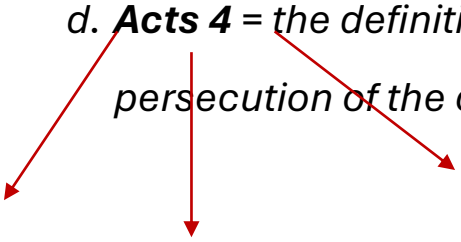
1. Why so long on Acts 4?

a. **Acts 1** = last time disciples meet with Jesus / the promise of the Spirit / The Ascension / The map and strategy for spreading the gospel (good news)

b. **Acts 2** = Day of Pentecost / Coming of the Spirit (fulfillment of the promise) / Beginning of Evangelism / Peter's 1st Sermon

c. **Acts 3** = Demonstration of the power of the gospel / the central conflict of the church (begins because evangelism begins) / Peter's 2nd Sermon

d. ***Acts 4*** = *the definition of the church as a unified body of Christ / the persecution of the church / Peter's 3rd Sermon*



2. Remember that we are the **BODY OF CHRIST = The Church**. Recall that Jesus' journey through earthly ministry included the following phases:
   a. Preparation
   b. Obscurity
   c. Popularity
   d. Opposition

e. Persecution

f. Passion = (**CRUCIFIXION**) – dying… to self / accepting death and the threat of death for sake of the spread of the gospel

g. Power = **(RESURRECTION**) – the life of Christ working in those who have been empowered!

3. Song: "Whose Gonna Tell Them? (let's look at the lyrics)

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i. "Whose gonna tell them that Jesus loves them?"

ii. "Whose gonna tell them – there's a better way?"

iii. "Whose gonna warn them of the things coming on them?"

iv. "So He can turn their nights to days!"

4. **CRITICAL QUESTION:** Before we move on:

i. Do we want the church to grow?

ii. Are we willing to withstand the opposition/persecution?

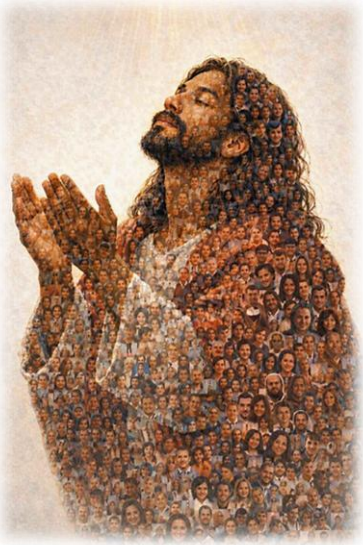
I have a strange introduction to chapter 4 but listen to this closely.

One of the most challenging “ideologies” of this age is the concept of “woke.” So many young people of our culture are being **dis**enfranchised – **dis**illusioned – **dis**couraged – **dis**oriented – **dis**owned - **dis**gruntled – **dis**graced – **dis**carded – **dis**placed – **dis**inherited – **dis**qualified -**dis**couraged (straight down the “dis-list”…**”dis’d”)** with church today it is a cause for great concern.

Much of social media is reinforcing the idea that Black people are loyal to a religion that has been used to keep them in perpetual captivity. Let me use some provocative vocabulary that you will see on social media today to emphasize the serious nature of the oppression African Americans were subject to…



Africans were marginalized, devalued, colonized, purchased, brutalized, incapacitated, immobilized, dehumanized, exploited, decultured, dominated, incarcerated, abused, ostracized, politicized, poverty-stricken, traumatized, separated, institutionalized, sexualized, depersonalized (stripped of identity), assaulted, violated, and subjugated.



Look at your neighbor (or put this into the atmosphere) – “you’ve come THROUGH a lot – keep going!”

I USED THAT VERY PROVOCATIVE OPENING TO HIGHLIGHT THE REASON WHY WE HAVE TO GET **ACTS 4** RIGHT.

Many of us simply do a surface reading of what **Acts 4** says, but we neglect to see the BLUEPRINT that God gave us for effective ministry – His way!

Our churches nationwide are missing the gifts, skills, anointing and presence of our younger believers because they have begun to ask questions about the very things that I opened us this study with. They ask the questions that we thought about in our heads but were afraid to ask. Communities of young believers on social media channels are being influenced by what they are hearing and reading. While we tend to think this is a culture of complacency – it is rather a culture of questions.





Several of the questions today are:

1. Is the Bible reliable if it has been "tampered with?"
2. Why did God tolerate discrimination, abuse and slavery?
3. Where is God while people are suffering today?
4. Did Jesus really raise from the dead? And, does God really exist?
5. How can a loving God reject people He says He loves?

With all that as introduction, let's keep in mind that the same things were (are) going on in Israel when the church was being set in motion. This established the environment the church had to go an minister in.

Acts 4 causes us to take a look at: the attitudes of God's people towards each other and towards their ministry assignment. In chapter 5, we are going to meet a couple who tried to manipulate God with a lying spirit (rather than an attitude of cooperation).

How many times have we hindered the work of God by making ministry ABOUT US!

Connection: "And it was easy to make it about us. My opening "complaint" is valid.

It is a sad reality – THE EFFECTS OF WHICH TROUBLE US EVEN TO THIS DAY (DAILY). Perhaps this was part of the enemy's strategy – to make us who have such great power (v.33).

We are about to examine the challenge in the early church that remains until today. They were under persecution to STOP THE SPREAD OF THE GOOD NEWS OF THE:

LIFE - DEATH – BURIAL – RESURRECTION – ASCENSION – RETURN of Jesus Christ!

Consider…

WHILE WE ARE ON THE RESURRECTION – Death was the greatest threat known to mankind. To end someone's life was to take away their voice – their ability to influence and their ability to make change. These Jewish leaders wanted to shut down the progress of the gospel by taking away the believer's voice – their testimonies and the message that had power to deliver God's people from their predicament. THE REALLY SCARY THING TO THOSE LEADERS WAS THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION. The voice they thought they silenced, now came back from the dead! There were no better weapons in their arsenal than death and Jesus overcame that! Because of that, the persecutors of the faith were even more urgently trying to "hush" the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

We get to see the spirit of perseverance of those who were obedient to the commission of Jesus. When the Spirit empowered them to be "witnesses," He was giving them a boldness in the midst of persecution to be able to withstand the INTERNAL persecution (for they had not yet begun spreading the gospel beyond Jerusalem. They should have expected to receive support from the Jerusalem church (the **HUB** of gospel activities). But, they instead received

Remember…

The irony is that these are the same issues that the Jews prayed diligently for deliverance from. The church was the answer to the very ills they were experiencing - not to annihilate those who persecuted them, but to usher-in the kingdom of righteousness which overcomes the problem of evil. When God's people were experiencing the "pains" of oppression by evil, God's solution was to send the church out to spread the word of His Kingdom "come" (Matthew 6:10). His Kingdom has come to overcome the issue of evil!

Let's connect some dots to understand what's going on in the Scripture. The issues we introduced at the opening of this study were the very issues that caused them to cry out to God – so that God sent deliverance! We have to understand the context of the story in the book of Acts so that we understand what was happening among the people after the Day of Pentecost. The church was the extension of the ministry that Christ was sent to perform. We are not finished until we tell the story. And remember what Matthew 24:14 says:

"[14] And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (OUR JOB IS NOT DONE YET)!

See:

Exodus 2:23-25

[23] Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. [24] So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. [25] And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*.

Luke 1:67-71

Zacharias' Prophecy

[67] Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

[68] "Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
[69] And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
[70] As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who *have been* since the world began,
[71] That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND OUR MISSION BETTER - WE: (1) know better how to execute it; (2) have a better understanding of what we are going through to deliver on our assignment; (3) have creativity and ingenuity for getting the mission accomplished; (4) have passion and perseverance for making progress; (5) understand what our close connection with Jesus is all about and the necessity for being filled with His Spirit; (6) better understand our reason for being here and the big purpose for our lives. Hindi's not just setting us up for good jobs and good lives for our "now," but for our eternity; (7) have energy, enthusiasm, and excellence for our stewardship (their sacred trust).

That's the best way to describe what this community of believers demonstrated in their coming together as the "church."

They weren't just being benevolent, they were being purposeful. We'll understand in the next chapter of Acts why God demonstrated such "passion" at the violation of this sacred trust (Ananias and Saphira).

Your life has great purpose and meaning both now and in eternity! Out young poets would say - "Stop Playin'!"

The Power Summary: "The Power Came - Now the journey of sanctification had (has) begun. Now the message of sanctification must be told!"

Now we can review the original mission and see how it began to be carried out in Acts 4.

Acts 1:4-8 The Holy Spirit Promised

4 And being assembled together with *them,* He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to
wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said,* "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized
with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they
had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own
authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be
witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

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Acts 4

Peter and John Arrested

4:1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came
upon them, [2] being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection
from the dead. [3] And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was
already evening. [4] However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men
came to be about five thousand.

Addressing the Sanhedrin

[5] And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, [6] as well as Annas the high
priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered
together at Jerusalem. [7] And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what
name have you done this?"

[8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: [9] If we this
day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, [10] let it be
known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you
crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. [11] This is the
'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' [12] Nor is there
salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be
saved."

The Name of Jesus Forbidden

[13] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and
untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. [14] And seeing the man
who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. [15] But when they had
commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, [16] saying, "What
shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to
all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. [17] But so that it spreads no further among the people,
let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

[18] So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. [19] But
Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more
than to God, you judge. [20] For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." [21] So when
they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the
people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. [22] For the man was over forty years old on
whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Prayer for Boldness

[23] And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. [24] So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, [25] who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

'Why did the nations rage
And the people plot vain things?
[26] The kings of the earth took their stand,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the Lord and against His Christ.'

[27] "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together [28] to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. [29] Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, [30] by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

[31] And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God **with boldness.**

Keep in mind that the filling of the Holy Spirit was for the spirit of BOLDNESS that it would take to accomplish the assignment of spreading the gospel!

Sharing in All Things

This is the kind of solidarity that the church needs to have today – one soul! Examine what I will call the "CHARACTER" of the church in those days – under persecution…

[32] Now the multitude of **those who believed** were of one heart and one soul; **neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own**, but they had all things in common. [33] **And with great power** the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. [34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, [35] and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

[36] And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of [Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, [37] having land, sold *it,* and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

Please hear this passage. *They did not make their gospel assignment ABOUT THEMSELVES! Notice that the apostles preached about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. When we make things about US, we are trapped in a spirit of competition. But, when we allow our life's assignment to be about Jesus, we are empowered to cooperate together to get the job done.*

QUESTION*: ARE YOU STUCK??? Are you trapped in questions about why God allowed things to be the way they are? OR, are you motivated by the reality that the sin that has caused the deplorable conditions we experience today have been annihilated at the cross.*

NOTE: *IF YOU DON'T KNOW THAT THE POWER OF SIN IS BROKEN, YOU WILL REMAIN UNDER CAPTIVITY TO SIN! ONCE YOU KNOW YOU HAVE POWER, YOU CAN TAKE AUTHORITY OVER IT IN YOUR LIFE AND NOT REMAIN ENSLAVED TO IT! They had a powerful message to tell.* ***SO DO WE!***

APPLICATION:

As the church of today, we need to study the blueprint for the ministry that God entrusted to us. There will be many broken people at the gate of our temples as we travel through life daily. We may be tempted to give them what they "want" (the provision which will satisfy their immediate situation), but will we give them what they "NEED" so that they can be healed to serve? Every witness we help raise-up is a storyteller of the goodness of God. Are we making progress DAILY? What have you done today to "MOVE-THE-MINISTRY-FORWARD? _____

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