



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"RIDING THROUGH"

THE BOOK OF ACTS- LESSON 4

In last week's lesson, we saw a lame man healed, Peter's second sermon, and 5,000 people come to know Jesus as their Savior. What a chapter! Now in Acts chapter 4, Peter and John find themselves in prison as a result of their boldness. The court of the Sanhedrin came together to question them. Peter again seizes the opportunity to preach the Gospel to these religious leaders. Peter sure makes the most of every open door the Lord gives him, doesn't he? What an example Peter is of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Let's get started ...

First Day

1. Read Acts 4:1-37. Write any key words or phrases that you find. What is the key verse in this chapter?
2. Read Acts 4:1-12. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Who is doing the preaching? (vs 8)
 - b. With whom was he filled? (vs 8)
 - c. To whom is he speaking in verses 5-12?
 - d. Where are they speaking from? (vs3)
 - e. Where did they seat them? (vs 7)

In Acts 4:1, the temple officials came and took Peter and John into custody. These officials were made up of three classes:

Priests- The priesthood was divided into 24 courses which served a week in rotation.

The Temple Captain- He was the head of the Levitical police force which maintained order in the temple. The Romans allowed the Jews to police the temple themselves. The temple captain was second in authority to the high priest.

The Sadducees- This was one of the religious parties of the Jews. They rejected supernatural concepts such as angels and spirit beings and denied any literal resurrection. They were the first of the Jewish parties to persecute the church. They also had much influence in the temple because the high priest and his family belonged to this party.

Notice that the court did not meet until morning (vs 5). This was done so that it could be considered legal according to their law.

3. What question were they asked? (vs 7)
4. Did the court acknowledge the miracle? Did they believe it or deny it?
5. In Acts 4:11, Peter quotes Psalm 118:22. Read Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6-8 and Ephesians 2:20-22. Look up the definition of cornerstone. Why is Jesus called the Chief Cornerstone?
6. How were the Jews "stumbling" over Him?
7. How are people still stumbling over Him today?
8. Some people think that there are "many roads that lead to Heaven." Is that true, according to Acts 4:12?
9. **IS** Jesus **THE** only way to Heaven? Read John 14:6.
10. How else do people try to get to Heaven? Before you were saved, what did you think would get you there?
11. What are we saved from? Read Romans 5:9-10 and 6:23.
12. The men who were persecuting them were "**religious**." Can you be religious and yet not be saved? How?

A **religion** is a system of beliefs.

A **relationship** is the state of being connected with someone.

13. Explain the difference between being religious and having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

This ends today's lesson. I pray that you each have a relationship with the Lord and aren't just caught up with being religious. I was religious for 18 years. My "religion" was leading me nowhere. I praise God for the day He opened my eyes and saved my soul. That's certainly my **"Reason to Rejoice"** today. What's yours?

Memory Verse of the Week: "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 4:12

Second Day

Review this week's memory verse. This is one you really want to know!

1. Read Acts 4:13-22. What is the main point or thought of this section? Who are the central characters?

2. In Acts 4:13, why did the religious leaders marvel?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Why do you think God chose Peter and John to preach to these men? How can using untrained and uneducated men bring God glory?

4. What were Peter and John's occupations? (Luke 5:1-11)

The religious leaders make an interesting observation about Peter and John in Acts 4:13. They realized that they had **"been with Jesus."** How could they tell? Was it their boldness? Their knowledge? Their love and passion for Jesus? Whatever it was, it was evident that they knew their Lord well.

5. Do you know your Lord so well that people can tell you're one of His by how you live? Do you speak with boldness? Is He evident in your life? (Be honest with this one. You only have to share if the Holy Spirit prompts you to.)

6. Read Matthew 5:16. What changes do you need to make in order for this verse to be true in your life?

Having a morning devotion with the Lord each day is crucial in knowing your God. That's the time He speaks to you, corrects you, directs you, and comforts you. That's when you discover the depth of God's love and the power of His Word. If you are not spending quiet time with the Lord each day, please start now. It's crucial for your development as a Christian. You can't "look" like you've been with Jesus if you haven't been with Jesus. (Does that make sense?)

**"Lord, I have called daily upon You, I have stretched out my hands to You."
Psalm 88:9**

The healed man standing with Peter and John (vs 14) was definite proof of the miracle and the reality of Jesus. The council was stumped. They had to come up with some sort of plan to explain away this miraculous healing!

7. What was the council scared of? (vs 16)

8. What was the plan? (vs 17-18)

9. Did it work? (vs 20)

Peter and John were ordered to keep quiet. They were told to keep Jesus to themselves. These two men could not deny or compromise their faith by keeping still. (Remember, Peter had already been there, done that!)

10. Have you ever been in a similar situation, where you've been told to keep quiet? What did you do?

11. Is it always the right thing to do, to preach wherever you are, no matter what anyone says? Explain your answer and give examples.

12. We are tempted daily to compromise our faith. How have you been tempted lately?

Many people want to silence the Christians. The world doesn't want to bother with the message of the Gospel. Ignoring it won't make it go away, or be any less of the truth. 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 says the Gospel will either be a sweet smelling aroma of life or the smell of death. What fragrance are you wearing? Let's end here for today. See you tomorrow.

Third Day

Review your memory verse.

In yesterday's lesson, Peter and John were persecuted for their faith. This marked the beginning of persecution for the New Testament Church. The enemy wasted no time in attempting to destroy the work of God. Satan still works that way today. No sooner do we experience a victory or step out in faith to do something, than he's there to try and knock us down. We need to remember who we're fighting against and be clothed with the whole armor of God. Then we can be strong in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10-12). Peter and John stood strong and the enemy was defeated! They were released from prison because the people were all glorifying God (Acts 4:21)!

1. Read Acts 4:23-31. What is the main point of this section?

2. After Peter and John were released, where did they go? (Acts 4:23)

The word "**companion**" in verse 23 is not in the original text. "Their own" refers to those with a kindred spirit who would accept them.

It's important to come back to your Christian family to be encouraged and strengthened in the Lord. Your brothers and sisters in Christ are there to encourage you and build you up in your faith. When you need prayer, do you run "home"?

3. What did they immediately do together? (Acts 4:24)

The word "**Lord**" in verse 24 comes from the Greek word "**despotes**" which means master, Lord, one who possesses supreme authority.

The disciples' prayer acknowledged God's sovereignty. They claimed that God: **made everything** (24b), **controls everything** (25-27), and **has a purpose for everything** (28).

4. Read Isaiah 40:28-29. How does it encourage you that God is the Creator of the Universe?

5. The disciples are quoting from Psalm 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25-26. Why do they quote this psalm to show that God is in control of everything?

The early church believed in God's sovereignty. They believed that God had eternal purposes and plans for His people. Although they trusted in His sovereignty, they didn't ignore their responsibility. They were faithful to witness, pray, and step out in obedience. St. Augustine said, "**Pray as though everything depended on God, and work as though everything depended on you.**"

6. Read the following verses. What do they say about the "**Purposes of God**"?

- a. 1 John 3:8
- b. 2 Timothy 1:9
- c. Ephesians 1:7-12
- d. Ecclesiastes 3:1

7. Read Romans 8:28 and Jeremiah 29:11. What do these verses say about the plans He has for **your** life?

Understanding that God is a God of purpose should bring us to a deeper trust in Him.

8. Read Psalm 9:10. If you claim to "know Him" what will you do?
9. We can trust God in everything, even in our suffering. What two things does God promise us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 2 Corinthians 9:8?

Sometimes we think that we can't possibly bear the pain or the problems in our life. Whatever you call suffering, we need to remember that God has not only allowed it, He has purposed it. God's grace is there for you, but the choice to accept and draw upon it is yours.

10. Read the Scriptures and fill in the blanks:
- a. If I trust God I don't have to be _____. (Isaiah 12:2)
 - b. If I trust God I shall be _____. (Proverbs 29:25)
 - c. If I trust God I will have _____. (Isaiah 26:3)
 - d. If I trust God He will _____. (Proverbs 3:5-6)
 - e. If I trust God He will be my _____. (Proverbs 30:5)
 - f. If I trust God I will not be _____. (Psalm 34:22)
 - g. If I trust God I don't have to worry _____. (Psalm 56:11)
 - h. If I trust God my heart can _____. (Psalm 33:21)
11. How should knowing that we can trust God because He is in control of everything affect how we live? Is it affecting your life? In what areas of your life do you have trouble trusting God, and why?
12. What did the disciples pray for in Acts 4:29?

Boldness comes from the word "**parrhesia**" and means freedom of speech, unreserved, or an absence of fear.

Notice that they didn't ask God to remove them from the situation or destroy the Sanhedrin. How often do we pray and ask God to remove our problems from us instead of asking Him for the grace and strength to get through them? **James 1:2-4** says that we should count it all joy when we fall into various trials, because the testing of our faith produces patience, and patience will mature us.

13. Are you in a trial right now that you've been asking the Lord to remove from you? How can you change your prayers? Will you do it today? Write out a new prayer to the Lord, asking Him to give you His grace to endure.

14. Do you lack boldness in your witness? Have you been praying for it? Why not start today?

15. Did God answer the disciples' prayer? (Acts 4:31) What happened?

God answered their prayers because they were praying in His will. He promised them power (Acts 1:8), and they got it! Let's pray this week for boldness to share Jesus with those around us. That is His will for us! **Rejoice!**

Fourth Day

Can you share your memory verse with someone today?

Today we will look at the unity of the believers in the early church. After they were filled with the Holy Spirit in that prayer meeting, we see an even greater "oneness" among them. This is a further development of what took place in Acts 2:44-47.

1. Read Acts 4:32-37. Describe what happened.

2. Explain the phrase "one heart and one soul." (Read Romans 15:5-6)

We see the early church working in harmony together to meet each other's needs. This seems to have been important to Peter because we see him address it again in his epistle in 1 Peter 3:8.

3. Why is unity among believers so important?

4. How can our witness for Christ be damaged if there is strife among the church?
How can unity be a witness of Christ's resurrection?

5. Does dwelling in unity (Psalm 133:1) mean that we tolerate or overlook heresy in the church? Explain your answer. (Read Galatians 1:6-9, 2 Peter 2, 2 Timothy 4:2-5 and Titus 1:10-16 if you need help.)

6. Does unity mean that we all have to be alike? (personalities, gifts, etc.)

The believers seemed to have a sense of responsibility for each other and a desire to share what they had. This was a unique situation in Jerusalem at the time. It seemed to work well for awhile, but later we find Paul asking the Gentile churches to contribute to the "poor saints in Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26).

7. Was their giving voluntary or required? (Acts 5:4)

There is nowhere in Scripture that commands believers to sell all they have and give the money to their pastor. Again, this was purely a voluntary act by the believers, motivated by their love for God and others. We can, however, follow their example in giving, in their willing attitude, and sincerity of heart.

Paul deals with the principles for giving in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. He never gives us rules or policies, but principles to use as we make our decisions concerning giving to the church or others in need.

8. Read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Answer the following questions:

- a. What should be our attitude when we give?
- b. How much should we give? (2 Cor. 9:6-7)
- c. Should it be a blessing or a burden? (2 Cor. 9:5)
- d. What is our promise for giving? (2 Cor. 9:8)
- e. Who is our example of giving? (2 Cor. 8:9)

9. How can you personally share more of what God has blessed you with?

10. What else can we share besides our money? Give examples.

11. How have others blessed you by their generosity? It would be great to share with your group. (Don't be bashful ... the glory is the Lord's!)

12. What does John say about sacrificing for others? Read 1 John 3:16-17.

That's it for today. How can you lay down your life for someone else? How can you help someone by sharing what you have with them? Thinking about how generous God is with us sure gives us a "**Reason to Rejoice**," doesn't it? God loved us enough to give His Son for us ... Jesus loved us enough to lay down His life for us. How can we dare be selfish?

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse -- no peeking!

For our last day, we will look at a man we meet in Acts 4:36. He is mentioned a few times in the Book of Acts. I think you'll really like him.

1. Read Acts 4:32-37 again. **Who is this man Barnabas?**

2. What does the name Barnabas mean?

3. What do the following verses tell us about his character?
 - a. Acts 4:36-37
 - b. Acts 9:23-28
 - c. Acts 11:22-24

4. Why didn't the apostles receive Saul (Paul) in Jerusalem? (Acts 9:26)
5. Explain how Barnabas took Paul under his wing. (Acts 9:23-28)
6. How was Barnabas an encouragement to the believers in Antioch? (Acts 11:23)
7. Barnabas seemed to see the best in people. Who else did he support? (Acts 15:36-41)
8. Did Barnabas ever blow it? Read Galatians 2:13.

Barnabas seems to be the "cheerleader" of the New Testament. He's the one who comes alongside others and says ... "Come on, you can do it!" How we need more people like Barnabas in the church today! Barnabas saw beyond Paul's past to what God wanted to do with him today. It took courage to do it, but he did it anyway. It seems like Paul never forgets that and they remain good friends. In 1 Corinthians 13:15, Paul wrote that "love thinks no evil." Did he learn that from Barnabas?

9. Did you have a Barnabas in your life when you first received Christ? Do you still have one? How did they encourage you? Paul never forgot his. Take a few minutes and thank the Lord for your Barnabas.
10. Can you be a Barnabas to someone? Pray and ask the Lord who that can be. Write a note to them, encouraging them in their walk with the Lord.
11. Let's review: What point ministered to you the most from Acts 4?

12. What changes do you need to make as a result?

God is so awesome. Did you know that not only did God create the Heavens and the earth, He rides the Heavens to help you? (Deuteronomy 33:26) Could there be a greater God than He? Let's **Rejoice** together that the Creator of the Universe wants to have a relationship with you and me.