

Flip the Script - Easter 2024

Acts 3:1–16 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the ULTIMATE script flip.

It appeared that Satan had won - the Son of God, the author of life itself, nailed to a cross and crucified. His cold, lifeless body lay in a dark tomb. A stone rolled over the entrance marked by a Roman seal, and a squad of soldiers stood guard to ensure that his corpse remained undisturbed. It seemed that the sealed tomb would go down in history as *a perpetual memorial to a lost cause named Jesus of Nazareth*.

- Peter and James had already returned to their prior profession as fishermen.
- The women were preparing burial spices, which were intended to cover the stench of decaying flesh.

It seems nobody expected what came next - think of it - Jesus was dead in the tomb, and every cell had begun the process of disintegration. Then suddenly, dramatically, God the Father poured out the Holy Spirit on the DEAD body of Jesus - and not only did life burst forth from death - it was a life far grander than ANY that had previously been.

In some ways, he was familiar; in some ways, He was radically different. This is Jesus 2.0. It was the Jesus of Revelation - not only raised, but raised in power, raised in authority.

- His previous life was perishable, but now, He is raised imperishable.
- He died in humility, but now He is raised in Glory.
- He died the Lamb; He was raised the Lion of Judah.

Jesus is alive, the script has been flipped and because of that - ANYTHING is possible.

Now, what I want to do is to show you how the fact that the script was flipped in Jesus' story can cause it to be flipped in your story as well. Look with me in Acts 3 verse 1.

TEXT: Acts 3:1–16 (ESV)

¹ “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.”

We are told that they went to the temple at the hour of prayer. At this point in redemptive history, the followers of Christ, mostly Jews, did not see themselves as a new religion at all—but rather as the crescendo of everything the OT builds toward. Christianity was, in a sense, fully realized Judaism. So, they still go to the temple as any pious Jewish man would. We are told it was at the ninth hour - that is 3 PM in our vernacular.

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.”

This lame man would not be allowed to enter into the temple proper, but rather a large side entry that was used by pilgrims. This was the same area where the money changers had set up shop in order to take advantage of Gentiles coming to the temple to worship.

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!’”

That’s how we know Peter and John were Baptist preachers... they were broke.

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.”

Solomon’s portico was a colonnade at the Eastern entrance to the temple complex. It was there that the first Christians would gather on the Lord’s day for worship. So interestingly, it seems this man, who had been lame his entire life, followed Peter and James into the temple to worship and give thanks, then departed with them to the area where Jesus’ followers would be gathered.

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?” ”

I love that statement by Peter - why are you shocked that this happened? This shouldn’t surprise you. WHY? Because of the Resurrection!!! Look at verse 13 -

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.**”

Notice the profound nature of what Peter said -

- You chose death over life, Barabbas over Jesus. AND
- You KILLED the Author of LIFE - then GOD raised LIFE from the DEAD.

- You KILLED LIFE; God RAISED LIFE.

In other words - God flipped the script.

- Because God flipped the script in the story of Jesus,
- God could flip the script in the story of this lame beggar.

So, why are you shocked that a man lame from birth is suddenly able to run a 100-yard dash? ***If God raised Jesus from the dead, anything is possible!!***

Then notice what Peter declares -

Acts 3:17–20 (ESV)

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.”

- Because God flipped the script in the story of Jesus,
- God could flip the script in the story of this lame beggar.
- AND God can flip the script on your story as well.

ILLUSTRATION: Psychologists tell us that our brains are designed to “fast track” decision-making. You have heard it said that the right hemisphere of our brain is more creative, and the left hemisphere is more logical - that is somewhat correct, but it can be better understood by saying - the RIGHT side takes all of the data it has available and FAST TRACKS decisions, while the LEFT side works slowly and methodically to analyze the data available.

Jim Wilder explains is this way - The right side starts processing our surroundings and draws conclusions before the left side is even aware of what is happening. Jim calls this “preconscious thought,” meaning that our right brain processes our surroundings faster and before our conscious awareness.¹

THAT IS WHY human behavior is so very difficult to change. It is, in some ways, hard-wired into our PRE-CONSCIOUS thought.

- When tempted to sin, have you ever felt like the decision has already been made as to what you will do before you have actually processed the temptation?

¹ Wilder, Jim; Hendricks, Michel. *The Other Half of Church* (p. 21). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- You know you shouldn't **gossip**, but you do, again and again; sometimes, it has happened before you are even aware of it.
- You know you shouldn't look at **porn**, but you do, again and again.
- Zoom out, and you can see that entire families are marked by certain sin patterns; those patterns tend to continue generation after generation.
 - Divorce, infidelity, financial troubles, substance abuse, generation after generation as if they were living according to a script. Each generation wants to change but seems totally powerless to do so.

BACK TO THE TEXT: The lame man in our story probably had some idea of how his life was going to go. Kind people would carry him, day by day, to the steps of the temple, where he would beg for help. He would throw himself at the mercy of strangers and hope that he survived. UNTIL - Peter and John came by and flipped the script.

Suddenly, things he had never dared to consider - were possible. The course of his life had been set since birth - NOW, anything was possible. WHY? Because the same power that raised Jesus from the dead had worked in his life.

When the apostles speak of the Resurrection of Christ, again and again, they speak of it in this way - BECAUSE, Jesus has been raised, your story really can change.

Listen to how Paul puts it in Romans 8:11–13 (ESV)

¹¹ "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

That same Holy Spirit that was poured out on the dead body of Jesus was poured out on the CHURCH at Pentecost. The same Holy Spirit, not a portion of the Spirit, *all* of the Holy Spirit, was poured out on the church.

Paul says here, in Romans 8, that the SAME Holy Spirit that was poured out on Jesus Christ that raised Him from the dead into an unstoppable life is DWELLING IN EVERY BELIEVER AND THAT IS WHAT CAN EMPOWER YOU TO FLIP THE SCRIPT.

ILLUSTRATION: When I started college at the University of North Alabama in 1995, one of my first classes was psychology. I will never forget the first assignment. We were to do two things.

- **Assignment 1** - We were to write a paper on the relatives that the oldest people in our family could remember.
- **Assignment 2** - We were to write a paper on our earliest memories.

For the first assignment, I interviewed my grandmother on my Father's side, who was in her 80s at the time. She could remember Benjamin Franklin Terry - AKA "Big Frank."

Frank was a butcher in Hartselle, Alabama, and I am told that he could hold two quarters of beef, one in each hand, and rack them on his wagon. He was also a severe alcoholic and an incurable gambler. In fact, he died after being shot at point-blank range after winning a card game. He lived long enough to beat the other man to death before he himself expired. I'm told that was one of 3 men he most likely killed in his day.

For the second assignment, I wracked my brain to try and discern my earliest memory. Ironically, it also revolved around a card game. For some reason, my father had taken me with him to Decatur, Alabama, to the home of John McBride. Dad, John, and two other men were playing poker and drinking. I was sitting on the floor in the corner, playing with Hot Wheels. I remember Dad winning a particular hand, pulling the money into his lap, and then John standing up and breaking a beer bottle over Dad's head. The two men fought for a while, then Dad stood up, grabbed me by the arm, loaded me into his white cargo van, and drove home. I don't remember being upset about what had happened. Later, I found out that was a sign that I had likely seen that sort of thing before.

Since that time, I have discovered that my family has been marked by substance abuse, violence, infidelity, and godlessness for several generations.

So you get an idea of the STORYLINE, the SCRIPT I was born into. I was taken home from Decatur General Hospital to a single-wide trailer.

IN OTHER WORDS, I'm not supposed to be here today. I'm married and have two kids in college, one in high school. This wasn't the script the world, the flesh, and the devil had for me.

WHAT HAPPENED?

- In 1982, L.B. Voss, shared the Gospel of the risen Savior with my Father, and the same Holy Spirit that was poured out of the dead body of Jesus, raising Him from the dead, was poured out on Billy Carl Terry.
- In 1994, I heard Charles Stanley preach the Gospel of the risen Savior on the radio and the same Holy Spirit that was poured out of the dead body of Jesus, raising Him from the dead, was poured out on me.

So, when I'm tempted just like "Big Frank" was - it is that same Holy Spirit that gives me the power to resist when I am willing to receive it.

Here is what I'm saying - the script that the world has set for me was one of addiction, infidelity, and broken marriage. The same power that raised Christ from the dead, flipped that script for me and my family and it can for yours as well.

Peter tells us how it can happen in our text:

Acts 3:19 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.”

REPENTANCE is a change of mind that results in a change of direction. The Greek word is “Metánoia”. META = CHANGE and KNOSIS = MIND.

- **MIND CHANGE #1** - Change your mind in regard to who Jesus is and what He has done. You cannot purge your own sins; you cannot atone for your own sins... if that were possible, God would not have had to send His Son to die on the cross.
- **MIND CHANGE #2** - Change your mind about the way things are. Listen, this world is being taken over by the clown show.

C.S. Lewis said, “I believe Christianity to be true in the same way I believe in the sun, not only because I can see it, but because I can see everything else by it”.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, OUR WORLD IS A MESS. We are careening downhill at breakneck speed in a car without breaks, driven by clowns. Something has to change.

I want to submit to you today that the Gospel of Jesus Christ holds our nation's best hope for a radical change of the story. However, it is not likely to come this time through some massive revival like we saw in the Great Awakening, or even in the massive crowds in stadiums like we saw in the ministry of Billy Graham... this time it will come through individuals changing their mind and receiving that same Holy Spirit until their family story is flipped. It will come family by family, if it comes at all.

I read this week that someone wrote that traditional marriage is nothing more than glorified prostitution because it involves sex and economics. Well, that is true; marriage involves sex and economics. BUT THE PROBLEM IS NOT THAT BOTH INVOLVE SEX AND MONEY - the problem is all the things that prostitution is NOT.

- Covenant marriage means - one man and one woman till death do they part.
- It means having kids and raising them in a home with a mom and dad.
- It means minivans and school lunches.
- It means mowing the yard and fixing dinner.
- It means holding down a job.
- It means standing up for one another.
- It means holding your spouse's hand as they slip off into eternity.

FOLKS, I think you know that the script desperately needs to be flipped. When the President of the United States declares the holiest day on the Christian calendar to be a day to celebrate Transgenderism... we need a change.

IT was said of the Apostles, In Acts 17:6 (ESV)

“These men who have turned the world upside down...”
The fact is, they were turning it right side up.