

Restoration Revisited (7): You Can't Fight City Hall

(Acts 4-5)

I. Introduction

- A. Rite of passage of American adolescence is getting your driver's license
 - 1. I remember the conversation I had with my Dad after getting mine
 - a. I told him, "*Dad, I'm ready to drive.*" He said, "*No you're not*"
 - b. I showed him my license (he'd seen it before), but wasn't impressed
Yes, your license is a little plastic thingy. Before you can drive, you'll need a big metal thingy called a "car." And you don't have one of those.
 - 2. When Angelynn reached the license milestone, she had another issue
 - a. She turned 16 in the world after Sept 11; things were different
 - b. She got a Social Security card when she was little, but it was lost
 - 1) We had her SS#, but she needed the actual card at the DMV
 - 2) They wouldn't take my tax forms; only other ID was her W-2
 - 3) We had to get an actual card... but that requires driver's license!
 - c. We got bounced back and forth between bureaucracies for awhile
 - d. There's an old saying that reminds us, "*You can't fight City Hall*"
 - 3. She did finally get her license; bit not one of those big metal thingies
- B. You probably have a similar story of getting caught in a big bureaucracy
 - 1. **Old Saying:** "*The purpose of any bureaucracy is to maintain itself*"
 - a. People are punished more for bad decisions than rewarded for good
 - 1) To survive bureaucracy, you make as few decisions as you can
 - 2) You keep moving responsibility up/down a bureaucratic pipeline
 - b. So sometimes the organization gets in the way of the organization
 - 2. Church can become a bureaucracy. Someone told me this last week.
 - a. In their former church, the Senior pastor was basically the CEO
 - 1) Executive pastor was CFO; associate pastors middle management
 - 2) Youth pastors? Guys you keep around so you can fire someone
 - b. I remember Jule Miller chart comparing Rome to Catholic Church
 - c. Way too simplistic, but church does adopt the strategies of the world
 - 3. Big isn't the problem; even a small church can become a bureaucracy

- C. We've been looking at "*Restoration Revisited: On Being a NT Church*"
1. Our focus on restoration was generally on church forms and formats
 - a. One of the things we sometimes stressed was church organization
 - b. We have no church organization or headquarters or denomination
 - 1) That is spot on; "church" in NT means one church or all of them
 - 2) There was no hierarchy or bureaucracy to lead or link churches
 2. But the church in Acts was both led and linked; that my point today
 - a. It's also the irony and illogic in us claiming to restore that church!
 - b. The church in book of Acts was linked and led by the Holy Spirit
 - 1) Acts is not Acts of Peter or Paul; it's not "*Acts of the Apostles*"
 - 2) It is the Acts of the Holy Spirit; He is the one driving the bus
 3. We don't let the Holy Spirit drive the bus... or even on a back seat

II. The Acts of the Holy Spirit

- A. What's the last question the apostles asked before Jesus left? (**Acts 1:6**)
1. They still don't get it! They still think Jesus as Caesar's successor
 - a. They hung out for 40 days with someone who rose from the dead
 - b. But that's no reason to change their plan, even if it's a wrong one
 2. Jesus (sighs) and says he has other plans, but they are to wait (**Acts 1:8**)
 - a. They have this job to take the gospel to the whole world.
 - 1) The apostles were overwhelmed and outgunned in their task
 - 2) There was no way they could pull this off without help of God
 - b. There were to wait and not attempt the task without the Spirit
 - c. I wonder if that is the reason our feeble attempts stay so feeble?
 3. Many of our churches used to have cornerstones, "*Established, AD 33*"
 - a. Maybe a little too cute (or arrogant). Church did begin on Pentecost
 - b. But it began with the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus as Jesus said
 - 1) What was the difference between John and Jesus? (**Mark 1:7-8**)
 - 2) Unlike John, Jesus would baptize in or with Spirit (**Acts 1:5**)
 - c. We want to make Spirit baptism about tongues and miracles today
 - d. Jesus made it about POWER to carry out his mission. Our mission.

B. Holy Spirit did come on apostles on Pentecost— the first Pentecostals

1. They did miracles; first persecution came because of a miracle ([Acts 3](#))
 - a. A lame man at the Temple in Acts 3 (“*Silver or gold I do not have*”)
 - 1) There was a big bruhaha over it and they were arrested ([Acts 4:7](#))
 - 2) They’ll eventually learn not to set Peter up like that ([Acts 4:8-10](#))
 - b. **Note:** Spirit fills Peter; but he has already been filled (Pentecostal)
 - c. What does he do? He doesn’t speak in tongues; he responds boldly!
2. This was their first persecution; they go back to church and they pray
 - a. Do they pray God to take away the opposition? Hardly. ([Acts 4:29](#))
 - b. After prayer, they were filled with the Spirit and boldness ([4:31](#))
3. They are again brought before the Sanhedrin court in [Acts 5](#)... twice
 - a. They’re arrested, released by God, go back to preaching, rearrested
 - b. For the Sanhedrin, this is become a public relations nightmare
 - 1) They said, “*We all agreed you weren’t going to do this, right?*”
 - 2) Sets Peter up for his most memorable line (**Read:** [Acts 5:29-32](#))
4. Where did boldness come from? How can they go eyeball to eyeball?
 - a. Peter tells us! They’re witnesses but then so is the Holy Spirit
 - b. Gamaliel warns the Sanhedrin they may be fighting against God
 - 1) Their courage and their boldness here didn’t seem natural
 - 2) When they are flogged, they don’t respond naturally ([5:40-41](#))
 - c. The Holy Spirit filled these men and women to live and teach boldly

C. Jesus promised the apostles the Spirit would lead to all truth ([John 16:13](#))

1. He said not to stress over words; they would be given ([Matt 10:19-20](#))
 - a. That’s not the deal I have when I preach; I must give a lot of thought
 - b. My experience is that I get closer to truth the more time I spend
2. You know what I need? I need more courage, boldness, holy hutzpah
 - a. We all need to live and preach the world of God with boldness
 - 1) In the church in Acts, that happened through power of Spirit
 - 2) The Spirit wants to live and teach in that boldness ([2 Tim 1:7](#))
 - b. That’s why we must rely more on His power today and not on ours
3. We won’t be the kind of church God wants without yielding to Spirit

III. Conclusion

- A. Do we need people raising hands, shouting in worship? No! Yes! Maybe!
 - 1. *“I felt God’s presence today”* describes your feelings more than God
 - a. Let me use a clever example here—a completely hypothetical one
 - b. I say something particularly profound to applause and “amen”
 - c. I say something particular profound and there’s total silence
 - 2. The response (or lack thereof) is because they agree/disagree with me
 - a. It doesn’t say anything about whether or not God agrees with me
 - 1) Some of us are wired by culture/experience to a worship style
 - 2) As one elder said, “My hands just don’t go any higher than this”
 - b. Some are unengaged in worship because they purposely hold back
 - 1) They don’t want to be out-of-control, undignified or obsessive,
 - 2) They don’t want to be **bold!** But that’s exactly what Spirit does
 - 3. The church prayed for boldness, and Holy Spirit make them bold
- B. That’s what the church needs more of today—the Spirit of boldness
 - 1. Not just in our worship, though that may be where it is less threatening
 - a. We need to pray bold prayer, and then see where the Spirit leads
 - b. We need to dream bold dreams, and they follow where Spirit leads
 - 1) We once had area-wide-fellowships (*I went for pimento cheese*)
 - 2) Church reports on how things went, *“We’re holding our own”*
 - 3) What Jesus expect us to report? *“Gates of hell will not stand...”*
 - 2. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our church
 - a. The NT church prayed for boldness and expect Spirit to give it
 - b. How can we be the “restored church” without restoring that
- C. Old Joke: Guy returns a chainsaw after three days of cutting firewood
 - 1. The saw is obviously effective; it only cut half dozen pieces in 3 days
 - a. The guy at Lowes is puzzled; he pulls the cord and the saw starts up
 - b. Guy jumps back, *“What’s that noise?”* He used a saw without power
 - 2. Is that the problem with the church today—don’t turn on the power
 - 3. Francis Chan uses the parable of “The Big Red Tractor” here ([Video](#))