

Acts 3:1-26 | Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

¹⁷ "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²² Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.

²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Acts 3:1-26 | Times of Refreshing

Early in Jesus ministry he began to draw a crowd. Pharisees and teachers of the law gathered from all over Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. One of the men who desired to come see

Jesus was paralyzed. His friends carried him on a bed but couldn't push through the crowd to get their friend to the great healer. So they climb on top of the house and dig a whole through the roof (its now or never) and lower their friend to the presence of Jesus. Jesus saw the faith of the Men and said to the man on the gurney, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

The Pharisees began their grumbling. "Who speaks these blasphemies! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew this would cause a fuss. He provoked them on purpose. And in the midst of their grumbling he posed a question of his own. "Which is easier, to say, 'your sins are forgiven you', or to say, 'Rise and walk'? As a matter of fact it is easier to say rise and walk. To say your sins are forgiven and for it to happen means that Christ himself will bear the cost of sin, in hellish torment and death on the cross.

Luke 5:24 | But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he said to the man who was paralyzed - "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."

Jesus teaches the crowd. When you see me heal the sick on command, what you are witnessing is my authority to forgive sins. So with that story in mind let's hear the story of Peter and John and a paralyzed man.

1. Beautiful Gate

Acts 3:1-2 | Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Here again we have a man, lame from birth, who is carried by his friends to the gate of the temple called The Beautiful gate. This popular entrance to the temple would see a multitude of people pass by each day from whom he might ask alms. On this day at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Peter and John walk into the temple and he asks alms from them. Ours is an extroverted and shameless culture. To beg in the United States, you need markers, cardboard, and a clever wit. If you've traveled you may notice the more typical posture of asking alms is face down, subjected to the mercy of others to hear your cries.

Peter and John look at the man who is asking alms, and then they tell him to look at him. The man fixes his attention upon them, expecting alms. They make eye contact. Isn't it interesting we call it that?

Acts 3:6 | But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

He took the man by the hand and he walked and leaped and praised God. Everyone gathered around to see what had happened. Like an inverse car wreck.

2. Apostolic Authority

Acts 3:12 | And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”

When a crowd gathers, the apostles never miss an opportunity to begin proclaiming the gospel. Ever had friends that you liked but also made you a little nervous? Immediately they redirect their wonder. They can see that the wonder is starting to mount regarding them, but they of all people know, it is not their power nor their piety that has made the man walk. In order for the crowd to understand what has taken place they must understand that they have operated in the power of Jesus Christ.

A note on apostolic authority. Many read this and think that they should be able to do the same things in the name of Christ. Here is what is unique about apostolic authority. These first witnesses of Christ are able to operate within the power of Christ on command. This authority is not like the authority of those who have come after them. It is this same authority which allows them to write the New Testament. We have a subsidiary authority. We can proclaim their words as the word of God. We pray in Jesus’ name seeking Christ’s working and we pray in faith that he will.

This understanding of Apostolic authority is what guards the canon of the New Testament and appropriately recognizes how we are to interact with the authority of Christ. Commonly this perspective is called cessationism. It is the standard reformed teaching which means the sign gifts given to the apostles to testify to their authority have ceased. Cessationism does not mean we no longer expect Jesus to act miraculously in the world now. I pray for his action but I do not expect to direct it at will in the way the apostles did. But because the apostles could, I trust their preaching as uniquely authoritative. Which is the point of the signs, to authoritatively proclaim Jesus is Lord.

3. Times of Refreshing

Acts 3:15-16 | and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Peter explains to the crowd that this healing has taken place because the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the God of their fathers has glorified Jesus. Jesus was the Holy and Righteous one and he tells them plainly, you killed him. You killed the author of life. And God raised him from the dead. Peter will not ignore the culpability that already rests on us his listeners for their rejection of Jesus. This must be faced. Jesus came and we killed him.

It was my sin that held him there. But it is by faith in Jesus that this man has been restored to perfect health.

Acts 3:19-20 | Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

Here is the offer. Repent and your sins will be blotted out. Times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

They see the man healed and they preached forgiveness of sins. What is the connection? Don't you see. The man is healed so that you may know that when these apostles proclaim forgiveness of sins in Jesus name you might know they are speaking with authority. People get healed all the time. But people don't get healed on command ever. Broken bones are bound up, medicines are prescribed. But it never happens on command. But just like Jesus they heal so you may know that your sins may be forgiven in Jesus name.

Because it is one thing to be healed in the body, but who has the authority to cleanse your sinful heart? Who can reach down to the depths of your own errors, and transgressions, and iniquities and scrub your heart clean. Here is the authoritative proclamation of how that happens.

You repent. Please don't forget the old ways. Name your sin and repent of it. Seek to find the biblical framing of your sin. Look for the commandment you violated. You didn't stress clean at your family, you coveted someone else's house in your heart. You bore false witness. You provoked your children to anger. You lusted in your heart. Now repent and turn to Jesus who died to forgive your sins.

Now that you have repented. Rest in him. He has done it. It is over. Your sins are paid for. They are blotted out, no record of them. And now times of refreshing are flowing from the throne of God. Here are the times of refreshing, you can know that all your sins have been blotted out in Christ. This is the other side of repentance.

You don't have times of refreshing because you haven't really repented. Meaning you have kept some aspect of your sin treasured closely in your heart so you might keep entertaining it. Some resentment, some cultivated narrative that gets you off the hook. you can tell if the reason is even remotely clever. If it is even remotely clever you have not repented. "Well, what you need to understand about the relational dynamic is..." And second is that when you have repented you don't believe that Jesus has truly forgiven you and desires to lavish you with times of refreshing.

Here is Jesus's take on those who murdered him and repent and turn to him for forgiveness. He loves them. He lights up when he thinks about them. He's proud of them. They are his treasured possession and nothing can take them from grasp.