

No Other Name

Scripture Text: Acts 4:1-12

Introduction

What are some traits of a faithful church? Does a faithful church have great attendance on Sunday morning? Put another way, can a church be small in number and yet faithful at the same time? Does a faithful church have lots of things going on? If there are many things a faithful church is doing, what exactly would those things be? Is a faithful church free of any trouble within or with others outside of the church? Well, surely being at peace with one another is good, but being a faithful follower of Christ is going to put you at odds with the world. I see the following things as marks of a faithful church.

- *Jesus Christ is the foundation of everything in the church*
- *Jesus Christ is the only way to God*
- *Jesus Christ is boldly declared to a lost and dying world*

The church is founded on Jesus Christ. He is the Bridegroom of the church. Jesus alone shed His blood to establish His church. Jesus is also proclaimed as not one of many ways to God, but as the *only way to God*. And, His church is on mission for God to tell the world about Jesus Christ. These are some things I see a faithful church doing.

The Church on Mission - A Healing and A Proclamation

We see the early church was on mission and we see some amazing things happened. In Acts chapter three, Peter and John were going to the temple at the hour of prayer. As they entered the temple, a man who was lame from birth laid at the gate and asked them for money. They turned to the lame man, who expected to receive something from them. Peter then responded to the man with the following famous words.

Acts 3:6 *But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"*

That was probably not what the lame man expected to hear or what he wanted to hear, but it was what he needed to hear. Peter then took the man by the right hand and raised him up, and he was healed. The man leapt up, walked, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. People saw him walking and praising God and recognized him as the one who was lame and had been asking for alms. This drew a crowd of people who were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to the man. Then Peter seized the opportunity and told the people what they needed to hear. He told them about Jesus, the Author of life, who God raised from the dead, and how the disciples witnessed this. Notice the importance of names in this passage.

Acts 3:16 *And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.*

It was *in the name of Jesus* the lame man was healed. Peter then proclaimed Jesus to the crowd and called them to repent and turn to Jesus. What happens when God's people are faithful to Him and He works miraculously through them? Some will be astounded and others will be annoyed. Whenever God is at work, some will not like it.

People Will Oppose the Work of God

My wife and I have served God and His church for many years. We have shared many joyful experiences during our ministry together. We have seen people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and we have seen believers grow in their faith in the Lord. God has truly blessed us and we are thankful He allows us to serve Him. We have also seen people, even in the church, oppose what God was doing. If you are serving God and trying to be faithful to Him, you should expect opposition. Not everyone likes God at work, because oftentimes, that means things will change. The disciples in the early church faithfully served God, ministered to people in need, and shared Jesus to lost people. That is a great thing, but it also landed some of them in jail. Look below.

Acts 4:1–3 *¹ And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.*

The priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John because they were greatly annoyed. They were irritated about what had happened. But, what happened? A lame man was healed. People were amazed. Peter and John told them about Jesus. People even believed the message and decided to follow Christ. That all sounds good, but not everyone liked it. The Sadducees were wealthy and powerful. They wanted to have peace with the Romans, to preserve the status quo, and protect their own interests. The Sadducees also did not believe in a resurrection and were upset with Peter's sermon that spoke of a resurrection. His sermon alarmed them: a resurrection, the Author of life, and a new Moses. These were revolutionary ideas. Thus, they believed this movement must not spread. It must be nipped in the bud. If God does something new, some people will hate it, especially if it upsets the status quo.

God's Word and God's Spirit Bring Growth

While some people did not like what the disciples were doing, others responded positively to the Gospel message. The church grew! Luke told us in the beginning of the letter that just after Jesus ascended into heaven there were about one hundred and twenty people in the church (Acts 1:15). Then after the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost, there were *added to the church* about three thousand believers (Acts 2:41). Now, in chapter four, we see another increase. Look at the following verse.

Acts 4:4 *...many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.*

The church was at one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus, and now in this passage there were about five thousand men alone, meaning that the total number of believers could have been well over ten thousand believers. What was the reason for this incredible growth? Clearly, God was doing something amazing. Clearly, the Holy Spirit was moving in an incredible way. What we see in the Bible is the incredible growth of the early church occurred in response to two main things that were empowered by the Holy Spirit: 1) the powerful preaching of the gospel message about Jesus, and 2) the “many wonders and signs” that God was doing through His disciples. When the church is faithful to God’s Word and to Him working through them, great things will happen. The Sadducees tried their best to stop the apostles, but they did not succeed. People were hearing and responding to the Gospel. The rulers raged, but it was in vain.

A word of caution, though! We should not become too fixated on church growth. In fact, we should be careful to not make an idol out of such things, wanting to see more people in the pews rather than more disciples for Jesus. We should not believe more people in the pews is a clear sign that things are going well and God is blessing the church. There are many churches that seem to be doing well, but are far from the truth of God’s Word and off the mission God has given to them. And, a church can faithfully proclaim the Word of God and faithfully be on mission for God, and never see the numerical growth we see in this passage. God is the One who gives the increase. We must remember that God does not call His church to success, or to a particularly size, but He does call each of us to be faithful to Him. A healthy church is one that faithfully proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, makes disciples of Christ, and cares for the needs of others.

Jesus is the Foundation of the Church

Now, we come to the crux of this passage. We come to the moment of truth for Peter and John. They have been caught red handed doing the work of God and those in power, humanly speaking, were angry about it. Peter and John were brought before a council to answer for the crime of healing a man and proclaiming Christ and the resurrection. The Council asked Peter and John one simple question.

Acts 4:7 *And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”*

What the Council meant by asking Peter that question was by what authority did he heal the lame man. How would you respond to that? Peter could have just answered that question and moved on. He could have just said that Jesus commissioned him and it was under the authority of Christ the man was healed. But, Peter did more than that. Here was a wonderful opportunity, albeit a dangerous one, to proclaim not only the power that healed the man, but the very message *we all need to hear*.

Acts 4:8-10 ⁸ *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of 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.

With spirit-filled boldness, Peter answer the council's question. This is probably a fulfillment of what Jesus warned His disciples in Luke 12:11–12: "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." Indeed, the Holy Spirit was speaking through Peter in this moment, reminding the council that Jesus was crucified (*by them*), raised from the dead (*by God*), and the man was miraculously healed (*by Jesus' name*). But, Peter did not stop there. He went further to declare *their need for Jesus*.

Acts 4:11 *This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.*

The cornerstone is the critical stone in the corner of the foundation that ensures that a stone building is square and stable. This was proof from Scripture (Psalm 118:22) that established the guilt of the Sanhedrin. They were the "builders", the leaders of the nation, who rejected the very Rock upon which God built His people. Jesus is the critical stone upon which the whole church is built. If Christ is removed, the whole structure falls. If He is rejected, people have no place in what God is building. Therefore, Jesus is *essential* for the health of the church. A church that is not founded on Christ, whose existence is not based on Jesus, is quiet frankly not a church. It is something else.

Jesus is the Only Way to Heaven

But wait, there is more! Peter then spoke of how essential Jesus is for our *salvation*. Do you need salvation? Some people do not believe that. Some people do not think they need salvation. Do you really believe you need to be saved? Scripture declares no one is good or seeks God (Romans 3:10-12). All have sinned (Romans 3:23, 5:8-10). The result of sin is death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). But thanks be to God, He has provided a Way, and His name is Jesus Christ. Look at the following verse.

Acts 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.*

There is salvation! This presumes we need a Savior. In fact the end of the verse clearly says, "we must be saved". It is a necessity for you to be saved from your sin. You are a great sinner. You are bound for hell. You have broken God's law and are separated from Him. But there is hope. There is a name above all names. There is a name that provides salvation. There is a Savior who is greater than your sin. His name is Jesus Christ. The Law of God cannot condemn you more than the grace of God can save you. Peter's statement that there was salvation in *no other name* was an implicit invitation to the Sanhedrin to place their faith in Christ. Just as Jesus' name brought physical healing to the lame man's body (Acts 3:1–10), it is Jesus' powerful name, and His name alone,

that brings spiritual healing and eternal salvation to all who call upon Him. Jesus is the only way by which a person can be saved. Period! Look at the following.

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

There is no other way to heaven. There is no other name by which we *must* be saved, and we must be saved in order to escape eternal damnation and to enter eternal life. You cannot save yourself. You cannot do enough good things or be good enough to earn your salvation. It is by Jesus alone! There is no other way. Peter was bold in his response to the Jewish Council, and he had come full circle. The Council of elders asked Peter for the name in whom his authority rested. He answered their question, and so much more. The Council had rejected the One who bore this powerful name. Would they continue to reject the One, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, their Messiah and their Savior, whom God had placed as the cornerstone of His people? Would they reject the only name under heaven in which they would find their own salvation and have a right relationship with God? The final verdict rested in their own decision. It was they who were really on trial. What would be their verdict?

Conclusion

In closing, what is your verdict? Is Jesus your personal Savior and Lord? Have you trusted in Him, and Him alone, to declare you right with God? Is Jesus the foundation upon which you stand? Is Jesus the cornerstone, upon whom everything else stands, or is He just one stone among many? Put another way, if you were brought before a court and were on trial for the crime of following Jesus and ministering to others in His name, what would the verdict be? Would there be enough evidence to convict you of the crime of faithfully following Jesus? May it be so! May we be found faithful in following Jesus, proclaiming Him and only Him as the means for salvation, and resting upon Him as the rock and cornerstone of His church. This is good news! Thanks be to God! Amen!