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PETER AND JOHN TRIED BY THE SANHEDRIN

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF THE ACTS
NUMBER 15
ACTS 4:13-22

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ACTS 4:13-14 "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." See the significance of "The boldness of Peter and John". Contrast this with their conduct at the crucifixion when they were cowards and ran away. But now, they have learned something by the crucifixion and resurrection. They had to re-learn what Christ had taught them, and they also had to re-evaluate all Christ had taught. The disciples didn't learn much at first, but later on looking back through the glory of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, all that Jesus had taught them began to fall in place. The Holy Spirit worked in their minds and revealed the truth of these things to them. So, here is a major break-through. Peter and John had suddenly become bold. They no longer feared for their lives. They were unlearned men (no formal training) and ignorant (held no official office). They were not official, religious representatives. Naturally, the representatives of the Sanhedrin were very much impressed with Peter and John. The Sanhedrin members were amazed with what Peter and John said and knew. The difference is the presence of the Holy Spirit in them. All the disciples had to do was to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Now, with the Holy Spirit within them, they began to listen and they came to understand, and they began to recall points of doctrine Jesus had taught them.

The principle revealed here is this--They didn't have human ability to understand doctrine. But now, the Holy Spirit is within them, and they now came to understand what they could not understand before. Now, they have a new viewpoint in life.

"That they had been with Jesus" - For three years they had been with Jesus night and day, and at first, what he taught them didn't take. But now, as they began to see things fall into focus, they began to put together the truths he had taught them.

Now, let me ask you a personal question. "Do you have inner confidence?" Suppose you had to face a hostile court, would you be able to stand? One of the ways the Communists took over China was by the use of the children of China. Under Communist training, the children of China wrote papers about their parents, telling about their Christian faith. In a few months, these children were so deeply committed to Communist propoganda that they used it against their parents, and as many as twenty million people died in the Communist take-over of China.

Now, we all know that the Communist doctrine is a threat to our way of life. Would we be able to stand the Communist onslaught? Only Bible doctrine and the truth of God can stand up against Communism. Can you imagine youth like the "Beatles" and the "Beatniks" and the stoop-shouldered, guitar-strumming crowd winning a battle against opposition like this? Their hair is so long most of them can't see the enemy coming. The question is this--Do you have boldness and assurance based on doctrine you know? In verse 14, we have exhibit A standing before them. They had known this lame man for many years, begging at the temple gate, and now here he is standing before them. Here he is hopping around like a kangaroo. They just can't take their eyes off him. "Beholding" means they just kept looking at him as he jumped all over the place. A forty-year old cripple now standing before them whole. They are ready to listen to the gospel because of the miracle.

Let Us Look At Seven Things This Healing Reveals To Us

1. The presence of this healed, lame man made it impossible for them to criticize these men. Exhibit A was standing there before them.

2. The Sanhedrin, the religious leaders of the Jews, have previously rejected Christ the Saviour. Two months before this, they had put Christ on the cross. But they still refuse to accept Christ, even though they see this evidence of his power. Their minds had not yet changed about Christ.
3. The healing of the lame man was the credit card Peter and John had, showing that they spoke with authority. But the Sanhedrin, who were supposed to have power, had none.
4. The real conflict is the power of the Sanhedrin versus the power of Peter and John. The power exhibited by the message of Peter and John really shows the Sanhedrin that their power is lacking and inadequate.
5. The Sanhedrin will release Peter and John for they can find no reason to retain them. But, they will continue to reject Jesus as Saviour. They cannot deny evidence--exhibit A. They simply refuse to believe.
6. There is no dynamics in healing. Dynamics are in Bible doctrine, not in miracles. Miracles of healing did not lead them to the cross and to faith in Christ. Only believing in Christ could do this.
7. The dynamics are found in the gospel. Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek". It is not healing, tongues, miracles, or ecstasies that brings salvation. The only reason for healing the man was to produce an opportunity for them to preach the gospel in the temple. We read, "Many of them heard the Word". That was the reason for healing the man, to focus attention on the one thing that can save. The principle beneath this truth is this--This poor lame man was now healed, and he would have health for the remaining years on this earth. But, the great and glorious thing was that he would live with God through an unending eternity. Salvation is a million times more important than healing. Yet, there are many sentimental, weak-minded believers who think that miracles are everything and Bible doctrine and salvation is quite secondary. If emotion is your master, you will never know the true meaning of the Christian life. Emotion never brings maturity in the Christian life. If emotions are your slaves, then you can be relaxed and happy and everything is in focus. When emotions master you, then you have had it. Boldness doesn't come from emotions, but from Bible doctrine.

ACTS 4:15-17 "But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name." Here we have recorded the deliberations of the Sanhedrin Council. They reluctantly decide to let Peter and John go, but they don't accept Christ. They discussed it, but couldn't find an answer. They knew a notable miracle had been performed. All the people in Jerusalem knew it also. They felt that Jesus had set aside the Mosaic law. They believed in religion by works and they knew Jesus opposed everything they stood for. The Sanhedrin said, "But that it spread no further". They were determined to stop Christianity, if they could. Little did they know that God was at that moment, laying the foundation for a worldwide empire, centered around the church and the Gentile world. So, the Sanhedrin Council threatened them and did everything they could to intimidate them. They were commanded not to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus.

ACTS 4:19-20 "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Thus, Peter and John raise an issue. The Supreme Court of the land, the Sanhedrin, had ordered them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But, they were operating under a higher law. Here, the law of man runs straight into the law of God.

Peter and John are going to follow Bible doctrine instead of the decision handed down by these men. Peter and John gave their answer. They are going to abide by the direction from a higher court, even from the voice of God that speaks in their hearts.

ACTS 4:21 "So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done." So, they were threatened and let go. The people were on John's side and on Peter's side. The people were too many and the Sanhedrin knew it, and they were afraid to do anything to Peter and John.

ACTS 4:22 "For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed." This man, now completely healed, was forty years of age. He was a fixture in the minds of the people.