

“Gazing in the Wrong Direction”

Acts 3:11-26

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Introduction: The healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1-10) was a miracle designed to point away from itself.

1. The People Focused on Peter and John (vv. 11-12)

Acts 3:11-12 – “While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, ‘Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?’”

“Why do you gaze at us?” It would have been amazing had they been able to make this man walk in their own strength, but he was healed in the name of Jesus.

2. Peter Points the People Back to Jesus (vv. 13-16)

Acts 3:13-15 – “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”

Three Conduct Contradictions from the People:

1. They *delivered and disowned* Jesus when *he [Pilate] had decided to release Him*.
2. They *disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to them*.
3. They *put to death the Prince of life, but God raised Him from the dead*.

Three Titles of Christ from Peter:

1. *His Servant Jesus* (Isaiah 52-53)
2. *The Holy and Righteous One* (Isaiah 32:1; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9; Hebrews 7:26)
3. *The Prince of Life*. (Hebrews 2:10)

Faith in the Name Jesus

Acts 3:16 – “And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

3. Peter Goes from Prosecution to Pardon (vv. 17-19)

They Acted in Ignorance

Acts 3:17 – “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.”

The Bible makes a distinction between sin of ignorance and deliberate sin.

- Sin of Ignorance: Numbers 15:27-28 – “Also if one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a one year old female goat for a sin offering. The priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who goes astray when he sins unintentionally, making atonement for him that he may be forgiven.”
- Deliberate Sin: Numbers 15:30 – “But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.”

Ignorance doesn't remove a sinner's guilt, but it does moderate the conditions. A person who sinned deliberately was condemned but the person who sinned in ignorance was given the opportunity to seek forgiveness.

Luke 23:34a – “But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’”

Acts 3:18 – “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

Through their ignorance God fulfilled what He spoke through the prophets (Isaiah 52-53; Psalm 22; 31; 69; Jeremiah 11:19; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10).

Repent and Return

Acts 3:19 – “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;”

“Repentance is the summary response to the apostolic message. It stresses the need for change in direction, to change one's mind about where one is.” – Darrell L. Bock

4. The Prophets Point Forward to Jesus (vv. 20-26)

Acts 3:20-21 – “and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”

New Testament Moses

Acts 3:22-23 – “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’”

Peter quotes Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19) who predicted the arrival of a Prophet, the Messiah (Luke 24:19; John 1:19-28; 6:14).

Failure to respond to the work of Christ on their behalf leaves them culpable before God.

Acts 3:24-26 – “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

The covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:6-14).

May we continue to seek first the kingdom (Matthew 6:33) as we look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. What is the most amazing thing you've ever seen?
2. Peter in essence says, “You're looking at us but where you ought to look is at God” Can you think of some examples today of people looking in the wrong direction?
3. Peter's sermon was pretty confrontational. What might his sermon consist of if he were to preach it today?
4. Name some practical examples that make the distinction between sin of ignorance and deliberate sin.