

## Compelled

In the Sunday morning adult class in the auditorium, we have been looking at the history of the early church as recorded in the Book of Acts. It was written by Luke, an associate of the apostle Paul, and tells the story of Jesus' ascension, how and where the church was established, sermons from Peter, John, Paul and others, and many events in the life of Paul.

The establishment of the church was not simple. It was opposed on every turn by the Roman Empire and, most especially, by the Jewish hierarchy. However, one thing is clear from reading Acts: the opposition NEVER caused the preachers of the time, whether apostle or not, to stop preaching the truth to a lost and dying world.

Peter and John, because of opposition by the Jewish Sanhedrin Council, were brought in for questioning concerning the healing of a paralytic and the preaching of Jesus as the Christ that followed. In **Acts 4:18**, it says this about what the Sanhedrin decided to do:

***“Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.”***

What they were ordered was in direct opposition to what Jesus had commanded them in **Matthew 28:19-20** and **Mark 16:15-16**:

***“... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”***

***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”***

For Peter and John, the choice was clear. **Acts 4:19-20**:

***Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”***

We simply can't help ourselves. We must do what Jesus commanded us to do. After an imprisonment and additional examination in **Acts 5**, the Sanhedrin decision was the same. The words of the High Priest: ***“We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,...”*** Peter and John's response: ***“We must obey God rather than men!”*** Then, after being flogged and told not to preach any more, **Acts 5:42** tells us:

***“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.”***

They couldn't be stopped because they REFUSED to stop. They couldn't help themselves. Such love for the word! Such determination!

In next week's NEWSLETTER, we'll complete the article and see the same determination and passion in the apostle Paul. He, although starting out as one who tried to stop the preaching, eventually becomes one who was "compelled" to preach.

---Johnny Stephens