

# New Name

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray together as we stand. Father, we look to you. You are the creator of everything. You are the sovereign Lord of all. And you have exalted your Son, Jesus Christ, to your right hand.

And he is our Lord. And he is sovereign. And you have sent your Holy Spirit. And we ask that your Holy Spirit would be very present among us now. That you would grant us to see your truth, to see you, and to love you, and to follow you and trust you.

For the glory of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. Please go ahead and sit down. It would be great if you would grab the pew Bible in front of you, perhaps share if you need to, and turn to page 115.

But that's 115 toward the back. The New Testament switches over the page numbers. If you have been with us over the last couple months, you know that we are walking through the book of Acts. And we come this morning to a very important turning point in the book of Acts. Up until this point, in the first three chapters, everything has been going really, really well for the church.

[ 1 : 20 ] It's been an exciting story. I hope you've enjoyed it. You remember Jesus gathered his disciples and he ascended from the Mount of Olives up to heaven, up to the Father's right hand.

Chapter 2, the Holy Spirit descended upon the church, filling the church with power, sending the church out, proclaiming the gospel of Christ. People get converted.

People are healed. Miracles happen. And it's just wonderful. And if the book of Acts ended with chapter 3, we would have gotten the impression that church life is one long story of triumph and expansion and victory and excitement and, you know, there's part of me, to be honest, that makes me think, oh, that would have been really nice, you know?

But that's not the whole story. You remember last year, if you were part of this church congregation, you'll know that we were in the gospel of Luke and one of the themes that comes through in the gospel of Luke, it's kind of the prequel to Acts.

Acts is a sequel to Luke. Anyways, one of the themes that comes through loud and clear, Jesus says it again and again and again. Looks at his disciples and he says, I'm going to suffer.

[ 2 : 40 ] I'm going to be rejected. I'm going to be killed. And my path to glory is a path that goes through suffering. And if you follow me, you get in on that path too.

You know, which, now we come to the book of Acts and that's the pattern that we see. The church, throughout the book of Acts, suffers.

And the church suffers opposition and persecution and rejection and it happens again and again and again. and it has continued to happen all the way down through church history.

To be the people of Jesus is to be a people who suffer. But we don't suffer as a people without hope. You know, we follow someone who was killed and that means we're going to suffer.

But thankfully, we follow somebody who rose from the dead, which means we do not suffer as victims. We suffer as victors. Not because we're victorious, but because Jesus is. And he shares his victory with us.

[ 3 : 44 ] Now, why am I saying all this? Because the turning point that we have before us today in the book of Acts is the first time the church has to face down persecution.

And so the question that we need to consider this morning is what does it look like for the church to face down big, scary persecution and to do it with godly confidence and boldness?

What does godly confidence and boldness look like when we are faced with real opposition, with real suffering? Okay, that's the question. Let's get into the story. You'll remember the story that we pick up today is the second half of the story that started last week.

And last week we saw that Peter and John, two apostles, were going up to the temple at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon to pray. And as they were going into the temple they saw a crippled beggar

by the gate.

Now, that wasn't strange. There were lots of beggars around the temple. But this time Peter stopped. He looked at the beggar and he said, I don't have any gold.

[ 4 : 59 ] I don't have any silver. But I've got something better than money. I've got something better than money. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk.

And you know the story. The guy jumps up and he starts running or walking and then running and then leaping and praising God. And he goes right into the temple which was the first time he'd ever been in a temple.

People with disabilities were kept outside the temple. He runs right into the temple and a crowd begins to gather around him because they recognize who he is. They had seen him for years outside the temple gates at the same place asking for the same thing.

So as the crowd gathers Peter proclaims the gospel. Proclaims Jesus. And it just, like I said, if the story would have ended there we would all have lots of warm fuzzies and you know.

But then chapter 4 verse 1 happens. Take a look at it. The temple guards rush into the crowd. They grab Peter and John.

[ 6 : 07 ] They take them to jail. And the next day Peter and John find themselves before the Sanhedrin which is a very, very bad thing.

The Sanhedrin were the highest council amongst the people of Israel. They held an enormous amount of power. I don't know if you remember but the last time we saw them was in the gospel of Luke when Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin.

And they're the ones that condemned him. And the last time Peter was anywhere near the Sanhedrin it didn't go very well at all. Peter wasn't, he was in the courtyard outside but while Jesus was before the Sanhedrin Peter was busy outside breaking down.

He denies Jesus three times out of sheer fright, fear of the power that was coming down upon Jesus. And so now Peter and John are in front of the same group of people about three months later maybe.

And of course you know you don't know really exactly what it was like but I can kind of imagine John standing there looking out of the corner of his eye of Peter going oh man now we're in for it. Peter doesn't hold up very well under these situations.

[ 7 : 25 ] I hope he doesn't say anything too bad. And then verse 7 the council looks at Peter and John and they say by what power by what name did you do this thing? You've got to feel the tension.

You've got to feel the fear of that moment. You think Peter is going to break down but he doesn't. He doesn't. He responds with this astonishing boldness an astonishing level of confidence.

He looks at the Sanhedrin the 70 elders of Israel with the high priest and the high priest's family all the status that that represents and he says guys you want to know who did this?

I'll gladly tell you. Jesus did this. We didn't do this. Jesus did this. And you remember Jesus don't you Sanhedrin? About no three months ago or so.

In case you've forgotten let me remember let me remind you you rejected him you killed him but God raised him up. God raised him up and he is now the cornerstone of everything.

[ 8 : 37 ] And if you don't want us to talk about Jesus Sanhedrin then you're going to have to take that up with God because we would far prefer to follow God than to follow you. Now if Peter's a coward he is a pretty cheeky coward you know where does that boldness come from?

Where does it come from? The Sanhedrin are asking that same question they're not used to being spoken to in this way and they think that they look at these guys these uneducated common men where did they get this confidence and boldness and they're really close I mean they're right on actually.

Verse 13 They recognize that they had been with Jesus. That's where the confidence comes from. Let's think about that a little bit more.

Peter gives us a little bit more clarity on why being with Jesus gives him so much boldness. Look at verse 11 This Jesus Peter says is the stone that was rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone.

Okay, what does that mean? What does it have to do with confidence? Picture the scene. Peter is speaking to the Sanhedrin the most powerful religious experts in the land and they had acted in a sense like an architect an architect at the time might take a stone and examine it to see whether or

not it's fit to be used in construction.

[10:13] And three months before the Sanhedrin had looked at Jesus and as experts and people filled with power and authority they had looked at him and they had found him rejectable.

They threw him away like a flawed stone. And it wasn't just that they rejected him they used all their power and authority to have him killed. And when Jesus died when he hung upon the cross and breathed his last it was almost as if the power of the Sanhedrin the judgment of the Sanhedrin seemed to be vindicated.

Jesus seemed to be someone who could be thrown away disregarded absolutely irrelevant. But Peter knew that that wasn't the end of the story.

That the stone which had been thrown away God had not thrown it away. God had grabbed that stone and elevated that stone to be the cornerstone.

To be the stone upon which everything else rests. And Peter's looking up at the Sanhedrin and he knows that outside there is proof that God has made Jesus the cornerstone.

[11:31] There's proof. The beggar he's outside and he is running around he is walking everybody knew this guy even the Sanhedrin can't ignore the fact that there is proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead that Jesus isn't dead anymore.

And if Jesus isn't dead anymore then he is the true cornerstone. He is the true cornerstone of power in the world. Now you can see why this was rather annoying to the Sanhedrin.

You can see why the man's healing was deeply threatening to the Sanhedrin. I mean everything that they had kind of built their lives on and built their authority on everything that we naturally think is important things like wealth and political authority and religious influence these things that we desire and that we fear all at the same time Peter could see that they were an illusion before the power of Jesus Christ.

You see Peter stands confident because he knows who is really in control of the universe. He knows who is really in control of the world. He knows who is really ultimately in control even of the Sanhedrin.

That is why he is so bold. But let me show you something about his boldness. His boldness is not arrogant boldness. His boldness is filled with compassion and humility.

[13:03] Look at verse 12. Peter says and there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Now I know that for some of us that will sound very narrow that verse will sound very narrow and it will sound really arrogant. but I want you to see that it's not.

Peter isn't being arrogant he's being compassionate. He's looking at the Sanhedrin and he's saying you are wealthy you are powerful you are religious you are successful in every way that that word can be defined according to the world.

But Peter looks at me and he goes you know it's all a sham. I mean Sanhedrin you are being threatened by a healed beggar. It's an evidence that you are deeply insecure.

And all your wealth and your prestige it doesn't work for you. It doesn't ultimately it's not strong enough to save you. But here's the deal it's as if Peter's saying the one that made the beggar walk Sanhedrin he can give you what your money can never earn what your power can never control what your religion can never gain for you.

[14:25] Peter says there's salvation in no one else because he wants the Sanhedrin to know that only Jesus can heal their deep spiritual paralysis. The stone you rejected has become the only cornerstone that is strong enough worthy to build your life upon.

That's why he's so bold. He can see that Jesus is ultimately sovereignly now in control of the world and he proclaims the Sanhedrin that there is salvation only in Jesus because he wants them to see that everything they have built their lives upon is sinking sand.

Now what does it look like to have a godly confidence in the face of persecution? It is built on what we think of Jesus. If we can see that Jesus is the ultimate power in the universe then we will have boldness and a confidence in the face of real legitimate frightening persecution and opposition.

I want to point out three things as we in the rest of the sermon. When we have Peter's perspective on Jesus three things will happen three shifts will happen.

In the context of persecution persecution first of all will lead to prayer. Prayer will lead to power and power will lead to boldness.

[ 15 : 53 ] First of all persecution will lead to prayer. Look at verse 23. The Sanhedrin realize they don't really have any ultimate power in this situation and so they release the apostles.

The apostles run to the church, tell the church what's going on and what's the first thing the church does? Isn't it great? They fall on their knees in prayer. And what motivates them into prayer?

Why do they fall in prayer? Think about this. When you are persecuted, when life begins to heat up around you, you will always run to whatever you believe is ultimately powerful.

If you believe that something besides Jesus is ultimately powerful, then when life really gets critical, when opposition really gets uncomfortable, you will run to whatever that thing is.

You remember Peter before Jesus' crucifixion? When he's outside the Sanhedrin, why does he deny Jesus? Why does he deny Jesus? He's running to his ultimate God, his idol.

[ 17 : 02 ] He sees Jesus arrested, it looks like everything's falling apart, and so he reverts to what he feels is really the most important thing. And in that context, it seems to have been his status, his reputation, and so he flees to his real idol, and he says, I never knew the man.

But now Peter's changed, he has a new, he has the true God, he can see who Jesus is, and so he stands with boldness before the Sanhedrin, and the church has Peter's perspective on Jesus.

And so when the church is faced with real persecution, immediately they run to the one who has ultimate power, and they fall on their knees. Look at verse 24.

And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, what do they call him? Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

When life heats up, you will run to whoever you think is ultimately powerful, whatever you think is ultimately powerful in your life. And the church fell on their knees implicitly in prayer because they could see that Jesus was the cornerstone.

[ 18 : 16 ] He was the foundation of everything. And they sought refuge in him alone. Persecution, when we see who Jesus is, will lead us to prayer. Prayer will lead to power.

Do you notice what the church prays for? What would you pray for if you were here? I'm quite certain. that I would pray something like, God, make the bad stuff stop.

You know? Make them like me. You know? That's not what they do. Isn't it weird? They don't ask God to change the circumstances, even though they know he's powerful to do it.

They don't ask God to take away the danger or the difficulty, even though they know he's powerful enough to do it. they ask God for power. Verse 29, And now, Lord, look on their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness while you stretch forth your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

They ask God for power. Power to be bold, power for him to break in miraculously. And you know they're following the pattern of Jesus' own ministry.

[ 19 : 38 ] I mean, why would they ask God to break in in this way? See, they knew that in Jesus' ministry, when persecution against him reached its highest level, the high water mark of opposition to God and his purposes was when Jesus hung upon the cross.

But the church understood that that was also precisely the moment that God's salvation purposes were bursting forth upon the world like a wave.

And so they know that in their experience, when persecution heats up, that's precisely the moment that God is ready to break forth with his power and push forward his gospel in the world.

That's why they pray, oh God, send your power to push forward your gospel, your purposes in this land. persecution leads to prayer, prayer to power and power to boldness.

Verse 31, And when they had prayed, the place where they were gathered together was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

[ 20 : 52 ] Isn't it great? The Sanhedrin realized that the reason Peter and John were so bold is they had been with Jesus. What they didn't realize is that they were still with Jesus.

Jesus was still with them. And the church knew that too. And the church knew that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus, who had ascended to God's right hand, the cornerstone of everything, was not distant. He wasn't far off. He was closer than he had ever been. He was in their midst. He was in them, filling them with power. And when the Holy Spirit fills the church, it changes the way the church looks at Jesus.

The world looks at Jesus and they see someone that can be rejected, somebody who is irrelevant, somebody who is weak. But when the church is filled with the Holy Spirit, the church looks at Jesus and they see the cornerstone of all power, the rock upon which their lives are based, the rock upon

which all things are based.

And when we see Jesus in that way, his power becomes palpable to us. And of course, that becomes extremely motivating.

[ 22 : 11 ] It motivates us out, just like Peter. It motivates us to speak a big, bold gospel, even when we get rejected for it. It motivates us to pray big, bold prayers that God would use his sovereign power through which he controls all things and that he would apply that into the particular situations of our lives and the lives of the people around us and our city and our nation.

Isn't it glorious? The place where they gathered was shaken and they saw Jesus in all his power and they went out proclaiming him. opposition comes to thwart the church but it is a tool in the hand of God for his purposes to move forward.

So, how do we respond? You know, Jesus promised that we'll have tough times.

And as a church, if we look down in our future, you know, there's substantial uncertainty. But one thing that's not certain or that's not uncertain, one thing that's clear is that we will go through tough times.

I don't know if it'll happen right now. Don't know exactly in what way it'll happen but I know that we will not endure faithfully as Christians without being opposed.

[ 23 : 38 ] and friends, to equip ourselves with boldness and confidence, what we do is we look to Jesus. And the word to us is we are not to be afraid.

Do not be afraid because the stone which was rejected has become the cornerstone. Jesus is in control of all things. He is sovereign. And his path to glory ran through suffering which means we will go through suffering as well.

But he is sovereign. The most difficult things we will ever endure are safe within the hands of Jesus. Nothing is outside his control. Everything is gathered together up into his good purposes.

And we are gathered into his good purposes. So don't be afraid. Don't be afraid but thirst for the spirit. Because we are nothing if we are not filled with the spirit.

We are nothing. And in St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church we come from you know we are people here in Vancouver and in the lower mainland.

[ 24 : 51 ] We are used to comfortable lives. We are used to being liked. We are used to resting to some extent upon the comforts of this world.

and because of that I fear at times we can be underdeveloped when it comes to utter dependence upon Jesus. And if we go through times of trouble it will be God inviting us in his mercy to our knees so that we would see in those times the very power of God breaking forth in our lives and in the lives of this city.

And that is a beautiful thing. And it is because Jesus is the cornerstone. Let's pray. Behold I am laying in Zion a stone a cornerstone chosen precious and whoever believes in him will never be put to shame.

Father we believe that. Make it so in our lives. Amen. Shall we continue in prayer now?

Lord our Prince of Peace Lord our strength Lord our wisdom hear our prayer this morning. for a world which often persecutes the gospel as we've heard this morning we nevertheless are commanded to pray for the world especially to pray for peace in the world so we would pray Lord for peace between nations especially we would continue to remember our soldiers serving the conflict in Afghanistan you have commanded us Lord to pray for those in authority over us so we continue to pray for the Queen and for all the Royal Family we continue to pray Lord for our Prime Minister and for our provincial and civic leaders Lord we do pray that you would grant to the people of the world a most godly and peaceable life a life where the gospel may be heard and where your name may be glorified so Lord as we pray these things we say to you Lord in your mercy hear our prayer and we continue

[ 27 : 34 ] Lord to pray for the peace of the church that godly mystery that you are created in the world your son's body we pray for the church's peace we pray today for those who proclaim the gospel throughout the world for missionaries especially those who are persecuted for preaching the gospel especially again for those who are in prison for preaching the gospel we pray for those who teach and preach the mystery of Jesus in the world we pray for those who lead the church for those who lead our Anglican communion we remember the Archbishop of Canterbury today Rowan Williams and we continue to pray Lord for Archbishop Duncan and for Bishop Harvey for pastors and teachers

Lord those who lead us in the mystery of the gospel we pray for them we give you thanks for them  
Lord do guide your people and make us always a people meek and teachable in the mystery of  
your word Lord in your mercy and of course we would pray as we always do we pray for those in  
our midst who are suffering today we've been asked to pray by name for Lee for Don we pray for  
Harold we pray for Paul and Rowena we pray this morning for George and in a moment of silence  
Lord we bring before you those on our hearts today who are suffering and in need Lord for those  
that we remember before you today do grant them patience and hope and in your good time grant  
them freedom and peace  
Lord in your mercy Lord we do thank you today we thank you for the gift of prayer and we thank you  
that you are a God who hears us when we pray so Lord in your mercy hear our prayer for you