

Acts

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 April 1984

Preacher: Crowter, David (1931-2000)

[0 : 00] As the Lord is pleased to help and direct me, I venture to speak in his name from the words found in the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, in verse 20.

The 20th verse in the fifth chapter of the book of the Acts. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

These are the words of the angel to the apostles who had been shut up in the prison. But clearly also they are a message from God himself.

The evidence of the power of God working through the angel was very plain. The great gates of the prison were undone without any noise.

And it would appear that afterwards those gates were closed again in such a way that no one there had any realization that such a thing had happened and that the men had been released.

[1 : 31] And so the angel spoke from the Lord this message to his servants.

And clearly they received it as such and responded to it and exactly obeyed the word that they heard.

Angels are God's messengers. They are clearly holy and wise and intelligent and powerful creatures.

There are vast numbers of these spirits instantly and constantly going about to do God's bidding and to obey all his will.

We do not expect, I suppose, that it is most unlikely that any of us have had any such experience comparable to the apostles here.

[2 : 43] The angel clearly was seen and heard. Although in the ordinary way angels are invisible spirits.

But although we may not have this kind of acquaintance with the angels, there is no doubt that they do pretend upon the saints of God, that they do watch over us from day to day and night by night.

The word says in the Old Testament, to the saint of God he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

Although we may be really little conscious of it, there is no doubt that the ministry of the angels is very important.

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation?

[3 : 58] The Lord could work without such means. It was not essential for him to send an angel at this time to release the apostles and to speak to them, but he chose so to do.

And it is very wonderful that such majestic and glorious beings should so attend upon the saints of God, and indeed should attend the worship of God upon earth.

We read concerning the matters of salvation, which things the angels desire to look into. They have a very deep concern and interest and wonder as regards what the Lamb of God has done.

But in this case there was this word of direction spoken to the apostles, and you can see that it consists of three simple commands and three details respecting especially the last of those commands.

Go, stand, and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

[5 : 32] That was what the angels said. When they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning and talked. There are first then three commands.

The angels said, go. They were to leave the prison and to go toward the temple. No doubt such a word as this would have reminded the apostles of that commission that Jesus himself had given to them after his resurrection, when he said, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and preach the gospel unto all nations. And again he said to them that they were to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature.

The fact that they had been shut up in prison was only just a short interruption of their work. They were at once to return to it and to continue with it.

And as a result of such a commission as that, they and those who have followed them have taken the precious gospel of Jesus Christ into all parts of the earth and into our own land.

[7 : 08] And still there is need for the servants of God to go forth. Secondly, there is the command to stand.

That is, in the temple. When they had reached there, they were to stand. This means an erect and stationary and steadfast posture.

They were not to cringe or to lull about, but they were to stand as being bearers of a most important message, as being heralds of the King of Kings, ambassadors of Christ himself, as those that were by no means ashamed of the gospel of Christ, as those who had a vital message to speak to the people.

The usual posture of the Jewish teachers, the rabbis, was to sit when they taught the word.

But here the apostles were to stand. And for one thing, of course, it was a matter of great urgency with them.

[8 : 43] They were not to be there very long, not at this time, and not for a great deal of time afterwards. The very way that they stood before the people was an indication that they were not there permanently.

But the time to hear the gospel was comparatively short. For the words of life would not be spoken to them forever, but that it was a matter of great urgency.

As we considered that word in the Hebrews, today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Today is the word of the gospel.

We cannot tell about tomorrow. Never do we know what tomorrow will bring. We have no cause to assume that we shall live to see tomorrow.

Our lives are very fragile, and it is a matter of great urgency. Now is the accepted time.

[10 : 06] Now is the day of salvation. The word of life is before us today. How important, dear friends, it is that we should attend to it and respond to it as grace is given.

the very standing of these apostles meant that they had an urgent and most important message to deliver and that the time would soon pass when their voices would no longer be heard.

word of God comes to us as I have quite often brought it before you. In that way, it is the Lord's exhortation in his word.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his source.

Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. the message of life goes forth today.

[11 : 31] May the Lord grant us ears to hear it and hearts to receive it as a matter of most urgent importance.

And the third of these commands was speak. They were to speak the message that was given to them.

They were witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so as we read in those words which I find so moving at the end of this chapter that daily in the temple and from house to house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.

It was essentially the same message expressed really in those two words of that one name of the Saviour. Their whole message was in that and that was what they spoke.

Now dear friends we are given the most wonderful faculty of speech. It really is the most remarkable thing that we should be able to express in the words of our language so rapidly the thoughts of our minds and the feelings of our hearts.

[13 : 12] it is a marvellous way of communicating with one another. And the Lord himself said that of every idle word that men speak of that they shall give account in the day of judgment.

What power there is in the speech that we use, in the words that are spoken, and what a wonderful privilege it is to speak the words of this life in any measure, whether it be in our home, in the Sunday school, in the preaching of the gospel, in private conversation.

what a wonderful gift is the gift of speech, how great it was, the favor of these apostles, that when on the day of Pentecost their mouths were opened and the Spirit was given, they declared the wonderful works of God.

The word says, whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God.

What a privilege it is to be able in any measure to praise God from our lips, and how much that should be our desire, that our speech should be rightly ordered.

[15 : 01] Let your speech be all the way with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

What a great potential there is, both for evil and for good. in the words that we speak. Now these apostles were sent to speak.

We might have thought that it would have been more advisable, or more prudent of them to keep quiet for a bit. After all, before they are speaking, they have been brought into prison.

it might have seemed advisable for them to keep matters fairly quiet, or just to meet with their own people.

But instead, the command of God came in this way. They were to go into the temple, where they were sure to be seen. They were to speak those things which were sure to be heard, and sure to be opposed.

[16 : 15] They were to continue. what they had begun. The Lord plainly commanded them to carry on with that which he had appointed for them to do, and to leave the consequences with him.

I cannot tell why such a word as this should be so upon my mind to bring before you at this time. Is it a word from the Lord to you in any respect?

Go, stand, and speak. Is there not a sad lack often of that speech which is honoring to the Lord?

Well, might we pray constantly, O Lord, open thou my lips that my mouth may show forth thy praise?

These apostles were given a message from the Lord to deliver, a command to do it, and they went forth, and they did speak in his name those things which were for his praise, and for the good of precious souls who heard the words.

[17 : 46] Now, following the threefold command, there are the three details concerning what they were commanded to do, and especially concerning their speaking.

First, there is the place in which they were to speak. It was in the temple. Jerusalem, that was the temple at Jerusalem, which Solomon had built, and which had later been destroyed, had been re-erected, and had been recently enlarged by Herod.

Of course, the temple was by no means what it had once been, but it was the established house of God, and that temple where Jesus himself had so often taught, and he himself had there worked many miracles, and he also had stood and faced the enemies of truth fearlessly and faithfully, as his disciples were now called upon to do.

It was in the temple where God's name had been named, where his presence had been known, although it was doomed to destruction because of the great sins of the people, and especially because they had crucified the Messiah.

Although that was so, yet while it stood, the word was to be proclaimed there. so Jesus had said to his disciples that so it must be, that he himself must suffer and rise again, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

[19 : 52] First of all, the truth was to be spoken, was to be declared here. Nowadays, of course, there are numerous, numberless places of worship, the sanctuaries set apart for the worship of God, like this one.

And it is indeed appropriate that especially in the house of God, his word should be declared, still to be proclaimed as it was in those days.

You may notice that especially in this chapter, there is emphasis on teaching. You repeatedly find this word, it is teaching.

As a result of this, they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught. There was much instruction in those things which were set forth in the temple.

There were those things in which the people so needed to be taught. And how we do all need the teaching of the Holy Spirit with the word, that our hearts and minds may be instructed in the precious truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 27] And then also, the people to whom it was to be spoken go and speak in the temple to the people.

People were sure to be there, even early in the morning they were there. In the house of God, thus centrally established in Jerusalem in those days, there was a multitude of people coming and going.

Though there had been such a departure from the truth of God, and it had become to many such a formality, yet still great numbers came and went as regards the temple at Jerusalem.

It was still observed as God's house. The apostles never seemed to have any difficulty as regards a congregation to speak to.

There were no dwindling congregations in those days. There was never this problem. Finding a audience to hear the word of life.

[22 : 48] There were always people there in the temple to whom they could speak. We may be sure, dear friends, that as long as God's appointed way continues, and it is so much his appointment, as long as he sends his ministers to speak, speak, then there will be those who will hear.

In these days, we do have the written word of God, and so many more such a large proportion of the people in the earth now can read, which was certainly not the case when these apostles preached the word.

word. And we should all be very deeply concerned also that people should read the scriptures, and that the Lord may be pleased to bless the word as he so often has.

But still the word is to be spoken to the people, to those who will hear, whoever they might be in the temple. No doubt it was a mixed congregation often, but the words of life were to be spoken to all and sundry, to old and young, to Jew and to Gentile.

Anyone who was there was to hear the words of this life. And that is the last part of the verse here, the details of the message which was to be spoken.

[24 : 39] All the words of this life. The apostles did not apparently ask any question about this. It is an unusual expression, but they must have understood very clearly what it was that they were to speak.

All the words of this life. there is then a life, a special, a spiritual, a wonderful life, a life that the apostles themselves were very richly and powerfully experiencing.

They knew what this life was. They were full of this life. And there were the words connected with it, words in which that life was to be set forth unto the people.

And all those words were to be spoken. We cannot, of course, understand by that expression that every possible word was to be spoken, but that there was to be a full presentation of the gospel.

But they should act in the same way as Paul did later, when he could say to the elders at Ephesus, I kept back nothing that was profitable to you.

[26 : 05] They were to keep back nothing. He said, he had declared, he said, I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God, all that God has spoken in his word, and especially all that is contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All the words were to be spoken without fear. May it be so still. It is certainly my desire and exercise to speak all the words of this life, not to hold back anything that is profitable to you.

may the Lord grant us the hearts to receive all the words, whether they be words of warning or of reproof, words of conviction, or words of comfort and consolation, words of instruction, words of confirmation, whatever the word may be, if it is spoken in the Lord's name, and by his appointment, all the words are to be spoken, all the words are to be heard, for they are words of life.

This, of course, is the special emphasis here. Words of this life. The apostles were living a life which was markedly different from the lives of those around them.

It was certainly a very different life from those who were accusing them of raising all this trouble. And that was really why they were so disturbed about it.

[28 : 10] They could not bear these things happening. behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine. It was good doctrine, wonderful doctrine, most precious teaching.

But they said, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. they certainly deserve that, but they couldn't face it.

They felt they must do something to stop this teaching, and yet they could not possibly do it. Now, dear friends, these are the words of life.

Not just concerning this present life, life, although they do affect that indirectly. But it was a new life that these apostles were living and were experiencing in their hearts.

And I hope it may be said to you this morning, and indeed constantly. As Moses said to the people in his day, behold, I have said before you, blessing and cursing, life and death.

[29 : 35] Now, dear friends, the things that are spoken in the Lord's name truly are matters of life and death. And not just for this present life.

They concern our everlasting future as to whether it be, will be, with you, and with me, life, in the presence of God, or death, as banished forever from his loving and gracious presence.

The second death, the lake that burneth with fire, life is set before you. And where is that life to be known and to be found?

quite clearly and evidently, the apostles knew and constantly pointed to this. They said, in effect, now, just look at that cross.

Look and live. There is life to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ on account of his crucifixion, on account of his agonies and death, the offering that he once made forever for sin.

[31 : 01] As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, said the Lord Jesus, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life.

It is by looking to him that life is bestowed, that life is imparted through his cross.

Moses, in the wilderness, were surrounded by those serpent-bitten Israelites. On account of their sin, they had been bitten with those fiery serpents, and that bite meant that death faced them very shortly, and Moses raised up a serpent of brass, and told them to look, and those that did not look died in agony.

those that did look to that cross, to that emblem of the cross, to that serpent, they were healed.

And so it is still, as regards sin-bitten souls, the great message of the gospel is in that, to look, to look to that cross where the Savior suffered in faith, and then there will be life.

[32 : 36] There is life in no other. The words of this life are most certainly the words which lead and point to that precious Savior.

We shall never find life out of him. The message today really is much the same as it was last time I spoke to you here on the Lord's day concerning the vine and the branches.

There is life in the Lord Jesus Christ, and there will be life in our souls if we are united to him, and if we live by cleaving to him, but not otherwise.

How often he himself spoke of life, and the life that he had to give, how ready he was to bestow life on those who sought him for it.

He had only been a few moments with the woman of Samaria at the well, when he said to her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee at once.

[34 : 02] As soon as she had asked, he would have given her living water. And so he said, He that drinketh of this natural water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, a fountain, springing up into everlasting life.

Now dear friends, have you got that living fountain within you? Have you so received the words of life that they have had such a living effect upon you?

Jesus said concerning his teaching, which was the same as his apostles, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life, but there are some of you that believe not.

They did not believe, their hearts were hardened against these things, and it may be some of yours are, and yet those that did believe, they believed, they knew that the words of Jesus were spirit, and life.

They had such a life-giving, and a life-reviving, and a life-sustaining effect upon their hearts. Oh, do you receive the words of life, the words of Jesus himself, who said, I am the resurrection, and the life.

[35 : 42] He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.

He said, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

And that is the message of the gospel. In its simplicity, come to him and live. The words of this life, how precious they are to those that believe.

Not only have they been the means in God's hand of imparting life in the first instance, but again and again of renewing and restoring and reviving that life in their souls.

the apostle Paul speaks of holding forth the word of life. For it is, however feebly, it is held forth to you.

[36 : 53] Do you receive the words of this life? Later on in the Acts, we read of how the apostle Paul spoke. he spoke of the Lord Jesus and the way that he had suffered for sins and that through him everyone that believeth is justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Jesus, and yet some just blasphemed and railed against him. And he said that seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, we turn to the Gentiles.

What madness that is, to judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. that this is set before the people in the gospel, and yet there are those who will not receive it.

In their sin and folly, they are so blinded and hardened that they come amongst into that category of which the Savior spoke to those people and he said, but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.

In him there is this life to be had. He so freely gives to those who ask and seek it. May it not be said of anyone here this morning that you would not come to him who has such abundant life to give.

[38 : 45] My dear friends, in this word we see God's unchanging purpose. The fact that these apostles had been shut up in prison was not going to affect the preaching of the word.

The fact that again they were beaten and accused and forbidden to speak was not going to prevent them carrying on doing it. They had a higher command. The gospel was still to be set for.

The angel did not tell them to go into hiding, not to go somewhere else where it would be safer, but to go right into the temple and do again what they had done before.

God's purpose continues. He has a wonderful purpose of salvation. I could not possibly come and preach to you the words of this life unless I were convinced of that.

But in spite of all the hardness and unbelief and sin of the human heart, the Lord has a purpose to say unto everlasting life, and therefore the words of this life are to be proclaimed, and some will hear them.

[40 : 06] But the Lord's unchanging purpose continues. all through the ages, he has said that the gospel is to be preached, and therefore it must go, stand, and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

And we see here also God's unchanging message of salvation. It is the same now as it was when Jesus and his apostles preach.

It is simple and plain. Life is set before you. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Oh, that something that I may have said, or something that I might say might be so attended by the power of the Spirit of God, that it might convey this life to your souls.

Though in the Lord Jesus Christ there is life, it is because he laid down his own life in death, and has risen to the right hand of God, and has poured out of his Holy Spirit, it might be that there is life to be received.

[41 : 41] Do seek to know this life, that there is such a life, is absolutely certain, that you may know it if you come to the Saviour, that you will know it if you seek it earnestly in him, is absolutely certain.

The words of this life continue. you. The word of God is an unchanging word, the word of God, the word of the truth of the gospel, it endureth forever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you, that you might have life.

And so John says in his gospel, these things are written, these things are spoken, that ye might believe in the name of the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

O may the Lord grant us all this life. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Hymn number 876-876, Tune Evening Hymn 732.

When the chosen tribes debated against their God, as hardly treated, and complained their hopes were spilt, God, for murmuring to requite them, fiery serpents sent to bite them, a lively type of deadly guilt.

[43 : 46] Stung by these, they soon repented, and their God has soon relented. Moses prayed, he answer gave. Serpents are the beasts that strike them, make of brass a serpent like them, that's the way I choose to say.

Hymn number 876. When the chosen tribes debated, against their God has hardly treated, and complains their hearts were spilt, God, for maveric to requite them, fiery serpents sent to bite them, lively type of deadly guilt.

stung by these, they soon repented, and their God has soon relented.

Moses prayed, he answered gave. He answered gave. Serpents of the beams that strike them, make make of cross a serpent like them, that's the way I choose to say.

They was bandaged toil of plaster, rankling venom in the master, till the servant Moses took and took rid it high, far from my view it, bid the bitter look up down to it, light light light a tender relob in o'er light light light a tender relob

[47 : 22] Jesus thus for sin smitten wound and cruised and serpent be turned to the whose cross directs their pay while the earth why should I vampires uncherish why despair of pure love and rage look my soul look my soul who stuck to death thine and love's condition thine and love's condition thine and love's condition where earth cannot work they love's condition but thy goodness through the good death's within thee all about thee the all about thee but the remedies without thee see it in thy saviour's blood saviour's blood see the lord of glory dying say him cospin hear him crying say his bad and false and he look ye sinners ye that hung him look how deep your sins have stung him dying say that law can do the grace of our lord jesus christ the love of god fellowship and communion of the holy spirit be with us all amen as to the heart here families a godoris to