

Acts 4: 1-22. There is Power in the Name of Jesus! 22nd June 2025

Lord may we be inspired by the power of your word and through your Holy Spirit this day. Amen.

There is power in the name of Jesus. At his name the demons flee. At his name captives are freed. We have called on the name of Jesus and we are saved. We declare in the name of Jesus, we shall stand. At his name God's enemies are crushed beneath our feet. For there is no other name that is higher than Jesus!! These are the words of a Noel Richards song from 1989! I often think in the form of songs and hymns!

The passage today should excite and challenge us to be bold in the name of Jesus. To know of our salvation in him and to have courage and confidence to speak in his name empowered by the Holy Spirit, to pray for miracles, to expect persecution and to see the Church grow.

In Acts 3 we read that Peter and John had healed a lame beggar. Many had no doubt come running to see what had happened and so Peter took the opportunity to preach the gospel – proclaiming Jesus and teaching of the resurrection of the dead. Naturally the priests and especially the Sadducees were not too happy about this – they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They had also not long ago thought they had put an end to Jesus when they sent him to be crucified but now it seemed there was a new following, as disciples taught in his name – and they didn't have just a few followers – about 5000 added just that afternoon! Peter had Jesus' authority as he spoke, and many chose to believe the gospel message.

What were the religious leaders to do?? Probably under the pretext of a breach of the peace they seized Peter and John and because it was evening, they put them in jail. The next day they were brought before the Sanhedrin – interestingly Annas and Caiaphas were there – both who were involved with getting rid of Jesus and it must have seemed like here he was standing before them again. It's almost a comical scene as we picture it unfolding.

The question put to Peter and John in relation to the healing of the cripple was; *'By what power or what name did you do this?'* While technically the Apostles were there to defend themselves, Peter goes over to the attack and

takes the opportunity to preach to his judges. A bit of a different Peter to the one who had denied Jesus 3 times. He certainly does not deny Jesus now. Now he is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and he does not seem in the least bit scared of what may happen to him. In fact, he even possibly has a tone of indignation as he says from verse 8;

‘Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this... It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no-one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.’

No amount of temple sacrifices or good works will save you. Just Jesus. What the temple symbolised, Jesus actualised. And our bodies are now temples of the Holy Spirit as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6.

How bold Peter is, I wonder if he remembered that Jesus had predicted what the disciples were now encountering. In Mark 13 Jesus warns his disciples; *“you must stand on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues...Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”*

It certainly seems that Peter was given the words to say. In his response he quotes from Psalm 118 *‘the stone you builders rejected which has become the capstone’*, this is the same verse Jesus had quoted about himself that we read in Mark 12 and Luke 20 when he also was answering a question from the Chief Priests about his authority. Jesus responded with the implication that those who reject the stone will be crushed. Peter points out the other side by presenting the stone as the source of salvation. Peter moves from the healing of the cripple to what it signifies – salvation. Not just physical healings are possible in Jesus name but even more importantly spiritual healing from sin and deliverance from coming judgement. Jesus is the Messiah – the only one salvation is found in. Jesus has said this himself in John 14 when he says “I

am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”

The Council seem to be gobsmacked by Peters’ response to them, and they don’t know what to do. They are astonished at the disciples’ courage and the fact they were ‘*unschooled*’, but they note that these men had ‘*been with Jesus*’ whose teaching authority they had also marvelled at. The Sanhedrin were supposed to have the authority over religious matters in the nation, but their authority did not seem to compare to these laymen! They were perplexed and so they ask Peter and John to leave while they confer with one another.

It seems they could not come up with a real charge against them. The man who was over forty (this was seen as pretty old) and had been crippled since birth was obviously healed– he was in the court as a witness – and Peter and John claimed the healing was in the name of Jesus – whom God, the God of Abraham raised. It was not by Beelzebub or the devil as they had also accused Jesus of working under. Also, Peter and John had the crowds’ favour so it would not do the Sanhedrin any good to punish these men, but they had to stop them somehow. All they could come up with was warnings and threats to stop speaking in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John replied, verse 19 *“Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”* God’s name and authority was higher than men’s – what could the Sanhedrin come back with?! Peter and John were released.

There is power in the name of Jesus! This is a powerful story. To those who believed in his name there was salvation and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to do great things. For those who did not believe, like the Sadducees, the name of Jesus was a threat to their own position and to the status quo. Hence this Chapter of Acts sees the beginning of the persecution of the Church. As you read on in Acts you will find the stoning of Stephen in chapter 7, the first of the Christian martyrs.

Are we like Peter and John trusting in Jesus and the Holy Spirit, confident in the message of the gospel and compelled to tell it no matter what??

Persecution against Christians is growing here in Australia – it has been subtle, but it is getting stronger.

We no longer consider Australia a Christian country – are we ready for this increased persecution? Are we ready to go to court and stand before our accusers...this is already beginning to happen! Remember the man a couple of years ago who was sacked from a football club because he attended City on a Hill Anglican church and they were concerned about the church's views?

We need to be like Peter and take opportunities to speak with confidence about Jesus – it may not be politically correct but as Christians we believe that salvation is through Jesus.

I took a funeral last week and we had the popular reading from John 14 where he comforts his disciples before his death, saying he goes to prepare a place for them. I took the opportunity to speak of Jesus being the way, the truth and the life and that those who believe in him will have everlasting life. The family did not consider themselves 'religious', more that a church funeral was traditional for them. I pray some may have heard the truth of the gospel that day.

The people I find it hardest to share with are members of my own family and friends who do not believe. And yet in my love for them I should have a great desire to tell them of the relationship they can with Jesus, experiencing hope and abundant life now and for eternity.

As the persecution against the church increases, if we stand strong declaring the gospel of Jesus, I believe the Church will grow, like in Africa and Asia. I am hopeful for revitalisation here in Australia, apparently there is growth in young people coming to faith. I am encouraged with the appointment of the new Melbourne Archbishop who is gifted in church revitalisation and planting.

The courage of people like Peter and John has continued down the ages, I wonder if any of you have read *'The Little woman'* the story of Gladys Aylward a missionary in China from 1936? She told a story of 200 Christian students whom she watched getting beheaded for not recanting their faith. They

believed that the name of Jesus was higher than the name of Chairman Mao. What witnesses they were and what growth there is now in the Church in China. Last week I shared the story of two women in Iran who were imprisoned for sharing their faith. We pray for Christians in Iran today.

Peter and John were seen to be like Christ – that’s why the Sadducees were threatened. They performed miracles like Jesus, and they spoke with authority – how? Because they believed in the risen Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 14 that those who believe in him will do the work that he had been doing, in fact he said they would do even greater things than he because he was going to the Father. And they could ask for anything in his name. That is what Peter and John were doing. They were passionate followers of their risen leader and they were continuing his mission as Jesus had instructed them to.

Are we so passionate? Do we pray for miracles in his name? Miracles don’t always happen when and as we’d like, but they do still happen. We heard another amazing testimony in Alpha last week. A man who was basically dead due to drugs and alcohol was in a coma in hospital. They were about to turn off his machine when some Christians who had been visiting him in the street turn up and ask if they can pray for him. He is miraculously healed, physically and spiritually. He is a new creation and goes on compelled to tell the good news of Jesus.

Do we feel compelled to proclaim Jesus? Do people recognize us as being people who have “*spent time with Jesus*”? Do our lives show that we are Christians...Jesus says in John 13, that others will know we are Christians by our love. Would we stand up for the name of Jesus if we were called before the courts, believing that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say??

Let’s pray.

Jesus your name is higher than any other. May we boldly proclaim your name with authority in the power of the Holy Spirit, that many may hear the message of good news and come to believe and have hope in the resurrection. In your powerful name I pray. Amen.