

# Acts 4

Peter (in particular) but all the disciples in reality, were afraid before Pentecost. Peter had denied Jesus, just after promising that he would stick with Jesus and not deny Him. They all ran away, being more concerned about their own lives than Jesus. But now things are different. Jesus has gone, so if there is any trouble - it's them that are in it not Him. Also Pentecost has happened so they are different people - they have been changed by this encounter with the Spirit of God. So, how will they now behave?

Even being driven along by the Spirit, the disciples still needed courage to do what they were doing. Courage to stand up and speak about Jesus to others. Courage to give up everything to follow Him. Courage to put faith into practice and sell their possessions for the good of others. But most of all, courage to be willing to stand up and explain the faith in the face of a hostile set of Jewish leaders who could order them to be severely punished.

The opposition was personal ('You killed Jesus'), theological (Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection), political (the Sanhedrin wanted to keep the Romans happy) and stemmed from a guilty conscience. After Peter and John returned to the others, they prayed and the prayer they offered was probably not like something we might pray - and for that reason is very instructive.

## Read Acts 4.1-7

- What was the substance of the Sadducees objection?
- What do you think would have been going through the minds of Peter and John?
- What was the consequence of all this (in spite of their arrests)?
- How do we know that the authorities were seriously worried about this?
- What was the essence of their question to Peter and John?

## Read Acts 4.8-22

- In Peter's answer why do you think that Peter added "whom you crucified..."? Would it not have been less confrontational to leave this bit out?
- Read 1 Peter 3.15-16. How does this fit with Peter speaking here in Acts 4?
- What is so important in v.12?
- What impresses the Sanhedrin and what do you think makes them conclude this?
- What is the dilemma that they face and what do they end up doing?

## Read Acts 4.23-31

- What do Peter and John next do and why is this important?
- What is the substance of this prayer?
- What do they request?
- How does God respond?

## Read Acts 4.32-37

- What is the consequence of this trouble?
- If we were in such difficulties what might our reaction be and how does this differ from the early church?
- Why do you think that persecution did not put people off joining the church?
- Why does Luke introduce Barnabas here and in what way does he do this?
- What is the key to the disciples courage?
- Why are we often afraid of what others think or say about us? How can this be overcome?

Reflect on being courageous for Jesus.