

The Church: DEFINED

Study Questions

Week 8

Nobody likes the feeling of opposition. It hurts. It stings. It makes us wonder whether we're doing it right...or even doing the right thing. We may hope to avoid it, but opposition finds us if we are following Jesus. How should we respond when it's in our face? What should our attitude be toward it? The remaining verses of chapter 4 are a helpful guide.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 4:23-37

CONNECT & OBSERVE

1. What did you find most significant from Sunday's sermon?
2. Read the passage in Acts. What questions come to mind as you consider these verses?

LEARN

3. Read Psalm 2. How does this psalm, including the verses not cited here in Acts, help these early believers find strength in the face of opposition in Acts 4:23-30?
4. Verse 29 begins with the words, "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants..." As you read what follows in verses 29-30, what do you make of their request? Is it what you would expect if you were reading it for the first time?
5. Go back and read Acts 2:42-47. What are some of the common descriptions or ideas there that you also see in 4:32-37? How would you summarize them?
6. Luke makes a specific reference to "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" in verse 33. Why is the resurrection so central to the apostles' testimony?

APPLY

7. What makes prayer difficult? What's one thing you observe about prayer from this episode?

8. Is there some form of opposition in your life right now? If so, perhaps there's a need for boldness. What does this passage teach us about where boldness comes from? You will take the opportunity to pray below.

9. Read the brief reflection below on verses 32-37 by NT scholar Darrell Bock. What do you find most compelling (or strange!) about these verses? Do you think it's realistic for us today to exhibit a similar unity and generosity?

"The unity of heart and soul in this community is transparent. Not only do its members declare the word of God powerfully; they also make sure that each one in the community has access to everyday needs. Community life means both mission and mutual care. These occur because people care about one another and the cause they share. They see their obligation to God, even their worship, to be reflected in respect for other believers, what 1 John 2 calls a love for the brethren. Unity does not come naturally because we often like to go our own way. But to those who share the goal of reflecting the unity and reconciliation that Jesus brings, there is a desire to be sure that his body, the church, reflects his goals through concrete means." (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts*, p. 217-18)

10. Take time to pray together, asking the Lord for (1) the grace "to speak [His] word with all boldness" even in opposition, and (2) that your LifeGroup and our church as a whole would be "of one heart and soul," demonstrated through generous, open-handed sharing of our resources to those in need.