

SALVATION IS FOUND IN NO ONE ELSE

Acts 4:1-31

Key Verse: 4:12

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

In today's passage, we learn that the religious leaders in Jerusalem tried to stop Peter and John from preaching the gospel of Jesus. But they were not intimidated. They proclaimed that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus. Only Jesus can save us. May God help us to have absolute faith in Jesus Christ so that we may share this truth with young people!

I. ONLY JESUS CAN SAVE US (1-12)

Look at verse 1. *The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people.* Peter and John were talking to the people at the temple courts. They had gathered there to see the crippled beggar who was healed miraculously and was now jumping and praising God in the temple. They were astonished. Peter told them that the man was healed by faith in the name of Jesus Christ. He used the opportunity to deliver the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. While he was still speaking, some Jewish leaders showed up. Did they come to hear Peter's message? No, they brought security guards with them to arrest the apostles. Why? Why were they upset with the apostles? Verse 2 says that *they were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.* They were disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people. In their eyes, the apostles were laymen. They had no theology degree. They were fishermen from Galilee. So how dare did they teach the people in the temple courts? They had no license to do such a thing!

What was more alarming to the religious leaders was that their preaching had power and authority. In his message, Peter told the Jews that their Bible, the Old Testament, pointed to Jesus who came to suffer, die and rise again for the salvation of mankind. He challenged them to repent and turn to God. The people were hanging on to every word. It was a powerful message. The formerly crippled man was standing there, which made the message even more powerful.

So why were the religious leaders unhappy when they saw people responding to the word of God? It was because they didn't care about God's sheep. They were only worried about their own political power. When they preached long sermons on minor technical details of the law, many people would doze off. Still, they felt superior because the ordinary people didn't know the Bible. Now, the people were responding to the message of repentance preached by Peter, and the religious leaders felt threatened. They were also disturbed because the apostles were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees in particular didn't believe in resurrection. They were a privileged class of people. They had good life on earth. So they did not want to think

about death or life after death. But whether they believed or not, they knew death was inevitable. This is true for all mankind. Death is an equal opportunity employer. It does not discriminate against anyone. No matter how successful a person may be, his life is swallowed up by death in the end. So some people ask, "What's the point?" Others become hedonistic and say, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." They indulge in small pleasures in life. Some young people try to find security in human affection. They feel lonely when they don't have a boyfriend or a girlfriend. But we know that there is no security in people or things of this world.

Until Jesus Christ came, no one could challenge the power of death. Then Jesus changed everything. He rose from the dead. Christ conquered death. He crushed the head of Satan. It was a knockout punch to the devil. The resurrection of Christ is the best news to all of us. The resurrection of Christ opened the way for us to enter the kingdom of God for eternal life. But repentance is required, that is, we must turn from our wicked ways. If we refuse to repent our sins, by default, we side with Satan. We would remain condemned. The Sadducees did not repent. They were only disturbed when the apostles proclaimed the resurrection of the dead.

The temple guards seized Peter and John and put them in handcuffs. They hauled them away like criminals and put them in jail overnight. This would give them time to organize a full meeting of the Sanhedrin the next day. They thought they could subdue the gospel message. They were greatly mistaken. Look at verse 4. *"But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand."* They chained the messengers, but they could not chain the message. Many who heard the message believed. In fact, the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000--the church membership nearly doubled. Where there is the work of God, there is also opposition. But this opposition will not stop the gospel. The gospel flourishes in the midst of trials.

Look at verses 5-6. *The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family.* The entire Sanhedrin assembled to put the apostles on trial. Even the Pharisees joined the Sadducees. They were political enemies. It was like Republicans and Democrats joining together. It says that Annas was the high priest. Actually Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was the current high priest. But Annas had the real power. Anyway, these were the very men who had tried and condemned Jesus to death. Now they were there to try his apostles. It was a most intimidating situation for Peter and John. The Jewish leaders who had Jesus killed were there to condemn them this time. They were surrounded by their enemies. How did they interrogate them? Look at verse 7. *They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"* The leaders began the trial by asking them if they had a permit to preach. It was the same line of questioning they used for Jesus (Mk 11:28). They were not interested in the great miracle of God on the crippled beggar. They just wanted to punish the apostle. How did the apostles respond?

Look at verses 8-9. *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ..."* Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. When we look at Peter's testimony before the Sanhedrin, we see that it was not only powerful but also very eloquent. How could fisherman talk like Harvard law scholar before the Supreme Court justices? The answer is that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God. It is the spirit of power and wisdom. Peter began by reminding the leaders why he and John were brought before them. It was because of the miracle, even though the religious leaders failed to mention it. Peter told them they were arrested for showing kindness to a crippled man. They were charged for an act of kindness. What a ridiculous charge!

Look at verse 10. *"...then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed."* Peter boldly testified that Jesus Christ of Nazareth healed the crippled beggar. Then he reminded them that they had crucified Jesus but God raised him from the dead. This was the third time he said this (1:23-24; 3:15). Peter knew he risked punishment, even death. But he was no longer afraid of them. This reminds us of what Jesus said to his disciples in Mark 13: "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit" (Mk 13:11).

Peter continued to witness to them about Jesus. He quoted Psalm 118:22. Look at verse 11. *Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone."* The religious leaders rejected Jesus and had him crucified. But God raised him from the dead. God made him the cornerstone of his redemptive history. What was Peter's conclusion? Let us read verse 12. *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."* Now this is a remarkable statement. It is one thing to say that Jesus saves. It is another thing to say that only Jesus saves. Yet this is exactly what Peter said. Only Jesus saves. Salvation is found in no one else. There is no other name by which we are saved. Peter had absolute faith that only Jesus saves. But this was not his idea. It is written in the Bible. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." When Peter said that only Jesus saves, he was declaring to them that, without Jesus, they would perish in their sins. Peter was inviting them to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and receive eternal life that only Jesus can give.

This is a very important message for us. We live in a society where tolerance is expected and demanded. We are asked to tolerate all kinds of behavior. The freedom of religion is misinterpreted to mean all religions are equal. Some people are offended when we say that Jesus is the only way of salvation. They would say that Christianity is only one of many religions. But the Bible declares that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus. Only Jesus Christ can save us from our sins and give us eternal life. Why? Only God can forgive us (Mk 2:7). No human being can forgive another human being, because everyone is sinner. Jesus is God. He came to this world to save us. God came to

save us, because we sinners could not go to him in our helplessness. Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Only Jesus rose from the dead, defeating sin and death. No other religion can claim this. Buddha cannot save us. Mohammed cannot save us. Confucius, Socrates, Freud--none of them can save us. Technology cannot save us. Neither can capitalism. Only Jesus saves. Let me ask you: Do you truly believe this in your hearts?

I was deeply moved by Billy Graham's homecoming ceremony held at the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, NC. His entire adult life was devoted to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he lived what he preached. His grave marker describes him as, "Preacher of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ," with John 14:6, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Living in a multicultural society today, even some Christians become squeamish when asked if Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. They have no problem in saying they believe in God, but are reluctant to say that Jesus is the only way. We need to have Peter's conviction that only Jesus saves. Yes, we should be tolerant. We should embrace all kinds of people. Yes, we should live a life of love so that others may see in us what it means to believe in Jesus and be drawn to God. But we should never compromise on the truth of salvation for the sake of tolerance. Let's read verse 12 again. "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*"

II. WE CANNOT STOP SPEAKING ABOUT JESUS (13-31)

When the religious leaders heard Peter's powerful and clear message that only Jesus saves, they were shocked. Most of all, they were astonished by his courage. Peter and John were hillbillies from Galilee. How could the ordinary men speak so boldly? They had no formal education. Yet they spoke with conviction and authority. Then the religious leaders took note that the two men had been with Jesus (13). They had Jesus executed with their clever plot. They thought that their problem was solved for good. But now his disciples were rising up to take his place. Thousands of people in Jerusalem were joining their movement. They wanted to get rid of the apostles on the spot. However, the formerly crippled man was standing right there. They could not deny the miracle. Still they felt they had to do something. So they commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach in Jesus' name any more (18).

Look at verses 19-20. *But 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."* Peter and John refused to be silenced. They had to listen to God, not men. The Lord had given them the mission to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth. How could they stop speaking about what they had seen and heard? We learn from Peter and John that we cannot help but speaking about our Lord Jesus, after we experience his grace and love and accept his world mission command in our hearts. St. Paul said, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1Co 9:16)

The religious leaders could not decide how to punish the apostles because all the people were praising God for the miracle that happened to the crippled man. After further threats, they let them go. On their release, Peter and John went to the believers and gave a mission report. They reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. What was the believers' response to the report? Look at verse 24. *When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them."* The believers saw everything from God's point of view. They knew that the Almighty God was behind what was happening. They remembered Psalm 2, "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One." They began to view things in light of God's word. The rulers banded together to kill the Lord Jesus, but God raised him from the dead. Now they were trying to undermine the work of God by persecuting the apostles. But God was in control. The rulers could jail the apostles and threaten them. But they could not stop them from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What was their prayer topic? They prayed, *"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus"* (29-30). They didn't pray to God to take away the persecutions. Instead, they prayed for their leaders to overcome them. They asked God to enable them to speak the word of God with great boldness and to heal many people. God was pleased with their prayers. He heard their prayers and responded to them. The place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly (31). May God help us to pray as the believers in Jerusalem did!

In conclusion, salvation is found in no one else. Only Jesus can save. May the Holy Spirit give each of us this conviction so that we may share the gospel of Jesus Christ faithfully in this multicultural society! May God help us to say, "I have been saved by the grace of Jesus. I cannot help but speaking about his grace and love! Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"