the day come, if the government continues its trend towards this endeavor to control the activities of church by government rules and regulations, then I'll be singing, "Daddy get your baby out of jail, daddy won't you please go my bail." And I'll be calling Vernon and saying, "Hey, I need your help."

"Whether it is right in your eyes to obey God or man, you're going to have to judge for yourself, but we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

There was a time when the prophet Jeremiah got upset with God because he was thrown in jail for giving God's message. God said, "Go down and give them this message." And he went down and gave them the message and they threw him in jail. And he said, "That's some way for you to treat your servant. I go down and do what you told me to do and now you let them throw me jail. I'm through; I resign, here's my resignation. I'm not going to speak any more in your name. I've had it." But then he said, "But the Word of God was in my bones like a burning fire and I could not but speak." That's what Peter's saying, "Hey, it's something that is burning in me. I can't stop speaking the things which I have seen and the things which I have heard."

And so when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all of the people were glorifying God for that which was done ([Act 4:21](#)).

Oh, isn't that interesting? All the people were glorifying who? Not Peter, not John--they were all glorifying God. "Let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works they will glorify your Father which is in heaven" ([Matthew 5:16](#)). You know, you can do your good works so that men are glorifying you, drawing attention to yourself. "But all the people were glorifying God for what was done."

For the man was over forty years old, on whom the miracle of healing was showed. And so being let go, they went to their own company ([Act 4:22-23](#)),

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They've been in this hostile environment, and so they retreat into the friendly environment of their own company the church.

and they reported unto them what the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that [that is, the church], they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and they said ([Act 4:23-24](#)),

And notice now their prayer. And this to me is an excellent model for prayer. I think that an excellent study for a person to make is to study the prayers of the Bible. I think you'll find them extremely fascinating. Study the form; study the patterns. In this prayer they begin, Lord, thou art God, which has made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them ([Act 4:24](#));

First of all, the recognition of the one that they were praying to. "Hey Lord, You're over all. You made everything." So many times I think that when we go to God, we're not aware of the greatness and the vastness of God. We're too aware of our problem. And we rush right in, and our problem is so large and so big and, "Oh God, I don't know what we're going to do. We're about to go down God. We're about to go under, Lord." Because my eyes are on my problem and I've lost my perspective, I don't see the vastness of God.

The first thing in prayer is to take some time and just meditation in the vastness of the God that you are talking to. Imagine, I am sitting down to talk with the Creator of the universe. "Thou hast created the heavens, the earth, and everything that is in them." And if I will start off with that quiet consciousness of the greatness and vastness of God, I'll find that my prayers don't take on that desperate ring so much. I only get desperate when I lose sight of God, when my problems seem so large that they block my vision of God, because I've lost perspective. So, it's a good way to begin your prayer. Very slowly, remembering who it is that you're talking to. "Oh, Lord, Thou art God. You've created the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them."

The second thing, still in recognition of God,

Who by the mouth of your servant David has said, Why did 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 Messiah. For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together ([Act 4:25-27](#)),

"Lord, You know everything that is happening. These things didn't take You by surprise. You spoke about these things before they took place. Lord, You're perfectly aware of all the circumstances that surround my life." That to me is comforting to know. God, who is my heavenly Father, created the universe, and He is completely aware of all of those circumstances that I face and that surround my life. He has spoken in advance of these things. "Lord this has not caught You by surprise. You spoke of these things by the mouth of David, and just as You have said, it has happened." For they have gathered together, To do whatever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done ([Act 4:28](#)).

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"God, You're in control. You are the one that determined these things that were to be done. You were in control." And that is, again, a glorious, comforting thought. God is in control of my life. God is in control of the circumstances that surround my life. We panic because we think that it's out of control. Not so. God is in control of those circumstances surrounding your life tonight.

And now, Lord ([Act 4:29](#)),

Notice they didn't jump right in with their request. They spent a little time in their prayer just assuring their hearts, as they spoke of God, His greatness, His power, His wisdom, His sovereignty. "And now, Lord... " We get to the request,

behold their threatenings ([Act 4:29](#)):

Look at the way they have just threatened us.

and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness we may speak your word ([Act 4:29](#)), Now they've just been told not speak anymore. "We're going to really get you if you speak again in this name." And what are they praying for? Power to do exactly what they were warned not to do. "Don't let us shut up just because of their threats, Lord. Don't let us be cowed by their threats. Don't let us keep quite because we've been threatened on this. But give us all boldness so that we might speak your Word."

By stretching forth your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness ([Act 4:30-31](#)).

Quick answer to prayer. The place was shaken, and they spoke the Word with boldness.

Years ago when I was in Bible college, I was studying this particular verse, and I was impressed by it. The power of prayer. That the place was shaken where they were praying.

And I thought, "My, that's marvelous." And I underlined it and spent the evening just meditating on that, just thinking of the tremendous power of these fellows' prayer. It so happened at that time I was the student body president at the college, and it was my duty to have charge of the morning prayer meeting and to close the morning prayer meeting and send the students to class. And there was a pulpit somewhat like this. And so, as I called the students for the final prayer before we went to class, and leading them in prayer, suddenly I felt the pulpit begin to rock, like this, and my first impression was, "Is someone getting blessed on the other side?" I sort of peeked over the top to see if someone was pushing the pulpit from the other side, and there was no one there. And peripherally I saw that everybody was looking around wide-eyed and the whole place was shaking. EARTHQUAKE! And I thought, "My, what an interesting coincidence right after I had studied this the night before." Probably the Spirit brought it to my attention to prepare me so that I wouldn't panic in an earthquake. It was quite an interesting experience where, as I prayed, the place was shaken. But I don't think it was the power of my prayer though. But it's just one of those

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interesting coincidences. And if you live in California for very long, you're liable to have one of those earthshaking experiences.

Now the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul [of one mind]: neither did any of them say that the things that they owned were their own; but they shared everything. And with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ([Act 4:32-33](#)):

With great power, that is through the signs and wonders and the healings and all, they gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. and great grace was upon them all ([Act 4:33](#)).

God's glorious grace. Yet, in view of this verse, the beginning of our next chapter is quite interesting. For though great grace was upon them all, yet, there was that powerful righteous judgement of God in their midst also. As does testify the case of Ananias and Sapphira, which we will get into the first thing next week. "Great grace was upon them all." Neither was there any among them who lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought in the prices of the things that were sold, and they laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according to as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) ([Act 4:34-36](#))

A beautiful name, Barnabus. No doubt because of his characteristics, and that is born out as we continue in the book of Acts and we read more about Barnabus. He was the "son of consolation." He was just a great mediator.

a Levite ([Act 4:36](#)),

That is, he was of the tribe of the priests.

and of the country of Cyprus, having land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet ([Act 4:36-37](#)).

Now, in a sense, this was an attempt in the early church for a form of communism. That is, a sharing together of their assets. Seeking to sort of divide among themselves the assets of the entire body. It should be noted that it was a failure. That in time, the early church in Jerusalem became broke and destitute. And Paul the Apostle went among the Gentile churches taking up an offering for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. And then Paul later writes about the work ethic, "If a man doesn't work, he shouldn't eat. There are some among you who are acting disorderly. They are not working; they are trying to live off the body." Parasites. Don't support them. If they don't work then don't feed them. Let every man work, laboring with his own hands in order that he might provide those things which are honest. So this was a move that was motivated by love. It was very commendable. And I don't fault them for what they were doing. I think it was a marvelous, commendable, beautiful thing that was happening as they sought for equality among the brethren. Unfortunately, it didn't work. It ended up disastrously. Though the motive behind it was right and all, yet, God has declared that man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and we can't just say, "Well,

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we're not going to work any more. We're just going to serve the Lord and get holy and righteous and God is going to take care of us. God will feed us; God will provide for us. We don't have to work. We can just trust in God. After all, our Father feeds the birds and He'll feed us." No, the Bible doesn't teach that kind of haphazard living. Jesus said, "Occupy until I come." Let every man work laboring with his own hands.

So it was beautiful and the motivation was correct. It was a glorious thing that they endeavored to do. It did have its problems as we'll find out next week with Annanias and Sapphira. In spite of that, I look at the motive of the people's hearts and say, "Hey, that's neat. I love it." Certainly their hearts were right in this thing.

Shall we stand.

Now may the Lord be with you and watch over and keep you in His love. May you have that Word of God so burning in your heart that you with the apostles cannot but speak the things that which you have seen and heard. That's the true kind of a witness. Hey, that's just my life. It's not something I do; it's something that I am. Witnessing for Jesus is the most natural thing in the world. It isn't programmed. It isn't a little pat formula that I have learned; it's just something that I am. I cannot but speak the things which I've seen and heard. May you just bear witness of His love and of His grace.

The Lord be with you, give you a beautiful week. Look forward to that opportunity that God grants us to gather together again in the name of Jesus and just study His Word and learn of Him and grow together in our love for Him and with each other. In Jesus' name.