

THE REST OF THE STORY

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 4:1-22

Topic

The Jewish ruling council wanted to silence Peter and John but could not ignore the obviously healed man in their midst

Title

800-pound Gorilla in Your Midst

Acts 4:1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

Acts 4:2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

Acts 4:4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Acts 4:5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,

Acts 4:6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

Acts 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Acts 4:9 If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

Acts 4:10 let it be known to 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, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Acts 4:11 This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.'

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Acts 4:15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

Acts 4:16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*."

Acts 4:17 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."

Acts 4:18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19 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.

Acts 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:21 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.

Acts 4:22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Introduction

The man who had been healed said nothing but could not be silenced. He was like the proverbial 800-pound gorilla in the room.

Have you heard that expression? The gorilla in the room is used figuratively to represent something obvious that is being ignored. There are a series of TV commercials that feature a talking gorilla. He warns people that they are not preparing for their financial future, then says something like, "But don't listen to me; I'm just the 800-pound gorilla in the room."

Such was the lame man in their midst. His healing was an undeniable fact.

If you are a Christian, **your** healing is an undeniable fact! You have been made whole by Jesus Christ. You who were once dead in your sins have been made alive and enabled to walk with God.

You are always the 800-pound gorilla in the room. Men and women still want to ignore you. It's up to you to be certain they can't.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Your Healing Declares The Wonder Of The Lord, and #2 Your Healing Defies The Wisdom Of The World.

#1 Your Healing Declares
The Wonder Of The Lord
(v1-14)

Something gets lost in translation reading this passage. In verse nine the NKJV describes the man as being **made well**. In verse twelve you read the word **saved**. **It is the same word in the Greek text.**

The physical healing of the lame man was a sign that Jesus could heal you spiritually. It's not a cop-out to point out that salvation is the ultimate healing. It doesn't deny that the Lord can heal physically; it puts our focus where it ought to be, on the spiritual rather than on the material.

Our understanding of physical healing is too limited. We think only in terms of illness or injury or something else that affects our bodies. But there are other things in the material world that are healed by Jesus. When I was saved, my marriage was healed. Marriage is more than spiritual; it involves the material world.

Spiritual salvation also affected my physical body. Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit I quit destroying my body with alcohol and drugs.

When you get saved you are as perfectly sound as you need to be in order to declare the wonder of the Lord.

Peter declared the wonder of the Lord. Let's pick-up the story in verse one:

Acts 4:1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

Acts 4:2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

There were twenty-four groups of **priests** who served in the Temple on a rotating basis. They performed the rituals prescribed in the Law of Moses.

The **captain of the Temple** was the head of a special, handpicked security force that kept order within the Temple precincts. This was the force that had arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The **Sadducees** were a sect within Judaism. They were wealthy and influential. They preferred cooperation with Rome and worked to maintain the peace. Perhaps because they were so wealthy, the Sadducees were materialists who in their beliefs denied all things supernatural (Matthew 22:23-33).

The priests would be upset that Peter and John were teaching the people. The captain would be upset that a large crowd had gathered. The Sadducees would be upset that the theme of the teaching was something they denied, **the resurrection from the dead**.

When all this started with the healing of the lame man it was 3:00pm. Now it was evening and so the two apostles were incarcerated overnight.

- being changed to bring change -

Their message could not be silenced so easily:

Acts 4:4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Either the total number of believers in the young Church was **five thousand** or five thousand more were added. God was powerfully at work.

Or was He? That was the question needing to be answered. In the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, in chapter thirteen to be exact, the Jews were warned that if someone does a **sign** or a **wonder** they must determine whether or not the miracle points to or away from God. If the miracle spawns a teaching that leads away from the God

of the Bible, they were to kill the one doing the teaching regardless the genuineness of the miracle.

The Jewish authorities were within their rights to hold Peter and John for questioning.

Acts 4:5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,

Acts 4:6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

The **rulers** were representatives of the twenty-four groups of priests. The **elders** were representatives of the twelve tribes. The **scribes** were the authorized teachers of the Law of Moses. Many of them belonged to the sect of Jews known as Pharisees. This was an official meeting of the Jewish ruling council known as the Sanhedrin. It consisted of seventy men from those three groups and was presided over by the high priest.

Annas was the former high priest. He had been succeeded by five of his sons and one son-in-law, **Caiaphas**. **John and Alexander** and the rest of the high priest's **family** were there. There would additionally be many bystanders.

You're being told all this to understand the intimidation-factor at work as a tactic to silence Peter and John. Some of them may even have remembered Peter as wimping-out on the Lord before His crucifixion. After all, how could these two simple fishermen argue against such a group of men? *They were about to find out!*

Acts 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Acts 4:9 If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

Acts 4:10 let it be known to 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, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Underline the words, **filled with the Holy Spirit**. His powerful presence upon and overflowing from the apostles made this an unfair fight.

Peter boldly declared that it was in the name of **Jesus of Nazareth** that the man was healed. He went even further and reminded the Sanhedrin that they had Jesus **crucified**. He did not hesitate to declare that **God** had **raised Jesus from the dead**.

So much for intimidation! But boldness was not enough. Peter still needed to prove his teaching was Scriptural.

Acts 4:11 This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.'

Peter quoted from Psalm 118:22. The Jews would all agree it spoke of their Messiah. The Sadducees interpreted the **stone** as if it referred to the nation of Israel as a whole. To them, the Messiah was a synonym for the nation – not a real person. Their view was that the Gentile nations were the **builders** who were persecuting Israel. One day God would change all that by setting up Israel as the jewel among nations, the **chief cornerstone**.

Peter told them that the Messiah of Psalm 118 was a Person. He told them it was Jesus Christ. **They** were the **builders** who had **rejected** Jesus' offer to establish the kingdom by having Him crucified. He had risen from the dead and was proving His authority by healing this lame man.

They were blown away! While he still had their attention, Peter applied his argument personally to them:

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Yes, a lame man was healed. But an even greater healing was necessary. All men must be **saved** only through Jesus Christ.

They could not refute the argument:

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Step away from the story for a moment and think of yourself. You can be with Jesus. He has promised to never leave or forsake you. He loves to hang-out with you.

You don't need any formal education or training. You can be filled with His Holy Spirit and have all the boldness you need when you need it.

You have been healed. Always to an extent physically, but certainly spiritually. Why, then, are you not in more trouble with unbelievers?

There are as many answers to that question as there are believers. One that I suggest today is that we are allowing unbelievers to ignore our healing. There are at least two ways I can think of we might be doing this:

1. One way is to downplay our healing in order to fit in with unbelievers and not upset things at work or school or in the neighborhood.
2. Another way is to live as though Jesus makes little difference in our lives. Our marriages; our parenting; our ethics; are no different than those of unbelievers.

Here is another thought. The Sanhedrin looked upon Peter and John and **realized they had been with Jesus**. Their assessment was not accurate. They put it in the past tense, they *had been* with Jesus, when in fact Jesus was alive and with them always. Occasionally our walk with the Lord can be more in the past-tense than in the present. We need to get back to our first love.

Whatever the reason we must understand that a Christian is the 800-pound gorilla in the room. Your healing is a wonder that can introduce unbelievers to Jesus Christ – the name given among men by which they must be saved.

#2 Your Healing Defies The Wisdom Of The World (v15-22)

The Sanhedrin had created an even bigger problem for themselves:

Acts 4:15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

Acts 4:16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*."

Opposition to biblical Christianity is always in spite of conclusive evidence and proof that it is true. There are no discoveries in any of the sciences that contradict the Bible. Nothing in history contradicts the Bible. Men simply refuse to believe.

Acts 4:17 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."

Acts 4:18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

The Sanhedrin had failed to intimidate Peter and John. So they threatened them. It, too, was doomed to fail. They did not understand who or what they were dealing with.

Acts 4:19 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.

Acts 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

The apostles turned the entire proceeding against the Sanhedrin. It was as if they, not Peter and John, were being tested by Deuteronomy thirteen. A notable miracle had been done and it was pointing men to God. If the Sanhedrin had their way men would be prevented from knowing God. **It was they who should be stoned according to the Law!**

Acts 4:21 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.

These guys seem dumb. Intimidation had failed; why try threatenings?

Unbelievers live in a totally material world. They only have material weaponry in their arsenal. They can only hurt you physically. They can make your daily life difficult; they can fire you; falsely accuse you; ridicule you. They might even imprison you or physically harm you.

Stand against them on spiritual ground and you will always be victorious. You will suffer for it in this life... but you will be thankful and rewarded in the next.

[Acts 4:22](#) For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Again you are struck by the fact this healed man said nothing throughout these proceedings. It wasn't cowardice on his part. He stood with the accused, willing to testify and offering himself as proof. It's just that he didn't need to say anything.

By the way: I've mentioned before that both Jesus and His disciples had passed-by this man many times without healing him. Now we see something of the wisdom in waiting. He was healed by the risen and ascended Jesus Christ through His Church on earth.

It's what the Church does. It heals people. Sometimes physically in a more dramatic way. Always spiritually.

Bible commentator G. Campell Morgan put it like this:

The Church has no argument unless she has a healed man, and the Church that is not healing men, remaking them, has no argument for her Christianity (*The Acts of the Apostles*).

- being changed to bring change -
Peter and John had a healed man. So do we. In fact, you and I are the healed man.

Let's go forth leaping and jumping and praising God.