HANDLING OPPOSITION

(Persecution Because of His Name)

ACTS 4:1-31

4-19-2026

INTRODUCTION: v. 1 - 5

You must know what to do when others oppose you because of Christ.

How should you handle opposition?

I. **<u>Be Spirit-Filled</u> When Defending His Name: <u>POWER!</u>** (v. 6-13)
(<u>Let God control you</u>, when you <u>defend</u> His name)

II. **<u>Be Faithful</u> When Others are Opposing His Name: <u>PERSISTENCE!</u>**
(v. 14-22)
(<u>Determine to be faithful</u>, though others <u>oppose</u> His name)

III. **<u>Be strengthened</u> by Calling Upon His Name: <u>PRAYER!</u>**
(v. 23-31)
(<u>Pray for boldness</u>, so you can keep on <u>proclaiming</u> His name)

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(Let God _____, when you _____ His name)

II. **Be** _____ **When Others are Opposing His Name:** _____**!**
(v. 14-22) (Determine to be faithful, though others _____ His name)

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(Pray for _____, so you can keep on _____ His name)

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INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 3 – The Healing of the lame man from birth at the steps leading up to the Beautiful Gate of the Temple Mount (3:6-7); After this Divine healing, Peter uses this occasion to draw attention away from himself and to preach Christ's death and resurrection and of the need to repent and put faith in Him. With multitudes listening and 5,000 believing (4:4), the Temple's Religious "servants" show up to give trouble.

V. 1

Whenever God blesses, Satan shows up to oppose the work and silence the witness; and often he uses religious people to do his work (Wiersbe, p. 44).

Though none of us like it - opposition will come in one form or another.

Expect it! (don't be shocked by it)

Be mentally ready for one form of conflict or another when you stand for Christ.

1. Look at it as a <u>gift</u> (Phil. 1:29 - "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, no only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake")

2. Look at it as a <u>blessing</u> (Mt. 5:11-12 - "Blessed are ye...")

3. Look at it as a mark of <u>Godliness</u> (II Tim. 3:2 - "Yea, and all that will live godly...")

V. 2

To the Sadducees, teaching the resurrection was bad enough, but to also teach it "through Jesus" was more than they could take.

"Grieved" = greatly disturbed

Satan hates it whenever the Bible is taught; He is especially infuriated when the name of Jesus is preached.

v. 1 - 5

The emphasis in chapter 4 is on the <u>name</u> of the Lord Jesus (4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30).

A name means more than identification; it carries with it <u>authority</u>, <u>reputation</u>, and <u>power</u>. Notice in verse 7 how "power" and "name" are used synonymously.

When someone says, "You can use my name!", you sincerely hope the name is worth using. If an order is given in the name of the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Great Britain, those who receive the order know that they are obligated to obey.

If I were to issue orders to the White House, no one would pay much attention, because my name has no official authority behind it.

However, the name of "Jesus Christ" has <u>all authority</u> behind it (Mt. 28:18); His name is "above every name" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Because mankind is rebellious (by sin nature) to God's authority, His commands, etc., are often rejected and opposed by man.

ILLUS: Opposition to Christ in families, public schools, on job, government (society at large).

Why do men oppose Christ? Basic answer: "Men love darkness rather than light" (Men love sin; men don't want to answer to God).

The answer in context: Men oppose Him because of His <u>distinctiveness</u> and <u>exclusiveness</u>.

a. The <u>distinctiveness</u> of Christ.
(Jesus is <u>contrary</u> to the world's religions)
(He is distinctly different)

1. He gives life after death; religions can't (v. 2)

2. He gives people something true to believe in; religions don't (v. 4)

b. The <u>exclusiveness</u> of Christ
(Jesus is <u>exclusive</u> among the world's religions)

1. He is the <u>only hope</u> of <u>life</u> after death (v. 2)

2. He <u>alone</u> is the <u>cornerstone</u> (v. 11)

3. He is the <u>only source</u> of <u>salvation</u> (v. 12)

4. He <u>alone</u> can <u>change</u> lives (v. 13)

*** You must know what to do when others oppose you because of Christ.**

How should you handle opposition?

I. **<u>Be Spirit-Filled</u> When Defending His Name: <u>POWER!</u>** (v. 6-13)
(<u>Let God control you</u>, when you <u>defend</u> His name)

V. 6

The Jewish religious system had become so corrupt that the offices were passed from one relative to another without regard for the Word of God (Wiersbe, p. 48).

The council including Annas and Caiaphas was the same crowd that a few months before condemned Jesus to die (cp. Mt. 26:3-5, 57-68).

This opposition should have been no surprise. Jesus said "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you."

V. 7
NOTE: How "power" and "name" are used synonymously.

V. 8
"Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit" - Peter would again be filled with the Holy Spirit before the day ended (v. 31). There is <u>one</u> baptism of the Spirit (for salvation - I Cor. 12:13), but there are many fillings throughout one's life (for spiritual effectiveness, power, etc.) (Eph. 5:18ff)

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asketh a reason of the hope that is within you..."

V. 9-12

Being Spirit-filled will enable you to:

1. (v. 9) Speak with <u>wisdom</u> - Peter is implying "We should not even be standing trial here, we were doing good."

2. (v. 10) Tell the truth <u>without fear -</u> "By the name of Jesus Christ" - they thought they had done away with the Prophet of Nazareth. "You ...all the people ... ye crucified" Peter boldly proclaimed to all! This boldness can only come if you are Spirit-filled (if God is controlling you).

3. (v. 11) Recall Scripture (Ps. 118:22) - Jesus is the Cornerstone! Those to whom Peter spoke knew that in the O.T. the "Rock" was a symbol of God (Dt. 32:4, 15, 18, 31; II Sam. 22:2; Ps. 18:2; Is. 28:16);

Daniel pictured the Messiah as a Stone (Dan. 2:31-45); the Jews stumbled over the Rock (Rom. 9:32; I Cor. 1:23)

To us who believe, jesus is the precious, chosen Cornerstone (I Pet. 2:4-8); He is the chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).

4. (v. 12) Boldly declare the Gospel (Christ is the only means of salvation)

V. 13

Peter and John had no formal training in the rabbinic schools. They wee not professional scholars or ordained teachers (cp. Jn. 7:15 - Jews also marvelled over Jesus). They didn't have a degree after their name.

However, they were with the greatest Teacher ever to walk the face of this earth.

Can people observe from your life, that you "have been with Jesus?"

II. <u>Be Faithful</u> When Others are Opposing His Name: <u>PERSISTENCE!</u>
(v. 14-22)

(<u>Determine to be faithful</u>, though others <u>oppose</u> His name)

V. 15-16
The Council was confused! They had a real dilemma; no matter which way they turned, they were trapped.

They: 1) Could not deny the miracle
2) Could not believe Christ was back in business to haunt them
3) Could not understand where Peter & John got their "smarts"
4) Did not know what to do

Their response is <u>proof</u> that miracles alone can never convict or convert the lost sinner. Only the Word of God can do that (see Jn. 11:45-53; Acts 14:1-20) (Wiersbe, p. 51)

V. 17
NOTE: Rather than seeking the truth, they sought to cover up the truth - Avoid the truth. Why? Pride; hard hearts; their own religion.

APPLIC: You don't change a fact, just by ignoring it.
You don't destroy the truth by opposing it.
Submit today! Stop trying to cover it up!

Unsaved, hardened people don't mind what you talk about, just as long as you don't mention the name of Jesus (ILLUS: of Hasidic Jew I talked to in Israel who said, "I could get my head bashed in for talking about Christ." They don't even speak His name - one man referred to Him as "What's His face")
The contention through history over the person of Christ confirms in my mind that Jesus is for real, and the Enemy (Satan) knows it.

Satan has been trying to <u>silence</u> God's people for a long time. Sad to say he has succeeded in some cases. EX: "Silent witnesses" (life style evangelism)

V. 19
Peter was not intimidated. He did not alter his message; didn't cut it; or stop it at all.

(NOTE: He didn't make his decision on whether "it would be safer to stop"; "it would be more popular to stop." Rather he based his decision on what was "<u>right</u>")

We must base our decisions on right and wrong (on principle), not on personal whims of our own.

EX: of people who did what was right when they were commanded by government to do wrong - Jewish midwives (Ex. 1), Moses parents (Heb. 11:23); Daniel (Dan. 1 & 6), and the 3 Hebrew children (Dan. 3).

Whenever man's will conflicts with God's will - we obey God!

All that really matters is what is right in the sight of God (and the Sanhedrin should have known this)

We must do everything with a clean "conscience toward God" (I Pet. 2:19).

If your conscience is programmed by men (society), etc., it's not right. It must be by <u>God</u>.

"The trouble with so many people is that the voice of their neighbors (unbelieving family, friends, employer, society, etc.) sounds louder in their ears than the voice of God" (H.G. Wells)

V. 20.

Peter is saying: "We cannot help speaking about Christ" "We cannot stop it."

Peter is like Paul who said: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

Paul said, "I am debtor...I am ready...I am not ashamed" (Ro. 1:14-16)

Peter is like Jeremiah, who said: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay." (Jere. 20:9)

Ezekiel said: "The hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (to preach) (Ez. 3:14).

Elihu said: "For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak..."

III. <u>Be strengthened</u> by Calling Upon His Name: <u>PRAYER!</u>

(v. 23-31)

(Pray for boldness, so you can keep on proclaiming His name)

V. 23
Even the "great" Peter and John needed to assemble with other believers and pray, to be encouraged and strengthened.

V. 23-24
You might think that when their church heard this story, they might have gotten greatly depressed, decided to quit witnessing, etc., rather they asked God for strength (boldness - v. 29)

V. 24
Unity in prayer - division in a church robs the church of power in prayer.

Someone most likely led in prayer (because the specific words are mentioned - v. 24-30)

V. 24-30.
NOTE: When they prayed, they had the conviction of:

1) (v. 24) The power of God - He is the Creator and sustainer of all things. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (See Barclay's quote of Luther, p. 42)

2) (v. 25-26) The futility of man's rebellion. They quoted back to God Ps. 2:1-2, which described the same thing they were going through. "Rage" = used of wild horses. Unsaved men don't like being under God's reigns, but they will be one day. (opposition isn't something new! - cp. Heb. 11)

3) (v. 27-28) The sovereignty of God - He is in control. He works opposition out for His glory.

"The blood of the saints has been the seed of the church."

Holy "child" Jesus (cp. v. 30) - child = "servant" ( ). Again Peter is using a word in the LXX which is speaking of the suffering servant of Isaiah 42:1, 49:6, 52:13 (cp. Acts 3:13).

4) (v. 29) The provision of God's strength (NOTE: they didn't ask God to relieve the pressure [to stop the threatenings] but for boldness to keep on doing right).

They asked for "divine enablement, not escape" (Wiersbe, p. 54)

"Do not pray for easy lives," wrote Phillips Brooks, "Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Don't pray for a lighter load, pray for a stronger back."

5) (v. 30) The faithfulness of God. They asked God to keep on doing what He was doing. They didn't say: "God, hold off on some of your power. Don't rock the boat anymore."

V. 31

"Place was shaken" - an indication that God heard their prayer.

Cp. Earthquake after Jesus cried out, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit" (Mt. 27:50-51; cp. Lk. 23:46).

Cp. Earthquake after Paul and Silas prayed (Acts 16:25-26).

CONCLUSION:

1. Be Spirit-filled when defending His name: POWER!

2. Be faithful when others are opposing His name: PERSISTENCE!

3. Be strengthened by calling upon His name: PRAYER!