

010 - Acts 4:1-12 The Stone You Rejected

Scripture Reading: Psalm 118:22-29

Confession of Sin: from Psalm 118

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.

The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

Sermon: The Stone You Rejected Acts 4:1-12

Benediction: Psalm 118:29

Remember that early in His time with the disciples, the Lord Jesus had said to them:

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. (12) Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Then, after more than three years with them, He had repeated the same message, saying:

Luke 21:12-18 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. (13) But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. (14) Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; (15) for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. (16) You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. (17) And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. (18) But not a hair of your head shall be lost.

The Lord Jesus Christ had told His disciples that they would be persecuted, that He would help them know what to say, that they could rejoice in the midst of persecution, and that He would protect them.

Now that the apostles have healed the lame beggar, and have preached the truth about Jesus Christ boldly in the temple, they find that the persecution has begun.

I. The Preaching of the Truth About the Lord Jesus Christ Disturbs The Religious Establishment (1-3)

A. Christ commissioned the apostles to proclaim the truth about Him, and they do so! (1a)

1. they have been saying that the Lord Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead
2. they have been saying that these religious people are not saved by their religion, but that they need to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and turn away from their sins, that their sins may be wiped away
3. there is much more about the Lord that they said, this time and at other times, but these are the most important points

B. There is a religious establishment that is not based on preaching the truth about Christ (1b)

1. In this case, the church finds itself confronted by the Jewish religious establishment
2. In other cases, the church is confronted by the pagan religious establishment
3. When the church itself becomes a corrupt establishment, its preachers sometimes find themselves confronted by that establishment
4. Sometimes there are even those who claim to have no religion, because there is no god
5. In whatever religion, whether Judaism, paganism, corrupt Christianity, or even atheism, the establishment is not established on the preaching of the truth about Christ
6. It is present in the large, powerful centers of religion
 - the temple in Jerusalem
 - the temple of Artemis in Ephesus
 - the Hollywood movie industry
 - the universities and colleges

the mega churches
the large denomination structures
sometimes bishops, archbishops, cardinals, popes
sometimes boards, committees, conventions

7. It is present in the small, local centers of religion

the synagogues
the local churches
the local schools

C. Preaching the truth about Christ disturbs this religious establishment (2a)

They cannot stand someone outside their establishment preaching to the people (2a)

They cannot stand preaching the truth about Jesus Christ (2b)

preaching the approved version of Christ is allowed

but not the truth about Christ

in this case it is the resurrection

Acts 23:8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

D. This religious establishment takes initial steps to get rid of those who have disturbed them

II. Many Believe the Truth About Christ Anyway (verse 4)

A. The establishment is disturbed by this preaching, and takes the preachers into custody

B. But does that make sinners not believe their message?

C. People who care more about the opinions of men than the word of God will turn away from the preaching about Jesus Christ if the establishment is disturbed by it

D. But people who are regenerated on the inside by the Holy Spirit of God will believe the truth about Jesus Christ, regardless of what the religious establishment says

E. And so the number of men who trust in Jesus Christ grows to about five thousand, then fifty thousand, then five hundred thousand, then five million, and eventually to a "great multitude that no one can count, from every tribe"

III. The Religious Establishment Tries to Condemn Those Who Preach the Truth About Christ (verse 7)

A. Factions within the establishment unite against the preachers of Christ (5-6)

B. They try to condemn the preachers based on what they say

1. these leaders do this all the time

2. they tried this with the Lord Jesus several times, and He made them look foolish

3. finally, they did this in His trial, and found Him guilty of blasphemy

4. they are setting Peter and John up for this, also, probably using Deuteronomy 13

5. we see this all the time today

a. when well-known preachers are interviewed on TV, they invariably are asked if they think everyone but Christians will go to hell

b. bills are set before national legislatures all the time calling for penalties on Christians who insist on telling the whole message of the Bible, which accuses the people of the nation for their sins

c. Christian chaplains are told by their military leaders that they must not invoke the name of Jesus Christ when they pray at military ceremonies

d. I personally was asked by a church member "Are you a Calvinist?" Little did I know that he was conducting a trial. If I said, "yes" I was to be dismissed as a pastor. If I said, "no," I was to be tolerated. That question is full of controversy, and can't be answered well with "yes" or "no." But when I tried to explain, he told me that he just needed a yes or no answer.

C. APPLICATION: As this condemnation arrives at your doorstep personally, you will find that the condemnation may take on different forms in different contexts

1. they may be able to get the law enforcement authorities to kill or imprison you

2. they may be able to get the religious power structure to remove you from the ministry or the membership
 - a. in that day, the Pharisees threatened to kick Jesus' disciples out of the synagogue
 - b. in Luther's day, the Pope excommunicated him from the Roman Catholic church
 - c. in our day, professors and preachers get fired, and members are asked to leave
3. they may be able to ostracize you socially from friends or family

IV. Despite All of this Condemnation, the Holy Spirit Fills the Preachers of Christ to Preach (verse 8)

- A. They show the foolishness of their accusers (9)
- B. They preach the law of God (10a)
- C. They preach the death and resurrection of Christ (10b)
- D. They show how their message is true to the scriptures (11)
- E. They warn that there is no salvation other than in Jesus Christ (12)
 1. by salvation, they mean being saved from all that sin brings upon the sinner
 - a. the oppressing power of Satan upon you
 - b. the inner torture of a guilty conscience
 - c. the wrath of God coming upon you at the final judgment
 2. they say that there is no other name but Jesus of Nazareth by which we must be saved
- E. They preach the gospel, the good news, of salvation in Jesus Christ
 1. In the name of Jesus Christ, there is salvation from sin and all its consequences
 2. because in His death, He took the sins of sinners upon Himself, and died for them
 3. then God raised Him from the dead, showing that His death for sinners was an acceptable substitute for their own death
 4. now all who trust in the Name of Jesus Christ, repenting of their sins, are forgiven their sins, and saved from all the penalties for sin