

Acts 3-4

Acts 3:1-26 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, [*being*] the ninth [*hour*]. 2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted [*him*] up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12 And when Peter saw [*it*], he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let [*him*] go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did [*it*], as [*did*] also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, [*that*] every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all

the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Acts 4

Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne.

The glorious success of the gospel at Pentecost could not last. The mighty dragon who had attempted to devour the Christ, who had been "caught up unto God, and unto his throne" then turned the full strength of his fury against the Woman, that is, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The inherent hatred of truth and righteousness on the part of the powers of darkness was quickly manifested in the bitter opposition encountered by the apostolic preachers of the gospel. The first move against the church came suddenly.

Acts 4:1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

Peter's sermon was interrupted by the worst, most vile enemies of Christ, the Sadducees, who descended upon the apostles in sufficient strength to stop their preaching and cast them into prison. Significantly, the Pharisees were not a part of the arresting party

The chief opposition to the apostles is from the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection. The Pharisees, who affirmed it, were comparatively friendly; and many of them became Christians (Acts 15:5).

SADDUCEES This Jewish sect was composed of proud, secular, rich materialists who denied the existence of a spiritual world, holding that neither angels nor demons existed, denying any such thing as the resurrection, and rejecting the Old Testament Scriptures, except for parts of them they used to retain power. Through wealth and political power they had gained control of the religious apparatus which ran the temple, the office of the high priest being regularly filled from this group. Their pipe-dream of having silenced forever the claims of Jesus Christ by their premeditated murder of Him was rudely shattered by the incident recorded in the last chapter. Not only was Christ alive, but he had ascended to the right hand of God, had poured out the marvelous power of the Holy Spirit upon the Twelve; and the astounding miracles that had accompanied the personal ministry of Christ were continuing through the apostles who worked such signs "in the name of Christ" that Christ Himself worked!

The captain of the temple ... This officer was of high rank, coming from one of the chief-priestly families, ranking next to the high priest, commanding the temple guard, which was composed of a picked body of Levites, and presumably being the one who commanded the sentries stationed at the tomb of Jesus

Matthew 27:65-66 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make [it] as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

More than one man held this rank

Luke 22:4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

Luke 22:52-53 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

It is likely that they rotated with one another in the discharge of their official duties. Whichever "captain" was in this arresting party, it is certain that he, as well as all the group, knew for a certainty that the resurrection of Christ had occurred.

One of the main purposes of Acts is to show that the Jews who rejected and crucified Jesus continued their rebellion against God by rejecting the gospel of the resurrected and ascended Jesus proclaimed by the apostles.

Even the wicked Sadducees, however, were to have another opportunity to be saved. Their rejection of Christ, although grossly wicked, was not the final rejection; for they could have yet obeyed the gospel and have received the gift of eternal life.

So wisely did God plan that they should first hear a full testimony to the truth in the temple, and then in the great council; to which the apostles could have had no access, had they not been brought before the court as criminals.

Acts 4:2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Being grieved... The word thus rendered occurs only here and in Acts 16:18; and this is an inadequate translation. Alexander Campbell translated it indignant, far

more accurately describing the attitude of the priests. Moreover, the great popularity of the gospel message threatened their political base, promised to hold them up before the people as murderers, as ignoramuses concerning the Holy Scriptures, and as deserving of universal contempt. To proud, arrogant men like themselves, the situation had become intolerable; and their venomous hatred overflowed against the apostles.

Acts 4:3 And they laid hands on them, and put [*them*] in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

The healing took place at the 9th hour so Acts 3 took up 2 or more hours.

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, [*being*] the ninth [*hour*].

This jailing of the apostles was illegal. No charge was brought against them, this was a highhanded abuse of authority. They had a night time trial of Jesus, which was also illegal, but on this occasion, they deferred the trial until daytime the next day. This was not due to any concern for holy law, but because they simply needed time to try to get their story straight and figure out what they would do.

Miserable is the fate of those enemies of Christ's kingdom ... for, since that kingdom of God is everlasting, it follows that their grief shall be everlasting also.

Acts 4:4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

That heard the word ... means the gospel preached by Peter that day.

Believed ... As throughout the New Testament, "believed" here stands not as the sole condition of salvation, but as a figure of speech called a synecdoche, as a part standing for a whole ... for all the preconditions of redemption in Jesus' name; "Thus believe is the usual scriptural expression for the whole change brought about by belief.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man [*be*] in Christ, [*he is*] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

About five thousand ... Some ambiguity exists with regard to understanding the "five thousand" here as inclusive of the three thousand on Pentecost, or as an additional five thousand ... we just don't know.

Acts 4:5-6 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

This august assembly was known as the Sanhedrin Court, a form of Jewish Supreme Court, composed of the presiding officer, who was the high priest, and seventy others. It was the same body which had demanded and received the crucifixion of Jesus cf: Mark 14:53-65. It was the historical successor to the board of judges appointed by Moses cf: Numbers 11:16-25.

In Jerusalem ... The council chamber in which they met was traditionally in the temple

Annas the high priest ... Annas was deposed from his High Priest office by Tiberius in 14 A.D., because of his excess in executing one of his enemies; but the Jews still recognizing Annas as the rightful holder of the office for his lifetime. Rome controlled all the appointments and the office was rotated among no less than five of Annas' sons, with Caiaphas his son-in-law also taking part in the rotation. Those who controlled the assembly were the hard cadre of Sadducee priests who sat at the heart of official Jewry. They were as evil and unscrupulous a group as any that may be found in history, fit architects indeed of the crucifixion of the Son of God.

Acts 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

This shows that the Sanhedrin had not been able to formulate any charge against the apostles; therefore the question was to induce them to talk in the hope that they could turn some of their words into an indictment. However, both the worldly antagonist and the holy apostles knew perfectly well why they were there; and Peter at once launched into his message.

... By what power, ... Literal Greek "what kind of power". What is the kind or what is the sort of power have ye done this?.

... have ye done this ... Bruce tells us that in the Greek, "There is a scornful emphasis in the position of the pronoun at the end, meaning "people like you." Where did people like you get this sort of power?

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

Ye rulers of the people ... Peter's respectful language here teaches we should have the same respect of public officials which are binding upon all Christians; but there was a marked change in Peter:

A few weeks back he had quivered before the soldiers and servants in the palace of the high priest. But now he stands before the Sanhedrin and speaks in the language of respect ... but also that of unflinching boldness.

Regarding the profound and dramatic change discernible in the apostles of Christ which began with the resurrection and was final after Pentecost, "It is not possible to account for this change except on the supposition that this is true."

Filled with the Holy Ghost ... Here began to be fulfilled the blessed promise of Jesus to the Twelve that they should not be concerned about what they should say when arraigned before earthly authorities, because the Holy Spirit in that hour would give them the message they were to deliver

Matthew 10:17-20 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Acts 4:9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

Acts 4:10 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 here before you whole.

Peter moved quickly to the attack, he does not dodge the question but meets it head-on charging the Sanhedrin with murdering the Son of God, and affirming that the great miracle in view had been accomplished by the authority of that same Christ whom they had crucified.

Acts 4:11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

It is remarkable how true are the sermons of Peter recorded in Acts to the teaching found in 1 & 2 Peter in the New Testament. Peter had been present when the Lord first used this figure of speech for himself

Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

The Stone Metaphor

This is a prophecy of a rejected stone becoming the head stone of the corner. It was founded upon an incident connected with the building of the temple. The first stone that came down from the quarry was most complicated, and the builders could not find a place for it. It was dragged into a corner of the building area and in time covered with debris. When the first course of the building was completed, there was no cornerstone until someone remembered the rejected stone which fit perfectly. The Sanhedrin were the religious builders who had rejected the head of the corner, Jesus Christ; and Peter hurled this charge in their face.

Psalm 118:22 The stone [*which*] the builders refused is become the head [*stone*] of the corner.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner [*stone*], a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isaiah 8:13-17 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and [*let*] him [*be*] your fear, and [*let*] him [*be*] your dread. 14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. 16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Romans 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Daniel 2: 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet [*that were*] of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

I Peter 2:4-9 To whom coming, [*as unto*] a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, [*and*] precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe [*he is*] precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the

same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, [*even to them*] which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But ye [*are*] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [*stone*]; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Neither is there salvation in any other ... This declaration is universal and it shows that every human being who is saved will be saved in the name of Christ.

Wherein we must be saved ... Concerning this clause Boles pointed out that: In the Greek, the "we" is the last word of the Greek sentence; it means, "we priests, elders, scribes, fishermen - all of us" must be saved by faith and obedience in Jesus Christ.

Thus, Peter invited his wicked judges to participate in the salvation in Christ.

Even those who imagine themselves so lovely in God's sight, that God simply could not afford to damn them. These self-righteous bigots are equally certain that God Himself would be impoverished without them. They feel that they need no forgiveness.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

**Unlearned and ignorant ... This "does not refer to their intelligence or literacy but to the fact that they were not schooled in the traditions of the scribes."
"IGNORANT should be translated PRIVATE PERSONS.**

Some men are prone to "set at naught all others" as ignorant and unlearned, who have not been trained in just the way and manner they have. From all these things, dear Lord, deliver us!

It is the smug and arrogant pride of the Sadducees which surfaces

Acts 4:14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Had this wonder been performed on the sabbath day, they might have charged the apostles with breaking the sabbath, as they had so often falsely charged the Lord Jesus; but Peter's choice of the issue which he would defend was truly inspired of God. To paraphrase He said, "I suppose you wish to examine us regarding the good deed which has been done to the impotent man." Such a thesis was truly inspired. There was not a thing which those hypocrites could say against it; therefore, they decided to have a caucus about it.

Acts 4:15-16 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 that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them [i/s] manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny [i/f].

The utter bankruptcy of the Sanhedrin's position is plain in these verses. We do not find that the council gave any reason why the doctrine of Christ must be suppressed; they could not say that it was either false or dangerous, or it had any evil tendency; and they were ashamed to own up to the true reason, that it testified against their hypocrisy, wickedness and tyranny.

What the Sanhedrin DID NOT do is of epic significance. They DID NOT deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a fact Peter had boldly affirmed in their presence; and the conclusion is that the resurrection of Christ was in the same category as the healing of the impotent man before them. They could not deny it! Can any man believe that those unscrupulous unbelievers would not have denied it if there had been any rational basis under heaven for their doing so?

They conferred among themselves ... Commentators who raise a question as to how Luke knew what is related here overlook two things, (1) the Holy Spirit's guidance of the inspired evangelist, and (2) the fact that many of the Pharisees obeyed the gospel and had long been faithful Christians at the time of Luke's probable interview of them (Acts 6:1 & Acts 15:5).

Acts 4:17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

Truth was of no consideration to the Sanhedrin. They were determined to oppose the teaching of the apostles, and the best thing they could think of, at the

moment, was to threaten them. In view of the weakness of the apostles during the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, they might have supposed they could intimidate them. That failing, they were prepared to use methods of violence; but the popularity of the new faith made the murder of the Twelve inexpedient at the moment.

Acts 4:18-19 And 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 unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

This same Sanhedrin had once hauled the man born blind before their council; and throughout the proceedings the name of Jesus was not mentioned, in all probability because they had forbidden it; but Peter and John had boldly flaunted the name of Jesus before them, and their strategy here was to impose upon the holy apostles the same restriction they had for a while imposed upon the man born blind. The reply of the apostles served fair notice that the old strategy would no longer work. It was a new day, and the gospel of Jesus Christ would be preached if all hell barred the way. Boles said, "The original Greek conveys the idea that they were not to let the name of Jesus pass their lips again;" but these men would persevere unto death, shouting that Jesus is risen from the dead;

Acts 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

You no longer represent or speak for God ... The Apostles now speak for HIM. This verse proved that "The responsibility of men for their religious conduct is direct to God, and that other men have no power of control." It also indicates that "Men have a right to private judgment in matters of religion, subject only to God."

Acts 4:21-22 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all [*men*] glorified God for that which was done. **22** For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

Further threatened them ... These were not idle threats. Later, the apostles were arrested and beaten (Acts 5:17-40); and still later, Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the gospel (Acts 6:8-7:60). There is a progression in this inspired history toward that murderous fury which at last signaled official Israel's total rejection of Jesus Christ. For the moment, the popularity of the apostles with the people prevented all but the threats.

forty years old ... Luke added this bit of information regarding the age of the man who was healed, making the marvel of the miracle all the greater.

Acts 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

Having been threatened by the hierarchy, the apostles might have been expected, by those In power, to flee from the area; but instead, they, together with the whole Christian community, went to their knees in prayer to Almighty God.

No, they would not flee - yet. The battle for the soul of secular Israel would be continued for forty years; THEN the Christians would flee from Jerusalem, and the accumulated wrath of centuries would humble forever that city which rejected Jesus.

Acts 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou [*art*] God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

The Christians met the crisis through resort to prayer, and the prayer here recorded is remarkable in several particulars.

With one accord ... This expression occurs eleven times in the Acts, and only once elsewhere in the New Testament (Romans 15:6). It stresses the unity of the Lord's followers, and thus reveals one of the great secrets of the success of Christianity during those first years.

O Lord ... The holy reverence of prayers recorded in the Bible is notable and, in all ages, a loss of reverence in prayers has proved to be a loss of effectiveness. "Lord" in this place is from the Greek term meaning "Master" (English Revised Version margin); and, coupled with the reference to creation, it has the force of acknowledging God's unlimited power over all that he made. "The church in danger finds support and solace in the thought of God's absolute sovereignty." Thou art he that did make ... is preferable to the English Revised Version (1885) rendition and is given as a permissible reading in the margin.

Acts 4:25-26 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

Plainly taught here is the fact that the early disciples regarded the Psalms as inspired; and, to them, inspiration was not mere genius, or literary skill, or prudent foresightedness; it was an impartation of the Holy Spirit which endowed

the author of Scripture. Thus his words were true and accurate and his commands authoritative.

Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

Thy holy child Jesus ... Certain critics have attempted to deny that Jesus identified himself with the suffering Servant of Isaiah; but, as Hunter declared: The key to most of the (New Testament) theology is in the Old Testament, especially in the Servant Songs of Isaiah and the seventh chapter of Daniel ... Jesus clearly saw his Messianic ministry from Jordan to Golgotha, as a fulfilling of the prophecies of the Servant of the Lord.

Thus, it is no surprise that in the very beginning of the gospel proclamation by the apostles strong emphasis upon the role of Jesus' sufferings should appear.

We find Peter four times in the early chapters of Acts (Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30) calling Jesus "God's Servant." A little later, Philip expressly tells the Ethiopian eunuch that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:26-40).

The fulfillment of the prophecy from Psalms 2:1,2, as quoted in this prayer, is declared by this verse. Herod and Pilate were representatives of kings and rulers who would oppose the Lord, and they were Gentiles. The implication, although not stated so bluntly, is that the Jewish religious leaders in the Sanhedrin were representatives of other rulers and of the children of Israel.

Regarding the question of why the mighty men such as rulers and kings and priests would with nearly unanimous hatred of the Christ unite their efforts to oppose and destroy Jesus and his teaching, the reason for it was deeply embedded in human nature. The Jewish rulers were mortified, disgusted and outraged that one so poor and lowly would claim to be the Messiah. Their pride, ambition and selfishness simply could not accept Jesus as the fulfillment of an expectation they had so long cherished of some spectacular leader on a white horse who would overthrow the power of Rome and restore the defunct Solomonic (sol-o-MON-ic) empire. In the case of the Romans, human nature at last turned upon the new faith with the fury of a vicious animal; and, although at first not opposed to Christianity (because they did not understand it), when it finally became clear to Roman authorities that the new religion was not merely seeking a place **ALONG WITH OTHER RELIGIONS, but was exclusive in its claims, the Gentile authorities launched the great persecutions in the hope of exterminating Christianity.**

Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Perhaps the profoundest question in theology appears in what is stated here. This is the same problem on a cosmic scale that appears in the more limited instance of Judas' fulfilling prophecy by his betrayal of Jesus. Did God's foreordaining such rebellion against his authority become, in any sense, the cause of it? There are mysteries here beyond any complete human understanding of them; but any solution of the problem must take account of the freedom of the human will, either to obey or disobey God. Any resolution of the question that denies such freedom must be rejected.

In the case in hand, God desired the salvation of men through the death of Christ; but it was the wickedness of evil men which became an instrument of the fulfillment. That fact stands in bold relief in this apostolic prayer. God "foreordained" the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world. We may only bow the head and say with the incomparable Paul, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out" (Romans 11:33).

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

This is reminiscent of Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kings 19:14ff) in which he spread the insulting letter of Sennacherib before the Lord in the temple, pleading with God "to see and hear the words of Sennacherib." The praying saints did not propose any solution, leaving the matter wholly in the hands of the Lord; but their petition was concerned with their own basic need of power to "speak the word with boldness."

Acts 4:30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

This was a petition that God would continue to perform the great signs and wonders such as the healing of the impotent man; but the apostles accurately read the connection between such signs and the preaching of the word; for, in the previous verse, they had prayed first that they themselves should not flinch in the proclamation of the truth.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The place ... was shaken ... God gave this visible sign that his promise of miraculous power to the Twelve would continue to be honored.

Filled with the Holy Spirit ... This was not a repetition of the wonder at Pentecost, but a continuation in the apostles of that power "from on high" which had been

promised, the result of which (their speaking the word with boldness) was also a proof of the purpose of such a gift.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any [*of them*] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

This is not a reference to another manifestation of the event narrated in Acts 2:43ff, but another reference to that same event, introduced here by Luke as preliminary to the happenings regarding Ananias and Sapphira. The custom of having all things common which began shortly after Pentecost had continued until the time of these events; but Luke's reference to it here sheds new light upon it.

The things which he possessed ... Thus it is clear that private property had not been abolished. What is taught here is not that the institution of private possessions had been abolished, but that the Christians held their possessions, not as their own, but as subject to the will of God in the use of them for the relief of the needy. "This was an emergency, and all were willing and anxious to use whatever they possessed for the common good."^[38] In the fact of the "emergency" mentioned by Boles and so many others, there is a clue suggesting that all of the events mentioned thus far in Acts occurred within a very short space of time after Pentecost; because the most logical reason for any emergency, which is actually inferred rather than plainly stated, lies in the fact that vast throngs in Jerusalem for Pentecost, after obeying the gospel, continued to remain in Jerusalem for a time in order to hear the preaching of the apostles, and perhaps to aid in evangelism. Naturally, such a situation would terminate after a while; and the extreme generosity of the Christians prolonged it as long as possible.

Acts 4:33-35 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid [*them*] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Great grace was upon them all ... The result of such overflowing generosity was that the effectiveness of the apostles' message was multiplied, and what might be called a revival of the most fantastic proportions ensued.

Possessors of lands or houses ... As Lange observed:

We are authorized by the literal import of the text to assume that all the owners of real estate who belonged to the church, sold property, but not that they sold ALL the real estate of which they were the possessors. Each one contributed

a certain portion, but it is not said here that each one disposed of his whole property; we are not even distinctly told that a single individual relinquished all that he owned.

Unto every man according as he had need.... "This shows that only the needy received anything, and that those who were not needy were the givers." As McGarvey further noted:

This church was not at this time a commune, or a socialistic club, as many interpreters have fancied. There was no uniform distribution of the property of all among the members; neither was the property of all held and administered by the apostles.

Upon Luke's first mention of this matter of "all things common". (Acts 2:43), the comment was made that it was the result of no clear commandment of either Christ or the apostles; and while this is true enough, there yet remains the overwhelming impact of this generosity of the first Christians as an example for the church of all ages; and we believe that McGarvey was correct in thus assessing the import of the events here recorded:

In reality this church was setting an example for all other churches in all times, by showing that true Christian benevolence requires that we shall not let our brethren in the church suffer for food, even if those of us who have houses and lands can prevent it only by the sale of our possessions. It teaches that we should share the last crust of bread with our brother.

Before leaving this, the comment of Root is noted: "It was not a matter of providing for the whole church, but of supplying the needs of those who lacked." Despite McGarvey's comment, above, it is nevertheless true that the scheme of having all things common was not long continued, nor is there any evidence that it became a policy of the apostolic church. Perhaps, in the event about to be related, Luke intended that we should behold the failure of the experiment. Walker believed that the scheme did not originate with the apostles and that they permitted rather than encouraged it, stating that "the scheme was never tried elsewhere."

Ramsay pointed out that:

No universal selling of property is mentioned, and no general instructions were issued that members of the church ought to distribute to the poor all that they possessed ... Many of the owners of property, of their own free will, from love of the brethren, used from time to time to sell their property and bring the proceeds to the apostles.

Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, [*and*] of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold [*it*], and brought the money, and laid [*it*] at the apostles' feet.

It should be noted that not a word is here given to the effect that Barnabas "sold all that he had," there being no evidence at all that he did any such thing. Then, there is the further consideration that the sister of Barnabas, Mary, the mother of John Mark, appears in Acts 12 as the owner of a large residence in Jerusalem, capable of housing a considerable portion of the church for a prayer meeting, the house having a courtyard and a gate which was attended by the serving girl, Rhoda. It was not the practice of those early disciples to make a total liquidation of their assets in order to distribute all to the poor.

Barnabas ... This was the faithful and distinguished Christian who accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey.

Having related the example of the generosity of Barnabas, Luke would at once relate the story of Ananias and Sapphira and their scheme of imposing upon the Twelve apostles. This incident, about to be narrated in Acts 5, has the utility of shedding even more light on the so-called "Christian communism" of Acts.

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, The Commentaries of: Coffman, McGarvey, Boles, Root, Lange, De Welt, Bruce, Ramsay, Barnes, Dummelow, World Conquest