

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

VIII. Handling Ministry Opposition By Relying On God's Validations

(Acts 4:1-22)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 4:1-22 tells how God used the apostles to evangelize even Israel's opposing religious leaders by giving the apostles miraculous validations, what act as examples for us if our facing ungodly opposition in ministry:

II. Handling Ministry Opposition By Relying On God's Validations, Acts 4:1-22.

- A. God validated the apostle's ministry by way of the supernatural spiritual gifts they possessed, Acts 4:1-13:
 - 1. While Peter and John were telling the crowd how the lame man had been healed by the name of Jesus, testifying of salvation by faith in Christ, the religious officials and the Sadducees came up to them "greatly disturbed" over their teaching the people the resurrection of the dead through Jesus, Acts 4:1-2 NIV.
 - 2. The Sadducees "dominated" Israel's religious ruling body of the Sanhedrin (F. F. Bruce, N. T. Hist., 1972, p. 78) and they denied the resurrection (Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., vol. Five, p. 214), so they arrested Peter and John and put them in custody to process them legally the next day as it was now evening, Acts 4:3.
 - 3. Still, about five thousand men in the crowd had believed in Christ because of this healing event, Acts 4:4.
 - 4. The next day, the religious officials gathered at Jerusalem, set Peter and John in their midst, and asked them by what power or name had they done what they did for the healing of the lame man, Acts 4:5-7.
 - 5. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter replied that if he and John were being examined as to how the lame man was healed, they and all Israel's people were to be informed that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified, Whom God had then raised from the dead, had the man been healed, Acts 4:8-10.
 - 6. Peter cited the Psalm 118:22 figurative prediction of Christ being likened to the stone that the builders rejected becoming the head of the corner, meaning Christ Whom they had rejected as the Messiah had nevertheless become the head of the nation as that Messiah, Acts 4:11.
 - 7. Peter added that there was no salvation in any other name whereby one must be saved, Acts 4:12.
 - 8. The religious officials noted that Peter and John had not been formally trained in the rabbinic schools so that they were not professional scholars or ordained teachers (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 4:13), so the only explanation they had for the apostles' boldness was their link to Jesus, Acts 4:13.
 - 9. In addition, the religious officials saw the healed lame man standing with Peter and John, so they could not deny the testimony that the man had certainly been healed, Acts 4:14.
- B. God validated the apostles' ministry by evidence of Christ's resurrection independent of the apostles, v. 15-16:
 - 1. Having commanded Peter and John to go out of their meeting so they could confer and come to a verdict, the officials noted how they were at a loss to know what to do to punish these men, for they admitted that they had performed a remarkable miracle that was obvious to all who dwelt in Jerusalem, Acts 4:15-16.
 - 2. Actually, the simplest way for the religious leaders to discredit Peter and John would be to disprove the resurrection of Jesus that the apostles taught (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Acts 4:15-17 with Acts 4:2, 10). The religious leaders' inability to discredit this event itself showed the credibility of the apostles' message!
- C. God validated the apostles' ministry by the fruit of their ministry – a miraculous healing, Acts 4:17-22:
 - 1. The Sanhedrin ordered Peter and John not to teach in Jesus' name, a command the apostles explained they could not heed since they had to obey God Who wanted them to preach it, Acts 4:17-20.
 - 2. The Sanhedrin could only further threaten the apostles and release them, finding no cause to punish them since the people all glorified God for what had been done in the healing of the lame man who was over forty years of age and who had been lame from birth, Acts 4:21-22 with Acts 3:2.

Lesson: (1) *The apostles' boldness in spiritual gifting regardless of their lack of formal training, (2) Christ's resurrection independent of the apostles themselves and (3) the fruit of their work in the lame man's healing were God's means of giving credibility to the apostles' ministry even in front of the hostile ruling Sanhedrin in Israel.*

Application: *May we simply serve the Lord and let Him supply the validation we need before others regarding our ministry. God can use our spiritual gifting, circumstances independent of us and the fruit of our work to do this.*