

Intro

There are Bibles on the tables, there's an outline to take notes, and there are questions on the table.

Let me pray first...

Recap/Context

Just a recap on the context of where we are in the Book of Acts - Acts of the Apostles

[Powerpoint 1-Recap/Context]

Recap/Context – Acts 1-3

- Jesus promises the Apostles the Holy Spirit
- Jesus ascends to Heaven
- Matthias chosen as replacement for Judas
- Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost
- Apostles change from wimps to bold men
- Peter does first sermon – 3000 believers
- Believers share everything
- Peter heals lame man
- Peter preaches to the onlookers
- Peter's healing and preaching will land him in trouble...

1

Persecution (vv1-7)

The apostles, Peter and John are speaking to the people in Jerusalem

[Powerpoint 2-Persecution]

The priests and captain of the temple guard - Sadducees (a religious group that don't believe people are resurrected)

They are all disturbed because Peter and John are teaching the people

That they can have resurrection and eternal life through faith in Jesus (v2)

So they get arrested and thrown in jail - overnight - as it was evening (v3)

The result of the Apostle's preaching was that the early church of Christian believers grew to 5000

The next day the interrogation starts from the elders of Israel and the teachers of God's law - at the meeting of the Jewish Council - Sanhedrin - with Annas the high priest in attendance

It's basically a court case...

And the accusation against Peter and John is that they healed a lame beggar back in chapter 3 - and they are teaching the people about Jesus

The officials want to know - by what power - and by what name did they do this?
(v7)

Peter and John's Response (vv8-22)

Peter is the spokesman

[Powerpoint 3-Peter and John's Response]

He has the Holy Spirit with him

He says the healing was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

And that they crucified Jesus (that probably wouldn't go down too well - but true!)

And God raised Jesus from the dead

And in fact it was even predicted in Psalm 118:22 - that the people would reject Jesus

In Psalm 118:22 - Jesus is described as the stone that the builders (people) have rejected - but in fact what the people have done is reject the cornerstone of the temple - because Jesus is the foundational building brick for the spiritual temple of God - and all believers are living stones attached to Jesus

In fact Peter says in v12 - calling on the name of Jesus to save you from your sin is the only name that will save you -

We can't save ourselves, the religious leaders of Jesus day can't save people, the religious leaders of today can't save people - we can only point to the one who can save - that's Jesus

The Jewish leaders haven't got a clue how to handle this response from Peter and John - they realized the apostles are not well educated men - and besides the lame beggar is standing there in front of them healed - and there really isn't any explanation than the one the apostles have given

They Jewish leaders are not sure what to do - but they don't want the message of Jesus spreading any further

And that's what persecution is - isn't it

Trying to stop Christians from living out their faith and witnessing to others about Jesus

It makes some non-Christians real angry - and they try to stop Christians - sometimes by words - and sometimes by force

But notice again Peter and John's response to being told not to speak in Jesus' name anymore

See v18 and 19:

¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

That's amazing spirit filled bravery and boldness on the part of Peter and John
The result is the Jewish leaders threaten them but let them go - they are in a pickle - and can't punish them - because the people are all praising God over the healed man - who is 40 years old - the implication is he's been lame for 40 years and can now walk - it's no fluke

The people seem to have a better idea of what is going on than the Jewish leaders

Our Response to Persecution

There's no doubt we are living in dark times in the world

Certainly in ungodly times in our country of Australia

[Powerpoint 4-Heading]

- 2016 Census - says we have 61% Christians in Australia - so 39% are other religions or no religion
- Yet the Marriage Plebiscite - 61.6% Yes and 38.4% No

My only conclusion is that those who ticked the box as Christians in the census - aren't practicing Christians - or aren't serious about God's Word

My other conclusion is that Australia is no longer a Christian country and at best we have about 39% who are Christian.

Which on a positive note means we have 61% of the population to evangelize to

And on a negative note means we stand to be persecuted in some form or another

So what can we learn from this passage about Responding to persecution:

[Powerpoint 4a-HS]

1. As we are being persecuted - **remember we have the Holy Spirit** living inside us - the same Spirit that enabled Peter to speak - and the same Spirit that increased the number of believers to 5000. So we can claim that same Spirit!

[Powerpoint 4b-Kindness]

2. Peter and John showed a lame beggar kindness - and helped him. **Showing kindness is never wrong!**

[Powerpoint 4c-name]

3. **We have the name of Jesus to call upon** - the name of God's chosen One - the Messiah - the one God chose to die for the sin of the world to be fixed - the one whom God the Father raised from the dead - to offer believers eternal life - The most wonderful and powerful name in the universe that we can call upon for help - We can pray in Jesus name!

[Powerpoint 4d-means Saved]

4. Despite what people of other religions or of no religion might say; there is **ONLY ONE WAY** we can get right with God and live forever in Heaven. And that's by the way of following Jesus - believing in the **name of Jesus** (whose name means "He Saves") - is the **only means given to humankind to be saved** (v12)

[Powerpoint 4e-truth]

5. Being bold and standing up for the **truth about Jesus** - is a powerful piece of armoury that the Christian has - The Apostle Paul describes God's truth as "belt of truth buckled around your waist". Jesus himself says everyone on the side of truth listens to him (John 18:37). Jesus is the way, the TRUTH and the life (John 14:6). In the case of Peter and John - by boldly proclaiming the truth - their opponents had no answer.

[Powerpoint 4f-servants of Jesus]

6. As Christians **we are servants of Jesus** - and no one else. No one can stop us talking about Jesus - see v19 - the Apostles choose to listen to God not their opponents. The apostle Paul says it this way in Galatians 1:10: **Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.**

[Powerpoint 4f-can't help speaking]

7. Notice in v20 - the apostles say they **cannot help speaking about Jesus** - and what they have seen and heard. It's just too amazing - not to tell and share who Jesus is, why He came - what He is has done for us. We should be like the Apostles - and we shouldn't be able to stop telling people what Jesus has done for us. Are we like that? If not, why not?

Q & A

Let's pray...