

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor
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18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
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Acts 3:11-26 (read vv. 11-21) “Hope for the Sinner”

Intro. What I have just read to you is Peter’s sermon that followed a great miracle of healing in the temple. The man who never walked a day in his life, who sat daily at the temple gate to beg, was instantly healed when Peter said to him, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (v.6b). What an awesome God we serve! So in the last of v.11 Luke writes that the people at the temple who saw the healed man were “greatly wondering.” But why should they be amazed at such a miracle? Didn’t they believe that there a God in heaven who has such power? They all believed in the mighty miracles of the Old Testament. And hadn’t they seen or at least heard of the many miracles of Jesus? This miracle was done in His name.

What do *you* expect from God? Do you expect to see God save a soul today? If a mighty revival broke out in the average church today, most of the members would be amazed. A church will never get the attention of those around them without a manifestation of the life-changing power of God. We need to pray that God will do amazing things in our midst.

But regardless of the rightness or wrongness of their wonder, it brought together a large crowd of people, who were very interested in what had happened. Now Peter was a good preacher. Any time a preacher gets a crowd together, he will want to preach! So Peter took advantage of the opportunity to preach to this big crowd about Jesus. We ought to be like Peter, looking for opportunities to tell people about Jesus Christ. So I want to take the opportunity that I have to preach about Jesus as well.

Now there are 4 main truths that I want to bring out from this text of Scripture. First, when God does a great work through us:

I. WE SHOULD GIVE GLORY TO JESUS

Peter asked the people why they were looking upon him and John, as if they were the cause of this miracle. This is similar to what we read in chapter 14:8-15 (and 10:26). The apostle Paul was instrumental in healing a man who had been lame from birth. As a result, the people said, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” They even began to offer sacrifices to them. People often associate power with the instrument of miraculous occurrences. So Paul and Barnabas immediately stopped them saying, “We also are men with the same nature as you....” They redirected their attention to the true God. If Peter and John had been self-centered, anxious to make a name for themselves, this was certainly the opportunity for it. But they knew that by their own accomplishment, talents, or personal holiness they could accomplish nothing (Jn. 15:5). This is a refreshing change from what Luke describes in his Gospel, where the disciples began disputing among themselves as to which one was the greatest (Luke 9:46; 22:24). They have finally heeded Jesus’ warning that “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11; 18:14; cf. 9:48; 22:26). So instead of taking the glory of the miracle of Jesus to themselves, they gave all the glory to God.

How alien this humble attitude is in our culture. We see people unashamedly bragging about their achievements on social media, and in other ways. People today will do almost anything to become famous, even if it means shooting innocent kids at school. Yet we ought to have the

attitude of John the Baptist, who said of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). God can only use humble servants who are interested in exalting God, and are not seeking to take credit for themselves.

So instead of Peter and John glorifying themselves through this miracle, Peter asserted in v.13 that God had glorified His Son Jesus Christ. There are several ways God glorified Jesus according to our text:

A. By Fulfilling Prophecy - Israel, and especially their religious leaders, sought to bring great shame and humiliation upon Jesus Christ. Notice what Peter said of Jesus beginning in v.13, “...whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life,....” (-v.15a). It appeared that they succeeded in bringing humiliation upon Jesus. How shameful it was for Jesus to be mocked and scourged by the Romans. How shameful it was to be crucified like a vile criminal, hanging on a cross, subject to the stares and mockings of the multitudes. Before the day was over they killed Jesus.

But even in this shameful rejection, Jesus Christ must receive glory. For the prophecies of the Old Testament predicted all of this. V.18 says, “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ [Messiah] would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.” One prophecy that Peter must have had in mind is Isaiah 52-53. The word translated “servant” in v.13 is *paida* in Greek, which is the very word found in the Greek translation of Isa. 52:13 and the other “servant of the Lord” passages such as Isaiah 42:1. In Isaiah 53 the “servant of the Lord” suffers greatly. You should read that prophecy to see how it was fulfilled in detail in the suffering of Jesus. Furthermore, Zech. 12:10 predicted, “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him....” Indeed, Jesus was pierced several times the day He was crucified.

God also glorified Jesus:

B. By Raising Him from the Dead – In v.15 Peter says that the Jews “killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” Peter achieved a startling contrast when he charged his audience with having killed “the Prince of life.” “Prince” (*archegos*) can also be translated “Author, Originator, or Source.” How could the very Source of Life remain dead? He was seen and praised by many witnesses. The apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 1:21 that God “raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.”

C. By Healing the Lame Man - The ultimate explanation for the cure lay in the “name” of Jesus. In v.16 Peter said, “And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” Back in v.6 Peter had said to the lame man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” Oh, the name of Jesus is full of power, not in a magical sense, but as summing up who and what He is. For “name” in Scripture refers to a person’s revealed character and attributes. Only faith in a living, omnipotent Christ could have brought about such a healing. A dead Christ could not heal this man. The cripple had been healed because Jesus had been glorified. From His place of exaltation He had endowed His disciples with power to act in His name, and to perform mighty works such as He had performed in the days of His bodily presence among them (John 14:12).

Now one point of application is this: God is always seeking to bring glory and honor to His Son Jesus Christ. We should do the same by our lives and by our words. We should not be seeking glory for ourselves, but we should seek to give glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But the main point that Peter was seeking to get across was this: his audience needed to change their view of Jesus Christ. They had rejected Him, but God has clearly exalted Him. They had shamefully treated Jesus, but God glorified Jesus. They were totally out of line with God. So they needed to have a change of mind toward Jesus Christ. And that leads to my next point. Notice:

II. WE SHOULD REPENT OF SIN

Two times, in vv.13 & 14, Peter pointed an accusing finger at his audience with the emphatic “you.” But even though the people had committed a terrible crime, Peter offered them hope. He showed compassion in dealing with them; he was not “holier than thou.” He acknowledges in v.17 that what was done to Jesus was largely done in ignorance. Jesus Himself said on the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).¹ So Peter opens for them a door, as it were, into the city of refuge. Remember that the cities of refuge were set aside for those who killed someone without premeditation. Here is a proclamation of divine generosity, even offering a free pardon to all who took part in the death of Christ.

But there is an important condition to receiving this forgiveness. Peter says in v.19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” God is willing to forgive even the greatest of sins, but they must first repent of this and other sins. In fact, the word “repent” in v.19 is an imperative, or a command. Paul said in Acts 17:30, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

What is repentance? It is a change of mind leading to a change of life. Peter calls upon them to change their former attitude about Jesus and bring it into line with God’s attitude. God had clearly shown His verdict by raising Him from the dead. If you believe that Jesus is anything less than the exalted Son of God and Savior of the world, you need to repent.

True repentance will also involve the other command of Peter in v.19, “be converted.” That word means to turn around. When you realize you are heading the wrong way in life, you should change your mind and turn to Jesus Christ. Also, the last of v.26 gives a similar aspect of repentance, “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.” We not only should turn to Christ but we should turn away from our sins. You can’t turn to Christ without turning from your sins. True repentance will lead to a change of conduct. As Jesus Himself says, you need to get off the broad road that leads to destruction and choose the narrow way that leads to life (Mt. 7:13).

Peter’s audience had an obvious need for repentance. He had just accused them of participating in the murder of Jesus Christ (vv.13, 14b, 15), “therefore” they should repent, as he says in v.19. What a blunder! Israel handed over their Messiah to the heathen Romans to be crucified. They asked that a murderer, who took a human life, be delivered to them instead of the One who gives life. Even those who were not actively involved in the murder were responsible for passive involvement through denial of Christ, and not speaking out to defend Christ.

You say, “Well I had nothing to do with the murder of Christ. I have never done anything really bad like murder or adultery. I do not need to repent.” Yet notice here that Peter also mentions

¹ Likewise, Paul said in 1 Cor. 2:8, “which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

their other sins. In v.19 Peter mentioned their sins (plural), and in v.26 Peter mentioned their iniquities (plural). We have many sins that we have committed.

One of the most useful pieces of equipment in my office is found next to my desk. It's the wastebasket. From time to time I throw something in the wastebasket. It is no longer useful, or even harmful to keep. Too many lives are heaped with rubbish that should have been discarded and tossed long ago. Old anxieties, stupid grudges, and smoldering resentments are held onto rather than discarded. And why would anyone hold on to sin when it is so harmful to us? It is time to repent, and get rid of those sins!²

Have you ever turned to God as a repentant sinner and trusted the Lord Jesus for yourself? We also need to apply this truth to our gospel presentations. Any presentation of the gospel is incomplete without repentance. It is not enough to “believe” in Jesus. You must repent of your sins. Too many churches are about recruiting warm bodies. We should be about transforming lives, and repentance is a major part of that.

III. TRUST IN GOD’S PROMISES

Peter says in v.25, “You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” He assures them that they are the recipients of the covenant promises made to Abraham. God promises to replace the curse of sin with His blessing. Yet here we see that the promise of blessing is not for the Jews only (Rom. 1:16), but for all the families of the earth. So if we will repent, we can trust God to keep the following promises:

A. Promise of Forgiveness – Sin brings a curse upon us. If we are to be blessed, we must have our sins forgiven and removed. So v.19 promises that our sins can be blotted out. This was not new to Peter’s audience. Isa. 43:25 says, “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”³ Actually, the word translated, “blotted out” (*exaleipho*) can mean, “to wipe off, wipe away.” Barclay reminds us that “ancient writing was on papyrus and the ink had no acid in it. It therefore did not bite into the papyrus like modern ink, but simply lay on top of it. To erase the writing a man simply wiped it away with a wet sponge.”⁴

If you transgress the law and are convicted, it will go on your record and show up on your background check when you apply for a job. That mark against you could affect you for the rest of your life. Yet sometimes a court will expunge your record. What a blessing that is! That is what God does with your sins. Likewise, in the book of Revelation, we read of the Great White Throne judgment. The book of works will be opened up, which contains a record of all your sins. Wouldn’t it be great to have your sins blotted out of that book!

Peter knew what this forgiveness is about. He accused the people in v.13 of the sin of denying Christ. Well, he had committed the same sin. It is as if he had said, “You have done no more than I did myself. It is not for me to heap reproaches on you. We have been alike in sin—and I can preach forgiveness to you sinners, because I have received it for myself.”

This blessing of forgiveness only comes through Jesus. He is the one who died for our sins on the cross. Furthermore, in v.25 Peter quotes God’s promise to Abraham, “And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Gal. 3:16 says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the

² Modified from R.D. Clewell via Sparks, Pulpit Helps, April 2005, p. 28 [Illus.#C-1272]

³ David said in Psa. 51:1, “According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.”

⁴ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: Acts* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), p.32.

promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ." The Messiah was the descendant of Abraham in whom this blessing became a reality. The blessing forgiveness only comes through Jesus.

B. The Promise of Deliverance from Sin - God not only forgives us of our sin, but delivers us from its power. In v.26 Peter said, "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." The same Greek word is found in Rom. 11:26, where Paul quotes from Isaiah 59:20, "He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." This is in keeping with the many promises of the Old Testament regarding the new covenant, where God Himself will give people an inward ability to keep the law (Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26).

I am so thankful that God has not only forgiven me of my sin, but to a large degree he has delivered me from the sins of my past. My life is no longer adversely affected by these sins.

So through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus, God will not only forgive your past, and change your present, but he will also give you hope for the future. So let us also see from our text:

C. The Promise of World Restoration – In v.19 Peter called upon Israel to repent. And if they would, notice the promise given beginning in v.20, "that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (-v.21). The Old Testament prophets often said that this old sin-wrecked world will be restored to the beauty of the original creation. In fact, it will even be better! For example, in Isa. 65:17 God says, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." Likewise, in Rom. 8:21 Paul confirms that "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Someday the curse of sin will be removed. The whole earth will become like the Garden of Eden again!

Peter indicates that the source of this refreshing will be "the presence (face) of the Lord." This will only take place when Jesus comes again. Jesus spoke to Peter and others about this in Mt. 19:28, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

But the Jews as a whole still refused to accept Christ. And so Christ did not come again soon after Peter made this promise. But I believe that He certainly would have if Israel had repented. Peter indicates this in v.20. This was a key hope for the apostles, as Acts 1:6 indicates.⁵ But regardless of the time of fulfillment, the main point I want to make is this: those who repent and trust in Christ as Savior will enjoy the fulfillment of this promised restoration. Not only are your sins forgiven, but you will have a glorious future in the Kingdom of God.

Now these verses certainly relate to the subject of prophecy in another way. The final blessing of this poor world is wrapped up in Israel's repentance. When the people of Israel repent and turn to God, they will become the means of blessing to the whole earth. So I believe that the day is coming when the Jews are going to be so distressed, that they will turn to Jesus Christ as their only hope. Rom. 11:26 says that all Israel shall be saved. God is at work in the nation of Israel. The gospel is being proclaimed there. There is a revival of Jewish expectancy for the Messiah.

⁵ There, they used the verb form of the same word used in v.21, translated, "restoration."

IV. HEED GOD'S WARNINGS

A. Hear God's Prophet – Quoting Moses, Peter said in v.22, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.” Peter quoted from Dt. 18:15ff, where God promised that He would raise up a special prophet like unto Moses. And when that prophet was raised up, Israel was commanded to hear Him. That Judaism looked for a prophet like Moses can be seen from John 1:21, where they asked John the Baptist is he was Elijah, or “that prophet?” Well, he answered, “No.” Who was this prophet that we should “hear?” Well, at the baptism of Jesus, a voice was heard from heaven, “This is my beloved Son. Hear Him,” giving the same command. That command linked Jesus to Deuteronomy 18. Furthermore, God worked mighty miracles through Jesus, just as He did through Moses.

The gospel is always good news. But we also present the bad news of people's sin and warn them of its consequences. So notice the warning of Moses, affirmed by Peter:

B. Or Be Cut Off Forever – Peter says in v.23, “And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.” Just as Israel failed to give heed to Moses, even so Israel as a whole failed to give heed to Jesus Christ, or His apostles. Thus, the warning at the end of v.23 was fulfilled. In 70 A.D. Titus, the Roman general, came with his army and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. It is estimated that over a million people perished, and the rest who were captured were sold into slavery.

Conclusion: If the warning of God's Word was fulfilled then, what makes you think that it will not be fulfilled in your life? Heb. 2:3 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” If you fail to give heed to Christ, and repent of your sins and believe in Him, you will be cut off forever from the presence of God in a place called hell. But God does not want this to happen to you! The Bible says it is not His will that any should perish but that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9b). So repent of your sins, turn to Jesus, and let Him forgive your sins! It will change your life and give you hope for the future.

Sources: F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954); H. Leo Eddleman, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts* (Dallas: Books of Life Publishers, 1974); Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); Oliver B. Greene, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. 1 (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1968); Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975); H.A. Ironside, *Acts* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers 1943); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931); W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Outline Studies in Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956); Curtis Vaughan, *Acts: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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