

## Testifying Of The Risen Saviour.

Text: Acts 4:8-20

Suggested Hymns:

221, 347, 218, 206, 331

1) The Contents Of Such Testimony

2) The Motives Of Such Testimony

3) The Results Of Such Testimony

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Acts 4:8–20, <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 this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole.*

<sup>11</sup> *This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ <sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

<sup>13</sup> *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.*

<sup>15</sup> *But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, <sup>16</sup> saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.”*

<sup>18</sup> *So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Scripture says many times that Christians must bear sufferings for the sake of Christ. To His own disciples the Lord had said in John 15:20, ***‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.***

These words were among the last sayings of the Lord to His disciples, spoken shortly before His great Passion. About two months later the disciples were reminded of this saying of their beloved Master, for our text relates how Peter and John were subjected to their first persecution for Christ’s sake.

To understand our text, we must briefly review the connection. Luke tells us that Peter and John on their arrival at the Temple one day were asked alms by a beggar who had been lame from his birth.

Moved to compassion by the pitiable condition of the lame man, Peter said to him, ***“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”***<sup>1</sup>

By the command and power of Christ, Peter healed the lame man so that he now enjoyed the full use of his limbs. This miracle attracted the attention of the worshipers who were coming to the Temple. They saw the man walk and leap for joy. Soon a large multitude gathered around the apostles and the man, and Peter embraced the opportunity and preached to them of Christ, especially of His resurrection, urging his hearers to accept Christ as their Saviour.

While Peter was still speaking to the people, a body of armed men approached the apostles and placed them under arrest. The chief instigators were the Sadducees, who were bitter opponents of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The disciples of Christ had based all their preaching upon the fact of Christ’s resurrection, the undeniable proof of Christ’s divinity and Messiahship and man’s redemption.

Such preaching, however, caused the wrath of the Sadducees to boil. Hence they ordered the arrest of the apostles. The next morning the Sanhedrin met in order to conduct the trial of Peter and John. It was the same Sanhedrin, or Jewish Council, including Annas and Caiaphas, which a short time before had tried and condemned the Lord.

The question put to the apostles was, “***By what power or by what name have you done this?***”<sup>2</sup> It is here where our text begins, giving Peter’s speech of defence. Let us therefore consider the subject, *Testifying of the Risen Saviour*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. Testifying Of The Risen Saviour The Contents Of Such Testimony**

*The testimony of Peter given before a hostile court.* The two apostles, like Jesus, were tried by a hostile court. It was truly a packed court. But although standing before sworn enemies, Peter did not quake with fear, as he once did in the courtyard of Caiaphas, for Peter was now a courageous witness for Christ.

The Lord had promised them in Matthew 10:19, <sup>19</sup> ***But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak.*** Peter threw himself in full trust upon this promise, and God did not desert him in this hour.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, who took charge of Peter and taught him what he ought to say,<sup>3</sup> Peter gave his fearless testimony before the council. This was his testimony: ***“Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: <sup>9</sup> If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole.***

<sup>11</sup> ***This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ <sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”***

*Peter testified that the trial was unfair.* Let us note, to begin with, that Peter points out to the members of the Council the unfairness of conducting a trial in this case. Was it not a good deed which he and John had performed when they healed the lame man? Was it fair, was it just, was it reasonable, to conduct a judicial examination in such a case of kindness, healing a lame man?

People are tried for evil deeds, but not for good deeds. Would it not have been proper for the members of the Sanhedrin to rejoice with the man who had been healed, instead of subjecting the apostles for their good deed to investigative

treatment? This was the intention of Peter's words, when he said: ***9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man.***

*Peter testified that the man had been healed by the name of Jesus Christ.* The Council had put a direct question to them, and Peter gives a direct answer. This man, so Peter tells them, had been healed ***“by the name of Jesus Christ.”***

That a great miracle had been performed in the case of the lame man the Council could not deny. However, it is certain that the Council intended to accuse the apostles of performing the miracle not by the help of God, but by divination and sorcery, or to accuse them of blasphemy for misusing the name of God.

Peter opposes all such veiled accusations and boldly declares that Jesus, who had been murdered by this same Council, had performed this miracle through them. This was his direct answer to their direct question. To such an answer the members of the Sanhedrin could make no reply. How could they adduce any proof to disprove the answer of Peter? How could they prove the case to be otherwise?

In silence they heard Peter's answer, and their silence was evidence that Peter had taken them by surprise. Perhaps they had expected Peter to be cowed by their imposing appearance.

*Peter testified that God had raised up His Son from the dead. **Let it be known to you all, 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 stands here before you whole.***

In his speech before the Council, Peter emphatically declared that God had raised Jesus from the dead, in whose name the man had been healed. In plain words Peter held up to the members their sin; for they had crucified, they had murdered, Christ.

When they saw Jesus hanging on the accursed tree, they had rejoiced, for they had believed that at last they had rid the world of Christ, whom they hated.

However, this same Christ whom they had put to death was risen from the dead. We can well imagine that Peter, in speaking of the resurrection of Christ, put special emphasis on the words ***“whom God raised from the dead.”***

It is like saying: *“It will do you no good to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, it will benefit you nothing to give hush-money to the guard who kept watch at the grave of Christ; for the fact remains that Christ is risen from the dead and lives, which proves that He is all that He claimed to be; He is truly the eternal Son of God and the promised Messiah and the only Saviour of mankind.”*

To this answer and testimony of Peter the Council again had nothing to say in reply. Profound silence reigned among the members.

*Peter testified that Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. Our text says <sup>11</sup> **This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’** <sup>12</sup> **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”***

It seems that the longer Peter testified before the Jewish Council, the more courageous he became. He was a different Peter from what he had been just a few weeks before in the night of Christ’s betrayal. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter is bold, even in the face of serious danger; for we note that, when the Council remained silent, Peter saw an advantage for himself, and he pushed that advantage.

Our text states that Peter continued his testifying: *the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’* This is a passage from Psalm 118:22. Earlier, Christ Himself had quoted this same passage to a delegation of the Sanhedrin.<sup>4</sup>

What, we ask, did Peter mean by quoting this passage? These Jewish leaders before whom Peter was standing and testifying, the elders and rulers of Israel, were to be builders of the spiritual temple, the Church.

But in the blindness of their hearts they had rejected the chief Cornerstone of the foundation upon which the Church is built. They had despised and rejected the Christ whom God had ordained as the chief Stone, as the very Foundation, upon which God builds His Church.<sup>5</sup>

But Jesus whom these leaders had rejected, whom they had killed, God raised up from the dead and glorified Him, so that He is indeed the Foundation upon which the Church is built. Not upon sacrifices, not upon ceremonials, not upon self-righteousness, rather the Church is built solely upon Jesus Christ.

*Peter testified that Christ is the only Saviour of mankind.* <sup>12</sup> *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* This verse of the Bible is familiar to every Christian believer. Acts 4:12 is called "*the second verse of the Bible,*" John 3:16 being called "*the first verse of the Bible.*"

It is truly a most remarkable, meaningful passage, for in these few words Peter gives the whole way of salvation. He declares that there is salvation for all sinners, but this salvation cannot be found anywhere else than in the name of Christ, which includes everything that Christ stands for, all that He has done for our redemption and salvation.

This name, the Gospel of Christ, the Word of redemption, is given among men. It is by the grace of God proclaimed among men, and any one who wants to be saved cannot be saved except he turn in faith to Christ, accept the Gospel, and accept Christ as His Saviour. No more important and significant words were ever uttered by mortal man.

How nobly, how courageously, and yet how respectfully, Peter on this occasion testified of Christ before the Jewish Council!

Let us apply this lesson to ourselves. — We, too, have many an occasion to testify of Christ, our risen Saviour. Religion is a frequent topic of conversation. It is often brought up for discussion in private and in public. What are the things that we should testify of Christ?

There is much that we can say of our beloved Saviour. But let us stress especially the essential things. Remember that a testimony of Christ need not necessarily be a long discourse. Peter knew very well that the Council was not inclined to listen to a long sermon or address from him, and therefore in the time he had he stressed the most important things concerning Christ.

This is an example for us. What are these essential things? In testifying of Christ, let us testify of His divinity, that He is the Son of God, yes, God Himself, God of very God.

Much is said and written about the greatness of Christ as man, but His divinity is much denied in our day, denied frequently by the very men who ought to be the first to proclaim it.

See how Peter emphasised the divinity of Christ. He declared that the lame man had been healed by the power of Christ, which meant that this Christ possesses the omnipotence, (all-powerful) which God alone has. Likewise, he speaks of the resurrection of Christ, which is the most powerful proof that Christ is indeed the Son of God. Just so must we, in testifying of Christ, testify of His divinity, that He is true God. Such testimony alone pleases our risen Saviour.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, from Peter we also learn that, in testifying of Christ, we must lay stress on the fact that Christ is the only hope for sinful man. He alone has redeemed us, and through faith in Him alone are we saved. In giving such testimony, we are imparting the most essential fact of the Gospel, a fact every one must know and believe who wishes to be saved.

Although the Gospel of our crucified and risen Saviour has been preached for nearly 2,000 years there is still an appalling ignorance among mankind. If we were to take a place where many people pass by and were to stop and ask each passer-by whether he expects to go to heaven when he dies, there would be very few who would give us a negative answer — only those who do not believe at all in the existence of heaven.

And if we were to ask furthermore why they believe that they will be eternally saved, various answers would be received. But all, with the exception of those of the true believers in Christ, would revolve around self-righteousness, their own goodness and their own merits.

There are few people who really know and believe that there is no hope of eternal salvation in heaven and on earth, except through the name, through the merits, of Jesus Christ! What an opportunity we have to testify of this saving truth! There ought not to be a single Christian who does not know by heart that most beautiful passage John 3:16 and Acts 4:12 of our text. Quoting such passages in testifying of Christ, we give the most important and essential fact of Christ and of redemption and salvation through Him.

It is, therefore, not enough, in testifying of Christ, to mention only that Christ was the greatest man ever to be born into this world. It is not enough to praise Jesus for His many acts of kindness and generosity. It is not enough to laud many of His sayings, which even unbelievers often do. All this is true, but it is not enough. This alone will not save a soul.

We must testify of Christ's divinity, of Christ as the Son of God, of Christ as the only Saviour of mankind, of the Christ in whom every one must believe who hopes to be saved eternally. Such testimony alone is the proper testimony of Christ, and through such testimony the Lord gains sinners for His kingdom, and the Church is built.

## **2. Testifying Of The Risen Saviour The Motives Of Such Testimony**

What should move us gladly to testify of Christ, our risen Saviour?

*The Holy Spirit supports us.* We ought to gladly testify of our risen Saviour wherever and whenever we can, before friend and foe, also before the rich and wise of this world; for the saving truth of Christ and salvation through Him are intended not only for the common people, the underprivileged, the outcasts, the downtrodden, but also for the elite of society, for kings and princes, for high government officials, for teachers, university professors, and business magnates; in short, Christ is the Saviour of all people, and His Gospel is meant for all.

Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life for all people alike. Bear in mind that Peter gave his testimony of Christ before the Sanhedrin, the highest and most dignified civil and religious body in Israel and regarded by every Israelite with the greatest respect. Still, even before this august body, Peter, the unlearned fisherman that he was, testified of Christ, and God the Holy Spirit so took possession of Peter's thoughts and mouth that he made a noble confession before the Jewish Council.

Similarly, we should be glad of every opportunity to testify of the faith and the hope that is in us. However, is it not true that we are often too timid? How reluctant we are to say anything especially when we know that the person to whom we are speaking possesses a greater knowledge than we do, or that he is of far greater importance in this world among men than we are! We forget that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Oh, if we feel timid in testifying of Christ, let us not forget that the Spirit of God will guide us in our testimony as He did Peter. He will take charge of us, of our hearts, thoughts, and mouths. Therefore call upon Him in sincere prayer, asking Him to fill your heart with courage, to be with you, to take charge of your



mouth and your words, to help you to choose the proper words and to say the right things in testifying of Christ.

The promise of the Saviour that ***“the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say”*** written in Luke 12:12 applies to us also. God the Holy Spirit will guide and direct us in giving the testimony of Christ that we need not worry about what we ought to say or how we are going to say it.

Many a Christian has been surprised, when attacked by the enemies of Christ, at the easy flow of thoughts and words which came to him at such a time. Truly, this is a powerful motive to give a courageous testimony of Christ, our risen Saviour. Since we are assured by our Saviour that the Holy Spirit will support us, guide our tongues and our words, how gladly, cheerfully, and fearlessly we ought to testify of Christ!

*Our faith urges us to testify of Christ.* Peter, in professing his love of the Saviour after the resurrection of the Lord, said, ***“Lord; You know that I love You.”***<sup>7</sup> With these words he also solemnly declared that he would never again deny his Master.

Even under such trying circumstances as mentioned in the text the apostle faithfully kept His promise. Therefore it is stated in our text, ***And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*** Perhaps the members of the Council recognised Peter and John as disciples of the Lord and recalled that they had seen these two disciples in the night of Christ’s betrayal.

But do not these words, ***“And they realized that they had been with Jesus”*** also include that they could judge by their whole conduct that these two men were faithful followers of Christ, firm believers in Him as the Messiah, and that they were proclaiming the same doctrines which Christ had preached?

In other words, from the address of Peter the members of the Council perceived and were convinced that Peter and John were firm believers in Christ and that it was their firm faith in Him which moved them to testify so courageously for Christ.

Indeed, the apostles themselves informed the Sanhedrin a few moments later that this was the case, for they said, <sup>20</sup> ***For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.***”

This is the case with every Christian believer. If you have been with Jesus, if you have learned to know Him, if you believe in Him as your Saviour and Redeemer, if you love Him and serve Him, the world will soon find it out.

People will soon discover the fact that you are a believer in Christ from your Christian conduct. The world will soon see that there is a big difference between your life and the life of others. Thus with your life also you will give a testimony of Christ. You will be filled with joy and hope and comfort through Jesus that you, too, will say, ***I cannot but speak the things which I have seen and heard.***

As natural as it is for the sun to give light and warmth, just so natural is it for true faith to testify of Christ. Faith and testifying of Christ always go hand in hand. In short, if you are a believing Christian, you will testify of your risen Saviour. Your faith will move and urge you to do so.

We read in Romans 10:9-10, <sup>9</sup> ***that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*** <sup>10</sup> ***For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***

God's command. The risen Lord had said to His disciples in Acts 1:8, <sup>8</sup> ***But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me ...***” It was Christ’s command that the disciples should go out into all the world and testify of Him. When Peter testified of Christ before the Jewish Council, he was fulfilling a command of his Lord and Master.

Has Christ commanded us to testify of Him? Indeed He has. Our Saviour not only expects this of us but has directly commanded us to do so. We read in Matthew 10:32, <sup>32</sup> ***“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”***

And in 1 John 4:15, <sup>15</sup> ***Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*** And in Philippians 2:11, ***every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

Remembering what our Saviour has done for us in order to redeem us, how glad we ought to be to do this for our Saviour! What a wonderful promise the Saviour also gives us! He will confess us, acknowledge us as His own, before

His Father in heaven if we confess Him before men. What another powerful motive to testify of the risen Lord!

### 3. Testifying Of The Risen Saviour The Results Of Such Testimony

We look lastly, into the results of testifying of Christ.

*In Peter's case.* Our text states, <sup>15</sup> ***But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, <sup>16</sup> saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."***

<sup>18</sup> ***So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."***

Up to this time the members of the Council had remained silent; they had not contradicted the apostles, nor had they convicted them of sorcery in healing the lame man. Their silence was an admission that the apostles had done no wrong, that they could not deny the truth which Peter had just spoken to them.

However, the members of the Sanhedrin were men of hardened hearts; maliciously they closed their hearts' door to the truth of God's Word.

At the time of Christ's trial they found themselves in a predicament, and so also on this occasion. For the time being the apostles were dismissed from the council-chamber so that the Sanhedrin could hold a private consultation and decide what steps to take.

Being strongly influenced by the Sadducees and all hating Christ and His Gospel, they decided to forbid further preaching of the Gospel by the apostles. Peter and John were then called back to the council-chamber and they ***commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.***

What was Peter's and John's reaction to this? Were they intimidated by the decision of this dignified and learned assembly? Not in the least. Immediately they announced their decision to the Council, ***"Whether it is right in the sight of***

*God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”*

The apostles appealed to the conscience of the members of the Sanhedrin, to judge for themselves whether it is right to obey men and to disobey God, who had commanded them to preach. In clear, plain words they declared their refusal to abide by the command of the Council. After more threats by the Council the two apostles were set free.

Such was the result of Peter's testifying before the Jewish Council. It seems that he did not gain any of these hardened men for Christ, the Saviour.

How different the result of Peter's preaching on Pentecost Day, when 3,000 were added to the church! — But they were happy that they had been able to testify of Christ and undaunted by their failure to gain members of the Council for Christ, the apostles went forth and continued to preach the Gospel and to testify of Christ.

In our case. Our experiences will be the same. Some with hardened hearts will refuse and despise the saving truth of Christ. Others will even mock and ridicule, as so many do when they assail the doctrine of the atonement. Others will shrug their shoulders and let it go at that. Still others will tell you that no person can know anything certain about those things of which we speak to them. They will want to remain neutral, neither accepting nor rejecting the Gospel of Christ.

However, some people will embrace the opportunity to learn more about Jesus Christ and His saving Word and will embrace Christ in true faith.

Let us not become discouraged. Let us continue to testify of our risen Saviour; for the seed of the Gospel will take root in some hearts and grow and bear fruit.

Take note that we ourselves have come to faith by the testimony of others — our mother or father or a minister or friend; but some one testified of Christ to us and led us to Jesus. Let us faithfully speak of our Saviour to others so that they, too, may come to faith in Christ and be eternally saved. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 3:6

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4:7

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:11-12

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 21:42

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. 2:4-6

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 16:16-17

<sup>7</sup> John 21:15