

Responding to Persecution

by Don McClure

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for trials and tribulations, as seen in the example of the early church's response to persecution in Acts 4.

Duration: 51:30

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Description

This sermon delves into Acts chapter 4, where Peter and John face persecution for preaching about Jesus' resurrection. Despite the threats and intimidation from the Sanhedrin, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly proclaims the truth. The key lessons include the importance of being filled with the Spirit, standing firm in the face of opposition, and prioritizing obedience to God over man's approval. The early church's response to persecution highlights the power of God working through believers and the impact of living out the gospel message.

Transcript

Tonight, if you would, turn to Acts chapter 4, and we're going to kind of rumble through the chapter. It's a great chapter to me. It's the first time in the records of the early church where persecution happened.

So I'll read a little of it, and then we'll get into it. And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, they came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and they preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. And they laid hands on them, and they put them...this is Peter and John and some of the apostles...put them on hold until the next day, for it was now evening time.

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men, which was about five thousand. Well, it came to pass on the morrow that the rulers, and the elders, and the scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many were as of the kindred of the high priest, they were gathered together in Jerusalem. And when they set them in the midst, they asked them, By what power or by what name have you done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and you elders of Israel.

We'll hold it there, and then we'll get into it. Let's pray. Father, as we look to your word tonight, Lord, we thank you so much for it.

We can't even imagine where our lives would be without the word of God. Lord, what the word of God has done to us, what it has taught us about you, about life, problems that we've been through in our life that you've solved, and the guidance, the stability your word has brought in. Lord, what a treasure we have.

So much of our life, Lord, has been fashioned by it, and we long that so much more of our life would be fashioned, and fashioned, and fashioned again, and again, and taught by your word that we would live by it, that it truly would be a lamp under our feet, a light under our path. And so, Lord, we don't just gather together tonight just to kind of read some nice things, or to be entertained, or just to be superficially encouraged. Lord, we live in a world that's diametrically opposed to you and your word, and your word teaches us how to live in this world.

So teach us and strengthen us, Lord, as we look at trials, tribulations, as we look at persecution, Lord, and see how the early church handled it. Lord, that we ourselves, we can learn how to respond when tough times come our way as well. So teach us, Father, we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, throughout the history of the church, persecution has always been around, sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes more in some parts of the world, and less in other parts of the world. But in the early church, for the first couple of centuries, there was a tremendous amount of just straight persecution, virtually wherever the gospel went.

When under the Roman empires, and while the Roman Caesars governed, they were so wicked and corrupt and hateful. Virtually, they're Christians, and I'm sure you know much of it already, but thrown literally to wild animals, used as sport in all sorts of arenas. They were crucified.

They were literally used as human torches, and they were painfully sometimes dragged, you know, to their death. They were beheaded. They were virtually all the things that you can do, you know, to inflict great pain.

They found all sorts of ways, always have to do it. Tens of thousands, untold tens of thousands of wonderful Christians were martyred. But one of the things that was a mark that was recorded so much by even those that opposed them was the calmness, the serenity that they went through the persecutions, that they tolerated, that they were able to live with.

And it literally unnerved the tormentors, and it actually so many came to Christ watching there as they were the ones literally bringing the pain on people, bringing the suffering. But as they saw the way they handled it, they realized there was something tremendous about them. Of course, Saul of Tarsus later to become the Apostle Paul, when he there oversaw the stoning of Stephen and saw the way that he died, and as he looked up to heaven as the face of an angel is recorded there, he said, Lord, lay not this to their charge.

Here he was not angry, not hostile, not crying and begging for his life, but just there with the face of an angel asking for forgiveness for the very ones that were putting him to death. And of course, that was something Saul of Tarsus could never forget. That was perhaps one of the greatest turning points in his whole life towards his coming to Christ.

But it's something there that you watch, you know, one of the things that has always happened is that persecution has always purified the church. It's strengthened it, and that's true whether it's on an individual person or whether it's on the church itself as a body of believers. And of course, Rome, as I said earlier,

was the dominant force in the world at the time.

But while all of this was happening, one of the early church fathers at the time, Tertullian, once made a very famous statement that's lasted and should be for so long, but he says, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. That there when the trials, when the persecution and things came, when there was something about the martyrs and the way that they went through it, there was one of the most powerful evangelistic tools ever. Of all the preaching you could do, all the teaching you could do, all the ministry you could be doing, all the witnessing you could do in all sorts of ways, but yet as they would look back, what was it that had one of the greatest impacts on the world at large? And it was the very persecution that they put on people trying to destroy it was the very thing that turned many of their lives around.

And actually something that has still gone on, there is still a tremendous amount of persecution in so much of the world. You get over in Africa and there are still tremendous areas where literally tens of thousands of Christians, if you, the newspaper doesn't seem to pick it up much, but only the amount of martyrs that have gone on just in the last 50 years. What has gone on throughout the Middle East, the way that Christians, the persecution has gone on there, for some reason the press doesn't seem to care about it and the political world doesn't seem to care much about it, but they believe that more people have died in the last 50 years than perhaps in the first 500 years.

And so it's a tremendous amount that's gone on, but yet you may wonder, well, why hasn't there been more in America of persecution? And I think there's a couple of reasons for that. Number one, we still have some of the remnants of a godly founding fathers that set up a system of righteousness, set up a government, you know, of what is right and what is wrong. There's many, many Christian principles in our society that govern that just haven't allowed somebody just to come along and tyrants to come in and to take over and to change all the laws, although we're watching tremendous, you know, changes in our moral foundation and the righteousness of this country.

But another reason, I think, is the fact that the devil himself who is behind persecution, he's the one that's writing the script for it, so much of it. I think why would he particularly want to be motivated to bring persecution upon America? It seems like as a country we are already so carnal. Our witness is so pathetic, it is so weak.

When they hear, you know, when they get these Gallup polls that come out of the huge percentage of Americans that say they're Christians, they say they're evangelical Christians, they say they believe on that, and yet at the same time their lives on the whole, when you would look at it and, you know, the amount that they will look at morally, they don't care. I mean the premarital sex, the homosexual lifestyle, the huge percentage just, oh well, let them have it. Let, you know, homosexual marriage happen, let all these things, you know, to each his own, and we shouldn't be laying out, you know, all these rules.

And so it's like why, you know, if the martyrs bring tremendous number of people to come to Christ, compromisers don't seem to. The world almost mocks compromisers. The world looks at that and says, yeah, there's nothing I see in your life that makes me want to be like you.

There's a lot of people look at Christians. It's interesting, Larry King, and maybe you remember Larry King live on CNN and the interviewer, he was so famous for getting virtually almost anybody in the world to sit down with him, but his most desired person that he ever had was Billy Graham. Whenever he could get him, he always wanted Billy Graham.

And in his own writing of it, what he liked about Billy Graham, though himself not a believer, he said this is the genuine man. He's not here for publicity. He's not here for fame.

What he believes, he truly believes it, and he would stand right up for it. And he would also, Larry King would bring other Christian leaders, you know, on and he realized they just want fame. They just want fortune.

They just want to have their 15 minutes or whatever it is out there. They're very carnal. They're very worldly.

And Larry King would just look at them. He told Billy Graham, and it was written that he wrote down in his memoirs about it, how that anytime that Billy Graham would be in town, if he would come on Larry King, he said, I don't care who my guest is, I'll move him for you. And here he looked there, and he said, because he looked, you're the genuine article.

I may not believe, but if I did believe anybody, it would be you. But on the whole, he could look and just, he would ask these others, you know, when I, you know, I mean, some of the biggest names in quote-unquote Christendom in our country today. He, I saw the interview.

Maybe some of you watched some of these. He said, now, do you believe that you must come to Christ to be saved? They said, well, I don't want to be judgmental about that. You know, I mean, that's not what, now how about sin? Do you preach sin? Well, you know, some people already know they're sinners.

They just need to know they're loved. And Larry King saw right through that. Look, he said, what a bunch of karma.

You don't believe anything yourself. You just believe in your own fame. And how I'm sad that the world sometimes looks at Christians and mocks them because they're not genuine.

And thus, I think our country, one of the reasons that we haven't had more, that may be part of it. But here is persecution is happening. And it goes on.

This is the first time here that we really see it in Acts chapter 4, but it's in Acts chapter 5, chapter 7, chapter 8, and chapter 12 as well, the persecutions are going on through the book of Acts. And it's also something, though, that the early church was well-prepared and disciplined for persecution. It was no surprise to them.

Jesus had warned them very clearly, His followers, in John 15, 18 through 20, He says, if the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world. But I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, a slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep your word.

In John 16, too, Jesus said, and He warned them, He says, they will make you outcasts from the synagogue. But an hour is coming for everyone who kills you will think that he is offering his service to God. And Jesus, well-prepared, He says, if you're going to follow Me, a servant isn't greater than his master.

And they watched all the persecution Jesus went through. There were the Pharisees, were always dogging Him, they were always attacking, always right there behind, and He permitted that to happen so that they could see this is the world you're going to be in. And then, of course, they watched there as Jesus was literally taken, you know, through all this trial, and then as He was crucified, and all that He went through, what they did to Him, how brutal they were, not just simply killing Him, but all the pain that they could inflict, everything from plucking out His beard, slapping it around, beating, the Bible says, His face beyond recognition as a man, that His face was so beaten, and they saw that.

They knew that. The early church realized, that is our Lord. Nails in His hands and His feet, His back ripped open with a cat-of-nine-tails, shredded.

There were the nerves just wreathing out in the pain, screaming through His body, you know, and then a nail, I mean, sword in His chest, nails in His hands and His feet, all that He went through there, and yet they realized this is who we're following. This is, they were well-prepared. It wasn't something this might happen.

They knew that as soon as Jesus was alive and risen in them, when their lives were fully surrendered over to Him, and He was living His life through them, they should expect the exact same trials that they watched their master go through, so too would they. So they weren't surprised at it. Jesus had taught them and promised them literally trials.

He promised it to them. He says, These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. He says, In the world you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I've overcome the world. Jesus taught them, prepared them. This is what you're signing up for if you're going to follow Me.

It may cost you your life. It will cost many of your lives. And all but John of the apostles, it did as well.

The only one that tradition tells us that lived out a normal life. But here we have, so, the first recorded persecution to deal with. And as we look at it, we're watching primarily Peter and John.

They're on the stage here doing the speaking. But as they're looking at this, though, I don't think it's all that much difference whether it's persecution, whether it's suffering, whether it's trials and tribulations you can go through with your health or with your marriage or with your children or in the financial world or with a career. There's all sorts of difficulties and tensions and struggles that come to us in this life.

And how to respond to it, how to respond to the heartaches, to the pain, the suffering, the tribulations, the persecutions of life. And here we have, I believe in this chapter, tremendous preparation and watching them so that every one of us, no matter what it is we may be going through, whatever the trouble it could be, to look there and realize this is the way to handle it. Regardless of the circumstances here, the principles that they operated on were tremendous.

Now, they end up, they had just preached. There'd been this tremendous message and it's been this wonderful work of healing that had happened to this man in the previous chapter. Some 5,000 people had responded to the gospel, which absolutely set the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the entire Sanhedrin on its ear.

It was furious, you know, over this. They thought they'd crucified Christ. They thought He was gone.

They thought He was dead, buried history. And now, you know, come to find, you know, that here there's these, He'd already appeared to over 500. There's many infallible proofs, you know, of it to many of them they had seen.

They knew there was no question of His resurrection to them. And here the Pharisees, now they're having to deal with it because now they're preaching Christ and the resurrection of the dead, that there's the sermons. And here the Sanhedrin come together.

Now, the Sanhedrin, just to put them together, they were an interesting group. It's about 71 of them usually. And they were made up of, first of all, the dominant force in them were the Sadducees.

And they were a sect made up, a lot of first century Judaism. And they were, next to the Sadducees, smaller in number but very vocal and powerful, were the Pharisees. Then there was also the Essenes and the Zealots.

And those smaller number, they were also very, very powerful. And here amongst, but in it, though, this Sanhedrin was made up. It's almost like our Congress, you know, you got Republicans and Democrats and people to the far left, people to the far right, people in the middle of the road or whatever else on it.

And they were probably operated somewhat like that in a room themselves. They didn't have much to agree on. But what, this is probably one of the first things that they all agreed on.

And that is these Christians have got to go. They don't fit here. We maybe don't get along and we fight and we argue and we, you know, they want to, we detest each other, but they'd all learned how to live with each other.

But they're looking at this force here of Christianity and they had found great unity there in wanting to destroy it. Now the Sadducees were a sect, they were kind of the social liberals, you might say of the day. They didn't believe in the resurrection or in an afterlife necessarily.

They were kind of golden rule people, not even very good on that. They believed somewhat in the written law, but in all of the, you know, legal things that the Pharisees were, you know, really hard on. They laughed a lot of that off and didn't care about it.

The Sadducees were also, they were the very aristocratic, they were very wealthy. Most of them were landowners, were powerful. Now at the time also realized there's Rome over here that ruled over Israel.

They'd come in in great power and they, and Israel had no capacity to fight them. And so there they had just given up, but basically all Rome wanted, we just want your taxes. We'll rule you and as long as you get along, you do what we say.

We've got, you know, our basic rules, our government over it. But how you govern yourself is your business. We don't care about your religion.

We don't care about your Judaism. We don't care about Sadducees or Pharisees or Essids or Zealots or any of those piddly little things to us. You just do who you are and you guys govern yourselves and whatever you want to do, you do.

And then Rome was kind of this huge authority over here politically and militarily. But over the Jews, so they had these two great powers that, you know, over them, where they'd have incredible power between

the two of them. And, but here now the Pharisees on one hand, they did believe in the resurrection of the dead, and they did believe in a future, but not in the resurrection of Jesus.

That's the Messiah, obviously. So all of them, they find themselves in great opposition to this thing called Christianity, followers of the way at the time is what they were so far. And this was a tremendous source of irritation to all of them.

And so they found themselves in great agreement on this. And now when they had watched what had happened, the thousands of men plus women and children, you know, it says in the previous, in the early, 5,000 men. So maybe 10, 15,000, easily they're a number.

I mean a massive massive ministry had occurred. These people that had been held under the law, held under Judaism, held under all this, the things there for so long, that was so lifeless, so powerless. And when they see the resurrection of Christ, the love, the hope, the power that they were seeing in the Christians, it just began to overwhelm them.

They were so hungry. They were so thirsty. They were just desiring.

Here they had Rome that they didn't like. They had Judaism that had just imprisoned them as well. And they just, all of a sudden there was a sense of life and hope and future.

And it was being preached so powerfully. So then to try to stop this, they bring in, they take Peter and John and put some of them there in prison overnight. And then they gather in the morning.

There the next day, the Sanhedrin, all of them. And when you watch how they reacted, that's the point of all of this that we want to look at tonight, is how did they react with this Sanhedrin brings them together. And then also the relatives of some of the higher mucky mucks.

So this was quite a deal. First of all, just to get the whole Sanhedrin together, it was like an act of Congress already just to meet, get them all there. There they all came.

They agreed on this is important enough that we've got to deal with this as an entire Sanhedrin. And so there they all are. But when you watch this thing, you begin to see it tells us, first of all, there in verse 6, there's Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were the kindred of the high priest.

They were gathered together in Jerusalem. And when they had them set in the midst, they asked them, by what power or by what name have you done this? Here they bring them in, and they put them right out in the midst. Here they would all be in some form of a semi-circle or something around them, and there all of a sudden you're brought in to sit there in the middle of this.

And now the Sanhedrin, there they ask him, said, by what name or by what power or what name have you done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them. But as you watch the whole temperament, you can just watch this whole thing, and you realize that in it, Peter and John, they're very submissive, very powerful, but very submissive in the sense there that they came, and they offered no resistance. They didn't come in there and start name-calling or doing accusing.

They were very powerful in what they had to say. But they were very controlled. They quietly submitted to all this.

They said, who do you think you are? We obey Christ and nobody else or whatever else. No, they let this happen. They took it, and they had already been through some times.

They knew there would be many more, and they were already prepared. All right, we know who we are. We know who you are.

We see the battle, and we're prepared for it. And we've been taught and equipped and trained for this very thing. They'd watched Jesus in the midst of all these times when they'd come and after Him and tried to set Him off, and they realized He was just a master at peace, a master there.

I mean, His peace, His stability, His feathers were never ruffled. He was never, you know, there to, I can't take it anymore, just get lost. Or He never, you know, just did some dramatic thing here.

He could have opened up the earth like Moses did. You know, He could have bought fire from heaven. He could have done all sorts of things that people suggested to Him that He should do.

But He didn't do any of that, just absolutely calm under pressure. And they'd already been disciplined in this. They had been around somebody there that's so mature, so wonderful, so perfect in Jesus, and watched Him, and watched all of these attacks that came year after year for three and a half years, and yet never lost His composure, never cornered, never having to fight His way out, never having to react.

And here under this pressure, when you look at this, here we've got again, it tells us there's the rulers, they're called the chief priests, and they're together with the elders, and the elders are primarily family heads or heads of tribes. There's the scribes, they're the law experts. They're mostly, those were Pharisees.

And as they made up the Sanhedrin there within them, they're all gathered together in Jerusalem. And here is the equivalent of their supreme court. When the Sanhedrin would call a meeting, they would come together.

It was like the supreme court had just been called into session. And as far as the people, just the common people, the rest of the world out there, there was two powers. There was Caesar, and there was the Sanhedrin.

Both had power to kill you. Both had power just to decide whatever they want. Rome didn't care.

They didn't care, hey look, we just want our taxes, we just have our way of controlling. You want to kill each other, you kill each other. You have your own judicial system, you want to have something, your own laws, and what somebody, at what point you stone them, or you kill them, or you do whatever it is.

You do all that. You run yourself. That's your business.

We don't care. We got a world to run. We just want what we're getting from you.

So Rome was incredibly powerful. Caesar was very powerful. But internally, the Sanhedrin.

And here they're called in before the Sanhedrin. And they're, and they turn, and they ask them, by what power, or in what name, have you done this? And right there, just in the very asking of that question, how intimidating it is. It's like there's only two powers here in the world.

There's Rome, that we don't even think much of, but we have to live with because we're afraid of them. And there's us. Now what power, and there is no other authority.

And here was something, what are you, what authority do you have to do what you're doing in this country? There's only two authorities, two names, that you can do something under its authority and its power. Who, what name, who, how did you do this? Whose name are you using? Because that was almost like an act of treason, no matter what it is. When somebody would come in before that, it'd be like you and I can call before the Supreme Court.

Call before the great, and there they could make a decision, and whatever happens to our life that they want to do with it, it happens. We can do nothing about it. And most people going into that, even the thought of being called before it, would be the most fearful thing in all the world.

But then to have them come and have them all sit around their room and 70 faces looking at you and say, by what power and what name, where do you get the authority to do what you're doing? And right there, most of them would say, well, I don't know, forgive me, I don't know what I was thinking. Or they would somehow or another, how do we deal with this thing? Because now, when I suggest there's another authority outside of their authority, that in itself was an act almost of treason to Judaism and Rome. And here when you look at this and you watch there is Peter and John, the way they were questioned, it's like you're only here because you're rebels in the first place.

We're just going to discuss your rebellion. We're going to discuss this act of rebellion that you're doing against Rome and against us. And we're going to deal with it here.

And here, in the midst of it, so peaceful. How important it is that when you and I, when we find ourselves in difficult times, find yourself under pressure, finding yourself under some attack in one form or another, some stressful thing, to be able to realize, God, this is, you know, come, handle this. A second thing that is so important, in the next verse, it tells us, verse 8, Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel.

Here he's looking at them, he didn't say you have no right to rule, you have no place. They knew Jesus taught them, God puts up kings, puts them down, you submit to those in authority. He gave them their title.

But it also is there that notice, Peter filled with the Holy Spirit. This is something that is the most fundamental prerequisite to solving any problem we'll ever have. I can't overstate this.

Three times in this chapter it refers, being filled with the Spirit, and Peter filled with the Spirit. Something there that it makes it real clear that with a guiding force that Peter is completely dependent upon all the way through this is the unseen one in the whole thing that is so real to them. The most real person there wasn't the high priest, it wasn't Annas, it wasn't Caiaphas, it wasn't any of the Pharisees or the Sadducees that were staring him down.

The greatest force in the room, if God before you, who can be against you? They knew, filled with the Spirit, there's a majority right there. Peter, when you're filled with the Spirit, you're in a majority. That's what they have learned from Jesus.

When they had watched, how does he handle himself? How does he do so well? How does he operate like this? And it was because Jesus always was filled with the Spirit. It's the way he lived, you know, so triumphantly. It was the whole secret of everything.

And Jesus, again, he taught his disciples, Luke 12, 11, it says, and when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities. So when Jesus, he's talking to him, he didn't say if they bring him, he said when, it's going to happen. You're going to be brought before the synagogues, the rulers and the authority, but he says, do not become anxious about how or what you shall speak in your defense or what you should say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. Here they had been taught specifically. It was something they all had all night long to think, we're brought in, brought in.

But Jesus said, don't even worry about what you're going to say. You'll be filled with the Spirit and the Spirit of God will give you the words in the very hour you need them. And when we realize, God, that's what we need in our lives, that's the great problem solver, that the whole of Christian living, of ministry, of our witness depends upon the filling of Spirit.

In Ephesians, Paul writes in, you know, on spiritual warfare, and he says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. Here we're taught that we live in a world of spiritual warfare.

And the Bible wants to make it, if we get familiar with the Bible at all, we ought to know there's only two worlds. That's all there is. You know, when you settle all the dust down and everything is going on in life around the world, militarily, politically, financially, in a marriage, in a family, everything, there's two worlds always around.

There's the spiritual world, and there's the carnal world. There's the life of the Spirit, and there's the life of the flesh. That's it.

That's all it is. And Jesus had taught them, you are not of this world, even as I'm not of it. You're of another world.

You're of the spiritual world. And when you're in the spiritual world, the key to it is being in the Spirit. If you want to solve any of the problems, you try to solve anything else.

Every one of our struggles, persecutions, trials, whether it's Rome or it's the Sanhedrin or it's the government or it's your marriage or your children, the bottom line is if I'm in the flesh, I'm in the flesh. I've already lost. I've already lost.

No matter what it is that's going on, the interesting thing about it is we can be absolutely right, but if we're in the flesh, we're kind of dead right. You know, you're right in one sense, but because the very power you're trying to use to solve it is your own. And here Jesus taught them you don't solve things that way.

You need a fresh work of the Spirit constantly within our lives, constantly within our homes, constantly in our relationships, constantly. We need to go into work. God, fill me.

Fill me with the Spirit. We're going to the bank. We're trying to deal whatever it is.

God, we're standing in a grocery store, and there's, you know, somebody just checking out in front of us with this or that, and a person is filled with the Spirit. They realize the world that they're in and around, and

they'll have the words. They'll have things to say.

They'll see somebody in confusion or duress, and they'll have words for them. One of the things, I mean, in fact, I don't know if any of you, this weekend Gene and I were going up to, you know, do your married couples conference. That'll be a fun time.

And, but we've been married 46 years, but it didn't take a long time to realize how different we are. I mean, to male and female. I mean, God had such a tremendous sense of humor, I think, when He made men and women.

I mean, He made us so radically different, so incredibly different. And then He tells us love each other, and understand each other, and to deal with one another. But He designed us in such a way as we don't have the tools to do it.

It's like, you know, what's the book Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus or something like that? I've never read the book. I mean, we are from different worlds. Be a fool not to know that and realize how different we are.

I mean, on one hand, a woman, her wife, and I don't mean to be critical. I'm just going to analyze something. I mean, God bless you.

We love you to death. But anyway, we're trying to put it that way. But the, I mean, a woman is somebody that when she says, never mind, I'll do it myself, her husband lets her.

But a man, on the other hand, is when his wife says, never mind, I'll do it myself, and then he lets her, she gets mad. And a man, on the other hand, he's somebody that when she says, never mind, I'll do it myself, and then he lets her, and then she gets mad, he then says, now, what have I done? When she said, never mind, I'll do it myself, and he lets her, and she gets mad, and he says, now, what have I done? She says, well, if you don't know, I'm not going to tell you. And then he says, now, be happy and be married.

What a joke. But it's not going to work without the work of the Spirit, without just the simplest, most basic relationships in life, the trials, the trouble you have just trying on the natural human level to reason with one another, to function with one another, to raise a child. You need to be filled with the Spirit, incredibly filled.

I remember when my boy, I guess three boys are now 38 to 44, but I remember one time, one of them particularly, he was always kind of a rascal, which they all qualified for in that realm, but at any rate, I remember the time, he's about two years old, crawling across the floor, and I'm actually having a conversation with somebody, and you know, little kids, they only, when they're focused, they see something, but if they're not looking straight at it, they don't see it. So you can sit there, and you're watching out of the corner of your eye, something going on, and they can be looking at you, because you're not looking straight at them. They don't think you know.

Well, I'm watching, talking to somebody, and here, he's crawling across the floor. There's a candy dish on a coffee table, and he's going for it, and he's coming across, and he's just working his way up to it, and I looked over at him, and I said, no, no candy, and he kind of backs off, and goes over, sits down. We go back talking.

Well, I watch. Well, what he sees, okay, I'm not looking, so he thinks, so he's working, and I watch him. He gets over, and you can see his hand slowly working his way.

He's two years old. He's doing this. I look at it.

No, and he backs off, but I can remember consciously thinking, I'll fix that. I mean, I'll fix that. It's a kid, two-year-old.

I'm an adult. I'll fix that. I'll fix the kid.

That's what parents do. I'll fix him, and about three years later, you know, you're staring at the wall, drooling, you know, insane. The kid has got you wrapped around his finger.

You want to die. You want somebody, or he's doing it. Somebody's doing it.

You can't solve it. You don't know what's going on. You can't fix them, and you realize only God can fix them.

Only the Spirit can fix them, and to be patient and realize, God, by Your Spirit, You've got to do this. Whatever the trial, whatever it is, but to realize. You know, even in one of the things that I'm grateful for, on one hand, any of you that know Jean, and she's incredible.

I could fight. I grew up kind of fighting, so to me, having a fight was just part of life. Like, I mean, my wife would never fight with me.

I did my level best to get many decent fights going. I could never get one off the ground. She would always just, well, okay, it's not worth it to me.

We'll do that. Okay. No, no.

Come on, woman. Stand up. Put your dukes up, you know, or something.

We were never door slammers or knocked over furniture or holes in walls or screamers, but we could have little things, and even then, though, we realized years ago, one of the things that I am grateful for, that we learned, never let the sun go down on a wrath. We could have times, you know, that having to get upset, and we would see people, maybe some of you like this, or you know people, they get mad and decide for days, we're not going to talk. They literally not talk to each other for days, other than past the salt, you know, or something.

I mean, they can just simply, and I have people talk. I was, last week, I sat down with a couple who told me for two years, they didn't talk to each other. They have five children.

They were, I mean, they said, oh, we talk, but not, but about absolutely nothing for two years, personally. I said, man, I mean, I don't know how you do that, because both of us, we're the type that, all right, I'm not talking to you, but 10 minutes, all right, all right, I got to talk, so we don't have the temperament to do, but some people, they can do that, and then they don't even know why they're mad. They don't even know why the trouble, why the stress, and so we just learned a long time ago, don't, the Bible says, don't ever let the sun go down on your wrath.

Keep your, keep all the accounting short. If there's something that needs to be dealt with, sit up, say, let's pray, let's talk, let's get through this. I remember one time, some years ago, we were in San Jose at the time.

Whatever it was that happened, I don't remember the details. The only thing I do remember is I was right, and she was wrong. That's, that's, this, the rest is immaterial, but anyway, I was so frustrated.

There, I went against this. I said, I, take my pillow. I'm going down.

I'm sleeping on the couch, and there I am down on the couch. I'm trying to go to sleep, and next thing I know, there's enough light still around. You could see there.

I realized Jean was standing right next to me there, and I'm laying on the couch, and she's just standing there quietly. I kind of, she moved around, and then I just hear this very sweet voice. It says, don't let the sun go down on your ass.

I laid there for a minute, and I said, I didn't get mad until the sun went down, so I've got till tomorrow night. True story. She went on, but about ten minutes later, I couldn't.

All right. That's how stubborn we can be sometimes. Instead of God, all we want is you, by your Spirit, to help us through these times, to teach us whatever it is, and here we look at Peter there at peace, filled with the Spirit, and then also he realized that what he's fighting for isn't to win, isn't to loot.

The battle there is for the kingdom of heaven. For then Peter, verse 8, filled with the Holy Spirit said unto them, you rulers and people and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined for the good deed done to the impotent man by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. And this is the stone which is set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Neither is there salvation by any other, for there is none other name given under heaven by where it admits we must be saved. And here when they saw the boldness of Peter, here they perceived, unlearned, ignorant men, and yet they marveled. And here as they found themselves, they set up this whole scene.

We're going to deal with this rebellion, these peasants, these people that they know who they, the whole Sanhedrin's come together. And why they probably want everybody that ever came in there and sat in the midst of the Sanhedrin and looked around the room. Their knees were shaking, they were just used, all you got to do is call them, just bring them in.

They're loose, they're done right now. They know they have come up against a force that no one reckons with and can deal with now. They bring them in and now they're looking at Peter.

Filled with the spirit, at peace, and yet you ask him by what name? And he says, I'll tell you the name. By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. Even by him did this man stand before you.

And then he quotes from Psalm 119. And he says, in this stone which is set at nought of you builders is become the head of the corner. He looks there now, he turns the table completely around.

You guys are the builders, you're the Sanhedrin, you're the one that's in this, that's belying the foundation of Judaism and leading the people that ought to know the Scriptures. But the stone which was set at nought of you, you did this. He's the chief, he's the head of the corner, he's the cornerstone.

And here as they looked and then they said, this man that stands here is over 40 years old, is healed. Everybody knew him. Now the witness is there and he says, there, but that's, that is why this man, he stands here.

That is the one that made him whole. That is how that happened. And the incredible calmness and clarity and authority and conviction of Peter.

And how different this was from Peter that when he had tried to be bold once before, told Jesus, I'll die for you, you know, and he says, oh, will you, Peter? Before the cock crows. He'll deny me three times. See you in the morning, Peter.

We'll chat about it then. And then three times, a woman and a couple of other, just he curses, I never knew him. And off he goes, no courage, no spine.

But now, filled with the Spirit, comes back, not just a soldier or some young woman, a maiden, who just asked him, weren't you one of them? But now he's in the midst of the Sanhedrin and this man stands up. Oh, the difference when somebody's filled with the Spirit and all they want is the kingdom of heaven to win. Not my battle, not your battle, not you win, not I lose, not do anything, but because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty.

And when you find yourself angry or you've lost your disposition and you're frustrated, you're coming out in hostility, and the flesh comes out, you've already lost it. But when there's something, God, all I want is your will. And instead of being frightened or put into silence there or compromising their faith in one way or another, here, Peter, they found themselves right on the offense, right there turning to them, turned the tables right on the Sanhedrin and said, fellas, you killed him.

He is risen from the dead. He's the one that healed this man. Your business is with him, the chief cornerstone.

And there they found, all of a sudden, they had no answer. You can just see them all looking around. Well, somebody say something, but nobody had a word.

What do you say? When truth and love and the power of the Spirit get together, you've got an incredible force. And here, there's something there that the Sanhedrin, no doubt, you know, thought of Jesus. He was a mystery to them because they were looking for a Messiah that was going to come and was going to take over Rome, was going to come with great power.

Jesus came and said, humility and sacrifice. And then when He died, then He was completely written off to them because their concept of a military deliverer, Jesus did not fit it, even though the Scriptures described exactly what He would do. But here Jesus, you know, Peter fills them in on the truth.

And then I'm trying to look here at the clock and realize I'm done. But quickly, know that when you're going through a battle and you can trust the Holy Spirit to do the work, trust the Holy Spirit. Verse 14, it says, And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

But when they commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do with these men? Indeed, a notable miracle has been done by them, and it is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. You see here, they were just wishing we could deny it. You know, what's just happened here? Everybody, they all know.

They know the man. For us to say he's not healed, or for us to say some force, some power, some authority didn't do this, this is miraculous. And they said, Indeed, an incredible thing has been done, a notable miracle.

And they're upset. They're actually upset. We wish we could deny it, but we can't.

So we're kind of stuck with it. How sad it is. Have you ever noticed sometimes when you're in the flesh and somebody looks at you and you're wrong, and you know you're wrong, and you know what they're saying is right, and you just wish it so bad, you could still prove you're right even though you know you're wrong.

Isn't that amazing that we can do that? I don't do that, but I've read books about people that can do that. But it's something that, that there's something in our nature, rather than just stopping, and just when somebody just says something to realize, that's true. I know when, you know, when you're young and married, you know, you're so insecure, I think, at least I sure was.

The important thing was just winning. I had to win everything. I had to be right, because I was so insecure, fearful that if I ever say I'm wrong, then I'm going to lose my leadership.

And you can't, and no matter what it is you got to do at the moment, you got to protect that. And a lot of it, when you get to where you don't have to protect anything anymore, that's one of the things when you get older. When you're young, you have to have all the wisdom.

Yeah, I know it's right. When you get a little older, anybody got an idea? I don't. You know, I mean, you get, you're right.

Let's, let's do it your way. Hopefully a little maturity comes, you know, we want His wisdom. Don't care for right, don't care for wrong, just want God to break through.

They weren't there. They couldn't do it. But they're so, but they decided, so it spreads no further among the people, let us straightly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

So they called them and commanded them to speak, not at all or teach in the name of Jesus, but Peter. And John answered, and he said unto them, Oh, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than to God, judge ye. They looked and said, Hey, I'm sorry, fellas, whether we obey God or man, you tell me who you listen to.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. And so when they further threatened them and let them go, finding nothing that they might punish them because of the people, for all men glorified God for what has been done. Here they look, and so they, well, we're, we're, get out, just get out, you know, and no more, no more.

And they, okay, we'll go. But here they went out and how they glorified God. And when somebody, it doesn't mean you always win the argument, but it means that when you do something in peace, you do it with a sweetness, you do it filled with the Spirit, you do it in a truthful yet non-accusatory way other than

just there's the truth.

It's amazing in on how, you know, you, how God can, it opens the door for him to resolve things. The persecution didn't end. The bigger battle didn't end, but they walked out of there and they realized as they wanted to beat him and they put him through things and threw him in prison, did all sorts of things.

The greatest thrill that the early church had was the fact they have actually confused us with Jesus. They confused us with Jesus. They thought they killed him.

They thought he was gone. They thought it was done. And now all that's happened is he's multiplied himself in many.

And Jesus told the disciples, he says, the works that I have done greater works than these will you do. That isn't greater by the way in quality, it's greater in quantity. The works that I've done right now, they're limited to just one person living in the Spirit, living in the wisdom, living by the Word, letting, you know, the Spirit fill and lead and guide and living in his peace.

He says, after my resurrection and I come and take over your lives in the Spirit, there'll be many wonderful things happening. And just like I healed one here, raised him from the dead, you'll do it because I will do it through you as you let me fill you. God can raise and heal and do all the things he ever could do in our lives.

But when we find ourselves just crying out to him, not vacillating, standing in joy and peace and victory, that's what he wants. Let's pray. Dear Father, how we thank you for your love and for your Word.

Lord, I pray for any struggles and battles that may be going on here. Lord, our families, our loved ones, people we work with and around, and we can get so agitated. And Lord, so often we're absolutely convinced we know what's right, and yet we're dead right.

We're trying to do a heavenly work with a carnal nature. And Lord, I pray that you would fill us afresh with your Spirit. Lord, that tonight there would be something happening afresh to say, fill me, Jesus.

Fill me with your love and your Spirit. You promised that in these trying times, in the difficult times, that we don't have to worry about what we're going to say. All we need to be concerned about is, am I filled with the Spirit? Am I looking for the fruit of the Spirit and the wisdom and the words of the Spirit to lead me and guide me? Lord, help us to learn that.

That we then would know something that can work under all sorts of duress, all sorts of persecution, all sorts of trials and misunderstanding and confusion. Lord, in the process of our marriages or raising our children, Lord, that we don't want to do this in the flesh. We don't want to live in the flesh.

We want to live in the Spirit. We want to walk in the Spirit. We want to be filled with your Spirit.

And so, Lord, tonight we ask that in a fresh, wonderful way that you would pour out your Spirit on us. And, Lord, whatever it is, the struggle that right now we're just looking to heaven and saying, Jesus, I don't want the sun to go down without being filled with you. And I don't want the sun to go down on my wrath or my problems with anybody else.

Not that everything will be solved. But from my heart, I'll be resting in you. And so, Lord, teach us and strengthen us.

Bless us. We ask you, Jesus, in your wonderful name. Amen.

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