

Part Two.

Introduction. Part one's focus on Jesus as the Cornerstone came about from Peter's response to the accusations made against him. He knew that many of the leaders were unhappy that the apostles were proclaiming Jesus as resurrected. However, the occasion of this arrest was because he had spoken Jesus' name over a lame man who now walked.

We can learn from Peter's example on how to develop a strong faith and on how to make this public through God's acts of Kindness.

What is God's standard for 'acts of Kindness'?

The method of attack against the bad builders (those who reject Jesus) is not of condemnation:

John 3:17, 'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.'ⁱ (NIV)

Nor is it simply by being kind or nice. Most people are kind, even though this is affected by personal and cultural bias.

For example, a first aid training session filmed actors falling ill and lying down on a busy London street complaining of internal pains. The actor who was well dressed, fitting in with the type of businesspeople around at that time was attended to very quickly. The actor who then did the same, but looked like a tramp was ignored for at least five minutes before someone took compassion on them. It was not that the people were unkind that caused the delay, which in a real-life situation could have been the difference between life and death, but because they had an internal bias against the tramp and made assumptions that he was probably drunk.

Neither condemnation of the bias, nor a passive acceptance of it by being nice will provide the cure. The one who stood out as acting humanely was the one who had the confidence and conviction to act. When they did that, others then joined in offering to phone for an ambulance and asking what they could do to help.

Likewise, we can hold a personal belief in Jesus as the Cornerstone and of being built into his house but find our faith is lame because we do not have the courage of our convictions. We wonder how to communicate our faith to others, especially those who seem unfriendly toward Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Peter and John's acts of kindness were in saying and doing the things of Jesus and this got the people's attention – in this instance the lame man walked!

His accusers had no answer against Peter's challenge that it was for an act of kindness that he and John stood accused. That is what all the apostles were doing; speaking Jesus' words of life into their communities, showing signs and wonders of God's Kingdom and creating opportunity for hearts to be warmed by the Holy Spirit's touch and lay themselves upon the cornerstone. All of these acts were Holy Spirit led. To leave the Holy Spirit behind is to allow our faith to be made lame but to earnestly call for him will yield results that save others.

Spiritual First Aid Training

I suggest that if we were to adopt a mindset that Holy Spirit filled Christians are spiritual first aiders then we too can be healed from being lame.

To be effective we need to know who the foundation for an alive and active faith is, Jesus of Nazareth. That is why we started with teaching on Jesus as cornerstone. A quick reminder about him before we look at how the apostles worked out their purpose of being Jesus' spiritual first aiders:

We'll use the acronym CPR to help us!

C = Christ as Cornerstone

There is no other philosophy or religion that rests on Jesus as the sure foundation. No other religion has a personal God who calls people into relationship with him, offering forgiveness for sins.

If anyone tries to convince you that it is by your own works, by following moral teaching or by being universally all things to all people that salvation comes, do not be convinced!

Jesus is the precious cornerstone, and it is only through his grace that our sin is forgiven and eternal relationship with God given.

P = Proclamation

Jesus does not call his people to attack the bad builders, with a 'you are wrong, we are right' attitude. That way will not build God's Kingdom but will isolate others from it.

Peter and John were called to question over their proclamation of Jesus is Lord, over life and death. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit points out to their accusers that it is a Spirit-led act of kindness that has led to that moment. He goes on the attack by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus, highlighting his works and wonders. Do not stay silent but, in both words and deeds, ask for the Holy Spirit to work through you to show Jesus' truth and love.

R = Rescue

It is notable that after they are released that the believers all got together and prayed.

Did they pray directly against their accusers? Did they pray for God to strike their accusers?

No, hear their words,

Acts 4:23-26, The believers pray

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

“Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain?
²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the
Lord and against his anointed one. (NIV)

They recognise that attacks on Christ’s followers are against the Lord and his anointed one, Jesus.

They go on to say,

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ (Acts 4:29-30 NIV)

This is the rescue; that his people will call for his spirit to work through them to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of his holy servant Jesus.

Keeping with the spiritual first aid picture a moment longer; through the holy Spirit Christians are first aiders to the culture in which they live but it is the holy Spirit himself who is the defibrillator, bringing hearts to life in rhythm with God.

Friends, followers of Jesus, expect others to rise up against Jesus but know that against this backdrop Jesus will build his kingdom. Answer the antagonism of the world with the love and grace of Jesus, by saying and doing his works to show His kingdom.

May He bless you with His gifts of His Spirit and may His Kingdom be made a reality through your life. Amen.

ⁱ Scripture references are from The Holy Bible, New International Version, Anglicised Edition (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011) except where noted.