

“THERE IS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE”

Acts 4:1–22

Key Verse: 4:12

“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.”

What do you think about “salvation”? Every religion claims its own version. Even the non-religious promote personal growth, self-actualization, and contributing to humanity’s well-being as a kind of “salvation.” The Bible describes real salvation as deliverance from sin and its consequences, being restored in a right relationship with God. God’s salvation is a theme in Acts, and God wants to bring it to the ends of the earth.¹ Today we want to learn more of what God’s salvation really is, why Jesus is the only source of salvation, and what it means to believe in his name. May God speak to each of us.

In the name of Jesus, Peter has just healed a man (3:1–10). And he has taken this opportunity to share the gospel with the people of Jerusalem in his “second sermon” (3:11–26). Through Peter’s words we learned the meaning of repentance. It’s so simple: to realize we are wrong, turn back to God, and put our trust in Jesus. We also saw how Peter gave his message to these people. Despite the evil they’d done, he pleaded with them. Peter had hope that, if they repented and turned to Jesus, they could inherit the blessings God had wanted to give his people throughout history. Peter could see the vision of God that, through their repentance, their offspring could be a source of blessing to all the families of the earth. Peter’s message was convicting and heart-moving. Until now, the outcome of his gospel ministry was positive. But this time, as we will see often in Acts, the response is mixed. Many repent and believe. But there is also strong opposition.² But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, again proclaims who Jesus is. Today’s passage shows us that since Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, everything has changed. Those holding on to their positions, traditions and buildings in the old religious establishment have become irrelevant. Now, through the name of Jesus, God is about to bring his salvation to all peoples on earth (1:8).

¹ 2:21,40,47; 4:12; 5:31; 7:25; 11:14; 13:23,26,47; 15:1,11; 16:17,30–31; 28:28.

² For example, see 5:18; 6:12; 8:3; 9:2; 12:1–3; 16:19–24.

Look at verse 1 (ESV). Peter and John's teaching in the temple gets interrupted. The priests, captain of the temple and Sadducees "come upon them." It's a hostile move. It's the same word Luke used to describe what they did to Jesus while he was teaching the people in the temple (Luke 20:1). Look at verse 2. This is especially the point of view of the Sadducees. Being the rich landowners and top class people of the time, they don't like what's happening through the followers of Jesus. *They* want to be in control of everything. They are "greatly annoyed" that these Galilean nobodies are teaching the people. They also are greatly annoyed by their "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." They love the world so much, they are just not interested in a resurrection. They totally disrespect Peter and his message and make a move to shut him up. Look at verse 3. The word "arrested" is literally "seized" or "laid hands on"; it's the same thing they did to Jesus (Luke 22:54). Peter and John get arrested and jailed overnight for speaking the truth. It's disturbing, but not surprising.

Despite this, Luke records an important detail. Read verse 4. Peter's message of repentance helps two thousand more people repent and believe in Jesus and commit to the new Christian fellowship. It tells us that nobody can stop the work of the Holy Spirit. Despite any opposition we face today, we too need to just keep giving people the gospel, and depend on the Holy Spirit to work.

Look at verses 5–6. These are the top leaders in Israel. This new Christian movement has gotten their attention, with 5,000 men in Jerusalem now eagerly committed to it. The assembly of top leaders, the Sanhedrin Council, is run by the high priest's family. This family has been in power for nearly 30 years. Humanly, they command the people's respect. Look at verse 7. Actually, as we see in verses 13-14, the man who was healed is standing beside Peter and John. He may have gotten arrested along with them, as he was clinging to them so tightly (3:11a). Bringing them all in after a night in jail and having them "set in their midst" is a strong intimidation tactic. These aristocratic leaders then ask, with the most condescending tone, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" They're confident that their wealthy appearance, clever use of their voice, and group solidarity will cause these Galilean fishermen to melt.

What happens? Look at verses 8–9. In contrast to them, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, begins respectfully. But his words call into question this whole situation. Why are they arrested and being examined for a good deed done to a crippled man? They should be thanked instead of being treated like this. If they're being asked by what means the healing happened, Peter is happy to talk about that. Look at verse 10. "...let it be known to you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is

standing before you well.” In other words, Jesus, the one they killed and tried to get rid of, is alive. And this risen Jesus Christ of Nazareth is still working on earth, by the power of his name, to heal people. By the name of Jesus this crippled man is well, sound, fully restored. It’s what our Lord Jesus still wants to do for sick and wounded people today. And he can still do it, by the power of his name, if we repent and believe.

Peter then says something else to these religious leaders. Read verse 11. “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.” The one they despised so much is the very one exalted by God as the most important person in God’s building, God’s temple. In his famous parable of the tenants, Jesus quoted this same verse of prophecy to these same people.³ The prophecy is saying that even those in positions of religious leadership will find themselves crushed and cut off if they refuse to listen to the word of God about Jesus. No one, no matter how powerful, can stop God’s work of salvation through “the rejected stone.” Today, when we are rejected by men but come to Jesus our Lord, the living stone, we too become unstoppable, like living stones in a spiritual house (1 Pet.2:4–5).

Here, Peter keeps all the focus on Jesus. Read verse 12. “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.” These men in the high priest’s family had big names: Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander. Currently they have a monopoly on temple worship in Jerusalem. They are in charge of the very impressive temple complex and automatically have many people coming there for the annual feasts. Their arrogance and narrow-minded hostility to the gospel would end up driving many believers out of the city. But they could not snuff out the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and the world salvation work God would accomplish through him. Insecure people today resort to name-dropping to make themselves seem more legitimate, mentioning famous people or schools they know. But we don’t need any other name. Philippians 2:9–11 says, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Just before his arrest, Jesus told his disciples, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Why is Jesus still the only way of salvation? It’s because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom.3:23). Due to our sins, there’s no way out of being under the wrath of God. No amount of good works, or human effort and willpower to keep religious rules, can save us. But God, in his righteousness, justifies sinners by his grace

³ Cf. Luke 20:9–18; Ps.118:22. Years later, Apostle Peter again quotes this verse in his first epistle (1 Pet.2:6–7). Apostle Paul also calls Jesus “the chief cornerstone” (Eph.2:20).

as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God put him forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith (Rom.3:24–25a). This salvation is deeper than just escaping bad situations; it's the salvation of our souls. We may suffer and lose many things because of it. But in this salvation from God we experience forgiveness, peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit, adoption into God's family, a changed life, a living hope in heaven, real joy, a sense of mission, and faith in God's victory. There's nothing better. And, there's no other way to get right with God, no other way to enter his kingdom. As Joel's prophecy says, "...everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (2:21). God provides salvation in the name of Jesus to any person, any time, anywhere. His salvation is available to anyone humble enough to accept it.

And what's the nature of this salvation? The lame man who was healed is a picture of it. He had been so sick, so weak, all he could do was beg and use people. But now he's "walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts 3:8b). He's now strong and in perfect health. And he's not critical; he's *grateful*. He's inspiring many people to turn back to Jesus in faith. The man's change shows us that salvation is not mere intellectual assent to some dogma. Salvation is deep inner healing, in every possible way. Only the grace of Jesus heals like that. This salvation happens not through our ability or effort, but through the power of Jesus' name. We all desperately need this salvation.

It may not be religious, but we're all looking for some kind of salvation. Some try meditation or self-help. Some seek self-fulfillment through personal growth, career achievements or relationships. Some join a community. Some become activists for justice and equity. Some pursue physical health and wellness, or safety and security through financial stability. Some try to leave a legacy. But none of these ways of "salvation" is real. None of it meets the need of our soul. David wrote, "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation" (Ps.62:1). As a popular song today says, "Honestly, we just need Jesus."⁴ God gives our souls his salvation in the name of Jesus. The Bible says the gospel of Jesus "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom.1:16). His salvation gives us "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" and guards our hearts and minds in this chaotic, crazy world (Phil.4:7). Ultimately, his salvation brings us back to our eternal home (2 Cor.5:1).

The Sanhedrin is astonished by Peter and John's boldness. These two are uneducated, common men. But even the religious leaders recognize that they had been with Jesus. And the healed man standing there leaves the leaders with nothing to say. They command the group to leave the council and confer with one another. The best

⁴ Woods, Terrian. *Honestly, We Just Need Jesus*. Published by Maison, de Emack (ASCAP), 2023. Accessed June 29, 2024.

they can come up with is to charge them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (13–18). But Peter and John say they have to listen to God. With some further threats, the leaders have to let them go for now, because the people are still so happy about the man's healing (19–22).

Let's read verse 12 again. We live in such dark and confusing times. May God help us experience the real salvation that's only in Jesus, and may he use us to bring the saving power of Jesus' name to the sick and hurting people all around us.