

# ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON SUBJECT

## WHEN GOD WORKS

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ACTS 4:23-37

MEMORY VERSE: ACTS 4:31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and spake the word of God with boldness.

### INTRODUCTION:

Peter and John have just returned from the temple area where they went to pray yesterday about 3:00 PM. God healed the lame man and this miracle gave an open door for Peter and John to preach Jesus and the resurrection. This message brought joy and salvation to a great multitude of people. However it stirred great jealousy, rage and self righteous indignation against the apostles and against the name of Jesus and the resurrection on the part of the religious rulers. They held Peter and John overnight, threatening them and commanded them not to teach nor preach in this name any more. The apostles would not yield to their demands and told them so.

Not being able to find any wrong in Peter and John, and knowing that the miracle of the lame man's healing was no fluke, they threatened the apostles (and by them the whole church, including Christ) and released them. They returned to their own company with a report of these things, and they went to the Lord in Prayer. They didn't hire a lawyer to plead their cause and they didn't protest in the streets of Jerusalem because their rights had been denied. They went to the Lord in prayer and God heard and answered their prayer in such a miraculous way. How encouraged and emboldened they must have been. The details are in the scriptures of this lesson.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND THOUGHTS

#### MONDAY – ACTS 4:23. A TROUBLING REPORT.

#### SCRIPTURE.

V23. And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

COMMENTS. They had just wanted to spend some time in prayer and probably had no intention of creating trouble at the temple. Unfortunately, sometimes it takes trouble before any good can happen. First there was the healing, then they preached Christ in order to rightly explain the source

of the healing, then they were badly treated by the religious rulers who despised this Jesus and his doctrine. When they gave their troubling report to their people, it stirred anxiety among them. In effect, they had been told that they could not express their spiritual convictions in public; it was not “politically correct”, that is it did not conform to the “accepted” religious traditions of the day. Their views were condemned before they were even heard. Their “narrow, minority-held, publicly unacceptable views were not acceptable to the Roman courts, the Roman religious system, or the Jewish orthodox religion of that day. Their only hope was in God.

#### **TUESDAY – ACTS 4:24-30. THEIR RESPONSE TO TROUBLE.**

##### **SCRIPTURE.**

V24. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. 25. Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29. And now, Lord, behold their threatening; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word. 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

They lifted up their voices to God in prayer. It was by the providence and plan of God that Christ should suffer and arise from the dead the third. Now we are being threatened because we believe and teach that; what shall we do? Grant us boldness, no matter what the danger may be, that we may speak thy word as you would have us to. Before you ascended, Lord, you commanded us to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature. They are trying to stop us from doing that and we need your help. Let your miraculous power intervene for us so that we may preach the gospel everywhere. We know there will be sufferings and disappointments, but that is acceptable so long as we are in your will.

#### **WEDNESDAY – ACTS 4:31. GOD RESPONDS TO THEIR PRAYER WITH A GREAT OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST UPON THEM.**

##### **SCRIPTURE.**

V31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

##### **COMMENTS.**

“When they had prayed”, was the key to their help from God, and has been down through the ages even until today. They are still an infant church, with a world out before them to witness to. God was the leader in this great and eternal enterprise. The place was shaken when they had prayed; not by

their power of praying, but by God's power of answering their prayers. Not only was the "place" shaken where they were assembled, but they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. The first response on their part to this outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon them, was, that they spoke the word of God with boldness. This is very noteworthy for the fact that the preaching of the word of God was exactly what the authorities wanted to stop. In this case it suggests to us that among themselves they had a compelling resolve that they would not be thwarted in their task of preaching the word of the Lord.

#### **THURSDAY – ACTS 4:32-35. THE IMPACT OF THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST UPON THE CHURCH.**

##### **SCRIPTURE**

V32. And the multitude of them that believed was of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. V33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35. And laid them down at the apostles feet and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

##### **COMMENTS.**

The church has become so traditionalized, ritualistic, self-centered, shallow and lukewarm in its spirituality today that the mere mentioning of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in a distinct and specific work upon and within our lives, is foreign and uncomfortable to professing Christians. In this case they were seeking for it, and God did not disappoint them. However God did not pour out his Spirit upon them just to "bless them" and put an end to their troubles. There was a powerful response expected and forthcoming on their part. There was great unity among them; they were totally committed to their mission; with great power the apostles witnessed to the resurrection; great grace was upon them all, and their unselfish support of the gospel aided in the needs and spread of the gospel.

#### **FRIDAY – ACTS 4:36-37. AN EXAMPLE OF COMPLETE DEDICATION TO CHRIST.**

##### **SCRIPTURE.**

V36. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37. Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet.

##### **COMMENTS.**

Barnabas was that example and his name will surface again in a very important work in the gospel. But there were many others. The real question is, are we that kind of examples today? In fact, this entire lesson speaks so clearly to the needs of every church today. Faced with unrelenting opposition to the real work of the gospel in this world, there is but one thing for the church to do: fall on its

knees before God and seek an outpouring of the Holy Ghost that will impact us as it did these early Christians. Our own machinery, programs, training, resources, etc., will not meet the needs. It is when “God Works” that real progress in the gospel can be made.

#### SUMMARY.

The church in this lesson was still in its infancy and still confined essentially around Jerusalem. There was a vast world to which the gospel must be carried. Within themselves, the marginalized, hated, and in all reality totally incapable disciples (just as we are today), could not possibly successfully penetrate the Jewish and pagan worlds with the gospel. Conversely, they are a marvelous example of what God can do with “weak instruments” which are totally surrendered to his will. Knowing all of this, they sought God for divine help. They were not asking for ease, personal deliverance, selfish miracles or anything else for their own benefit. They asked for God to intervene to empower them to be witnesses of his word and to attend and confirm it with signs and miracles. And he did! Then they could!

We talk about revivals; we talk about evangelistic meetings; we talk about special musicians and we talk about celebrity appearances. But we don’t talk much about an outpouring of the Holy Ghost with a complete life changing impact upon our individual lives and our churches. We don’t talk about brokenness from conviction by the word of God; we talk about making decisions for Christ. There is no wonder that prominent ministers of the gospel everywhere are troubled over the shallowness of our experience in the Lord and of our depth in the word of God. We need an outpouring of the Holy Ghost equivalent to what we read about in this lesson, and then we will be better equipped to serve the Lord in a world that opposes the name of Jesus and the resurrection from the dead.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. When people are treated wrongly today, how do they usually respond?
2. Did they ask God for personal protection from the persecution or strength to confront it with the gospel? What do we ask for today?
3. What kind of miracles were they praying for and for what purpose?
4. Did God deliver them from persecution, or in the persecution, and what is the difference?
5. What can we learn from their selling of their possessions and giving it to the church?

