

No Other Name

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Preacher: Pastor David

[0:00] This morning we will be back in the book of Acts. And if you're using one of the Bibles around you, you can find that on page 857.

And I'd encourage you to follow along. It's been about four months since we were last together in the book of Acts.

And so before we come to chapter 4 this morning, I'd like to take a few minutes and remind us where Luke has brought us. One of the most important things to remember about Acts is that Acts is ultimately a book about Jesus.

Luke begins by reminding Theophilus that in his first book, what we call the Gospel of Luke, he wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach.

You see, the Gospel records what Jesus began to do and teach during his earthly ministry until the day when he was taken up. Acts records what the risen and exalted Jesus continues to do and teach from heaven by his Spirit through the witnesses he's chosen and commissioned.

[1:24] And that's what we've watched unfold in these opening chapters. In Acts 1, the risen Jesus commissions his witnesses. You remember Jesus had been crucified, but he's alive.

And he spent 40 days with his disciples, giving them many proofs that he had risen from the dead and teaching them about the kingdom of God. And before ascending to the Father, he gave them both a promise and a mission.

In Acts 1, 8, we see Jesus said, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. So there to be his witnesses testifying to who Jesus is, what he's done, and the salvation that's found in him. Now, they'll do that, not in their own power, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then we see in Acts 2 that the exalted Jesus empowers his witnesses. And on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes upon his people.

[2:41] And as Peter stands before the crowds in Jerusalem, he points them to Jesus, telling them, Jesus was crucified. God raised him from the dead.

He's been exalted to the right hand of the Father. He is both Lord and Christ. And from this place of exaltation, Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit.

So Pentecost is not merely a story about what happened to the disciples. It's evidence that Jesus Christ is alive, that he's exalted, that he's reigning and carrying forward his work.

Then, as you may remember, Peter calls the people to repent and to turn to Christ. And about 3,000 receive the word, are baptized, and are added to the church.

And suddenly, there was a substantial growing community in Jerusalem devoted to the apostles' teaching and a fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.

[3:43] And we see them worshipping together, caring for one another, bearing witness together. Their lives being marked with gladness and generosity and worship and fellowship.

And Luke closes the chapter by telling us, The Lord added to their number, day by day, those who were being saved. Jesus is forming a people.

He's building his church. Then in Acts 3, we see the reigning Jesus working through his witnesses. Peter and John meet a man at the temple who had been lame from birth.

And you remember, he asks them for money, but Peter says, I have no silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

And immediately, the man who had never walked is strengthened, and he gets up, and he enters the temple walking and leaping and praising God. And everyone recognizes him.

[4:47] A crowd begins forming and staring at Peter and John, but Peter immediately redirects their attention, saying, This is not our power. This power belongs to Jesus.

The same Jesus they had rejected. The same Jesus they delivered over to be killed. The same Jesus whom God had raised from the dead. The risen Christ is still at work.

So, Peter preaches Christ again and calls the people to repent, to turn back to Jesus so that their sins may be blotted out.

So, by the time we reach Acts 4, there's a clear pattern developing. Jesus is alive. Jesus is reigning. Jesus has poured out his spirit.

Jesus is empowering his witnesses. Jesus is bringing people to faith and repentance. Jesus is building his church. And as a result, Jesus is making his name known throughout all of Jerusalem.

[5:50] And now, those witnesses, commissioned in chapter 1, and empowered by his spirit in chapter 2, and bearing witness to the power of his name in chapter 3, are about to face their first official opposition.

The controversy will ultimately come down to one question. What are they going to do with the name of Jesus?

Now, as the passage unfolds, Luke will show us that the name these people oppose is the name the Spirit empowers us to proclaim.

The name that God has vindicated through the resurrection and the only name by which anyone can be saved. And by the end, the question will no longer merely be what these leaders will do with Jesus.

The question will be what each of us will do with him. So, starting in Acts 4.1, let's consider the first point. Opposition to the name.

[7:01] Opposition to the name. Now, notice how chapter 4 begins, because the chapter division doesn't mark the end of the scene. It says, You see, Peter and John are still speaking when the temple authorities arrive.

The miracle of the lame man's healing has drawn a huge crowd of people, and there's ample room in the temple courts for a crowd numbering in the thousands.

So, of course, the temple officials notice something's going on and go to investigate what's happening. As the temple authorities listen to Peter and John, we see in verse 2 that they're greatly annoyed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

The authorities are greatly annoyed, or maybe more clearly put, they're unable to endure it one moment longer. You see, the apostles' teaching, it challenges the religious leaders' authority and their doctrine.

Peter and John are publicly teaching the people in the temple without any authorization. And not only that, they're teaching that Jesus has been resurrected, which is contrary to what the Sadducees believed and taught.

[8:29] We also see that it directly challenges their rejection of Jesus. By declaring that Jesus of Nazareth has risen from the dead, they're declaring God's vindication of the one these very leaders had condemned.

So, the miracle drew the crowd, but it's the message that draws the opposition. And as a result, in verse 3, we see, they arrested them.

They arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. Now, do you feel the opposition growing? Even in these first three verses, the authorities come upon them, confront them, then the authorities are so disturbed, they can't endure it a moment longer, so they physically seize them, and they imprison them to stop their witness.

This is the first imprisonment in Acts, and it begins the pattern that Jesus has already warned his disciples to expect when he said to them, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you.

So, we see the opposition that was once directed at Jesus is now directed at the continuing work of the risen Christ through his witnesses.

[9:53] But, but their attempt to silence the gospel is already too late. Look at verse 4.

It says, But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of men came to about 5,000. So, the authorities can interrupt the sermon.

They can seize the preachers. They can put them under guard. But by the time they do so, the word has already gone out, and it's bearing fruit.

Many have heard. Many have believed. And the number of believers now has grown to about 5,000 men. So, the authorities could restrain Christ's witnesses, but they could not restrain Christ's work.

That's a theme we'll see throughout Acts. You see, human authorities can make Christian witness truly costly, but they can never stop the risen Christ from building his church.

[11:03] That reminds us, the advance of the gospel does not ultimately depend upon favorable circumstances. It doesn't depend on cultural approval or in powerful people giving Christians permission or a platform to speak.

Christ is alive, and no amount of opposition can place his mission of building the church in danger. It comes down to the question for us as whether we believe that enough to remain faithful, especially when his name becomes costly to us.

Now, another important point to notice from verse 4, God ordinarily brings people to faith through hearing the gospel.

Now, the miracle, as powerful as it was, could draw attention to Christ, but it could not explain Christ. Peter had to speak about Jesus, who he was, what he's done, so Luke says, many of those who heard the word believed, and that's how God ordinarily works, bringing people to faith as they hear the good news of who Jesus is and what he's done.

Paul asked the appropriate question in Romans 10 when he says, how are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard? So, as much as our lives should commend the gospel, as much as our good deeds should point people to Christ, Christian witness cannot stop there.

[12:54] We must actually tell people about Jesus. Now, that also helps us understand why the opposition is growing in Acts 4.

It's not simply the sight of a healed man that so deeply disturbs the authorities. It's what Peter and John are saying about that healing.

They're proclaiming that Jesus is risen and reigning. And so, the opposition continues to escalate and that's what we see in verses 5 through 7.

It says, on the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high priestly family.

And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this? So, the opposition has escalated from an impromptu arrest in the temple to an actual formal trial by the key religious authorities of Israel.

[14:03] And the group presented here is probably best understood as the Sanhedrin, which was Jerusalem's supreme governing council. And I think the description Luke gives us of this trial is important because it echoes very closely the trial that Jesus had only weeks before.

You remember, Annas had interrogated Jesus. Caiaphas had presided over the council during the events leading to Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion.

And now, Peter and John stand before essentially the same leadership circle that had interrogated and condemned Jesus and put him to death.

So, having set Peter and John in their midst, the leaders ask, by what power, by what name, did you do this? I think Luke is intentionally trying to highlight another parallel between Jesus and his witnesses.

You see, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 20, verses 1 and 2, Jesus faced a similar question. It says, one day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, tell us by what authority you do these things or who it is that gave you this authority.

[15:34] So, we see Jesus teaches in the temple and the religious leaders challenge his authority and now, Jesus' witnesses teach in the temple and the religious leaders challenge their authority.

The truth of the matter is, it's very likely the leaders already know the answer to their question. but, in demanding that Peter say to publicly, providentially, they give him exactly the opportunity he needs as he's empowered for the name.

Empowered for the name. Continuing with verses 8 and 9, it says, then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we're being examined today, concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed?

Now, this scene provides an especially powerful contrast with Luke chapter 22. Again, remember, only weeks earlier, during Jesus' arrest and trial, Peter is cowering outside in the courtyard.

And when confronted by a mere servant girl, his fear led him to deny that he even knew who Jesus was. But now, after Jesus' resurrection, after his ascension, after pouring out the Holy Spirit, we see

Peter brought inside before the very authorities who condemned Jesus and put him to death. [17:20] Yet, this time, instead of being controlled by fear and denying Christ, he's filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Now, if you don't stop to think about this, it's very easy to overlook this moment as one of Acts' most dramatic demonstrations of what being filled with the Holy Spirit actually looks like.

You see, the man who only weeks ago feared association with Jesus before this very group of leaders is now about to proclaim Jesus to them boldly.

And it's after they've actually crucified Christ. You see, Peter has no doubt about what these men might do to him. So, I think it's worth us noting that throughout the book of Luke and Acts, the filling of the Spirit characteristically gives God's people words to speak.

And Acts, specifically, that Spirit-given speech repeatedly becomes a bold witness to Christ. So, we see Spirit-filling results in proclamation.

Right? At Pentecost, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak. Here, we see Peter filled with the Spirit. He's about to speak. In a couple of weeks, we'll see after the church prays, they're all filled with the Holy Spirit and continue to speak the Word of God with boldness.

[18:55] Now, on your listening guide, you can find a more extensive list of passages from both Luke and Acts showing that Spirit-filling repeatedly empowers God's people to speak God's truth, often bearing witness to Christ and the salvation that God has accomplished through Him.

I think this means we should not treat this being filled with the Spirit primarily as an inward or emotional experience. And especially in this context, we can see that the visible result is faithful, courageous, Christ-centered speech.

I think it's also easy to overlook the second part of verse 8 where Peter says, rulers of the people and elders. Because we see Peter speaks courageously, but he does not speak contemptuously. He recognizes their position, but we see that his boldness is not rudeness. He respects their office while refusing to compromise the truth.

And I think that's very useful for us as Christian witnesses living in such a harsh and confrontational time. We should seek to show respect without fear, to have submission without silence, and to have courage but without contempt.

[20:37] I think it's also easy to imagine that boldness belongs to a certain kind of personality, but Peter's life tells us otherwise.

You see, Christian courage is not a natural fearlessness. It's what happens when the Spirit makes the reality of Christ greater to us than the people we fear.

That's exactly what we see here in Peter. Then continuing in verse 9, Peter respectfully exposes the strangeness of the situation.

Are they really being put on trial because of a good deed done for a man who's been unable to walk? But even in that, Peter uses the healing to create a bridge to the gospel.

The word translated healed in verse 9 comes from the Greek word *sozo*, meaning to save or to rescue. And we're going to see that Luke uses that same word family again in verse 12 when Peter declares we must be saved.

[21:49] So we can see Peter moving from the lesser rescue to the greater one. The Jesus who rescues this man from physical helplessness is the only one who can rescue us from our deeper spiritual helplessness.

So if this man's been rescued, then the council's question is the right one. Who rescued him? And Peter's answer is unmistakable.

Jesus did. That brings us to the proclamation of the name. The proclamation of the name.

Continuing in verse 10, Peter says, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. So the council had asked, by what power, by what name did you do this?

Peter's answer is direct, by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And that's important. By saying Jesus of Nazareth, Peter leaves no ambiguity about whom he means.

[23:14] He's speaking about the same Jesus these leaders had recently rejected and condemned. I think it's also important for us to remember that we should hear Christ as a title.

It's not Jesus' last name. It's the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. And both of those mean the anointed one.

You see, Peter is identifying Jesus as God's promised king. The one through whom God is fulfilling his promises of salvation and kingdom.

So, in other words, Peter is saying this man was healed by Jesus, the Messiah from Nazareth.

Now, that declaration would have been explosive in front of this council.

You see, these leaders had rejected Jesus, but Peter now publicly declares that the man they rejected is indeed God's Messiah.

[24 : 18] Then, Peter, drawing the contrast even more sharply says, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. You see, these elders, these rulers had placed their verdict on Jesus of crucifixion and death.

But God had overturned that verdict in the resurrection. They had rejected him, but God vindicated him as his chosen Messiah.

And not only that, but the very evidence of Christ's living power is standing directly in front of them. This man had been unable to walk from birth, and now he's standing before the council completely well.

The healed man is living evidence that the Jesus they crucified is alive. He's reigning. He's still at work. The council had asked by what power or what name, and Peter's answer is unmistakable.

The risen Jesus did this. And then Peter goes on to interpret what's happened through scripture. He points back to Psalm 118 verse 22 when he says, the stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone.

[25 : 41] Now Luke has actually already shown us Jesus applying this very passage to Israel's religious leaders. You might remember in the parable of the tenants in Luke 20, the tenants reject and mistreat the owner's servants.

And then when the owner sends his beloved son, they kill him too. Jesus warns that the owner will judge those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

And when the people respond, surely not. Jesus quotes this very verse saying that the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone.

You see, Jesus had already identified the pattern. The leaders would reject the son, but their rejection would not overturn God's purpose for him.

And now Peter stands before those very leaders and tells them directly, you are the builders and Jesus is the stone you rejected.

[26 : 49] Now, Peter's wording is also especially pointed. He doesn't merely say they overlooked Jesus or they found him unsuitable.

The word he uses carries the sense of despising him, treating him as if he were worthless. You see, these men had examined Jesus.

They had listened to his claims. They'd witnessed his works and after evaluating him, they rejected him. They treated him as worthless. They cast it away like nothing.

But the stone the builders deemed worthless, God made the very cornerstone. God made him. And if God has vindicated Jesus in this way, Peter's conclusion really is unavoidable.

There's salvation in no other name. Salvation in no other name. Verse 12, Peter says, and there is salvation in no one else.

[27 : 52] For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Now, there's four things we need to consider in this final crucial statement that Peter makes.

First, what does salvation mean? What does salvation mean? And the concept of salvation has already been well developed in Acts. We've seen it includes the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from judgment, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and restoration to God through his Messiah.

So, by verse 12, Peter's clearly moved beyond the physical healing of one lame man. He's speaking about our deepest need.

Our need to be rescued from our sin, from our selfishness, from our pride, from our rebellion, and our need to be rescued from the judgment and wrath that we deserve because of it, but also our need to be restored to an intimate relation with God through his Messiah.

Second, we need to see the universal need for salvation. The universal need for salvation. When Peter says there's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, he's communicating a universal need.

[29:24] Everyone, everywhere, needs to be saved. No one is exempt. I think it's also important for us to notice that Peter says we.

He doesn't say because these religious leaders crucified Jesus or because they rejected God's precious cornerstone, they must be saved. He says we must be saved.

Peter doesn't place himself outside of the need he's declaring because there's one human need and there's one savior to meet that need.

So Peter stands here before the Sanhedrin, not merely condemning their rejection of Christ, but as a man who himself has denied Christ and received mercy.

received mercy from the same savior that they desperately need. Third, we need to delight in God's gracious provision of salvation.

[30:36] God's gracious provision of salvation. Notice that Peter not only shows us we all desperately need to be saved, but that God has not left us without a savior.

The phrase given among men is beautiful. It's a humbling phrase because Peter's wording reminds us that salvation is not something that humanity has accomplished.

God has given the savior. And praise the Lord, the savior God has given remains his sufficient and enduring provision for salvation.

So, so Peter's not saying we Christians have chosen Jesus as our preferred religious path. He's saying God has acted.

God sent his Messiah. God raised him from the dead. God made the rejected stone, the cornerstone. God has given this name by which we must be saved.

[31:55] Now, just stop for a minute. Just consider the immense grace and mercy that's captured in this truth.

You see, from birth, apart from grace, our hearts are turned against God. God, we reject his rule, we despise his glory, and yet, at great personal cost, our glorious God provided the Savior that we all desperately need.

Now, that naturally leads to the final consideration, salvation, the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus, the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus.

The verse begins literally something like this, and in no other is there salvation. Then Peter reinforces and explains that same truth a second time when he says, there's no other name under heaven.

So, so this verse doesn't say what our billboards and bumper stickers so often say. Jesus saves. Nor does it even say, Jesus is the best way to salvation.

[33:27] It says, salvation does not exist in anyone else. And lest there be any ambiguity that there's no other name under heaven that's been given.

You see, Peter leaves no possible alternative. Salvation in the name of Jesus means salvation in Jesus himself.

Peter's not presenting a formula or a prayer to be prayed or an act to be done. He's proclaiming a person, Jesus, the Messiah from Nazareth.

So, so this morning, the question remains for each of us, what will I do with the name Jesus, the Messiah from Nazareth?

You see, the religious leaders did not lack information about Jesus. They'd heard his teaching.

They knew about his works. They'd examined his claims.

[34:39] But after examining him, they rejected him. They treated as worthless the Savior God had given. And it's very easy for us to do the same thing.

We can know facts about Jesus without bowing to him as Lord. We can admire parts of his teaching while rejecting his authority.

We can attempt to add Jesus alongside the other things that rule our lives, our comfort, our reputation, our desires, our possessions, our relationships, or our ambitions, trying to just add him to the midst of it all, but without receiving him as our only Lord and Savior.

But Jesus will not remain one option among many. You see, the one the leaders rejected is the one God raised from the dead.

The one they condemned is the one God vindicated. The stone they discarded, God made the corner stone. And the name that they attempted to silence became the only name given under heaven among men by which we must be saved.

[36 : 07] Now, the word we is important because it includes everyone in this room. We need to be rescued.

We need to be rescued from more than difficult circumstances or emotional challenges or financial difficulties or physical ailments or problems in our relationship or whatever you would fill in the blank.

We need to be rescued from our sin, our rebellion against a holy God and the judgment that we deserve because of it.

And no matter what we do, we cannot accomplish that rescue ourselves. But God has not left us without hope.

In mercy, he's given the Savior we need. Jesus Christ died for sinners. God raised him from the dead.

[37 : 08] He lives, he reigns, and he will save everyone who turns from sin and trusts in him. So this morning, do not merely examine Jesus and then walk away.

Don't try to place him alongside the other gods that compete for your heart. I challenge you, turn from your sin and trust yourself completely to Jesus Christ.

He's the only Savior God has given. God has given. Now, if you're here this morning, if you already belong to Christ, I challenge you, remember what this passage teaches us about bearing his name. Opposition cannot stop his work. The Spirit can give fearful people courage, courage, and the message that we sometimes are so tempted to hide is the very message through which God saves. So let us speak with respect but not fear, and with humility but not shame, and with courage but not contempt.

[38 : 35] Let us clearly tell people who Jesus is, and what God has done through him, and what God has done through him for us.

Because there's salvation in no one else. There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. If you don't know whether you have trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior, please don't leave today without speaking to me or speaking to somebody around you, we'd be honored to talk with you about the Savior God has given.

For there is salvation in no one else. For there's no other name under heaven that's been given among men by which we must be saved.

Let's pray. heavenly father, we are humbled by your goodness and your grace.

Knowing that our hearts from birth are at enmity with you, we fight against you, we rebel against you, we despise your glory, and yet you in your infinite mercy have pursued us in love, sending your son who willingly comes to live the life we could not live, and then taking our sin on himself, taking the wrath and the punishment that we deserve, giving us the privilege of through faith becoming your children, of knowing the same love that you have for your son.

[40 : 33] Father, how glorious are the truths of the gospel. Father, help us not to forget. Help us to daily remember your grace, your mercy.

Help us not to become so content with the gifts that we forget the one who's given them. And to give us eyes to see those around us who've not experienced the hope and the love that we have found in Jesus.

Help us to be bold. Help us to be courageous. And help us to be kind. Father, we ask these things that your son would be glorified and that more and more people would come to know him, love him, and worship him as he deserves.

Father, we thank you again for your word. We thank you for this day. We thank you for your salvation given. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. may!