

The Name That Brings Life

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[0 : 00] Well, this is the last week in our summer series called No Other Name. And as you know, we've been following Paul and his friends on their great adventure as they make the good news of Jesus made known throughout the world.

And we've seen that the name of Jesus is one that symbolizes his living presence, his power and authority to give salvation and to bring freedom to all kinds of people throughout that Mediterranean world in all kinds of places.

And now in this passage of Acts 20, we hear the good news that Jesus is the name that brings life. And so I'd like you to turn to Acts 20 because in this passage, you're going to see two things.

The power of Jesus to bring life from death. And secondly, we're going to see the character of that new life in Jesus Christ. So grab a Bible and turn to Acts 20 verses 1 through 24.

And I want to just give a little bit of an update because those first six or seven verses tell us that following the riots in Ephesus, Paul returned to Macedonia and Greece.

[1 : 19] And there he encouraged the churches there. And then and it was quite an encouragement for them, really strengthen those churches. Then he backtracks and he goes back where he came, past Philippi into now Troas.

And that's where he met Luke. He met Luke in Philippi. Now he's in Troas. And he's there for a number of days. And on the last day in Troas, it was a Sunday.

And Paul spoke with the believers who were gathered together. Don't we wish we could be doing that right now as well in person? But on that day, he spoke to them well past midnight.

So don't complain if your small group Bible study goes a little bit late. He went till well past midnight. And that upper room where he was meeting was filled with torches. There was probably some smoke.

It was a warm day in what is now Turkey. And there's a young man there named Eutychus. He's sitting next to that open window that we heard about, trying to get some fresh air, trying to stay awake as Paul is going on and on and on.

[2 : 24] And we find that as Paul continued teaching late into the night, Eutychus is overcome by sleep. And he falls three stories to his death.

What a shocking way to interrupt a sermon. Paul rushed down to where he had fallen. And in that moment, God uses to show his life-giving power in all of its wonder.

Look at verse 10. It says that Paul went down and he bent over this young guy. And taking him into his arms, he said to everyone who'd come running down with him, Don't be alarmed, for his life is in him.

Luke, who is a physician and eyewitness, clearly says that Eutychus was taken up dead before Paul embraced him.

He was not unconscious. He was not unresponsive. He was dead. Luke could have written a death certificate. But in the most unspectacular and gentle way, God made life to flood back into this young man when Paul took him into his arms.

[3 : 39] And I love how understated Luke is here. He says later on that they took the youth away and they were not a little encouraged. They were not a little comforted.

Well, there must have been an amazing celebration here. What is going on here? It's not just a warning to preachers not to preach long sermons. It's much more than that.

It's clearly a testimony to God's healing power. But even more than that, it is a picture of new life.

It's about that life that comes through faith in Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It's what has been happening to men and women and boys and girls throughout Paul's journeys.

You know, one of the favorite images for the Christian life is of death and resurrection for Paul.

He writes in Galatians 2, And then in Romans 6, he says, We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death.

[4 : 51] In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. In newness of life.

And throughout the Bible, we see that our problem is much more desperate than most of us really grasp or realize. And this means that our salvation is much more radical and powerful and deep as well.

Think of how the Bible pictures God's saving work. We have hearts of stone. We need hearts that are alive. Hearts of flesh. We are blind.

We need eyes that are able to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are deaf. And we need new ears to hear God's saving word for us.

We are lost. We need to be found. We need to be rescued. We are enemies who need to be reconciled to God. And finally, we are dead.

[5 : 51] And we need to be made alive. We are like the walking dead. Spiritually. We need the life of Jesus Christ. And when we entrust our lives to this Jesus, He doesn't just enable us to live better lives.

He actually resurrects us from spiritual death into a new and very different life with Him. And this means that He doesn't just make us a better version of ourselves.

He gives us a new identity. He gives us a new purpose of serving this living Lord Jesus, this living King. And He welcomes us into God's family as beloved children adopted by Him.

He fills us with His Holy Spirit. He fills us with the very living presence of God. And He begins to change and transform us from the inside out.

This is a powerful miracle of God that is at work as you believe in Jesus. It's His name. It's His living power, authority, and presence that brings that new life and the gift of God's grace.

[7 : 02] But what does that new life look like in practical ways, in real life? Well, that brings us to the second half of our passage where we see in God's own testimony the character of the new life of Christ.

Now, I find it amazing that after Eutychus was healed, Paul continued to teach the believers until daybreak, all night long. Didn't he get the message when Eutychus fell asleep?

No. It is because the believers were hungry to know all they could know about this resurrection life of Jesus. It shows how important our gatherings are to hear God's truth, how critical that is.

It's why we miss being together and hearing God's word preached in one another's presence. It's why our small groups are so very, very important. It's the way that we know God and His resurrection life in ourselves and one another.

And Luke says the next morning, without any sleep, he gathers his friends and he sets sail south along the coast, what is now Turkey, past Ephesus to Miletus.

[8 : 16] And some of you have gone on cruise ships and have done this, actually. It's very popular still, that route. And they end up in this place where there is a crucial meeting. Because they, in Miletus, they meet with the elders of Ephesus, these leaders of Ephesus.

It's crucial meeting because Paul planted that church in that great city. And he'd spent two to three years there teaching, preaching, and encouraging the new believers.

He had a very close relationship with those leaders. He had spent a lot of time with them. And he poured his love into those leaders.

They were more than acquaintances to Paul. These people were Paul's family, really. And he knew that he would not see them again because after this, Paul would set out for Jerusalem.

And then he would be imprisoned and have to go to Rome. So in that final talk to these beloved friends and co-workers, Paul gives them a vision for Christian ministry and a call to be faithful in that leadership in the church and to Christ.

[9 : 25] And the way that he does that is he uses his life, his own life, as an example to them. Look at verse 18. He says, You yourselves know that I lived among you for the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia.

You knew how I lived, he says. And how did he live? Look at verse 19. It was a life of humble service in the face of sorrow, suffering, and persecution, and riots.

He humbly served the Lord and these people. Secondly, it was a life of wise instruction, both in public and in private homes, which was, he says, profitable for the life of believers.

They really grew from what he had to say. And then thirdly, there was a courageous witness. We see in verse 21 that he earnestly called both Jews and Greeks who didn't know Jesus yet to repentance to God and faith in Jesus Christ.

And you know, he lived out that life. It is the life of a Christian that there is a dependence upon Jesus, turning to him constantly, placing your faith in the Lord Jesus.

[10:40] It's our daily pattern as well. It was the life that Paul lived among them. And then later in the passage, Paul said, He never ceased to warn and admonish them day and night with tears.

He taught the whole counsel of God, meaning he didn't hold back from those parts that were really challenging of God's word. And he didn't covet their gold or the silver, but rather he worked hard to support himself and also to provide for the weak who were in the community.

All of these were important signs of the Holy Spirit's work in Paul, this new life that he gives. But look at verses 22 through 24.

You see how deeply gripped Paul has been and changed by the risen life of Jesus at work within him. Let's read those verses again.

He said, He was zealous for God, but blind to the truth of the gospel.

[12:35] And he was ruthless and violent and opposing the church. So it's a remarkable testimony to the risen life of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that we see this Saul of Tarsus, former Pharisee, great persecutor of the church.

He's standing before the leaders of Ephesus, who he personally mentored in the faith of Jesus. He has tears in his eyes and he stands and he tells them, you know, I don't know what's going to happen in Jerusalem, except that it will involve imprisonment and suffering.

That's okay. I'm not holding on to anything except for Jesus. Not even my own life. All that matters is that I run my race and I finish the ministry that I received from Jesus to be a witness to the gospel of the grace of God.

Well, there's Paul's life. It's shaped thoroughly by the life of Jesus, who, according to Paul, emptied himself and took the form of a servant, humbling himself to the point of death, on a cross to fulfill God's mission of creation, of reconciling creation to himself.

And it's not just by words that he displayed the love of Christ within him. It was his love for the church and their love for him.

[14:00] So at the end of the chapter, which we weren't able to read, Paul kneels down with all of these elders. It's a very moving scene. And he prays with them. And Luke says that after they prayed, there was much weeping on the part of all.

They embraced Paul and they kissed him. You see, people don't respond like that. Somebody's simply a great teacher.

They viewed Paul as a spiritual father. They viewed him as the one who introduced them to the risen Lord Jesus Christ. They loved him for it.

They were deeply grieved in knowing that they wouldn't see him again. And, you know, I can think of no other way to account for this incredible change in Paul than a spiritual death and a resurrection, an ongoing growth with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, Paul really had been crucified with Christ. The violent Pharisee was dead and in its place lives a man gripped by Jesus Christ.

[15:10] Gripped by God's amazing grace. He is a man ready to pour out his life, bearing witness to that good news. And we praise God for it today.

Because that can be your story as well. If we've seen anything in this series on the book of Acts, it is that the good news of salvation in the name of Jesus is for everyone, no matter who you are, what your background is, what you may not be able to forgive yourself for.

Because in the past few weeks, we've seen the risen life of Jesus at work in people through the Holy Spirit that were incredibly diverse. A violent religious leader like Paul is changed.

A wealthy Gentile businesswoman like Lydia is changed. A poor slave girl who's oppressed by a spirit and exploited by masters, she is freed and transformed.

A blue-collar Roman soldier comes to an amazing living faith in Jesus. Philosophers and cultural elites want to know more about this Jesus and put their faith in him.

[16:22] People from all nations and walks of life is what we've seen. The earliest and most basic Christian confession was, Jesus is Lord. That confession is a universal declaration.

It's true whether we believe it or not. It's true for all people. But it is also an invitation for everyone. You and I, everyone in the world, even those who do not know Jesus yet.

It's an invitation to every day receive the life, joy, freedom, and purpose of serving our King Jesus humbly and sacrificially.

It's an invitation to recognize that we, like Paul, have been called, saved, and are being sent in the name of Jesus to be his witnesses in the world to this good news.

And the question that we close with is, how will you respond to Jesus' invitation? And I encourage you today to embrace Jesus as all of these people have done.

[17 : 29] Embrace his life. Be filled with his life. And share that life with other people. For there is no other name, no one else.

There is no salvation in any other name under heaven, given among men, women, boys, and girls, by which we must be saved.

Thanks be to God for his incredible gift. Jesus Christ died and risen for us. Amen.