

Acts 4:1-22
CBBC
8/24/2025

Introduction—Preferences in the Gospel. Peter presented the Gospel to a sympathetic audience, then to an indifferent group, and then finally to a hostile group. By looking at this we are made aware of some serious truths about evangelism.

I. **The Crime**— (verses 1-4)

The church is starting to unfold. Think of it as a flag that is being unfurled, and its emblem is opening as it is caught by the wind. It is Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and coming again. And the call is to become His disciples. A man who had been crippled for decades had been miraculously healed by Peter, who did so in the name of Jesus Christ. He was only able to do so because Jesus had given him the power to do so. This floored everyone, except for the man who was healed.

Peter gives a speech, telling them that the power did not come from him; it came from Christ, whom Israel crucified, but Jesus still rose from the dead. It was not a surprising thing that Jesus was alive. This had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament, and in fact, Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 12 that the entire world would be blessed through the Jews. The call to the Jewish nation was to repent and turn away from their sins.

They are annoyed, disturbed even, that they were teaching the people first of all. Who did these people think they were? They were not the religious leaders of Israel. They were uneducated blue-collar workers who had been hanging around with a rebel. Peter and his people were also proclaiming Jesus' resurrection from the dead. That got under their saddle. Remember how much work they went to, to claim that Jesus had not

really risen from the dead? They bribed the guards to say that the disciples had stolen Christ's body under the noses of Roman soldiers.

Peter and John (possibly the formerly crippled man) were arrested and were going to be held overnight, as it was already later in the day. But in spite of that, there were many people who believed. Let's pause for a moment and consider what they believed. What was Peter saying? Jesus was the one who healed this man, crippled from birth. Jesus is alive and is going to return. Repent, turn to Him. So, another two thousand turn, not because of the healing itself, but because of what the healing confirmed.

Challenge and response (5-12) The religious leaders all gather the next day. This is a who's who. We have not met all of these people, but it is important for us to remember that Luke is writing a historical document, and thus, he is expecting details to be checked.

The question is asked, "By what means do you claim to have healed this man?" Notice that they are not contesting whether the man was healed; they want to know by what authority or by what power Peter healed them.

Peter responds, and the text tells us that he is filled with the Holy Spirit. This is where the Spirit works very specifically in Peter's mind as a fulfillment of Jesus' promise found over in **Luke 21:12-15, Luke 12:11-12**. God supernaturally worked in Peter so that what he said at that point was given to him by God. That does not mean that Peter was infallible or that everything he spoke was Scripture. We know how he was confronted by Paul later on. Right here and at that point, Peter is giving the answer that God gave him.

Peter knows he has an audience, so he is giving it everything. If you are asking how we were able to do this, we were able to do this because of Jesus, not just Jesus, but Jesus, the Messiah, from Nazareth, and just in case they didn't get the picture, he continues, the Jesus of Nazareth, that you crucified, but God raised Jesus from the dead. It is because of Jesus that this man is standing. The evidence is so powerful. Remember when we talked about his atrophied legs, and now they are strong?

He wants them to know two things, and again, he is talking to Israel, but this is hostile Israel. This is the part of Israel that is not devout, not curious, but hostile towards God. This Jesus, who was rejected, became the cornerstone. Psalm 118:22—Matthew 21:42, Luke 20:17, Mark 12:10.

And he also stated that there is salvation in no one, for there is no other name under heaven in which one could be saved. Salvation and being saved at this point were very near and dear. They are not abstract comments. What do they need to be saved from and why? They need to be saved from the consequences of killing the Messiah, and thus demonstrating their rejection of God. Who is the only one who can save them from the consequences of their actions? Jesus Himself.

The command and response— 4:13-22 They were astonished at Peter and the men. They were uneducated, and they were bold. I don't know if the religious leaders knew Peter well, but I've run into Peter before. I've seen him on the plant floor, in meetings, and even with other pastors. They have to be the head man. They have to be the ones to call the shots. Their opinion is the most important. When push comes to shove, though, they are cowards. They aren't there when you need them. Peter is different now. Is he perfect? No. But because of working in the Holy Spirit in his life, and

his submission to the Spirit, he said what needed to be said, making some public accusations.

The religious leaders were shocked at what was going on, and they recognized them as being Jesus' disciples. They couldn't say anything in response. Who was standing next to them? The crippled man. Consider that they had all probably passed them over and over. Maybe some of them gave alms to him. They couldn't argue with healed legs.

They gather together. They ask what to do with the apostles. They say that they have a notable sign, the healed man. So let's tell them not to talk about this at all. So they called Peter and John back in, telling them to no longer talk about Christ.

You would think that with all of the evidence they had that Jesus was alive, in spite of them, that they would repent. I want us to consider what Christ had already told them. First of all, rejection of Christ is always based on hate **John 15:18-25** summarizes it. The world always hates Jesus. It is a rejection of Him. Why do they reject Him? Because He reveals who they really are. We are the heroes of our stories. Jesus shows us that we are the villain, and not only the villain, but a pitiful villain. We are not antiheroes, we are spoiled children. They hate Jesus because they hate God as God presents Himself. We love our own conception of God, but we hate God. I'm really drilling down on this because this is the only explanation as to how you could have a lot of very intelligent men who understand that something supernatural has happened, and they understand it is divine, but they refuse to acknowledge what is staring them in the face. Sin makes us irrational. Sin leads us to reject the authority of a God that we know has every right to rule over us, and who wants to save us.

Peter and John don't even try to argue about the truthfulness of what has happened. Jesus had already told them what was going on in the hearts of the Sanhedrin. They were not going to debate what was obviously true. They basically make a statement by asking a question rhetorically. You guys tell me whether we should lie, like you want us to, or whether we should tell the truth about what we have seen and heard. It's basically a legal argument that is rooted in the Law. You were not to accept a charge or testimony unless you had two more witnesses. Through the entire Old Testament, it was understood that when God said or did something, you were to very clearly state that that was what was happening. What was the penalty for lying about what God said? It was death. To state this wasn't from Jesus was to lie about what God did. We have to say what we saw.

The Sanhedrin is left with threatening them more, but their hands are tied a bit because they have this 40-year-old man who has clearly been healed.

Nothing should ever outshine the Gospel. Whether it is an event or a discussion or an illustration, if the Gospel gets lost in the mix and we are more enamored with the special effects than Jesus, we are doing it wrong.

We need to define "salvation" in our conversations with unbelievers and even consider how we have been saved.

We need to understand that ultimately, our audience is always hostile to us because they are hostile to God.

We don't need to prove what's true, but we do need to clearly state what we know to be true. Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead. We are proclaiming historical truths.