

## Acts 4:8-12

<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, <sup>9</sup>if we are being questioned today for a kind act that was done for the lame man, as to how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead! By him this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.

<sup>12</sup>“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

## By What Power?

### I.

He stood up straight and tall, squared up his shoulders, and took a deep, cleansing breath.

This was to be no kindergarten answer, not that there’s anything wrong with those—especially when you are *in* kindergarten.

Timidity was no longer an option. At times in the past he had been decidedly and embarrassingly timid. No longer.

Before select audiences he had even been able to be bold and powerful. That’s relatively easy when it’s friends and coworkers whom you know will all vehemently agree with you.

Maybe, just maybe the bold and powerful statements before select audiences had been to prepare his rhetoric for such a time as this. The time for timidity was long past. Kindergarten was over.

He launched.

One of those times of preparation had been long before. After asking the disciples what other people had to say about him, Jesus had asked: “But who do you say I am?” (Mark 8:29, EHV). Peter often served as the spokesman for the group. “Peter answered him, ‘You are the Christ’” (Mark 8:29, EHV).

It had all seemed so easy. They had been with Jesus for some time. They had seen things. Jesus had walked on the water. *Peter* had walked on the water by the power of Jesus when Jesus gave him permission. They had witnessed the feeding of thousands with just a picnic lunch. They had heard Jesus’ Bread of Life discourse. There had been healings. There had been powerful sermons. Yes, it was easy to confess: “You are the Christ.”

But then...Jesus had explained what that meant. “Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things; be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the experts in the law; be killed; and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31, EHV). Even after following him and listening to him and watching him for nearly three years, *that* did not comport with the disciples’ understanding of the Messiah.

“Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him” (Mark 8:32, EHV). It seemed that his answer, “You are the Christ,” had been a kindergarten answer. His understanding had been rather shallow of what the Christ, the Messiah, was coming to do.

To the one who had made such a bold, confident statement to his friends and coworkers, Jesus had to say: “Get behind me, Satan! You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men” (Mark 8:33, EHV). What a low blow to Peter’s ego.

Perhaps in some ways it had been downhill from there. In a flash of pseudo-bravado, Peter lashed out with his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane, but moments later he ran away. Speaking to a mere serving-girl in the courtyard of the High Priest he couldn't even admit to being acquainted with the One he had identified as the Christ when he had been around his friends.

Now? Now he was before the Sanhedrin—the ruling-class. It wasn't just a little serving-girl, from whom he had little to nothing to fear. The audience didn't consist only of friends and coworkers—it was a hostile crowd. Now was a time when one might *expect* timidity from one who had displayed his lack of courage in the past.

Instead, he launched.

## II.

His answer was given to a question asked by the Sanhedrin: “By what power or by what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:7, EHV). The question had come up because Peter and John had been speaking about Jesus. They had punctuated their teaching by healing a man who had been lame from birth. A man who had been a beggar at the gates of the temple had been running around and telling people about the men who had given him the ability to walk again. Because of the healed man, Peter and John had many opportunities to tell even more people about Jesus.

Their bold confession had seen them arrested. Now they were on trial. It was possible they would face death because they had insisted in speaking about this name of Jesus so boldly. What would they say?

Peter launched.

“If we are being questioned today for a kind act that was done for the lame man, as to how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead! By him this man stands before you healed” (Acts 4:9-10, EHV).

Timid little Peter, the man who had been afraid to acknowledge even knowing Jesus, on trial for his life, says this. Is he the accused? He sounds more like the judge.

## III.

What is it, really, that made Peter's confession so great? Was it Peter, himself? Was it his strong faith? Was it some devil-may-care attitude he now displayed? Was it some strength of character he had developed?

What made his confessions great—both the confession he made around friends and coworkers, and this more dangerous one at the Sanhedrin—was the One he was confessing. It is that Name that was the object of his confession that was *really* great.

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone” (Acts 4:11, EHV). The whole point of the faith of their fathers—the whole direction the religion of Judaism had been pointing this whole time—was Jesus.

What a perfect analogy Peter used: a cornerstone. A special cornerstone these days is just a place to put a time capsule, or a place to indicate when the building was constructed. Back in those days, however, the cornerstone was essential. Everything for the whole building keyed off the cornerstone.

The Psalm of the Day today was Psalm 118. Peter was directly quoting this Psalm. He identified Jesus himself as the One to whom the Psalmist had been pointing. *Jesus* was the cornerstone. They were rejecting him and *had* rejected him. Jesus has purchased and won

salvation for the whole world.

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, EHV). To reject Jesus and look to some other future Messiah who would live up to their own expectations was pure sophistry—a false argument that would deceive others. There is no other way to heaven. There is no other way to make yourself right with God. Don’t deceive yourself into thinking you can make your own way or choose for yourself. There is no other name under heaven.

“By what power?” the leaders had asked Peter. “By what name?” Here was the answer. By the name of Jesus. Only by his Name can anyone go to heaven. His death on the cross paid the penalty for everyone. By his name people are saved, and his name alone.

#### IV.

Peter’s confession was short and sweet and to the point. It was bold. It was a great confession. But only because of the One whom he was confessing.

Which Peter are *you*? It’s easy to be Joey Christian or Susy Christian in *here*—where everyone *expects* the answers to be those of a believer. In *here* it’s *easy* to say: “Jesus is the Christ.”

What about out *there*? Out there are people who love to make jokes about Christians. You have friends who are Jewish or Muslim or Buddhist, or who don’t believe in any God whatsoever. How hard is it to tell them that anyone who doesn’t believe in Jesus will be lost to hell? You might get into trouble for telling the Good News that Jesus died on the cross to save them from hell.

Are you prepared to give the answers? Have you progressed beyond kindergarten? Study up. Be prepared.

While we don’t want to continue using kindergarten answers, we *do* want to continue with a kindergarten faith—a faith which looks humbly to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness and salvation—a faith which doesn’t try too hard to apply human logic to everything God has told us.

Square up your shoulders. Take a deep, cleansing breath. Stand up straight and tall. And launch.

“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, EHV). Amen.