

# Truth Suppression Illustrated

## Grace Bible Chapel

Completed Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 4:13-22

July 16th, 2017

**Context:** Peter and John have been arrested following the supernatural healing of a man born lame (Acts 3:1-10), and a proclamation to those at the Temple that Jesus Christ is the source of healing and the Messiah (Acts 3:11-26). The authorities were so stirred by their message they place them in jail (Acts 4:1-4). Now, in today's passage we have their trial before the same Jewish leaders who promoted the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ.

The boldness of the apostles, along with their ability to communicate, and the supernatural circumstances of the healing place the Sanhedrin in a precarious position – they cannot determine a reason to punish them, and they also fear the people who are praising God for the healing. After plotting privately they threaten them, although their threats are not received, and release them. The dialogue and circumstances of this first persecution of the church serves as an illustration of blatant truth suppression. No facts are denied by the Sanhedrin – they are fully aware and do not deny either the miracle of the healing, nor the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their concern however is their power, influence, the continuance of their agenda, and not the truth or the glory of God. There are lessons for us today as we study this narrative.

### Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).

VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)

F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:12)

3. Sincere appeal (Acts 3:17-26)
4. Strong opposition (Acts 4:1-12)
5. Suppressing truth (Acts 4:13-22)

#### Key Words

- God (3)
- man (3)
- cannot (2)
- miracle (2)
- speak (2)

### Pre-introduction:

- Last time in Vs. 4:5-12 we spoke on the priority of truth – truth is so important, but in our fallen world it comes with a premium – that premium is significant opposition & even persecution. Why? - truth is directly associated with God.
- Truth – the Word is used of God to transform sinners – it is the essential.
- What lengths, troubles - will you go to in order to be faithful to the God of truth?

### Introduction:

- How does a Christian who loves truth deal with the continual onslaught of neglect, disdain, opposition, & suppression of the truth which takes place all around them?
- What is our clearly revealed attitude and then action?
- We know first of all that all the unsaved are natural truth suppressors (Rom. 1:18-21) and this is at the heart of man's problems in relation to God.
  - Our Lord stated that "men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).
  - We are told that righteous Lot living in Sodom (where we live today) had his heart continually "vexed" or "oppressed." That was his attitude & it should be ours if we love the truth.
  - Our Lord also told us that "in the world we will have tribulation...but (He says) I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

### 5. Suppressing truth (Acts 4:13-22)

- **Silent reaction** (Vs. 13-14)
- Peter has made an iron-clad incredible argument beginning in Vs. 9.
  - He made it a challenge based on an obvious glorious accomplishment – so it is with all the true Gospel – it is about the reality of what God has done!
    - Inferred in Peter's reply is the unworthiness of their opposition & questioning.
    - You are examining us as if for something bad rather than for good.
    - Peter is subtly and truthfully accusing them of injustice.
    - Surely it cannot be somehow wrong to be actively involved in the healing of a man lame from birth!

- What is Peter doing? Armed with the truth he goes on the offensive!
- As such his defense is he is leading people to God, and not away from God. – this was a promise from Christ (Luke 21:12-19) – trust God –all situations!

**Point:** The difference is love of truth versus suppression of truth.

- **Vs. 13** – This was not a business as usual situation for these religious leaders.
  - “they observed” – these are crafty, educated, humanly savvy seasoned men – when it says “they observed” it means they were evaluating the situation with all the force of human reason – they knew Peter & John were not typical rift-raff trouble makers – what did they observe?
    - Confidence – why? This would normally be terrorizing & intimidating – this is the same lynch party who tortured & murdered Christ only days before.
    - Uneducated & untrained – these are bohunks – men who usually would speak ignorantly, no mental match to challenge the Sanhedrin – their response “amazed” – tho-mad-so-wonder/admiration (this too is a miracle).
  - Recognized them – Reflection on John 18:15-18 – this shows how fresh the crucifixion of Christ was on their minds – so once again they cannot avoid the testimony of Christ!
    - Peter /John were acting supernaturally in conformity to the manner of Jesus.
    - Not only in boldness, but fearlessly armed with truth & supernatural ability & thereby the authority of & blessing of God.

**Point:** Who is really on trial here? The Sanhedrin – they failed with Christ, now God has per-say given another opportunity. Did Christ’s death & known resurrection change them? No! they are visited with truth but are still concerned about wrong things, conniving – thinking only of the immediate, only of their prestige & positions!

**Point:** How will God choose to spare Peter & John? – that is the issue, our times are in His hand – God brought the miracle, God provided the strength, & circumstance.

- **Vs. 14** – “And seeing the man...standing with them” – with this situation before them, it would be like declaring the sky is not blue to deny it!
  - “nothing to say in reply” – their backs are against the wall - trapped like rats!

**Point:** On judgment day, those who have denied Christ will have nothing to say either!

- **Shameful plotting** (Vs. 15-17) – what do truth suppressors resort?
- **Vs. 15** – Their only recourse – regroup, re-plot, re-plan – not to consider the truth, not to re-think their untenable position, but to consider how to suppress this truth according to their personal agenda – an agenda opposing God!
  - So they clear the room! – now we get to look inside at their deliberations!
  - “they began...one another” – just as a side note – if all you ever do is confer, listen to fools, are close minded to truth – there is no hope for you! (Ecccl 5:1).

**Point:** There is zero indication here these are interested in the truth – how about us here today? Are you interested in what God says, or just your personal closed minded agenda? God help us to hear what He has to say today and everyday before it is too late!

- **Vs. 16** – Look at the foolish desperation of those who deny truth!
  - “What shall we do...men?” – the first thing that strikes me is their lack of fear of God! Do you see how misplaced their concern!
  - God just healed a lame man, & made ignorant fisherman stand with courage & speak in a manner to wonder – don’t you think they would be asking themselves as the representatives of God – I better get on board this situation!

**Point:** If God is so obviously with these men, working thru them – doesn’t mere logic say: I better not only back off, but at the least support them, & find out more!

**Point:** We see instead, opposition to Christ is always opposition in spite of conclusive evidence! The healed man has been in a sense multiplied for centuries – if we are in Christ, we are the healed man - unless we are not healed & have no testimony!

- Their reasoning is not because of lack of availability of the truth – it is because they do not want and therefore suppress the truth.
- **Vs. 17** – Their illogical response – “not spread any further” – again their concern is not with the truth – they have admitted by their conversation Peter & John have the truth – ironically, amazingly, they are fighting the truth! They are doing as Paul stated (Rom. 1:18-19) or the words of Christ “men love darkness” (Jhn 3:19).

**Point:** There is nothing innocent about this – this is the biggest deal around! These Sanhedrin have been given great authority, great privilege – bringing great accountability! (Mat. 23:13) – that is exactly what they are doing! What is their outcome? (Mat. 23:33-35) – “not spread” – upset positions of power / prestige.

- Humanistic thinking is always rooted in selfish rationalism – always associated with a selfish materialistic philosophy (James 3:13-16) – precisely defined.
  - James 3:14 – if that is your characteristic – which it was these Sanhedrin – you lie against the truth!
  - Earthly, natural, demonic (natural being fallen). Demonic – it is from Satan.
  - Selfish ambition – trade truth, trade their soul for a pot of beans (using the analogy of Esau (Heb. 12:16-17) – warning – do not toy with the sacred! Do not treat privileges with contempt – serious warning of hardness to truth.
- The whole work of Christ is glorious & beneficial – He alone has the way – of salvation, the hope, & all the residual benefits of healing, & helping. Oh how upside down is the thinking of the natural man.

- **Serious threat** (Vs. 18)

- **Vs. 18** – “summoned them” – bring them back as such for sentencing.
  - “commanded them” – commanded – par ang gel o – direct, charge – as from a greater to lesser - same word translated “ordered” (Acts 5:40).

**Point:** Under normal circumstances this would be not only powerfully intimidating, but the directive is in accord with the purposes of God in establishing righteous order – many conversations concerning the need to submit to governing authority.

- **Sagacious reply** (Vs.19-22)

- **Vs. 19** – “answered them” - once again Peter puts them on trial – he shifts the burden of reasoning to the Sanhedrin.
  - What is the real issue? “whether it is right...God” – that is the real issue, & the matter of which this Sanhedrin was to be about!
    - If it is right, or if it is of God, that settles it – threatening will not avail.
    - He places them in opposition to God – “give heed to you rather than God.”
    - “you be the judge” – he placed this in such a phrase they could not possibly answer – again they are backed into the corner, they (the Sanhedrin) are in an untenable position – the wisdom of God is shining by this circumstance.

**Point:** we are told by Paul & by Peter (Rom 13; 1 Pet 2:13) to submit to governing authorities, & the reason given is these authorities are there because God placed them to maintain peace & order – so this appears as a violation of that very principle.

- Rom 13:2 – “opposed the ordinance of God” – now here is the clear reason Peter, John, Shadrach...etc. defied the authority over them – that is because the authority over them is commanding them to directly oppose the ordinance of God – to do the very thing the authorities are there to prevent!
- The reaction of Peter / John here & in Acts 5:29 sets the limits of obedience.

**Point:** The greater authority is God. Whenever, an under authority is commanding people to do that which is contrary to His revealed will – “we must obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29) when they later get re-pulled in before this same counsel.

- **Vs. 20** – “we cannot” – the same as saying will not. This should remind us of the situation with Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Dan 3) when told they must bow to the idolatrous image & said “we are not going to serve your god or worship your image” – a refusal before the highest authority on behalf of God.
  - This was an obey God at all costs situation.
  - How did Peter / John know with such surety? “what we have seen and heard.”
  - We should note the Sanhedrin did not argue to deny what they were preaching, ie: the fact of Jesus resurrection – they only sought scare tactics.

**Point:** Their confidence is via the HS – no one with a flimsy “I hope so” kind of weak faith, is able to withstand this kind of intimidating pressure. Their faith was fixed – we serve a real & living God – the same is true today – stand up for Jesus!

- **Vs. 21** – “when they threatened them further” – tells us they paid no heed to what Peter/John stated in rebuke (no interest in reason Prov 18:2), but “threatened” them more – threatened – a word only used here – has as its root - menace.
  - They let them go – why? – in parenthesis – “having no basis on which to punish them” – which by the way, did not stop them with Christ Jesus!
  - But, it wasn’t their sense of justice that caused them to let them go – they could not find even a flimsy basis for punishing them – but more importantly!!!

**Point:** “on account of the people” – (God used their fear of people) the intimidating pressure they attempted on Peter/John failed because of their faith, but they themselves instead are intimidated by the people – notice “because...glorifying God...happened;”

- **Vs. 22** – God purposely used the healing miracle of this man 40 plus years old in the name of Christ, known by all the people (3:10) to show the faith of Peter / John, while at same time exposing the wicked leaders, & to release Peter / John.

**Point:** On the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

**Closing:** In the midst of persecution, Peter & John remained faithful to God.

- Don’t allow the rejection of truth by others to discourage, or cave to foolish ways.

**Point:** Before we pass this off as just them – what are you & I doing with the truth in Christ today? Are we withholding it from others? Are we living it? Are we actively engaged in the promotion of the truth?

- The business of the church is not theories, speculations, or self preservation, or to be merely religious – but, is in seeking & saving those who are lost & growing them in Jesus Christ.
- One man stated – “Ironically the early church had to be commanded to be quiet, while the last days church has to be commanded to speak!”
- How are each of us doing today, not in persecution, but in the humdrum of daily life – have we allowed the cares of the world to suppress our expression of truth?