

You've seen the mysterious looking pieces of mail come to your house before. On the outside is very little to identify who it comes from. A glance at the postmark tells you though, bulk mail. Inside the letter screams at you, exclusive offer, you won't get this anywhere else. It's designed to entice you into thinking that whatever they're offering is so special you'll only find it with them. Others may have something similar and probably do, but if you think they're offering something super special you're more likely to buy it at their store.

The apostles, Peter and John, would from time to time run across a crippled man who had been that way since birth. Each day friends would carry him to the temple gate so he could beg for money. But Peter and John had an exclusive deal for him, certainly one he would find nowhere else. They healed him. Instantly he was able to walk. No explanation other than a miracle had taken place.

Exclusive offers or deals are something we often laugh off. We know the trick. But every so often a truly special deal does come along; something exclusive you really can't find anywhere else. In the first lesson from the book of Acts Peter gives an explanation for the healing of the crippled man. He does and goes further explaining how we are saved...

Salvation is found in no one else
The one raised to life
The one giving life

On Friday this nice lady behind me picked up something that I dropped checking out from Crest. This morning I saw some of you holding the door for others. You think of these as nice things to do for someone. What would happen if you were hauled off to jail for them or brought up on charges before a judge? Seems unlikely, but Peter was facing a trial for healing the crippled man. **"If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple..."** He couldn't believe he was defending himself for helping someone. Since when is that a crime?

Peter wasn't so foolish that he was blindsided about why he was on trial though. The elders and the religious leaders had asked him, **"By what power or what name did you do this?"** They knew the answer. It was why they were trying to intimidate Peter with the trial. Everyone heard Peter heal the cripple by these words, **"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."** This frightened the religious leaders. Why were Peter and John, both disciples of this man Jesus, talking about him as if he were alive? Jesus had been killed on the cross. Everyone knew it. But now the religious leaders were wondering if it might be true. Had Jesus been raised to life?

He was standing in front of some of the very same people who had convicted and put Jesus to death. Yet there was no hesitation to confess the truth. Peter spoke with authority. **"Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'If we are being called to account...and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.'" That's faith in one of a kind. It's faith in a fact; Christ Jesus was raised to life. It's faith that by Jesus' resurrection Peter had the power to heal. Peter was all too happy to confess his Savior, Jesus who was raised to life.**

Unexplained healings happen probably every single day. Moments where doctors and nurses struggle to figure out why someone can walk again after a paralyzing accident. Struggle to explain a disease simply going away. Science and medicine continue to search for answers. But for all the miracles there are plenty of times where no miracle at all happens. The paralyzed person never walks again. The disease does its worst and takes a loved one's life. In those times we struggle to explain both, why something good happened to one and bad happened to another. We struggle to understand why anyone has to suffer with problems at all. Why not a miracle this time? We're so busy looking for the earthly miracle we missed the heavenly purpose.

We attempt to explain the physical healing. We try and explain the resurrection of Jesus. But we can't. God wants us knowing it's not important. Not the resurrection, that's vital. But understanding how it happened physically is not. We must understand it spiritually. The religious leaders thought Jesus was gone for good. God raised him from the dead so Jesus will never die again. He alone is different; he alone is the world's Savior. He's the one we believe in and he saves us. Through the power of his grace the one raised to life brought physical healing and made a crippled man whole. We don't have the promise of physical healing. But through the power of his grace Jesus, the one raised to life, brings us spiritual healing. Salvation is found in no one else other than the one raised to life.

It's one thing if you can draw and create characters or scenes on paper. It's a totally different thing to take that scene or character and make it come to life in a movie or on television. Often times the same person can't do both. One person is usually the one coming up with the ideas and doing the initial conceptual sketches. But a totally different person is doing the technical work of making the 2-D sketch into 3-D for movies or television. Jesus was raised to life. But he wasn't just raised to life. Jesus gives life too.

Jesus never even touched him. Jesus physically touched most of the people he healed. This time though Jesus wasn't even present. The power to heal people hadn't left when Jesus physically left the earth. The disciples continued to have it through the powerful name of Jesus. But the power to heal wasn't the main purpose of why Peter and John were traveling around. Peter made it clear believing in Jesus was more important than anything. Rejecting Jesus is dangerous business.

The religious leaders were the builders of Israel. They were supposed to be in charge of the spiritual growth of Israel, making sure God's Word was still number one, and not going after idols or false gods. They weren't doing anything like that. They had killed the Author of Life, Jesus. **"The stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone."** Notice Peter's direct law application. "You builders. You rejected the one who was very important. You rejected him and he was made into the most important building piece of the whole building." They should've been looking for the Messiah. Instead they rejected the only Messiah God would ever send.

Every so called savior the world puts forward has been a fraud. They're just attempts to find our own way to salvation. It might start with the thought that if we could as a human race end discrimination and war we would find salvation. Or if we could become good enough like by legislating people's behavior. We think medical miracles save people and since human beings made that happen we're in control. Human beings, even though sinners, ultimately must be able to save themselves.

What Peter said was true then and it's still true today. **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."** There is no other Savior other than Jesus. No other Savior that can give life the way he gives life. No other savior that given enough time you could apprehend through meditation or in the endless books on endless shelves in endless libraries. Only God reveals him. Reveals Jesus Christ as the world's one and only Savior. The one who came back to life so that he might give us life. We hear of his resurrection in God's Word, and we hear how he gives us life. A living Jesus makes believers who live.

Apart from Jesus we have nothing. No purpose, no forgiveness, no life. The church would have no reason to preach or teach. Christians would have no reason to keep the faith or live a life for God. Without a living Jesus and without the certainty of salvation coming from no one else we have nothing. But if Jesus is alive then we have purpose. We have forgiveness of sins. We have life. We have a reason to teach others about Jesus and we have a reason for faith. Connected to Christ Jesus and through the name of the one raised to life we have life. Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus.