

Week 9

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH IN ACTION – PT 4

Unified in the Strength of the Spirit's Power

In the face of arrest and threats of reprisal, it never dawned on Peter and John to back down from what they knew was the right thing to do. They had encountered the Living God in such a personal way. Not only did they walk with Jesus for three years, but they also saw Him raised from the dead and felt the empowerment of His Holy Spirit within them to preach and work in His name. Nothing could stop them from living as witnesses to the truth and power of Jesus.

It seems that so many of Christ's followers have lost that kind of strength and confidence in today's world. If the certainty of what is true cannot hold us to the life of Christ, what can? Today, many do not hold to any kind of objective truth. While it is hard to say just where and when this challenge to objective truth began, it is pervasive in our society.

Jesus, as God, proclaimed that He is truth, way, and life (John 14:6), as such His words should be the very foundation of what truth is, yet confidence in the very Word of God has eroded greatly. While there are many reasons for such an erosion, perhaps the greatest reason is the lack of the church (in her various forms) to stand with unity over essential truths of life – even things as essential as what human gender is.

Such a belief in the truth of who Jesus was not only gave the Apostles great boldness, but it also gave the church great power. It is interesting to note that from the moment the church received the news of Peter and John's arrest, subsequent threats, and release, their response was one of prayer and praise.

The prayer of the church demonstrates a good pattern for us to follow. They prayed in unity and in the Word. As they prayed, they praised God for his mighty works and demonstrated their understanding of His sovereign plan in the world, no matter what things may look like at the time. They knew the threats received meant they would likely face persecution as the desperate leaders made good on their threats, so as not to lose face before the people.

Verses 32 through 35 show us the church at her best. When everyone understands what the truth is and what the mission is, then there is unity. And the key to that unity is to understand the solidarity of humanity. They held each other's needs so in common that they supported one another in every way possible. And the church was the source of the blessing as all gifts were given and distributed through her.

C. THE CHURCH MINISTERING IN JERUSALEM (3-8:3)

1. A Sign to Israel: A Lame Man Healed – The 1st Miracle of the Church Age (3:1-11)

a. The habit of the Apostles

- The Liturgy of the Hours

b. Lame from birth

- Common in the East for beggars to position near shrines
- No one could deny the miracle was of God

c. The Oneness of Apostolic ministry

- The one thing the church has is what the world needs
- The age of miracles – have they stopped?

2. A Warning to Israel: Peter's Sermon (3:12-26)

a. Early Christian preaching

1. The Cross
2. The Resurrection
3. The Power of the Risen Lord

b. Knowing their limits opened unlimited possibilities

- “Yet not I, but through Christ in me”

c. the Old Testament prophesies Jesus

- Moses is specifically quoted
- All prophets pointed the way to Jesus

d. The preaching and healing led to arrest

- Thousands more believe – The church grows exponentially

3. The Reaction: Persecution (4:1-37)

a. The animosity of the religious leaders (4:1-22)

- The offense of power
- The undeniable reality of anointed ministry
- The conviction of true faith

b. The prayer for boldness (4:23-31)

- Prayer was grounded in the truth of the Word
- Prayer was affective – God added his witness to their faith

c. The continuing unity of the church (4:32-37)

- Unity without charity was unthinkable
- It was unthinkable that some among them should suffer from want
- The charity of the church people was from the heart not from legislation

