

Peter and John Before the Council

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[0 : 0 0] to the chapter we read in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4. These words, verse 12, well-known words, words that Peter spoke, and he said, 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, as a church, we talk about home missions and foreign missions, or what today we term international missions. And many see the book of the Acts of the Apostles in that very way, that we have the home mission and then we have the international mission.

And really that's how the gospel works, because we find that the first part of this book is dealing with the spread and the growth of the gospel in Jerusalem.

And in the homeland where Jesus, of course, had lived and taught and witnessed and worked and eventually been crucified.

But from there, the gospel spread out. And as people were converted, and we see in a moment that there were thousands converted, as the gospel began to flourish and take root, then people began to move out with the gospel.

[1 : 3 9] And as the gospel moved out, people were being converted in all the different areas and different countries. And when you go through the Acts of the Apostles, it's a really, it's a very exciting book, because we see there how God is developing His church.

And although there are a lot of problems and teething problems and so on, the great message of the Acts of the Apostle is such a positive message, as we see the gospel spread throughout the different lands.

And that's how it should always be. Because, you know, when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, that person becomes a missionary.

Every believer, if you're a Christian here tonight, you are a missionary. The instinct of grace is to tell others about Jesus Christ.

It's a very strange thing. It's almost an inconsistency. If somebody comes to faith in Jesus Christ, embraces Christ as Savior, and never talks to anybody else about Jesus, never shares the gospel with anybody else, never uses any opportunity that is given to them to speak about the Lord Jesus.

[2 : 5 9] As I say, the instinct of grace is to speak to others about Jesus. You find that, for instance, with the woman of Samaria, the moment that she came to this recognition that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, she couldn't contain herself.

And although this woman had an amazing past, she went straight back into the city and she began to tell everybody, come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did.

Is not this the Christ? And there's something of that in the heart of those who have been touched by the Lord. And as I say, it is the instinct of grace.

And that's what we find here, because there was an amazing transformation took place amongst the disciples, and particularly Peter. Peter, who was at the very forefront of the growth of the church.

Because not so long before, we find that Peter is a broken man. Peter is the one, as we all know, who denied his Lord with oaths and curses.

[4 : 06] Peter is the one who said, I go fishing. Literally, I'm going back to the fishing. Peter is the one who thought that by his actions and by his denial, not that he had lost faith in Jesus, but he thought that his role for Jesus could never be what it was before.

But as we know, the resurrected Jesus came to Peter and restored him lovingly and carefully on the shores of Galilee. And Peter, it's so different to the Peter that we find, remember the disciples were hiding in our locked room.

Remember when Jesus, the resurrected Christ, appeared in their midst? They were in our locked room. The door was locked for fear of the Jews. This was after the death of Jesus.

So the picture that we have at the end of the Gospels couldn't be more different to the picture that we have here at the very beginning of the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter and John were hiding away. Here we have Peter and John at the very forefront challenging all the religious leaders, challenging the whole city about what they have done to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 26] And why? How? Well, we know, of course, how the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost with power upon them. And that's what we read about.

If we had read through in chapter 2, we find there that on that day, the day of Pentecost, as Peter goes to preach, that thousands were converted.

There were some, about 3,000 were converted on that day. We're told in chapter 2 that they were cut to the heart because Peter had told them exactly what had happened.

It was wonderful. You know, Peter is speaking to Jews. Peter is speaking to people who knew the Bible, who were built and whose lives had been based upon the Old Testament.

And Peter worked his way through the Old Testament, showing how Jesus Christ truly is the Messiah. And that they had put him to death.

[6 : 26] And they were cut to the heart. Now, the great thing about Peter's preaching, while there was condemnation because of what they did, there was also hope.

Because Jesus was the risen Savior. And Jesus was now offering himself to them, even although they had been guilty of his death.

He was now offering them life. And so we find that many of them, they were cut to the heart, and they were crying out, what shall we do? Do you know this?

I would love tonight, if there were any in here who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior, who were to be cut to the heart, and they were to be crying out, what must I do?

Just like the Philippian jailer, who said, what must I do to be saved? Of course, we know that answer. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

[7 : 25] Maybe there are some people in here tonight, and that's what you're saying to yourself. Because life is no longer what it used to be. Life has become empty for you.

You can no longer get from it what you used to. There's a dryness in things. Life used to be fulfilling and thrilling.

And you used to find, as each week went by, you would say to yourself, you know, it's pretty good. And as you viewed life in general, you would say, I'm quite happy, I'm quite satisfied. But it's no longer like that.

There's an emptiness. There's a dryness. And whatever the happiness used to have, it's just not there. There's something missing. May I suggest to you that it's not something but someone.

That's Jesus. And we all need Jesus. He is the passion who is central to our life.

[8 : 30] Life becomes different when we receive Jesus. Remember, Jesus is a passion. When you become a Christian, you enter into a living, personal relationship.

With a passion. It's not into a system. It's not into something that's just sort of rules and regulations. It is into a relationship with our living passion.

And that's what makes Christianity so real, so dynamic, so different. And these people, as they listened to Peter, realized that they needed, they needed this Jesus.

And then we find again that Peter, again, as he preaches, then there are more converted, so that by chapter 4, verse 4, there are about 5,000.

What an impact in the city. You and I know the impact, even in our own community, when two or three or four people are converted, and people speak about it.

[9 : 40] Every conversion has its impact. Every person who becomes a Christian, it has its own impact within the circle, within the group.

It has an impact in the home. It has an impact at work. It has an impact at school. It has an impact within your own social circle. Always there is an impact when a person becomes a Christian.

Well, can you imagine the impact in Jerusalem when 5,000 people had come to faith in Jesus Christ? And of course, this was causing no end of consternation amongst the religious leaders.

They thought they had seen the last of Jesus. They thought that when Joseph of Arimathea had begged for the body of Jesus, and that Jesus' body had been put in the grave, and when they had put a guard again around that tomb, they thought, that's it.

That's the end of this man. But to their amazement, and as we say, to their consternation, consternation, they find that rather than the cause of Christ diminishing, it is now flourishing.

[10 : 57] And so the Jewish council have arrested Peter and John. And I think the root problem here is that everything is going against what these religious leaders really were wanting for their own life.

because these men had tremendous influence and tremendous sway. They were the people who kind of called the shots. You had the different groups. There were the chief priests, and there were all the religious leaders.

There were the Pharisees. There were the Sadducees. For instance, the Sadducees, they came really from the privileged aristocracy. They were a group that were very much in league with Rome because they found that by playing a sort of a political and economic game with Rome that their own privileges and their own rights were being looked after.

And so there was a lot of self-interest in all that was going on within the religious hierarchy of the day. They were all trying to protect their own interests so that everything would go just as they had it and as they were enjoying it.

But this Christianity was radical. It was revolutionary, and it was turning, as it says elsewhere, turning their world upside down.

[12 : 22] And so there was a lot of anger in their hearts and resentment against those who were at the forefront of the preaching, and that's why they took Peter and John. And you know, it's still the same today.

There's often anger and resentment in people's hearts. against Christianity. Because Christianity is radical. It is revolutionary.

It changes. It changes people's lives fundamentally. And there's a lot of people who can't cope with it. And that is why there is often what we would term unreasonable, unnatural opposition towards Christianity.

And you know, even within the church itself, people who are sitting under the gospel can hold out in opposition to Christ because they don't want their life as they know it to be changed.

You know, I don't know where you are tonight, but you know, it's possible that you might be here and you're quite happy to come to church. And you feel that you ought to come to church.

[13 : 35] It's something you've done since you were a child. You were brought up in that way. And that's good and I thank the Lord for that. But you know, the fact of the matter is that while you might be sitting in church unhappy to come to church, yet there is still within you an opposition to Jesus as Lord of your life.

Because you're not ready for the Lord to turn your life around. And you're not ready to be a Christian and you don't know what will happen. And so, you're afraid that to become a Christian will interfere with the lifestyle that you enjoy and the way that you live at the moment.

And so, there's a kind of a rejection. You're saying, no. So far, but no further. But you know, the problem is that, and I say that with all due respect, is that you don't understand the nature of being a Christian.

And the reason I'm saying is that this is because I know myself. I was exactly like that. I was happy to come to church.

I believed what I was hearing. And yet, there was a barrier. I wasn't prepared to have my life changed. I wanted to call the shots.

[14 : 57] I wanted to be in control. I didn't understand. But you know, my friend, when you come into the kingdom, it's different. When you're outside the kingdom, you cannot understand understand what it's like inside.

It's different. Because as we said just a moment ago, you come into a personal relationship. You have come to meet with a person. Jesus.

And it changes. Your life changes. Yes, you're still the same person. There's still sin, still faults, still feelings. But there's a change.

Your attitude changes. Your perception changes. You know who you belong to. There's a new outlook. There's new attitudes. It's an amazing thing.

And so, there was fundamentally within the religious leaders and all these opposition to Peter and John. And so, the Jewish council meet and they say to them, look, what are you doing?

[16 : 07] Because this has all come about through the healing of this man that we were going to read chapter 3, this lame man who had been healed. And so, as they were brought before the council, they were asked by what name and what authority they were doing this because the religious leaders were perplexed because they knew that Peter and John were unlearned men.

These were fishermen. They had never been to the colleges or the rabbinical schools or the seats of learning. And yet, Peter and John spoke with a power and with an authority that even the religious leaders didn't have.

And they were perplexed. They were confused. And they were saying, how is this? But it tells us that they took note that they had been with Jesus. That's what it says.

Now, when they saw, in verse 13, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

It's the very same thing that they were saying, the same accusation that was leveled. It wasn't an accusation, the same perception that they had of Jesus. They couldn't understand the authority that he had.

[17 : 28] They said, that's what was said. Never a man spoke like this man. They couldn't believe it. Here is this man who just appeared, as it were, on the scene, grew up amongst them, had never been to the schools of learning, and yet he spoke with an authority and with a power that none of them could match.

And now they were seeing it again in his followers. And that really threw them. And you know, there is a power and there is an authority in the words of Christ, even to this day.

Because something of the words of Christ carry with it truth. The truth speaks. And people recognize that truth. How they deal with it is another thing.

They may react against it. They may rise in opposition to it. But they still recognize something of the authority and the truth in it. Now we find that, as Peter and John are speaking, the words of Jesus, as Jesus spoke back in Luke's gospel, Jesus told them a day was going to come when they would be taken from the synagogue and they would be thrown into prison and they would be persecuted for his name.

But they weren't to worry. They weren't to be worried about what to say because he would give them the words to say. That's what it says. Settle in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer.

[18 : 59] For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. That's what Jesus had said when he was ministering on earth.

And that's exactly what was happening now. The opponents of the gospel, they were at a loss for words. So, they asked Peter, right, by what authority?

Whose name have you done this in? And that's what we find. It says this in verse 7, and when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this?

So, that's why Peter says in verse 12 that there is no other name but the name of Jesus. And when it says there is no other name whereby we must be saved, we see here something of the exclusiveness of the gospel.

Now, when we say the gospel is exclusive, that doesn't mean for one moment that we say to ourselves, hey, we've got the gospel and it belongs to us.

[20 : 11] My friend, it doesn't. Yes, it does belong to us but it belongs to everybody else as well. No person who, as we said at the beginning, the instinct of grace is to go out with the gospel.

So, when we talk about exclusiveness, we don't mean something that we have and we want to keep for ourselves, not at all. The very operation of grace is to spread the gospel.

What we mean by the exclusiveness is that there is no other way of salvation but in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's something that the Bible teaches us over and over and over again. Now, a lot of people don't want to hear that. And many people will say, well, you cannot be so dogmatic today as long as people are sincere in their approach to God.

It's sincerity of heart that counts. It doesn't matter how a person comes and tries to get right with God as long as they're genuine and sincere in their heart, then God will accept them.

[21 : 18] Well, that's not what God's Word says. And we've got to go by what God's Word. We're not being dogmatic for the sake of being dogmatic.

And we're not being dogmatic simply to say, well, I'm right and you're wrong. We're being dogmatic because this is the Word of God. And it's the Word of God making it so clear that there is no other way of salvation but in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And very often when you look at other faiths or other beliefs or so on, you will find that there are two differences to the Christian faith. The first is that Jesus Christ is not the way of salvation.

That it's not in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And secondly, that the individual is able somewhere or another to become right with God.

But the Christian faith is exclusive in this sense, that it's in Jesus Christ. Not... Now, you know, again, it's possible within the Christian church to teach that the way of salvation is in Jesus.

[22 : 43] And to teach it in such a way that all that you do is try to follow the example of Jesus. That our life is simply to be following the example of Jesus and all will be well.

Let us not at any point deny the example of Jesus. An essential part. We've been studying Peter, going through the first letter of Peter, and Peter emphasizes the importance of Christ leaving an example for us.

But that's only part of it. Indeed, that's the second part of it. The first part of it is coming to faith in Jesus Christ. It is accepting Christ's work, His sacrifice, His substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross.

That's why Jesus came. He came to die, to open our way to God. And the example follows on from that. If we try simply to follow the example of Christ without first coming to know Jesus Christ, then we're going to fail.

And that's what the Bible is so emphasizing. And then we see the necessity of salvation that you must be saved.

[24 : 03] You know, there's lots of things in life that we say, I must do. Maybe you're saying to yourself today, or do you know this week there are one or two things I must do. But it's not the end of the world if you don't do them.

But you know, my friend, it's the end of your soul if you don't do this. You must be saved. It's serious.

That's what the Bible is very, very clear on that, that we must be saved. And that's what Jesus Christ has done for us. He saves us from all that sin is, from the dominion of sin and the guilt of sin and the power of sin and the punishment of sin.

And He delivers us from and He takes us into all the freedom and the liberty and the wonder that is in Jesus Christ. And so, Peter says, look, there is no other name.

No other name. There's no more powerful name. Now, a name for the Jews was not simply what somebody has to distinguish one person from another.

[25 : 19] Very often, the name identified in some way, characterize something within the family or something about the person. I've said this before, in the same way as in the community that we live in here, we often use a nickname.

A person gets a nickname because of some characteristic or something they've done or something that their father did or grandfather and it kind of runs down.

Very much within the highlands and islands, we have people with nicknames. And it's kind of descriptive. Well, in many ways, a Jewish name was descriptive.

And that's what we have of Jesus. His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

So, this is the name. It is a name that's descriptive of what Jesus does. And all power is given to him to do this very thing. And there is no name that's so secure as the name of Jesus, because he alone can give you security.

[26 : 29] Imagine if your salvation depended on the church. Well, I'll tell you, if it did, I would be worried tonight. If your salvation and my salvation depended upon any particular church, we would be worried because the church is made up of people.

salvation is dependent on the head of the church, who is Jesus Christ. And it's on him. He is the rock.

He is the one who is able to save to the uttermost. And you know, the wonderful thing is, it doesn't matter what you've been, it doesn't matter what you've done, it doesn't matter how many opportunities you've had, he's able to save.

And in many ways, there's no easier name. Because all you have to do is believe.

All the doing has been done. Jesus has done everything. And all he's saying to you tonight is, in order that you must be saved, believe in me.

[27 : 39] Accept me. And you know, at the end of the day, our salvation is all tied into the glory of God. And you know, when you become a Christian, one of the things you discover, because sometimes when you become a Christian, you're so caught up with yourself.

But you know, as time goes on, you realize, you know, it's actually not about me, but it's about God. And there's an emphasis from yourself or a moving from yourself to him. And so there's this great sense that this salvation that God has worked within you is ultimately to his glory.

And it's his name that will endure throughout all eternity. And he has in his wisdom, he has ordained that you'll be part of that, sharing in that forever and ever.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall. And you know, the wonderful thing is, that he's going to make your name endure as well.

Because his people are his portion in this world. That's what it tells us. God loves his people.

[28 : 56] And he's building his church. We've used this description often enough before, but it's so true. The church is like a building.

the history of the world is the scaffolding. And all that's taking place round and about is the scaffolding.

And at the center of the scaffolding is the building. When the building is complete, the scaffolding is taken down. There you have it. And it's only really when the scaffolding is taken down that you're able to appreciate the beauty of a building.

You can't see it properly while the scaffolding is there. And that's what's happening just now. As the world goes on and everything takes place and things are crisscrossing here and there, and often we cannot see the church.

Tonight, maybe we can't see the glory of the church. But one day, the church will be revealed in all its glory when the scaffolding is taken away. And Christ, who is the glory of the church, will be in the center of it.

[30 : 06] And then we'll see it for what it is. I hope tonight that you are in Jesus and that you know him as your Lord and Savior and that you will be singing his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we give thanks for being able to meet together and to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We pray to bless us and we pray that we might know the salvation of the Lord. We pray for any who are outside the kingdom tonight, that they might come in, that they might come to meet personally with Jesus.

They might know the safety and the blessing that is found in Jesus Christ. Oh, Lord, do us good. Take us all home safely, we pray. Grant us grace to follow the Lord.

We pray thy blessing upon the young ones that were baptized today and bless their families, we pray. Watch over them and bless all our young and take away sin in Jesus' name.

[31 : 15] Amen. Amen.