

The Priority of Truth
Grace Bible Chapel
Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 4:5-12
July 2nd, 2017

Context: Peter and John have been arrested following the supernatural healing of a man born lame (Acts 3:1-10), and a proclamation to those at the Temple that Jesus Christ is the source of healing and the Messiah (Acts 3:11-26). The healing, and second message was so affective that 5,000 believed (Vs. 4). But, it also stirred the authorities to lay hands on them (Acts 4:1-4). Now, after spending the night in jail, beginning in verse 5, they find themselves before the same Jewish leaders who promoted the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ.

The trial, before these high officials, would be overwhelmingly intimidating were it not for the indwelling of the Spirit of God. The question by the officials skirts the enormity of what has taken place. Their concern is not related to the glory of God, but to their authority. It is also not related to truth, to Scripture, or to the benefit of the people. Peter's response cuts through the smoke screen, and with clarity he shows the ridiculousness of being on trial for benefiting another. He proclaims the source of the healing is Jesus the very one they crucified. He uses Old Testament Scripture to show it was the purpose of God and closes his statement with the sweeping fact there is salvation in no other Person or means. In these brief words we see the importance, power, and clarity of the testimony we are to bring to a non-believing world. Peter teaches us the priority of the truth.

Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).

- VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)
 - F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:12)
 - 3. Sincere appeal (Acts 3:17-26)
 - 4. Strong opposition (Acts 4:1-12)

Key Words

- Name (4)
- Done (3)
- Elders (2)
- Rulers (2)
- Stone (2)

Introduction:

- How really important is the truth? History records (John 18:38) Pilate dismissed truth from the lips of Christ as something irrelevant & indefinable.
 - Pilate was really expressing the general cynical attitude of the unsaved world – which is a truth suppressing world, and elsewhere stated in Scripture by Christ as “men loved darkness rather than light.”
 - Today we see the value of truth ridiculed & demeaned at every turn – in politics, religion, advertising, relationships, commerce, even in so-called science.
 - We live in a world of untruth at every turn – our discernment along with our attachment to truth is being pressed continually.
 - One of the prophesied marks of our day – a warning stated by Paul is that men “will want to have their ears tickled” – another way of stating, those even in the church would rather hear a lie than be confronted with the truth.
 - Now, each one of us has been tested, & at times failed when we have been confronted with something we could not escape, & have told a fib, or better put – a lie. Telling the truth at such times was just too difficult!
 - So today – right now! How important is truth to you? What premium or priority?
- The Bible is very much about the battle for truth in contrast to falsehood.
- Some basic things about truth:
 - Truth does not change – it does not migrate, evolve, conform, or have revisions.
 - God is truth (Is. 65:16), Jesus Christ is truth (John 14:6), The Word is truth (John 17:17). Man has changed the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25).
 - And importantly, supernaturally, & practically - It is by the truth (God's Word) that man is set free from the curse of sin in Adam (John 8:32).

Point: Then if we know this, believe this, & are committed fully to these realities about truth – that is we know that truth is uniquely essential, necessary for salvation, necessary to know God, to walk

with God, to live for God, & that truth is one of the primary characteristics of those who belong to God. Then we prioritize it in our life!

4. **Strong opposition** (Acts 4:1-12)

- **Situation review** (Vs. 1-4) – discussed last time I preached.
- As Peter & John presented the truth in Christ in the public arena of the Temple – swiftly those in Jewish authority “laid hands on them” – physically intervened.

Point: It should strike us how quickly & how prevalent, & I will say how consistent those in rabid opposition to truth always show up & always do the same things.

Point: they are also in the most prominent & generally considered unlikely places – places of supposed leadership & wisdom – in universities, pulpits, & high places.

- There was no real reason for this extreme action by these in authority:
 - What really is the number one priority of the Temple? God, truth, His glory!
 - Consider what Peter & John were about:
 - They had healed a beggar born lame at the Golden Gate.
 - They were proclaiming the source of power behind the healing.
 - Based on the miracle & the Scripture they were declaring Jesus as the Messiah – the One all Israel had been looking for & anticipating.
- Where else would be a more appropriate place for this than on the Temple mount dedicated to God, to Scripture, to truth, to all spiritual teaching, discussion, expression, & even debate

Point: But, because of the opposition, the pressure is on – it is extreme. They are cast into jail – not pleasant! What premium will Peter & John give to the truth & how will they handle it?

• **Subjective leaders** (Vs. 5-7)

- **Vs. 5-6** – This is precisely the same high ranking gang of opposing leaders that mistreated our Lord most hideously less than two months before.
 - Rulers – the 24 priestly orders, elders – family heads of tribes, scribes – law experts/Pharisees – the complete assembly - these are those who should be most knowledgeable, most wise, and are most accountable before God.
 - **Vs. 6** – Annas – a past high priest (high esteem), Caiaphas – the current high priest - when you visit Jerusalem, Caiaphas residence has been archeologically excavated out of the ground (a church is built over it), & you can enter it. One feature is a large prisoner pit in the floor of his residence – showing he was personally big on enforcement & punishment of all opposition.

Point: Peter & John are being tested to the degree consistent with the opposition to the Savior “if the world hates you, you know it has hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

- I titled these “subjective” leaders – to be subjective means by definition to be more concerned about self, than about the object considered. Subjective thinking does not deal with truth or reality, it thinks only of what is in personal best interest.
 - John 11:47-53 – look at the thinking, the self-centered attitude, the closed mindedness, the rejection of truth of these same leaders.
 - Vs. 47-48 - Think of this – these were frantic because Lazarus was raised from the grave. Instead of embracing it with joy, seeking what it means – not an ounce of concern for the truth – only for their self preserving agenda!
 - Vs. 49 – Caiaphas proclaims something evil, which God providentially made prophesy from the high priest – not as he intended but true!
 - Vs. 53 – look at the degree of their rejection of truth, of their evil – the depth of this exposes what total depravity really is – the darkness that pervades unsaved man. It is irrational, it is insane, it is seen as equal to Satan.

Point: This is what our Lord dealt with, this is what Peter is dealing with, and this is what you & I in 2017 will deal with as well – it has not changed!

- **Vs. 7** – “placed them in the center” – this is the epitome of pressing the fear of men. It is purposeful to intimidate.
 - Notice the tone of their questions – it is accusatory, not a genuine seeking of knowledge. They swept the glory of the healing miracle aside.
 - They know they are in the presence of a fact they cannot account.
 - They attempt to divert the thinking from the evidence to make it evil.
 - What power? – they knew that only God could do such (John 9:30-33).
 - What name? – a name represented authority. The question implied Peter & John were rebels – after-all they had not given them approval to act.
 - “have you done this” – they do not even acknowledge the glorious miracle, but treat it as a “this” as if something wrong, something unmentionable.
 - **Supernatural courage** (Vs. 8)
 - **Vs. 8** – “filled with HS” – Peter’s response was not something he drummed up of himself – his courage, or his message “He (Spirit) will guide you” (John 16:13).
 - The difference between & OT saint, and a NT saint – (John 14:17). All truly saved today have the HS (Rom. 8:9). And, we have (Eph. 5:18) – a command!
 - All true Christian ministry is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - Eph. 5:18 – “filled” pleroo – make replete, cram-up, satisfy, execute – a present imperative – continually be filled - whereas the word filled in Acts was something God did – this word is commanding the full execution or use of that which is already present. The Spirit is not at issue, we are!
 - Filling is not getting more of God’s Spirit, it is rather our part in the HS having more of us – serving His purposes instead of our own.
 - Notice the contrasting example – drinking alcohol causes a type of control over the person that is negative; here – instead acting to have the HS in our actions – this is now (in the epistles) the responsibility of every Christian.
 - This again is a command - there is a participatory aspect – an individual responsibility I have as a Christian to walk with God & seek His continual control over my life & actions – the result being more Christ-likeness.
 - **Saving message** (Vs. 9-12)
 - **Vs. 9** – There was a powerful method in Peter’s response – the wisdom of God is in this! He made it a challenge based on an obvious glorious accomplishment – so it is with all of the true Gospel – it is about the reality of what God has done!
 - Inferred in this reply is the unworthiness of their opposition & questioning.
 - You are examining us as if for something bad rather than for good.
 - Peter is subtly accusing them of injustice.
 - Surely it cannot be somehow wrong to heal a lame man!
 - What is Peter doing? Armed with the truth he goes on the offensive!
 - By-the-way, submission to authority is not cowardice, or submission to error.
 - The Christian is always armed with the truth, & must never compromise.
 - They demanded to know by what power –so Peter will tell them what power.
- Point:** This is like Paul’s statement “I am not ashamed of the Gospel” (Rom. 1:16).
- Point:** Instead of Peter & John being on trial, Peter uses the truth to put these high officials on trial, & such they are before God.
- **Vs. 10** – Immediately on what does Peter set their focus! On God! On Christ!
 - “name” has reference to who Christ is in all His Person & attributes.
 - He is the Person, the power, the authority behind this healing.
 - **Vs. 11** – Then Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 applying it to their rejection of Jesus to show it was God’s purposeful sovereign plan all along.

- He non-compromisingly exposes them as those in direct opposition to God.

Point: He has told them the truth in Christ in the most powerful, skillful, concise manner possible – what has he done? Shown God is in this by the healing, given a full explanation using the Scriptures – then, then....

- **Vs. 12** – The bottom line, the conclusion, which amounts to a form of condemnation with an invitation – the only conclusion anyone with reason can come to – implied is as Psalm 2 says “kiss the Son” – repent & turn to Him.

Point: This is the true message the world needs – turn to Christ, be obedient to His message, seek His forgiveness, embrace Him, & begin the path of living for Him.

Closing:

- There is a priority to truth – top priority. Truth is never separate or apart from God. Do you place a premium on “the truth?” No such thing as a casual Christian.
- If you are I place a premium on our relationship with God – we say God is number one to me, than we cannot compromise in our relation to the truth.
- This premium on truth has many ramifications: It means a hunger for the truth, it means “that I long to know more of Christ” (Phil 3:10). It means I am not ho hum about my church life, my studying the Word life, my obedience or walk life, etc..
- With this - Christ stated “if you will not...” – our commitment must be tested & real!
- It means I place a premium on truth in Christ, & that when the opportunity arises I speak truth uncompromisingly to others no matter the consequences – as Peter!