

Acts 4 | Christ the Cornerstone
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Sunday 22nd February 2009

Acts 4.1-22: We've seen that the gospel came and turned their lives upside down and reordered their priorities towards God, people, and their possessions, and now we move on to see how it affected their relationship with the world.

You may be here and not be a Christian. Maybe you are looking in to all of this, and you are asking yourself, 'if I become a Christian, how much does my life have to change?' What does it mean?

Some say that if you become a Christian your life will become nice and easy. But it didn't turn out that way for Jesus! Or Paul! Or Stephen! Or the other disciples! Does it mean an easy life? My best life now? Will people love me or hate me? Is it all comfort and convenience? **They claim we are true to the faith by showing how loved and accepted we are.**

Others say in a religious hardline kind of way that the whole world will hate you, if normal people on earth like you then you aren't being true enough to your faith.. 'pick up your cross and follow Christ'. **They claim they are true to the faith by showing how rejected we are.**

In this one passage we are looking at we see both: People were greatly annoyed with them (4.2), 'arrested them' (4.3), 'many who heard the word believed, and the number of men came to about five thousand' (4.4) they did a 'good deed' (4.9) the opposition was 'astonished' with them (4.13) they 'further threatened them' (4.21) yet 'all were praising God for what was happening (4.21).

Will people love us or hate us? BOTH. Not easy to categorize: We're a new breed!

Jesus affirms this in the many things He says:

Matt 5.16: "Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works ...".

John 15.18-20: "the world hates you.. if they persecuted me, they will persecute you"

1 Tim 3.7: Elders are to have a good reputation with outsiders!

John 16.33: "In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world".

We also see this dichotomy throughout Acts:

2.43: Awe came upon every soul. 2.47: Favour with all the people, 3.10: All the people were filled with wonder and amazement, 5.11: Great fear, 5.13: People were scared to join them, 5.33: 'enraged and wanted to kill them'.

It seems they ***loved the things that the Christians did and how they lived, but hated their insistence on truth.*** This is true today. ***You meet these young partying guys*** who measure their masculinity by how many young women they bed. They hate us for saying that sex before marriage is sinful, but they want to marry someone who followed our ways, a nice Christian virgin!

The world is so grateful for Christians who have started schools, liberated women, made advances in science and education, but they also hate us for our insistence in one way of salvation.

We don't fit in or out – we're a new breed.

UNLESS WE REALISE THIS WE WON'T BE FAITHFUL TO CHRIST. IF WE TRY EITHER WE WILL NOT BE TRUE TO JESUS.

Peter refers to this very same passage in **1 Peter 2.4, 7, 9, 11**: Builders .. Sojourners and exiles... live such a good life among the pagans ...

He's writing to local people living in their countries and calls them foreigners! **A writer of the time used the word 'genus' meaning another species!**

We see this in Acts 4, they loved their actions, but not their view.

Why did this happen? We find the truth of this in verse 11 – 13:

- **Recognized that Jesus was the cornerstone of their lives (4.11)**

'the stone the builders rejected' **We are all builders**, building on something! What do different people build upon: **Status, finances, generosity, serving, acceptance, good works, kids.**

Your life is built upon a cornerstone, a foundation. When your foundation shakes, you shake. Matthew 7 and the foundations. Christ as our cornerstone is unshakeable.

What did a cornerstone do? It determined all the angles. We have to line up with all the angles of the cornerstone. We align with Him. **Galatians 2.14: IN LINE... (with the angles)**

Our identity is with him: If he's accepted to the Father, we are accepted to the Father. **Galatians 2.20: 'I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'.**

If you aren't a Christian: It's not about doing good works for God, it's about identifying with Christ, embracing Him. Making Him your cornerstone! He lived the life we should have..

If you aren't a Christian it's because you have 'rejected' this cornerstone and have another.

Jesus said in John 17.16: They are not of this world, as I am not of this world. Jesus was loved, the crowds followed Him, but sometimes his teaching was too hard for them. John 6.66: 'After this many disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.'

Does Christ live in you? Is your life built on Him? We are **CHRISTIANS**

- **They had been with Jesus (4.13)**

It's not just a system of thought, a worldview. Into the Kings presence. Know Him and love him.

This comes as we learn about Him in his word (**speak about bible reading and prayer**).

Christianity is not just teaching about Jesus, it's being brought into the presence of Jesus. It's not facts about Him, it's a love of Him.

Peter called it living stones 1 Peter 2.4: "As you come to Him a living stone, rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up into a spiritual house'.

What does this mean for us?

We Insist on Truth: We are unswerving, He is the only way of salvation!

Our Marriages: Not worldly, we a faithful even when our loved ones are not. Connected to the cornerstone. We lay our lives down for our wives as Christ did for the church.

Our relationships: Pursuing reconciliation, going after the lost brothers, because Jesus did.

Our finances: We are free and generous, Our lives are securely built on Jesus in whom we trust.

The poor: We have compassion on them, knowing that Christ made himself poor that we may..

Boldness – no fear! Because they are connected to truth.

Our enemies – we love them, pursue them, we serve them, minister to them.

We refrain from sin – because Jesus died for sin and we are built upon Him.

We don't compromise our values – as Jesus was faithful through death for us.

Our business dealings: Honesty and integrity. We can't lie, built on the cornerstone – truth!

We put no confidence in our flesh: Our good works have died with Christ.

We are confident and joyful before God: We are in Christ.

When Christians were around in early Rome the other residents assumed that they would be bad for society. They thought that their exclusive, narrowed minded views of salvation only being found in Christ would separate them from society, make them arrogant and lousy citizens. **But this wasn't the case!** They actually were far more embracing, far more accepting, life affirming, loving, reaching out than the people of the day. They reached out to the poor. How can this be?

People think religious fundamentalism always leads to terror... like after 911. Have you ever seen an Amish terrorist? It depends on the fundamental is? What if it at the very center of your fundamental is a man who died for his enemies, who when accused did not retaliate, but who entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

Our differences don't make us hate our opponents, because the person we are fundamental about died for his enemies! ***People say that fundamentalism causes war. Not when the fundamental is to love your enemies and lay your life down for them!***

If ultimate truth is a man dying for his enemies, then our views do not make us different in a bad way. We aren't going to be into separatism, we aren't doing to be into religious fundamentalism, we aren't going to be into terrorism, we are going to be into liberalism, ***we are going to be the church of Jesus Christ.***

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” – Is He YOUR cornerstone?

Let us pray