

Salvation in none other

Acts 4:12

Introduction

The cure of the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in Jerusalem gave Peter and John the opportunity to preach the Gospel message, and urge repentance and turning to the Lord. At once there was a satanic counter-attack. The priests, temple-officers and Sadducees (wealthy aristocrats) who had put Jesus to death were furious that the disciples were preaching that He was alive, and performing miracles, and winning people over. The number of believers increased to 5000 men, and this was a very real threat to the Jewish leaders. They arrested the Apostles and put them in jail.

The next day Peter and John were brought to trial. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, and gave a very clear explanation. Again, he disclaimed any personal power. He said it was all the work of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. They had crucified Him, God had raised Him, and now He had made the cripple well.

Then Peter moved from the physical healing to spiritual healing, i.e. salvation. The physical cure was a picture of salvation which is offered to all in Christ. **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved** (Acts 4:12).

There are two strong negatives in this verse: “no one else” (οὐδενι), and “no other name” (οὐδε ονομα ετερον). Hence positive uniqueness of the name of Jesus. Because of His death and Resurrection and exaltation and authority, He is the one and only Saviour. No one else possesses that qualification. It is of utmost importance that we look at Him, consider Him, hear Him and respond to Him. This is still true after 2000 years. He is still unique, still the one and only Saviour. We must consider Him in all His urgent and imperious claims.

In our text there is much that is alien to men in religious matters nowadays. We expect a doctor to make a certain and confident assessment of our health. We expect a surveyor to make a precise and confident value of our house. We expect a teacher to teach with absolute certainty that two add two makes four. But we do not expect to hear a strong and confident statement about salvation. We prefer our own statements, a more diffident approach, hesitant, and certainly not dogmatic. Someone has said that one of the greatest needs today is a dogmatic pulpit; after all, we have a dogmatic Gospel in a dogmatic Bible.

We are not to be aggressive or bombastic, but with humility and grace, combined with certainty and unwillingness to compromise, be strong and confident about the essentials of the Gospel.

The uniqueness of Christ's salvation

Salvation presupposes the fact of sin and all that this entails. Men's greatest need is not that they be saved from fear, loneliness, the various threats to life and environment, or even themselves, but from sin. Men assert themselves against the will and glory of God. This affects every part of their personality, words, thoughts and deeds. They become marked by guilt, shame, curse, tyranny and penalty.

Here is the root cause of this world's condition, the cause of all going on in society, the meaninglessness of life, and the fact that we are totally cut off and separated from our maker God, with and for whom we were made to have fellowship. The grace of God deals with this fundamental and deepest problem of men. He sent His Son into the world. **You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins** (Matthew 1:21).

Salvation is often seen as something very narrow and negative. Some think it is just having sins forgiven, or an insurance policy to ensure a safe ticket to heaven when we die. That is only part of it, but it is much wider and more positive and glorious.

The Bible uses the three tenses. (1) We were saved, εσωθημεν, a once for all action in the past (Romans 8:24). (2) We are being saved, ο δε κυριος προσεριθη, (Acts 2:47, 1 Corinthians 1:18). (3) We shall be saved from wrath, σωθησομεθα διαυτου απο της οργης (Romans 5:9). Or, if it is easier to remember, we have been saved from the penalty of sin by His death on the Cross; we are being saved from the power of sin by His indwelling risen life; we shall be saved from the presence of sin by His coming again. In theological terms: justification, sanctification and glorification. Or in more homely terms: salvation begins with us as wandering sheep, it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd, who carries us into the fold, rejoices over us, preserves us in the fold throughout life, and then at last brings us to pastures of heaven, beside still waters of bliss, where we live forever in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

This salvation is entirely free. We do not deserve it and we cannot earn it. But it is ours when we are aware of our deep unworthiness, and humble ourselves and receive it as a free gift. This salvation is only in Christ. Only in His name. He said, **I am the way, the truth and the life** (John 14:6). **For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ** (1 Corinthians 3:11). **There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus** (1 Timothy 2:5). **He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life** (1 John 5:12). There is no other way, no other hope, and no other ground of trust. We can find salvation in no one else and nowhere else. We can search high and low, read every book, and consult anyone we wish. But Christ is the only Saviour.

Grounds for asserting the uniqueness of salvation in Christ

How can we be so dogmatic, so sure, so confident and so intolerant of any other option? We are not just being dogmatic, we are echoing and repeating the teaching of the New Testament. Those who reject this are, at the end of the day, not quarrelling with us but with the New Testament. The New Testament's answer is bound up with who Christ is, what He has done, what He is doing now, and what He is going to do. It is so important to be clear about this because of ignorance and confusion.

We also need to be clear about this because of trends at the moment in this country. We live in days of religious pluralism, which questions the uniqueness and finality of Christ. There are several causes. Post-war immigration policy produced an influx of people of other races and faiths, e.g. one million Moslems in the UK. The second largest Hindu community in the world outside India, after Durban, is in Leicester. Also the growth of Western modern cults, like the Christians Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

The development of modern theology has also had the effect of denying that Christ is the eternal Son of God, saying He was just a wonderful man, very open to God. C.f. "The Myth of God Incarnate", written in 1977 by seven theologians from Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham universities. Their views are like and comparable to those held by many other religious leaders.

There is a strong tendency to say that all religions are one; different paths up the same mountain, each with different insight into the truth, and that Christ was one of many who have contributed to our understanding. So we find multi-faith services in cathedrals and churches a regular feature in British life. Some missionary work is not to win converts to Christ, but to use medical and educational work to learn more from other religions, to help Moslems become better Moslems, and so on.

Too often we are told there is no finality in Christ, He has no exclusive claims, no uniqueness, and if we insist on it we are guilty of idolatry. Thus Christ is diminished, and the New Testament picture of Him is denied. In London, there is fear among open-air preachers that the proclamation of Christ's uniqueness will be hailed as "racist", and therefore they will be criminals under the public order act.

As those who know and love Christ and who accept the authority of the New Testament, we need to affirm very strongly the distinctiveness of our faith in the uniqueness of Christ. There is salvation in no other. Unlike all other religious leaders, Christ was no mere man. He is also God, the second member of the Trinity. He is the Eternal Son, sent by the Father into the world for men's salvation. God became flesh for our redemption. God was in Christ.

The Gospel is not man's opinion about God, but God's revelation to men. All other religions are about men working their way up to God. Christianity is about God coming down to men.

The work on the Cross was unique. Christ's death was not martyrdom or injustice. By it, atonement and satisfaction for sin was made. Justice was satisfied by the Son whom God, in His love, provided. According to other religions, man earns his salvation by what he does. But Christianity acknowledges that man cannot save himself, and his only hope is Christ's atonement for sin. That is the only grounds of salvation. Other religions preach self-reliance, merit self-salvation. Christianity tells men to despair of themselves – salvation can only be found through the death of another.

Christ's resurrection was unique. He rose in triumph on the third day, and is alive for evermore, mighty to save. The guilty conscience can find peace, we can be inwardly transformed and changed, and all things be made new. The founders of all other

religions are dead; they are no more than an historical memory. No one knows Mohammed; no one opens his or her heart to Buddha. But Christ can be known personally. We can have a relationship with Him, speak to Him, and have His power in our lives.

The New Testament is quite emphatic about the finality, uniqueness and conclusiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ. To repeat its teaching is not arrogance, it is not about thinking we are better than everyone else, but about simply bowing before and acknowledging the claims of the Lord Jesus and His Apostles. In no other person but Christ did God become man, live a human life on earth, die to bear the penalty of sins, raised from the dead, exalted to glory. There is no other Saviour. No one else is qualified to save. Hail Him, and Him alone, as Eternal, Lord, Saviour, Judge of all men.

One practical inference

Are you impatient with the theology and arguments? Do you not understand, because you are an ordinary simple person? Are you wondering what this text has to do with you? This text has much to say to all of us, even though we are not Hindu or Moslem. Very many ordinary people need to hear this text even though they know nothing of the religions of the world and are never likely to follow them.

On what are we depending for salvation, heaven, and acceptance by God? On ourselves? On our doing our best? On trying hard and being a good neighbour? On going to church? Salvation is only found in Christ, and no one and nothing else. Christ alone. God bars all other doors – good works, reformation, sincerity, and ceremonies. There is only one door and only one way.

We need that salvation as much as anyone else. Imperative we take steps to receive the Saviour. Salvation has to be received. If we want to be lost, we can carry on as we are. If we simply neglect to receive the gift of salvation, the result will be loss. **How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?** (Hebrews 2:3). Answer – we shall not escape. We must repent and have faith in Him alone for salvation.

Conclusion

Listen again to the text. **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved** (Acts 4:12). There has to be clear acknowledgement and acceptance. We must worship Him as the only Saviour and Hope of men.

Then there is an urgent need for evangelism. If there is no other hope, the Gospel message needs to be heard by everybody. Our service, prayers and giving must be to that end.

Finally, are you personally saved? Is He your hope? Is He your personal Saviour, Lord and Master? **Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other** (Isaiah 45:22).

