

EVIDENCE DOES NOT CHANGE HARD HEARTS!
ACTS CH4:13-22

ILLUSTRATION

At Loch Ness, Scotland, scientist Dr. Abernathy is killed by slipping off some rocks, after seeing something in the loch and taking a single photograph of it. Months later, American zoologist and freshman college tutor, Dr. John Dempsey, is asked to replace Abernathy and dispel the myth of the Loch Ness Monster. Dempsey is reluctant to do so, having ruined his career by trying to prove the existence of the Sasquatch. He agrees to go for the money, which would allow him to pay alimony to his ex-wife that ran off and pay an IRS debt, naming a newly discovered species of parasitic wasp after her.

Arriving in Scotland, Dempsey meets Dr. Abernathy's assistant Adrian Foote, who fanatically believes in the monster. Dempsey rents a room at a local inn run by Laura McFetridge and her young daughter, Isabel, who grows close to him. He soon meets the other locals, fisherman Andy McLean, who aggressively comes to see Dempsey as a rival for Laura's affections; eccentric Gordon Shoals, who claims the monster is his property; and the Water Bailiff, who is highly protective of the legend, and tries to repeatedly sabotage Dempsey's efforts.

There is this amazing line between Dempsey and the young girl, Isabel, when he says "I need to see to believe" and she replies "you need to believe to see." Christianity is similar!

SEEING BUT NOT BELIEVING THE GOSPEL! V13-14

In proving something, how much weight should be put on clear evidence? Should clear evidence, convince us that something has happened?

V13 - The boldness (Ch2:29; Ch4:29; Ch4:31; Ch9:27-28; Ch13:46; Ch14:3; Ch18:26; Ch19:8; Ch26:26; Ch28:30-31)! This is Spirit inspired, Spirit empowered and Spirit promised intervention! Jesus' promise of "words and wisdom" that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict was being fulfilled – **Luke Ch21:12 -15!**

The word that Luke uses for "boldness" translates "as the freedom of speech by those empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God." It highlights the rights of citizens to say anything in the public assembly, with an openness to speak the truth. This was remarkable for the apostles! Why? Because they were regarded as "uneducated, common men".

The Sanhedrin recognised that the apostles master was Jesus, and that they had been incredibly influenced by Him. Peter and John, it was recognised as having been taught by Jesus!

V14 - The healed man standing! Even more proof (Ch3:7).

The Sadducees were so pre-occupied with protecting what they had, it shut them off from seeing the real reason for the miracle!

SPEAKING BUT NOT BELIEVING THE GOSPEL! V15-18

The evidence continues!

V16 - The Jewish leaders demonstrate **stubborn unbelief** in the face of what they acknowledge to be a "notable sign" which they could not deny v16! The Jewish authorities

were not convinced, from Peter's speech (Ch4:8-12) or the miracle concerning the healed man (the man standing now in their midst Ch4:14) nor the prophetic power, as to the need to acknowledge Jesus as the one responsible for this healing, nor were they ready to call upon His name (v12). ***Neither logic or Spirit empowered healing and speaking can shift hard hearts to faith!***

V18 – So the Sanhedrin called them back in and charged them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. The main concern of the authorities was to stop the spreading v17. However, the apostles, Peter and John, believed in the ***power of the name of Jesus!*** The name of Jesus is given prominence in Ch2:38, Ch3:6, Ch3:16, Ch4:7, Ch4:10, Ch4:12, Ch4:17, Ch4:18 and Ch4:30!

SUBMITTING AND BELIEVING THE GOSPEL! V19-22

Even more evidence!

V19 - The right authority THAT IS NOT AFRAID OF THE PEOPLE! Peter and John appear as the true leaders of the people, willing to bear whatever consequences may come, if only to remain faithful witnesses to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus!

V20 - v21 - The wrong authority THAT IS AFRAID OF THE PEOPLE! Faithful gospel ministry demands such courage in the midst of such “demonic authority.”

V22 - The result of obeying the right authority! ***Faithful gospel ministry demands such boldness and willingness to suffer!***

APPLICATION

What evidence is there?

1. V13 boldness
2. V13 uneducated common disciples
3. V13 left them astonished
4. V13 seeing that they had been with Jesus
5. V14 the healed man
6. V16 the notable sign
7. V16 we cannot deny it
8. V20 courage of the apostles
9. V21 fearful of the people
10. V21 people now praising God

How can we make sure that we are not “shut off” from seeing the miracles of Jesus!

Are some, or all of our beloved non-Christian friends, too busy trying to protect what they have, and cannot see the real person behind this amazing miracle!

If so, how can we help them?