

Christian Response to the Rage & Wrath of Man: Examples from the Book of Acts

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Scripture Reading: Acts 4:1-12

Our study of II Thessalonians 3:1-5 has shown us the prayerful dependence on God that we need to properly respond to man's rage and wrath against the kingdom authority of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Word of the Lord must have free course. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Even though Paul tells us that the Word of God cannot be bound (II Timothy 2:9 cp. Isaiah 55:10-11). Nevertheless, it is our responsibility to propagate and preserve the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints (II Timothy 2:1-10; Romans 1:14-17; II Corinthians 5:14-21; Jude 1:3).

The full title for the Book of Acts is "*The Acts of the Apostles.*" It is not "*The Personal Convictions and Good Intentions of the Apostles.*" The very title of this book tells us that God's Word / the gospel of Jesus Christ has authority and requires action from us. So, it is in their actions that we will gain good examples to follow in the work of the gospel. We do not merely try to imitate things in the Book of Acts. Some of the things we learn are part of a narrative that explains how the gospel came to us. But many of the things we learn provide examples and illustrate principles of how to operate in spreading the gospel, as well as how to establish and strengthen churches. We also learn what to expect from people in this world who do not have faith. We see how wicked and unreasonable they can be. Let us now look at some of those examples.

Acts 4:1-37 – Listening to God More than Men

Acts 4:1-22 – Humble Confidence in the Lord & Clear Simple Answers to Men

Everything we learned in II Thessalonians 3:1-5 pointed to having confidence in the Lord and to viewing man from God's perspective. We need to take care to have strong God-consciousness, so that we can stay focused.

- Acts 4:1-7 – Gospel preaching went public and was making an impact on many people. The status quo religious community saw it as a threat and tried to use force to stop it.
- Acts 4:8-12 – Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared that Jesus Christ had come to save men from their sins and to change the status quo in Israel and in the whole world (Acts 1:8). Peter shifted the attention on the Jewish leaders and their relationship to Jesus Christ.

- Acts 4:13-22 – The calm courage, the humble and simple background of Peter and the others, the evidence of intimacy with Jesus Christ gave their interrogators no justifiable grounds on which to punish them. Peter left them with a difficult question to answer, *“Should we obey God or man?”* The evidence of God’s power to change lives is unanswerable, but frustrating to the nominal religious community. Nevertheless, they would threaten them, trying to intimidate them.

Acts 4:23-30 – The Holy Huddle of God’s People

The brethren who suffered the incarceration and interrogation did not go to the public to protest the religious council. They gathered with their brethren / their church and took counsel with God. Note how their prayer language is saturated with Scripture (Psalm 2:1-2). They presented their petition to God from God’s perspective. They did not ask for the destruction of their enemies. They asked for boldness to continue the work of the gospel.

Acts 4:31-37 – Hallowed Power

The brethren prayed according to God’s will and for His glory (John 15:7; 16:1-3,23-24; I John 3:22; 5:14). God gave them their request. They were strengthened to boldly speak God’s Word.

- Acts 4:31 – They spoke God’s Word boldly. They were unashamed / unintimidated (II Timothy 1:7-8; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:18-20).
- Acts 4:32 – They had a great sense of love and unity – one heart / one soul (Psalm 133; 33:18-22; Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:1-3).
- Acts 4:33 – The apostles demonstrated great power as they testified of the resurrection of Christ. The great grace that was abounding among the believers was evidence that the resurrected Christ was in their lives (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:20-21; Romans 12:1-2).
- Acts 4:34-37 – They practiced sacrificial stewardship. This Scripture is not an endorsement of communism or communal living. Communism is not people making a sacrifice of their possessions for something they believe in. It is the surrender of their personal autonomy – where others attempt to force people into conformity to their control. People, here in Acts 4, are making free choices to share out of love and devotion to Christ (Acts 5:1-4 cp. Romans 12:9-14).