

Before we get into any discussion of SALVATION, there is a CONTEXTUAL STORY we need to understand for this Testimony of Peter. One day, Peter and John were walking through Jerusalem, when a man who could not walk cried out to them begging for help. Peter stopped, took the man by the hands and looked intently into his eyes. Peter declared "GOLD & SILVER HAVE I NONE, BUT WHAT WE DO HAVE IS JESUS! I CALL ON THE NAME OF OUR SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST, TO BE HEALED. STAND AND WALK!" And to everyone's amazement, the man stood on his own two feet and was healed!

This is where the passage from The Acts of the Apostles begins... The Next Day NOT ONLY the RULERS, ELDERS & TEACHERS OF THE LAW met, Among them were Annas and Caiaphas, John and Alexander... You recall those names from Holy Week? Caiaphas was The very same High Priest of the Temple at Jerusalem and his Father-in-Law who were responsible for paying Judas to identify, then arresting, imprisoning, beating and demanding the Crucifixion of Jesus! Now, instead of Jesus, they have arrested Peter and John, and the Greek of the New Testament is far more explicit than the English translation. Annas and Caiaphas are of the lineage & education of PRIESTS considering Peter & John as UNEDUCATED, POWERLESS IDIOTS, they are Fishermen claiming to be Disciples of a Teacher a Rabbi whom they know to be DEAD! The whole of their argument, their arrest of Peter and John is about POWER DYNAMICS. What Power had Peter used? Had they broken the LAWS OF LEVITICUS in causing this man to Stand and Walk? Had they called upon the Devil? "By what POWER, or in whose name did you make this man walk?"

For Peter and John, they have no EDUCATION, they have no POWER, no Title, no OFFICE with the Temple! All that they possess, the one resource they trust, is that they knew JESUS, they trusted JESUS, Jesus DIED, and GOD RAISED JESUS from death to life! So they Called upon GOD through the NAME of the Broken JESUS to offer healing.

According to ANNAS & CAIAPHAS, the POWER DYNAMIC is between those who have all Authority and Power, attempting to dominate those who are POWERLESS IDIOTS for breaking The Law, because Judaism was all about ADHERENCE TO THE LAW. Recognize that Judaism had gone from being one of the Greatest, most powerful Monarchies in all the World, to being conquered, dispersed, even the tiny remnant of Judah alone was exiled; then when the refugees returned their land was taken by one Empire after another. The only POWER that Annas and Caiaphas can refer to is JEWISH LAW. THE LAW OF MOSES is their connection to GOD to RIGHTEOUSNESS, to being Right.

According to PETER & JOHN, the Power Dynamic is they saw a man who was broken, he could not stand; Jesus had been killed literally his body broken, who was RAISED by GOD, so they call on the NAME OF the crucified JESUS for HEALING of this man. In this way, JESUS was THE REJECTED STONE which becomes the HEAD & CORNER STONE. The CORE of their argument is not SALVATION as in HEAVEN & HELL, but SALVATION from his suffering, Salvation as in HEALING, Changing his LIFE, his Condition.

Originally, the word SALVATION, the verb to be SAVED, had nothing whatsoever to do with Religion! You were SAVED from a Bear. Saved from Illness. Saved from Poverty. Saved from Death.

Tragically, overtime, the word SALVATION has been taken out of context, made like a BUMPERSTICKER. With that simple transition, FAITH WAS CHANGED from RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, into being INDIVIDUALLY and PRIVATELY SAVED from EVIL. The real importance of this story is: PETER & JOHN for the 1st time, connected the Suffering and HEALING of a person in need, with JESUS as the means of healing.

Have you before seen the image which is on the cover of our Bulletin this morning? There is an old Story about two artist who grew up together. The one was a gifted Musician wanting to become a Violinist and Composer. The other was a Painter and Engraver named Albrecht Durer. They each struggled, working at

whatever jobs they could find to make ends meet. The Musician found work laboring in the field to support Durer. By the time Durer achieved notoriety to be self-supportive, the friends' hands were too hardened and calloused to return to hold the bow of his violin. Legend has it that those hands became Durer's model for the Praying hands. Laying down one's life is not always a matter of death, but postponing or destroying one's own dreams that another might fulfill theirs.

Giving of self is not only about Sacrifice, but like with Doing The Hokey Pokey, putting All of who you are in our commitments. A Hired Hand can always walk away without a second thought; whereas The True Shepherd knows their Existence is dependent upon the Sheep.

After the Presidency, Jimmy Carter became involved in Habitat for Humanity. One of the homes he built was near where the Bataan Death March had been during World War II. It was extremely hot and humid as Carter and the Team labored, and their bodies became covered in Perspiration. When the House was Dedicated, the new Homeowner was asked what meant the most to him about the project. He replied that one day as he watched President Carter mixing bags of Cement Mortar in the sun, drops of sweat fell from him into the Mortar mix. The man said, I know my walls are blessed with the labor of one of the Leaders of the Free World. Putting yourself into the circumstance is witnessed when we give ourselves.

So I commented in the E Blast and struggle with how we reconcile the Words of Peter in Acts testifying that SALVATION IS FOUND IN NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN THAN JESUS, which sounds TRIUMPHAL & EXCLUSIVE, with Jesus own Words: I KNOW MY SHEEP and MY SHEEP KNOW ME, Just as the Father knows me and I know the father... I HAVE OTHER SHEEP THAT ARE NOT OF THIS SHEEP PEN. I MUST BRING THEM ALSO?

In part there is the issue of POWER, but specifically, CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY RELIGION WHICH SPEAKS OF SALVATION.

In Judaism, the primary Concern is RIGHTEOUSNESS, Human Spirit came from GOD's BREATH so needs to be right with GOD according to the LAW to return to be with GOD.

According to ISLAM, the point is to live according to the KORAN.

According to BUDDHISM the hope is REINCARNATION to a better and better plane of Existence.

The ONLY FAITH which describes GOD as a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER, the ONLY RELIGION which speaks of SALVATION IS CHRISTIANITY. There is no inconsistency in this because JESUS declared, I have other flocks who know my voice. The determiners ensuring who reach SALVATION are not us, we simply know his VOICE, his TEACHING and his LOVE.