

**THE ONLY SALVATION****Acts 4**

**Intro:** You will not get to London by going to Los Angeles. You CAN get to London by going to LA, but it's definitely the slow way to go.

Kathy and I were coming home from Menards in Ontario on Wednesday. Not noticing the total traffic standstill on Rt. 30 East we turned onto the onramp, which, as you know is one way. As soon as I did we saw the East Bound lanes were not moving at all. We only had one way to go, or so we thought. The people behind me turned and went back up the ramp to Lexington-Springmill Road. We decided to tough it out. Twenty minutes later we had just gone a few feet. After waiting another 10 minutes I noticed a gravel drive across to the west bound lanes and I maneuvered my way from the right lane, through the left lane and some irritated drivers and made my getaway on Rt. 30 West. We came home by driving through a busy Mansfield right as everyone was getting off work. It was the slow way to go.

Alcatraz Island was a federal prison in the middle of the cold San Francisco Bay. It is quite famous for the fact that the only way to it was by boat or helicopter and allegedly, there were no escapes from it in the 31 years it was in use. Technically you could swim to or from it, but it would have been a dangerous and likely fatal way to go.

Our renovation of our master bathroom at home has gone without a hitch until this past Thursday when our contractor, Rod, and I discovered that the bathtub we purchased for it would not fit through the door into the bedroom and certainly not through the bathroom door which was even narrower. You cannot imagine how that ruined my evening. But both Rod and Joel said separately to me "There will be a way." Even if we had to take a bay window out, there would be a way. We did find a way. Well, actually Joel found a way by removing part of the frame of the bedroom door and completely removing the frame of the bathroom door. There was a way. But it was no picnic.

BUT, there is only one way to salvation and to eternal life. There is only one way. There are no alternate routes. You can't swim there. You can't find another route. You can't take the slow route. You can't brave work traffic. You can't even take a helicopter. There is only one way to the ONLY salvation, and that is by the name of Jesus. Specifically . . . *there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Acts 4:12

We are in the midst of a three week study of overcoming in an overwhelming age and the only way to be able to do that is to know that the only way is through Jesus Christ – is he is the ONLY salvation. A good way to know how to proceed in this is to observe and learn from the early Church, so we looked at Acts 3 last week, and this week we move on to Acts 4. As I did last week, I will read portions of the chapter and comment on them to help us learn and grow.

Right away, as we look at the opening of the chapter we see that . . .

**A SERMON INTERRUPTION RESULTS IN A SALVATION ERUPTION**

- Look at verses 1-4 (Read Acts 4:1-4)
- As we had closed out Chapter 3 last week, Peter was in the midst of a sermon that transpired from a teachable moment that was a product of a miraculous healing of a 40 year old man who had been born lame. Here the sermon is apparently cut short by the arrival of the authorities. It's like when there is an altercation down town and those standing around hear the sirens coming and blue lights flashing as the police arrive. Only when the cops arrive for an altercation, they have good reason. That was not the case as these grumpy religious leaders, known as the Sanhedrin, arrived. This ruling religious body was dominated by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection or in miracles of any kind, for that matter. For that reason their reaction was swift and strong against Peter and John who were teaching the Risen Lord right after they had healed someone in the name of that same Risen Lord. They thought they'd gotten rid of Jesus and now here his followers were making trouble like he's never left. And the truth is, he was still present in the form of the Holy Spirit. But they only knew they wanted to shut down the opposition.
- So even though Peter's sermon was interrupted by the arrival of the authorities, it's interesting that even though the sermon was cut short, and the speakers were arrested and hauled away, there was still such a harvest of converts. They arrested them, put them in custody overnight and still people were saved. One

commentator points out quite accurately that the new believers came in with their eyes open to the risk involved and they still were converted which shows the power of Peter's simple message.

- The authorities were that only in name when they came against the truth of the Holy Spirit. FB Meyer writes, *“How weak Man shows himself when he sets himself against God! All that they could do was to shut the apostles up; but they could not bind or imprison the living spirit or the speech of one saved soul to another, and so the numbers of the disciples kept mounting up.”*
- Thousands were added to the thousands of new Christ Followers from the Day of Pentecost. Thousands! Threat of arrest doesn't keep the truth at bay. When we speak the truth – the Holy Spirit does the rest. It was true for Peter and John and it will be true for us, our converts are our best arguments.
- So the disciples and we as well must proclaim . . .

### **SALVATION IS ONLY IN THE NAME OF JESUS**

- Let's move on to verses 5-12 (Read Acts 4:5-12)
- The apostles were kept overnight because nighttime trials were illegal. And, yes, you are correct, Jesus was illegally tried in the middle of the night – by these very same people. They tried to do things by the book this time. Commentator Albert Winn puts it this way, *“Peter and John are ushered into the center of the room to face questioners on all sides of them. The question is phrased insultingly, as though to say: “By what sort of power and in what sort of name did you do this? Men like you!” Nowhere is the difference made by Pentecost more striking than in Peter's reply. A few months before, Peter had been afraid of the shadows of these men. Their servants had frightened him so that he denied the Master three times. But now, fully aware of what the same men might do to him, he flinches not at all. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he confesses his Lord and accuses his enemies to their faces.”*
- And Peter's response to their question isn't as much a defense statement as much as another sermon. “We're being accused a tried for helping a cripple man?! Well let me tell you, the last man you tried and executed was raised from the dead, and he is the one who healed this man. He is the one you rejected, but he is the only one in whom one can be saved and in who can be found eternal life. Salvation is only in the name of Jesus!
- The religious leaders were amazed! They had to notice that . . .

### **SALVATION BRINGS BOLDNESS**

- Look at verses 13-31. (Read Acts 4:13-31)
- *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”* Acts 4:19b. Here is a truth that seems largely forgotten in much of Christianity: With the Lord on my side, what can man do to me? I mean really, Church, what can anyone do?
- That was the attitude of Peter and John as they faced these arrogant accusers. These may have looked like unschooled ruffians (in the words of Larry Norman), but Peter's confident and intelligent reply to their question showed that they weren't just simple Galilean fisherman. And since these men had not spent their time in rabbinical schools, instead actually, they had spent their childhood on fishing boats, these leaders knew that the only explanation was that they had been with Jesus.
- That's the reputation I want. I want people to look at me and say that it's obvious that I have been with Jesus. Every once in a while, when I am visiting with my sister Beth she will exclaim in response to some expression I have on my face, or movement I make with “OH! THAT WAS JUST LIKE DADDY!” And I am proud and humbled at the same time, since to be likened in any way to my dad is high honor. But the highest honor is to hear, “It is obvious Keith has been with Jesus.”
- Albert Winn asks: *“Should this not be the aim of Christians today - to live so close to Christ that in moments of crisis even our enemies will be forced to the explanation that we have been with Jesus?”* Let's aspire to this ABC.
- Moving on, our text tells us, the authorities threatened them and released them because it was obvious that there was nothing they could do with these men. These were the same disciples, who just a few months before on the weekend between Good Friday and the Sunday morning Resurrection, would have been

driven into despair and hiding by such contact with authorities. Instead, what they do now is call for a joyous prayer meeting.

- Look at the prayer:
  - Whatever our enemies can do to us can only further God's purpose in Jesus Christ. That's how we meet threats, with faith.
  - The petition of the prayer is not for protection but for boldness. They didn't care how safe they were – they just wanted the Gospel to go out. One commentator says, "The best answer to threats is prayer. They scorned to ask for their own safety it was enough of Jesus was glorified.
  - They rejoice that in the same way that Jesus suffered, they can suffer too, and to this Winn asks: "*The idea that the church is to continue Jesus's mission as God's suffering servant is never a welcome thought. Does this have anything to do with the church's lack of power and a boldness?*" How true! We have gotten very wimpy here in America and we worry about losing our religious freedom. And don't get me wrong, I love the freedom we have, but do we need laws to ensure our salvation? NO WAY! Salvation is only through Jesus Christ.
  - So the prayer is joyous. Just look at the exuberance of the life of God! We cannot speak of anything but Jesus. I think it was F. B. Meyer who wrote, "When once we have got the real thing, we cannot and dare not be still, we must speak."
- And notice, after the prayer the Holy Spirit fell again. Like on Pentecost. I'm out of time for this morning, but let me just say, this can happen now! This did not stop then. The Holy Spirit is still available to fall on God's obedient children! Are we ready for that ABC?!
- We need to finish . . .

#### **SALVATION ENGENDERS SHARING**

- Look at the final verses quickly with me. (Read Acts 4:32-37)
- The early church took care of one another. Winn says "*In sum, the material sharing of goods was simply a natural outward consequence of a deep inner sharing in the Holy Spirit. He goes on to say "The economic order has changed many times since the first century, but we may still ask ourselves if Christian fellowship is real when it does not affect the things we possess?"*
- F. B. Meyer says "*The spirit of God is the source of generous and liberal giving. When the church is filled with the Holy Spirit her pockets will be easily empty before his gracious, falling presence.*"
- We are good at this ABC. We really help one another a lot! We also help people we don't know at all. We don't know them from Adam and yet we reach out in various ways to assist and alleviate need. BUT we must not rest on our laurels. The temptation is to look at hands out and growl "Get a job!" That is too often the narrative we hear in the media. Let's not fall into that trap. Let's not be naïve either, but let's always err on the side of mercy. Let's continue to be generous. Jesus gave everything to be the ONLY salvation. Let's be willing to do the same.

We will finish this series next week as we cover most, but not all of Acts 5. Amen.