

## Persecution and Submission

How do you react when things get tough? What do you do when you are criticized, lied about, or experience some sort of opposition? There is a popular expression that says: “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” But for many of us, the first reaction to criticism or abuse is to whine, complain, and get off in a corner to lick our wounds.

In last week’s lesson a lame man was miraculously healed. Peter and John seemingly ignored the man’s temporal need of money, and offered him salvation and healing instead. As a result, Peter got to preach to a huge crowd and thousands of people were saved. That was wonderful, but as you read Acts 4 you will find that there were other, less pleasant, results of the lame man’s healing.

- Acts 4:1-3**      What happened to Peter and John as a result of Peter’s sermon?
- Acts 4:4**      How did many of those who heard Peter’s sermon respond?
- Acts 4:5-7**      The next day, Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish governing council in the land. What did they ask Peter and John?
- Acts 4:8-9**      What filled (or controlled) Peter?
- Acts 4:10-11**    Who was responsible for healing the lame man?  
  
Peter identified Him as “Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye \_\_\_\_\_, whom God \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Acts 4:12**      Is salvation available through anyone other than Jesus (compare John 14:6)?
- Acts 4:13**      What did the Sanhedrin recognize about Peter and John?
- Acts 4:14**      Why couldn’t the Sanhedrin deny that the miracle had taken place?
- Acts 4:15-18**    What command did they give Peter and John?
- Acts 4:19**      How did Peter and John respond?
- Acts 4:20**      “For we cannot but \_\_\_\_\_ the things which we have \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Acts 4:21-22**    The Sanhedrin threatened Peter and John and then let them go. Why didn’t they punish them further?
- Acts 4:23**      Peter and John returned to the other disciples and told all that had happened.

- Acts 4:24** The disciples didn't go off in a corner to lick their wounds. Instead, they prayed and turned the situation over to God. Acts 5:41 reveals that they actually **rejoiced** when they were persecuted.
- Acts 4:25-26** These verses are quoted from **Psalm 2:1-2**. The early Christians saw their persecution as fulfillment of those verses.
- Acts 4:27-28** What did the conspiracy of Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Israelites actually do?
- Remember that the death of Jesus was in accordance with God's plan (Acts 2:23).
- Acts 4:29-30** The believers asked God to take notice of the persecution they were experiencing.  
Did they ask Him to make it stop?
- What did they ask?
- Acts 4:31** The believers were totally submissive to God's will, even to the point of accepting their persecution. God showed His approval of their submissive attitude by shaking the place and answering their prayer to speak the Word boldly.
- Acts 4:32-35** The believers were very unified, and the apostles continued to preach boldly. How did the Christians meet one another's needs?
- Acts 4:36-37** What did Barnabas do to help meet the needs of his fellow believers?

**Concluding Thoughts:** The early Jerusalem church suffered persecution, but they endured it prayerfully, joyfully, and confidently. Their attitude showed submission to God's will for their lives. Their unity was another evidence of a submissive spirit, and they also demonstrated submissiveness toward one another by selling their possessions to meet each other's needs.

Peter and John were obediently doing God's will when they were arrested and thrown in jail. How would you react in a situation like that? How do you react to criticism and opposition? If you grumble, complain, and feel sorry for yourself, you may actually be speaking against God's will for your life.

Are you submissive to God and to others? Do you willingly give of your resources to help other believers who have legitimate needs? Ask God to forgive you of sin in the areas of complaining, pride, and selfishness. Thank God for any opposition or criticism you may be experiencing (see 1 Thess. 5:18).

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**Project:** Memorize **Acts 4:12**. Read the scriptures in the **Daily Bible Reading Guide** every day.