

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

No Other Name, No Other Options

Acts 4:1-12

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: The young Church is rapidly changing before our eyes. Just a short time ago it was finding favor by all, but now the power structures are threatened and it must be controlled. The message of Jesus Christ must be stopped and so the beginnings of the sufferings in the Church begins. But in all of this we find that truth rings out clear and strong. There is found no where else, but in Jesus, salvation and life.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 4:1-12.
- B. In our world of internet and social media we have many posts that provide a snapshot of a moment in time. But then over time what was stated then is shown to be inaccurate. The common way this is then noted on social media is the phrase, “That didn’t age well.”
 - 1. In a way, this is what we see in our current passage and it is all centered upon the change of attitude for the Church by those in power.
 - 2. Remember that in Acts 2:47 the early church was described as having “favor with all the people. . . .” Now, just a short time later we now find that this favorable attitude is changing. Not with the populace but with the leadership in Jerusalem.
- C. This passage is built around the repetition of a specific term— “name.” We see it used in vs 7, 10 and 12. Everything in this passage is based off of the idea that the Apostles were preaching in the name of Jesus Christ, they were performing miracles in the name of Jesus Christ and they were calling on the people to believe in the name of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. In chapters 4-7 there is a series of confrontations that will build up to people literally stoning to death a man named Stephen for preaching the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sin.
 - 2. In a sense what we have here in these chapters is a description of how quickly things change from fun and exciting to hard and challenging. The honeymoon stage is finished and now comes real life.

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- D. But this passage also shows the unalterable reality of the exclusive demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Four exclusive truth claims related to the name of Jesus that apply to us even today.

II. Four Truths about The Name of Jesus.

- A. No other name to proclaim (1-2).
 - 1. The players:
 - a. We see that Peter was not the only one speaking, evidently John, too, was teaching, note the “they.” So this is after the healing and now they are interacting with the massive crowd. One name, one message.
 - b. The captain of the guard was second only to the High Priest. He oversaw the Temple police.
 - c. The Sadducees were Levitical priests who claimed to represent ancient orthodoxy. They opposed any developments in biblical law, and they denied the doctrine of bodily resurrection and so disagreed with Peter's teaching on that subject. They believed that the messianic age and the Messiah were ideals had begun with the Maccabean rebellion (168-134 B.C.).
 - d. During that time of the rebellion the nation had essentially turned over political and economic control to the what is known as the Sanhedrin. This is the elite, ruling class of priests and religious leaders. They preached tolerance and cooperation with the Roman government.
 - e. The bulk of the Sanhedrin were made up of Sadducees with a minority being Pharisees. In fact, the Temple guard were all Levites, the caption of the temple guard was alway a Sadducee and also each of the high priests. Realize that these people had little interest in biblical truth as much as a maintaining of their power base.
 - 2. Notice in vs 1 “as they were speaking. . . .”
 - a. This is a key point to be made. The apostles were in the process of preaching to the people who had crowded around them due to the healing of the lame man.
 - b. What was the message? It was to repent and believe in Jesus as the promised One from God.

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- c. They were declaring that God had sent Him. He was the promised Servant that their beloved Moses had spoken of and that their only option was to turn from their wicked ways and turn to Jesus (3:26).
- 3. My point here is very simple but it is also very important. There is no other name to proclaim as a follower of Jesus.
 - a. You have no other answer.
 - b. You have no other way.
 - c. You have no other options.
- 4. What was the content of the words of the Apostles?
 - a. They were teaching the people. About what? About Jesus.
 - b. But the core message was the truth that in Jesus was life. True life. That in Jesus there was the promise of the resurrection from the dead. And this makes them “greatly disturbed” (2).
 - c. Why this? Because this is the enemy from which no one can escape. It haunts us and chases us until we are run down into the grave. And then it is done.
- 5. This must be true for us as well.
 - a. We have no other message to give to others.
 - b. We have to be clear who it is that we represent and in Whose name we come.
 - c. We are not about our political position, our sports team, our racial make-up or anything else. We must be convinced that we exist and breathe for the name of Jesus.
 - d. Note that the leaders are specifically upset because it was Jesus that was being taught and proclaimed. It was not a mix-up about the message.
 - (1) They know what is being said and they are correct in what they think is the message even if they did not believe it.
 - (2) In the same way we must be clear. We cannot give out a mixed message where those we know and live among wonder what it is we believe and hope in.
- 6. However, what you and I need to understand is that this necessarily creates a line in the sand.

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- a. There is no other message. The name of Jesus cannot be minimized or hidden and still be a message that is faithful to Jesus Christ.
 - b. But this leads to the very real possibility of suffering and persecution.
- B. No other name for which to suffer (3, 5-7).
- 1. This results in the Sadducees being the first persecutors of the Church, beginning a long line of others. The leaders order the arrest. Why?
 - a. Simply put it is to control the situation and stop the preaching. This is the nature of how persecution starts in most cases.
 - b. Now understand that there are many ways one can suffer and be persecuted. And there are things that are worth doing so. To protect your wife or your family. To stand for justice or freedom. In defense for your nation. To align yourself with others who are being persecuted so that you might shoulder the burden a bit.
 - c. But what is strange is how we might suffer our job loss over something other than the name of Jesus. We will stand for so many things to the point of suffering. But not for the name. This cannot be.
 - 2. In vss 5-7 we have some more characters introduced:
 - a. The "Council" (v. 15) before which soldiers brought Peter and John the next day was the Sanhedrin, which was the senate and supreme court of Israel. It consisted of the high priest, who served as its presiding officer, and 70 other men. Its aristocratic members, the majority, were Sadducees, and its lay leaders were Pharisees. Most of the experts in the Jewish law were Pharisees who were also nationalistic, but the Sadducees supported Rome. The Sadducees were more conservative, though rationalistic theologically, and the Pharisees were more liberal since they accepted oral traditions as authoritative in addition to the Old Testament.
 - b. The Sanhedrin normally held its meetings, including the one described in this chapter, in a hall adjoining the southwest part of the temple courtyard, the Chamber of Hewn Stone. This was behind the altar where the sacrifices would be made. "Rulers" were priests who would serve in various times of the year in the temple. "elders" were tribal and influential family heads of the

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people, and "scribes" were teachers of the law. Individuals from these three groups made up this body. The rulers and elders were mainly Sadducees while most of the scribes were Pharisees.

- c. Annas, whom Luke called the high priest here (v. 6), was technically not the high priest at this time. He had served as high priest from A.D. 6 to 15, but since A.D. 18 his son-in-law Caiaphas had been the high priest. However, Annas continued to exert great influence. During this time former high priests kept their titles and membership in the Sanhedrin.
3. So the Apostles now stand to give an answer to the Council and you need to grasp how difficult this would be for them.
 - a. These are the people who were connected to the death of Jesus Christ. They set up false testimony. They were the final say for religious issues in Jerusalem. This is all going on behind the scenes from the people.
 - b. There is an interesting thing about stress and attacks. They tend to strip away any false qualities that people project about themselves. Remember Peter with the servant girl prior to crucifixion.
 - c. It is here that we see the change that has occurred in Peter. Why? Two basic reasons:
 - (1) First, because he had seen the risen Jesus. Jesus was victorious. Jesus kept His promise.
 - (2) Second, he now had the Holy Spirit dwelling in him and was giving him strength. But also in vs 8 we see that the Holy Spirit divinely empowers him.
 - d. So we have fishermen standing before the elite of the elite and they stand firm. No idea what is going to happen to them, but they stand firm. They are committed to their message and their purpose. They are committed to the Name.
4. The question in vs 7 centers around "the Name." It was the Name of Jesus that the healing occurred and it is the Name of Jesus that Peter and John were preaching to the people to repent and return to the promised Savior.
5. We will see next week that at the end of this time of questioning there are threats but no actual violence. Rather this is merely the birth pangs of a growing hatred and resistance to the message of Jesus Christ.

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6. So through this question in vs 7 they open up the opportunity to preach. And so preach is what they do.
- C. No other name in which to believe (4).
 1. We go backward a bit in this story to see what was the effect of them proclaiming the name of Jesus. A massive number of Jews repent—5,000 men.
 2. The ripple effect of this would be huge. These men will bring this message back to their homes and their wives and children.
 3. This is what is behind the arrest. The leadership is threatened here because they have a whole different message. The Sadducee's is:
 - a. Believe us.
 - b. This man Jesus died because he was a false prophet and false messiah.
 - c. This man Jesus is still dead. People just stole his body, that is all.
 - d. We are the keepers of the truth. We know what is right. You follow us and don't you dare follow Jesus.
 4. And Peter is saying the exact opposite.
 - a. He isn't saying, "follow me." He is saying follow Jesus. Everything is about Jesus.
 - b. He and the others are there only because they come in the name of Jesus. In His authority and with His message.
 - c. They perform miracles in His name and these miracles are just like what everyone saw or heard about with Jesus Himself.
 - d. And the people believed this message. And to believe the message is to believe in the name of Jesus.
 - (1) Think back to what has already be proclaimed in Acts 2 and 3. Think about the many passages that Peter alone has shown them from the Old Testament that spoke of Jesus being the promised Messiah.
 - (2) Think about the hard words said to them about their responsibility and guilt before God. The call to repent. The call to be baptized in the name of Jesus. To become followers of Jesus.

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- (3) There was no other name to proclaim. There was no other option given to them. It was believe in the name of Jesus or don't. And the result was that thousands now believed in the Name.
- 5. This takes us back to the questioning by the Council in vss 5-7. They need to know by whose authority these men are acting this way. By whose authority or name do they think they can create such a ruckus on these most holy of grounds, the temple?
- D. No other name to find salvation (8-12)
 - 1. Peter again is the spokesman and through the power of the Spirit he now addresses this group of powerful men.
 - a. Notice the use of "filled". It is the term that speaks to the unique empowerment by the Spirit upon a person.
 - b. But what we see here is something Jesus promised to the disciples in Luke 21:12-15. Jesus promised it was good for Him to go back to heaven because then the Holy Spirit would be sent by Him. Here we see that working itself out.
 - c. But also notice that he is not disrespectful or improperly harsh or arrogant in speech. He addresses them with respect but that respect will not prevent him from speaking honestly.
 - 2. Vss 9-10.
 - a. Note the wording. He points out bluntly that the problem all centers around the good deed of healing a man who desperately needed it.
 - (1) This is how unbelief works. You have a man healed from a lifetime of affliction. Response, arrest the people responsible.
 - (2) Jesus heals people and effortlessly casts out demons Response, He does this by the power of Satan.
 - (3) Get this through your mind and it will free you. Speaking the truth will ultimately lead to some sort of rejection by those who do not believe. It doesn't matter how many good things you say or how carefully you say anything, ultimately the name of Jesus divides.

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- b. Note a play on words in vs 9 and vs 12. The term “healed” or “made well” is the Greek term *sodzo* that we often translate as “saved.” This sets things up for vs 12 where the same term is used but in the eternal sense.
- c. So now we can look at what he says by emphasizing key details:
 - (1) They ask by which name Peter and John were operating under and so he answers it. It is the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene.
 - (a) This wording removes any doubt or question for all who are there. He doesn’t get vague, he gets blunt, short and clear.
 - (b) Why? Well, if he is going to suffer and wants everyone involved to know exactly what it is for which he is being punished. No wiggle room.
 - (c) He is Jesus. Born in Nazareth. But who is the promised “Christ” or Messiah.”
 - (2) This Jesus, you, the spiritual leaders, of Israel decided to crucify.
 - (3) And this Jesus God raised from the dead.
 - (4) This is the reason the man was healed. Not because of us but because of the risen Jesus.
 - (5) In vs 11 he then quotes a well-known passage from Psalm 118 that was known to speak of the Messiah. But in doing so he calls the Sanhedrin something. . . . “Builders.”
 - (a) Consider what is happening. The Sanhedrin would have a high view of themselves. They are the spiritual elite. And here is a fisherman quoting the bible to them. And in doing so he implicates them.
 - (b) They are the builders. A builder is an expert at building. A builder recognizes the structure and importance of building materials. Builders of that day would know what is the most important part of the building, the corner stone.
 - (c) As builders they should have recognized Jesus as the critical and most important, but instead they

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rejected Him. Picture that. They looked at Jesus closely. They had examined Him and deemed that He was not worthy to be used as the corner stone.

3. Here we come to vs 12.

- a. They are focusing on the healing of this lame man. He has been delivered, or saved, from the crippling effects that dominated his life. And Peter turns it to a different salvation that is the real issue.
- b. Understand that Peter is actively putting his own life at risk here. He is a poor, uneducated fisherman standing before the wealthy and powerful. And he has essentially just called them fools and murderers.
- c. Salvation can only come through Jesus alone.
 - (1) Understand that this “salvation” is not only about personal salvation. It is the promise Peter gave to the people in his sermon that if the nation would repent and return then salvation would come to the nation. It is a massive declaration.
 - (2) This confronts their views of the Messiah and the nature of what is called the Messianic Kingdom, which was, in their view, already happening due to the Maccabean Revolution that took place between the Old Testament and New Testament.

III. Conclusion.

- A. This sermon is not deep and it is not difficult, but it is important. I speak to each of you where you are right now as individuals.
 - 1. The only question that matters in the end is what do you do with Jesus.
 - 2. For you who are Christians this means that there is only one thing that ultimately matters in your life and words. It is Jesus. He is to be the basis of your life and speech. You represent Him and Him alone. Nothing else can be higher.
 - 3. It means He is the only name you proclaim to a world that cannot save itself. You must believe this.
 - 4. It means that if you are to suffer it is because of the name of Jesus Christ.

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- a. *“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”* (1 Pet. 3:15-17)
 - b. There will come a day that you and I will face some level of persecution. I know this to be true because the bible says so. *“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* (2 Tim. 3:12)
 - c. This requires you and I to make decisions now, in the time of peace, about what is non-negotiable. What will you suffer for? What will you be known for?
 - d. My charge to you is simple. Make it only and always about Jesus.
5. It means you call people to believe in Jesus. You make no apologies about it. And that means you must believe it yourself.
- a. Remember what Peter said when Jesus asked what the disciples believed, *“Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”* (John 6:68-69)
 - b. This is not some sales pitch or recommendation that they ought to consider. The claims of Jesus Christ simply require an absolute acceptance or rejection.
6. Look for and be ready for opportunities to speak of Jesus. Sometimes there won’t be any but God is faithful to have His name made known. So ask and then be ready.
- B. Finally to those here who do not find their hope in Christ alone. You must realize that this is the Christian message.
1. Jesus is not a way. He is the only way to God and every other way is false.
 2. Jesus is not a truth among many. He is the source of truth and only in Him do you find truth.
 3. Jesus is not a way to life. He is the only way to life. A life where sin and rebellion are washed away. A life that is more alive than you can imagine.

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4. But it all comes by turning from your ways to Jesus alone.
- C. If you reject Jesus you must understand that there is nothing else out there. You can look, but you will find nothing in the end that will deal with your sin, the reality of death and the power of Satan.

Benediction

May our gracious Father in heaven cause us to be found in Christ, clothed on in His righteousness which comes through faith from the hand of God. May we know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as we become conformed to His death. Amen.

Community Group Questions

- **I challenged you all a few weeks ago to find your “one.” That person God has brought into your life to share the gospel. Discuss how this is going. If it is not going well, then as a group have an honest discussion as to why. What or where is the disconnect between the you and the gospel? Is Acts 4:12 true or not?**
- **How does safety and comfort help you to hide the gospel? Or do you think it helps you share it? Why or why not? Then how about the threat of suffering because of the gospel? How does that affect you in what you say?**