

There's Always Opposition... Deal With It! (Acts 4:1-12)

Baptized 27 people, 14 of who, were kids or youth! (Building struggles continue)

- This kind of frames up our text... awesome stuff happening and, opposition as well

Remember in the previous chapter, Peter and John healed a man who had been crippled since birth

- They did so during a crowded afternoon prayer meeting at the Temple
- There was quite a stir as people were in awe (in particular about Peter and John)
 - But Peter deflected the attention and redirected it to Jesus
 - And told the gathered crowd about the cross of Jesus
 - And that if they repented and turned to God their sins would be wiped away and times of refreshing and blessing would come to them through Jesus

And there is a great response to the message: The church grows to include **5,000 men** (verse 4)

- [Population at the time variously estimated to be between twenty and fifty thousand residents](#)¹

And then, Peter and John are **thrown into jail!** (verse 3) **What!?!**

- We see this reality emerge... The Kingdom advances, opposition increases
- We begin to take notice of a disturbing reality in Acts—Christians live in a constant state of war
 - Or, there is always opposition to the advance of the Christian mission or message or name
 - E.g. GQ; The New Yorker; CA Bill

There is real opposition to the mission, message and name of Jesus

- It is often shrouded in popular and even political concerns (Examples: Popular, political, sexual)
- In our text the opposition appears political in nature

Peter's discussion with the crowd (verse 2) has moved from how you get saved to what happens after

- I.e. **the resurrection of believes from the dead in Jesus**
- That is, the promise of eternal life (a natural discussion point)
- But, and perhaps surprisingly, that was a highly **politically charged** discussion at this place and time
- And there was politically motivated opposition to the Christians from the Sadducees
 - They were "**greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching**" this

"The idea of a general resurrection was an apocalyptic concept with all sorts of messianic overtones. Messianic ideas among the Jews of that day meant revolt, overthrow of the foreign overlords, and restoration of the Davidic kingdom. There had been such movements before, and the Romans had put them down. There would be many more in the future. In fact, the worst fears of the Sadducees were indeed realized when war broke out with the Romans in A.D. 66, with terrible consequences for the Jews. Here, with the large crowds surrounding Peter and John, their fears were aroused. The notes of Peter's sermon alarmed them: resurrection, Author of life, a new Moses. These were revolutionary ideas. The movement must not spread. It must be nipped in the bud." -John B. Polhill²

Notice: This opposition totally ignores the good that was done (verse 9 = "**act of kindness**")

The **Sadducees** were one of the Jewish ruling parties (Sanhedrin)

- Represented the greatest power base as the High Priest was from among them (those in verse 6)
- And they were sympathetic to Rome

"...They were accommodationists with regard to the Roman occupation of Israel. Possessing considerable economic interests, their concern was to make peace with the Romans, preserve the status quo, and thus protect their own holdings. In return the Romans accorded the Sadducees considerable power, invariably appointing the high priest from their ranks, who was the most powerful political figure among the Jews in that day. The prime concern of the Sadducean aristocracy, of whom the high priest was the chief spokesman, was the preservation of order, the avoidance at all costs of any confrontation with the Roman authorities." -Polhill³

¹ Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998). 228.

² John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992). 139-40.

³ Ibid.

What I want us to see here is the ruse (deception)

- Not that the Sadducees were pretending, but that they were themselves unaware (victims of the ruse)
- What in their minds was a keeping of the peace and promised prosperity for people—was evil
 - They had been seduced into thinking that Jesus was a threat to their well-being (cf. NY; CA)
 - Peter's defense was that in the name of Jesus the man had been **healed** (made whole) (v. 10)

Peter's words contain a bit of irony. The rulers were worried about the political dangers of the "name" the apostles were preaching. "This name is not destructive," Peter says; "it brings good things; it brings wholeness"

The real rub, comes in what the Apostle's believed—what Jesus taught us to believe (church must always believe)

- **John 14:6** and **Acts 4:12**, NIV
 - Offensive: (1) Need to be saved and made whole; (2) exclusivity (based on the Resurrection)
 - We see in the text two opposite responses (salvation and persecution)

Part of being a disciple of Jesus is realizing that we are in a war

- We are actually in the fight of our lives
- People's souls are at stake... there is an actual battle for people's lives! (5k saved and then silenced)
- This is true in every age... It is true for us now

There are lots of surface reasons for such things: Freedom from moral constraint, pol. correctness, greed, etc

But, the truest, deepest reason that sits behind all of these things is opposition to the Person of Jesus

- **John 15:18-21**, NLT
- That is what is really going on and it's a spiritual battle (**Ephesians 6:10-12**, NLT)
- What is at stake is the wellbeing of people (**John 10:9-11**, NLT)
- We are—Jesus' disciples always are—at war

So, how does Pete respond?

- He stands firm in the power of the Holy Spirit (**see verses 8-12**)
 - He does not whine about the injustice of it all and make it about himself
 - He does not rally people to make signs and picket the Sanhedrin
- Peter addresses spiritual opposition with spiritual means
 1. Spirit (is full of the Holy Spirit) (**verse 8**)
 2. Truth (sticks with the Bible) (**verses 10-11**)
 3. Jesus (keeps the main thing the main thing) (**verse 12**)
 4. Prayer (calls for a prayer meeting) (**verses 24ff**)

Now, that is not to say that we don't engage in political process, issues of justice, public debate, and initiatives

- We do, and we must
- But we must not do so without these things
 - They are the real and effective source and strength
 - This is what we have—and it is enough! **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**, NLT

Where is the battle being manifest in your life?

Where are you seeing both fruit and confrontation?

How is the battle going with you? Are you:

- (1) Walking in the power of the Holy Spirit?
- (2) Imbibing and disseminating truth
- (3) Keeping Jesus the main thing
- (4) Engaged in consistent, faithful prayer