

place the same day, as the hour for such functions had passed. On the morrow the prisoners were arraigned before the court which sat at Jerusalem. The court—the Sanhedrim, consisted of some of the very persons who had compassed the death of the Lord. There was a great array of notables, and although the persons to be tried were only poor fishermen, yet it is altogether likely that it was felt to be an occasion demanding the attention of a full court. The object of the trial was to put a stop to the movement with which the events of the past few days were associated. As well might they have tried to arrest the light of the sun as to prevent the light of the gospel of Jesus from spreading further. The proceedings of the court were opened by the rulers putting a question to the prisoners. They wanted to convict Peter and John of sorcery by having worked a miracle, not in the name of God, but in the name of a crucified malefactor. They hoped to bring them under the awful death sentence pronounced in the law (Deut. 13).

III. THE APOSTLES' DEFENCE. In the plea presented by the disciples in their defence it is clear that their design was not so much to secure their own liberty, as it was to advance the name and honor of their Master, who had told them that their being brought before governors and kings would give them an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those whom otherwise they could not have access to.

In the defence we notice (1) *The Lord Jesus was honoured*. Before the rulers, the very body which had condemned Jesus to death, perhaps in the very chamber where the sentence of death was passed, a disciple of Christ declares his master to be the true Messiah. He leaves no doubt as to whom he means, for he adds, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified." The boldness of the declaration was astonishing. True heroism will not flinch in the face of great odds. He presses home the fact, that, although Pilate had given the formal sentence, it was they who had crucified the king of glory. He most emphatically declares the messiahship of the Lord Jesus, and boldly announces that it was through the power of the living Lord that this great miracle and the other wonderful events had been accomplished.

(2) *The gospel was faithfully proclaimed to the rulers*. Peter was determined that the

whole array of Judges should hear the gospel at least for once. He had received the commission to "preach the gospel to every creature," and he would not allow this opportunity of proclaiming its glorious truth to pass. The message he had delivered to the multitude he now delivered with the utmost directness to the rulers. How the court must have winced under his faithful declaration of the gospel. Especially would this be the case when he portrayed the part they had taken in the death of Christ, and declared that salvation could only be attained by them, or any one else, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

(3) *The only way of salvation was proclaimed*. Peter and John arraigned before the angry council were compelled to reveal their authority and power. The name they gave was one hated and despised by the Jewish rulers, yet the apostles declare that it is only by this means that salvation can be obtained. By him and by him only, by receiving and believing in him, and embracing his doctrines, can salvation be hoped for. There is no other name, no other religion, no not even that delivered by Moses, by which salvation can be had. In whom can we find a sufficiency, either of merit to justify, or of power to renew a sinner? If we were to apply to the highest angel in heaven to give us of his merit, he would tell us that "he himself is only an unfaithful servant, for that he does no more than is his duty." If we should entreat him to change our hearts, he would confess his utter inability to effect so great a work. Shall we look to ourselves? We are full of sin. We have not sufficiency in ourselves to think a good thought, much less to renew ourselves after the divine image. None but Jesus can atone for sin; none but Jesus could yield such an obedience to the law as should be capable of being imputed to others; none but Jesus can send down the Holy Spirit into the souls of men through whose power the renewing and sanctifying work is accomplished. There was but one door to the ark in the days of the flood; so there is only one name which has power to open the door of salvation to men—all the elements of power necessary for salvation, all that can reach the soul and fit it for a holy life, are found in Jesus Christ and in him alone.

IV. BEING WITH CHRIST PRODUCES CHRISTLIKENESS. What is meant by being