

The Mandate of the Message

Acts 4: 1-4

As we continue to look toward the New Year, I felt led to consider the passage that we have read this morning. I am convinced that one of the greatest failures in the modern church is the lack of sharing the gospel with those who desperately need to hear. It is a known fact that we are surrounded by those who are lost in sin, separated from God. We cannot expect the lost to seek the message; we must take the initiative and share the gospel with them! It has been said, “*Too many Christians are no longer fishers of men, but keepers of the aquarium.*”

Billy Graham said this concerning the evangelistic efforts of the church: *The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear the full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities.*¹

In our text Peter and John have been confronted by the religious elite of their day for being so bold as to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many received the message, others were likely unmoved, and some were visibly angered by it. However they responded, all who heard their words were forced to make a decision regarding the message.

The fact remains that we are responsible to share the gospel with the world. If you are a born again believer, you have been entrusted with this noble responsibility. This passage offers insight to the message we are to share and what we can expect while sharing the gospel with others. I want to examine the [experiences](#) revealed as we consider: [The Mandate of the Message](#).

I. The Communication of the Message (3:13-19) – If we are to effectively communicate the message, we must have a good understanding of that message. If we take a moment to look at the previous chapter, we will discover the message that Peter shared, the message the world needs to hear. Let’s consider what Peter preached.

A. He Preached Redemption (3:13) – [The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.](#) Here he speaks of the Jesus, the Son of God, being glorified of the Father. The Jews had rejected Christ, delivering Him to Pilate, but this was all within God’s redemptive plan. Christ came to this earth to redeem sinful humanity. He came to reconcile what sin had lost. We were lost and undone, without hope, but Christ came to redeem!

- We must convey the redemption of Christ to those who have not believed. All are born in sin, in need of salvation. Apart from Christ we remain in our sin, but through Him we can be reconciled to God. In Christ, God provided the means for the salvation of sinful men. The world needs to know there is hope and deliverance in Him!

B. He Preached Crucifixion (3:14-15) – *But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; [15] And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.* Peter reminded them that Christ died upon the cross of Calvary. He gave His life for the sins of humanity. Sin demanded a sacrifice, one that could fully atone. Jesus came to this earth and offered Himself as the sacrificial atonement for sin. He had to die if we were to be reconciled to God in salvation. *Heb.10:5 – Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: [10] By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

- We cannot share the gospel apart from the crucifixion of our Lord. He alone was worthy to bear our sin. He alone was worthy to atone. Many today seek to remove the cross, and the shedding of Christ's blood, but apart from Calvary, there is no redemption!

C. He Preached Resurrection (3:15) – *And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.* Many who heard Peter's words were likely witness to the crucifixion. They had seen the lifeless body of Jesus removed from the cross and placed in a borrowed tomb. They had heard of the Roman guards who sealed the sepulcher. Peter confirms to the crowd that although Jesus had died, and was buried, He didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave, alive and well, to die no more! The multitudes may have thought the grave was the end, but Jesus rose victorious.

- The world around us needs to hear of a risen Savior; One who died upon the cross, but conquered death and the grave. That what sets Him apart from all others. He rose in glory and great power. Because of His resurrection, the saved have the promise of resurrection. The walking dead among us need to hear of Jesus' resurrecting power.

D. He Preached Justification (3:16) – *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.* A crowd had gathered greatly wondering about the healing of the lame man. How could this be; how could one who was lame on his feet walk? Peter declared that he was healed by faith in Christ. His faith in the Lord secured his healing.

- What a picture that paints of the justification of the redeemed. We too were like the lame man, crippled by sin and alienated from God. Through faith in Christ in salvation, we were cleansed of our sinful infirmity and justified in the sight of God. As God looks at me He no longer sees the sinner I was, but views me in light of the righteousness of Christ. I am justified in Him!

E. He Preached Salvation (3:19) – Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; Peter boldly proclaims their need of repentance and conversion in the Lord. In and of themselves they would yet remain in their sin. They had no hope apart from Christ. If they were to be saved, reconciled to God, they must come in humble repentance, believing in the Lord by faith.

- The world around us desperately needs to hear a message of repentance and salvation by faith in Christ. Modern theology has minimized the deity and holiness of God while emphasizing the self-righteousness of humanity. Christ is the only way of salvation. All who are apart from Christ through salvation remain dead and condemned in their sin. Let us boldly proclaim salvation in Christ alone!

I. The Communication of the Message (3:13-19)

II. The Controversy Surrounding the Message (4:1-3) – These verses reveals the controversy that surrounded the message Peter delivered. If you are determined to share the gospel, you might as well accept the fact that it will create controversy. Notice:

A. The Fervency in the Attack (1) – And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them. The opposition didn't wait for Peter and the others to finish their message. While they were yet speaking they came to resist the message.

- I am no prophet of doom, but I am realistic. You might as well expect a fervent attack from the enemy when you begin to share the gospel of Jesus. The enemy will usually not wait for you to finish sharing the message before he begins his assault. I have experienced various interruptions and spiritual oppression while witnessing for the Lord. It will come with fervency.

B. The Hypocrisy in the Attack (1) – Did you notice who greatly opposed Peter and the others? It wasn't the worldly crowd; it was the supposed religious elite of that day.

- Organized religion is one of the greatest hindrances to Truth. Religion tells man he must do something in order to be saved. Religion wants to keep people bound to its dictates and creed. Religion teaches that all men are basically good and will get to heaven based on their merits or religious activity. If you are committed to sharing Jesus, you might as well expect opposition from those who are religious. Religion rejects the notion that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Religion cannot and will not reconcile man to God.

C. The Animosity in the Attack (2) – [Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead](#). The Sadducees were grieved that Peter preached the hope of resurrection in Christ. They did not believe in resurrection of the dead. The real point of contention was the fact that Peter preached Jesus.

- This world doesn't mind religion. In fact, in many instances it encourages organized religion. It doesn't mind you recognizing the existence of a "higher power." They don't even mind general references to God. As long as you don't mention Jesus the world will typically accept your message. Jesus is where the line is drawn.
- Sadly, they are more right than they realize. Jesus **is** where the line is drawn. Our acceptance or rejection of Him makes all the difference in eternity. We must realize if Jesus is removed from the gospel, then we have no gospel. He is the gospel.

D. The Conspiracy in the Attack (3) – [And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide](#). Peter and John were arrested and jailed for preaching Jesus. The religious leaders hoped to silence their preaching and discourage any further witness. Even though the Sadducees and Pharisees had their differences, they conspired together to prevent the preaching of the gospel.

- Never underestimate the spiritual warfare we face. The enemy will use any means available to silence our witness. He stands opposed to all that is godly and righteous and will stop at nothing in his effort to hinder the church and the spreading of the gospel. The world around us will disagree on many issues, but they are united against the message of truth.

I. The Communication of the Message (3:13-19)

II. The Controversy Surrounding the Message (4:1-3)

III. The Conviction in the Message (4:4) – *Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.* The religious rulers likely believed they had gained the upper hand, but they had underestimated the power of the gospel. It may have appeared that if they silenced the messengers, the message would be of little effect, but God had a greater plan. The power of the gospel is greater than any power upon this earth. Satan and those under his influence will do all they can to hinder us, but in the end, God will accomplish His divine purpose. Notice:

A. The Reception – Peter and John had been taken to jail for the night, but the power of the gospel prevailed. The seed of Truth had been planted in the hearts of those who were open and receptive to the gospel message. Many of them received the word, believing on Christ.

B. The Results – Although Peter and John had been momentarily hindered in their pursuit, about 5,000 men were saved as a result of them sharing the gospel. They had been faithful to witness and God had been faithful to their efforts.

- All will not receive our witness, but we must not let that keep us from sharing Jesus. Eventually, if we are faithful witnesses, someone will receive the Word. They may or may not get saved at that given time, but the seed has been planted and God will give the increase! We may never see the fruit of our labor, but God is faithful and He will honor the efforts of those who seek to share Christ with the world.

I trust we have all been challenged by the message today. I know that God has dealt with my heart through this portion of His Word. The saved have received so much from the Lord and the least we can do in return is tell others of His marvelous grace. May we be faithful to share the gospel of Jesus even in the face of adversity.

Through the message this morning the gospel has been presented. Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sin. He died upon the cross and rose again the third day. He is seated at right hand of the Father even now. He gave His life so that you might be forgiven of sin and reconciled to God. Do you know Christ as Savior? Was there a moment in your life that you recognized your need and trusted in Christ by faith for salvation? If not, I urge you to come to Him today as He leads.

¹Swindoll, C. R. (2000, c1998). *The tale of the tardy oxcart and 1501 other stories* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Swindoll leadership library. Nashville: Word Publishers.