

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

Jesus had foretold His disciples that they would be delivered up to the courts and synagogues. He also told them that they shouldn't concern themselves with planning a defense, because the Holy Spirit would give them words that none of their opponents could refute (Matt. 10:17-20). Today we read one fulfillment of Jesus' promise. Notice that just prior to Peter's defense before the Sanhedrin, he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (4:8). His hearers marveled because an "uneducated and untrained" man spoke with such power and confidence. It was God speaking through Peter, and they didn't even realize it.

Even more amazing is the fact that every member of the Sanhedrin was convinced that a forty-year-old man who had been crippled since birth had been healed (4:16), and yet not one of them came to believe in Jesus as a result. Rather, they tried to silence the apostles. Their hearts were so hard.

Although they were released, Peter and John knew that greater persecution was looming. Trouble has a way of motivating us to pray, and so they went to their companions and had a prayer meeting.

Like so many good prayers, much of what they said served to encourage themselves. They started by reminding God that He had "made the heaven and the earth and sea" (4:24), something He probably hadn't forgotten! It reminded the disciples, however, that they were talking to the One who had unlimited power.

They also quoted to the Lord Psalm 2:1-2, a few more verses He probably hadn't forgotten. Yet those verses surely comforted them.

Then they recounted the persecution Jesus had suffered in Jerusalem, something else God had not forgotten! It reminded them that what they were facing was under God's control.

Finally, after reminding themselves of these things, they were able to make their requests confidently. They didn't ask God to stop the persecution, but that He would grant them opportunities to speak boldly (just as Peter had done before the Sanhedrin), and that He would continue to confirm their message with signs and wonders. (Notice, incidentally, that one person didn't lead them in prayer while the rest were quiet. They all prayed together at the same time.)

The Lord answered their prayers, as we read, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:31). From this we can learn two things. First, we can experience additional fillings of the Spirit, and second, the Holy Spirit can make us bold to speak God's Word. If you are timid about that, now you know what to pray!

For a second time in Acts we read about the disciples' sharing of material things. They did not practice communism, where there is no private ownership. Rather, we read, "they held everything they owned in common" (4:32). Everyone shared what they owned. And those who had much sacrificed to supply the essential needs of others, so there was not one needy person among them (4:34). This was nothing more than simple obedience to what Jesus told all His followers to do: "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:33). Their love for one another identified them as being true disciples of Christ (John 13:35). Where are the disciples today?

Luke wrote that all who owned houses or lands were selling them in order to meet the needs of the poor among them (4:34). As we continue to read the book of Acts, it will become clear that the early Christians lived in houses, and so it seems that it was those who owned more than one house, or lands that they didn't need, who sold them to relieve the poor. If farmers sold all their land, they would soon need someone to feed them. If people sold their only home, they would have to move into someone else's home. Thus it is safe to conclude that all the early disciples did not sell their primary homes.