

Acts Chapter 4:1-31 “Five Principles for Persecution”

I. We Will be Persecuted (Verses 1-3)

1. Persecution is a part of following Christ (3)

a) What do you think it means to “take up your cross?”

📖 *John 15:18-20* “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

b) All are included

📖 *2 Timothy 3:12* “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

📖 *1 Peter 4:12-13* “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

2. Especially when we start “sharing” our faith (1-2)

a) Satan will target a man or woman of God who decides to speak about Jesus

- The world tells us to keep our faith “personal” but Jesus said to share it

📖 *Mark 16:15* “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

3. People don’t like a message so narrow (2b)

a) It was only in the name of Jesus. Only “in Jesus” can we experience the resurrection (Vs.2&12)

II. Persecution Can’t Stop the Gospel (Verse 4)

1. The Church grows during times of persecution

a) See that even though these men were imprisoned and attacked, the gospel message was received.

- There is the remarkable story of the growth of the church in China. When missionaries were evacuated from China at the midpoint of the century, it is estimated that there were only 750,000 Christians in the entire country. Half a century later the number is estimated at 30 million–50 million Christians. This is happening in the midst of persecution!

(i) **The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. –Tertullian**

III. God Gives Boldness during Persecution (Verses 5-12)


1. The persecutors were men of prominence and power (5-7)

a) These were the same people who put Jesus on trial!

📖 *Matthew 10:17-18* “...they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. 18 You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.”

2. The boldness is from the Holy Spirit (8)

a) When we are in a place of need that’s when the Lord comes to give us what we don’t have naturally.


 *Luke 12:11-12* “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. 12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

3. Don't let your fear change the message

- a) Peter preached the truth that these people needed to hear. It is the truth that sets people free!

IV. When We are with Jesus we can Endure Persecution (Verses 13-22)


1. Have you “been with Jesus?” (13-14)

- a) Peter and the others were ignorant and untrained, but they had been with Jesus!
 - No matter what your background, you can be used mightily if you spend time with Jesus.
- b) If you have been with Jesus know that during persecution Jesus is with you!
 -  *Daniel 3:24-25* “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

2. They did not back down because they were sure this is the truth (15-20)

- a) They had to speak the things they had seen and heard. If they had not been with Jesus they would have nothing to say.
- b) See the importance of a genuine relationship with Christ. Persecution will demonstrate whether someone is genuine or duplicate
 - (i) A house church in a city of the Soviet Union received one copy of the Gospel by Luke, the only Scripture most of these Christians had ever seen. One Sunday the believers gathered to study. the windows were closed and doors locked. They began by singing a hymn quietly but with deep emotion. Suddenly, the door was pushed open and in walked two soldiers with loaded automatic weapons. One shouted, "All right-- everybody line up against the wall. If you wish to renounce your commitment to Jesus Christ, leave now!" Two or three quickly left, then another. After a few more seconds, two more. "This is your last chance. Either turn against your faith in Christ," he ordered, "stay and suffer the consequences." Another left. Finally, two more in embarrassed silence with their faces covered slipped out into the night. No one else moved. Parents with small children trembling beside them looked down reassuringly. They fully expected to be gunned down or at best, to be imprisoned. After a few minutes of complete silence, the other soldier closed the door, looked back at those who stood against the wall and said, "Keep your hands up -- but this time in praise to our Lord Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters. We, too, are Christians. We were sent to another house church several weeks ago to arrest a group of believers but, instead, we were converted! We have learned by experience, however, that unless people are willing to die for their faith, they cannot be fully trusted."

3. In the end, whether in death or life, we will win! (21-22)

- a) God delivered these believers, but many suffer death.
 - In the early church a believers martyrdom was known as his “day of victory”
 -  *1 Peter 1:4* “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”

V. We Need Prayer during Persecution (Verses 23-31)

1. This is a persecution prayer!

- a) They prayed according to God's greatness
- b) They prayed according to God's word
- c) They prayed for boldness
- d) Their prayer was answered