

The Apostolic Preaching, Pt 4 – Acts 3:12-26

Main Idea: Faithful Gospel proclamation is the presentation of a compelling argument fully supported by the facts presented in Scripture that leaves whoever hears the message with an urgent need to respond.

I. The Exaltation (of Christ) | Acts 3:12-16

The miracle performed in the name of Jesus Christ through Peter was immediately followed by a faithful proclamation of the Gospel. As it happened before the first sermon ever preached in the history of the church, a miraculous sign served as the introduction to Peter's second sermon recorded in Acts. **The Apostolic preaching was focused not on miraculous signs or the Apostles themselves but on the person and work of Jesus Christ.** Every time the Apostles spoke, they did it in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The name of Jesus was so central in the Apostolic preaching that in Acts 4, Peter and John were arrested, a council was gathered (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes) to discuss the Apostolic teaching, and the charge was that the Apostles should no longer "speak or teach at all in the name of Christ" (Acts 4:18). **The Apostles, not concerned about displeasing religious leaders but seeking to honor Christ at all cost, continued to exalt the name of their Savior.** According to the NT, the proclamation of the Gospel is not about making people feel good or creating a religious experience. Faithful Gospel proclamation is seen in presenting a compelling argument fully supported by the facts presented in Scripture that leaves whoever hears the message with an urgent need to respond (either by accepting or rejecting it).

Peter begins his second sermon by defining how the crowd should understand the event that had just happened. A man crippled from birth was made strong and now leaped for joy in the temple, "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power and piety we have made him walk?" (v.12). The basis for the miracle performed was God's power and willingness to make a lame beggar well. **The lame man was healed not by any inherent power in Peter but by faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter leaves no room for people's interpretation of the event but immediately attributes it to the glory of Christ,** "The God of Abraham, the God Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus" (v.13). The glory of Christ does not come from men but from God Himself. He is the source and the receiver of all glory. Christ does not depend on men to be glorified (John 17:1, 4, 5, 10). **Christ's eternal glory is displayed through the fulfillment of God's promises in the person and work of God the Son (His Incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension).** The Jews thought that by killing Christ, they would no longer have to deal with Him. However, His death proves even more the unbelieving world's guilt. Peter once again reminds the crowd that, when given a choice to deal with Christ, the decision was to reject Him, disregarding even the advice of a Roman Governor, "Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release Him" (v.13a).

Pilate was well aware that the crucifixion of Christ was a blatant injustice. He declared Jesus innocent no less than six times (Luke 23:4, 16, 22; John 18:38; 19:4,6). He repeatedly sought to release Him (Luke 23:12-22), yet he had no choice. The Jewish leaders had him backed into a corner. They had already complained to Rome and put Pilate's position in jeopardy. Another complaint would have cost him his place as governor (John 19:12-16). It is with all this background that Peter confronts his hearers with the enormity of their sin in executing the Messiah. All faithful preaching must follow Peter's example of rendering men guilty before God. **Only those who see themselves as sinners will recognize their need for a Savior and comprehend the work of Christ.** Faced with the choice between their innocent Messiah, and the guilty murderer Barabbas, they chose the latter, "You kill the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are all witnesses. And His name—by faith in His name—has made this man strong whom you see and know" (v.16). Through faith in Christ's name, the crippled man was made strong. By grace, the man was saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is the object of faith that saves. Christ is exalted by man's faith in Him and His work.

To Ponder:

1. In what ways can my faith in Christ exalt Him?
2. If faith comes from hearing (Rom. 10:17), how can I practically help others grow in their faith?
3. Why can it be tempting to ignore the truth that there are only two possible responses to the Gospel?

II. The Exposition (of Scripture) | Acts 3:17-21

Starting in verse 17, Peter urges the crowd to respond to the Gospel. As he pleads with them, he reminds them that they “acted in ignorance” (v.17) as did their rulers, “But what God foretold by the mouth of all prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He thus fulfilled” (v.18). Yet, Peter also recognizes that even if they acted in ignorance, they are still guilty of their sin. The death of Jesus Christ was no accident. Instead, it fulfilled all prophetic expectations of the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15; Num. 24:17; 2 Sam. 7:12-13; Ps. 2:7-9; Isa. 8:14; 11:10; 42:1; 52; 53). In light of the undeniable truths revealed in the OT, Peter urges the crowd to respond to the mercy of Christ, “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out” (v.19). **Repentance is more than anything an intellectual response. It takes the turning away from going a certain direction, stopping, and moving the opposite direction.** It takes the change of one’s mind, which Paul describes as *metanoia* (Rom.12:2), for true repentance to take place. As a result of repentance, a liar no longer lies, an adulterer no longer cheats, a thief no longer steals. Granted, for a Jewish crowd, the idea of “turning again to God” was unthinkable. Because of the covenants established with their forefathers, they thought they possessed God regardless of their condition. They trusted their salvation to their bloodline. They thought they were righteous before God on account of their commitment to the law and their sacrificial system. However, the Gospel urges all over the fact that the only way for people to have their sins blotted out is through repentance and faith in Christ as the fulfillment of God’s promises to His people.

Sacrifices, the temple, or even circumcision could not blot out anything. The Jews were indeed physical Israelites, but that did not make them inheritors of eternal life. What they needed was union with the true seed of Abraham and David: Jesus Christ. **Our ultimate problem is not something outside of us but inside of us (Matt. 5:27-28; 15:11).** Only Christ can forgive people’s sins. To have your sins blotted out is to have them completely forgiven, wiped away, and not counted as a transgression against God anymore (Heb. 8:12; 1 John 1:9). The command to repent occurs throughout the New Testament, appearing in every sermon of the Apostles. The “refreshing waters” mentioned by Peter in his sermon point to the result of genuine repentance: salvation. Peter is not referring to earthly or physical refreshing but spiritual and eternal refreshment in Christ (John 4:14; John 7:37-38), which will find its consummation at His return. Christ will come again, and on that day, there will be those for whom He comes to rescue and those for whom He comes to condemn.

To Ponder:

1. What are some misconceptions people have regarding the forgiveness of sins?
2. Practically, what does genuine repentance require?

III. The Exhortation (of Sinners) | Acts 3:22-26

In verses 22-26, Peter expands upon the truth that Christ will come to judge the world, “And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet, shall be destroyed from the people” (v.24). **Like Moses, through whom God performed many mighty and miraculous signs, and through whom God has delivered the ethnic Israel out of earthly enslavement, Christ, the One of whom Moses said, “The Lord will raise up for you like me from your brothers. You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you” (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22) is the One who brings the true Israel of God (Luke 3:7-9; Rom. 9:6; 11:25-26; Gal. 6:16) out of the spiritual bondage of sin.** Until the mind and heart of man is healed and enlightened by the Gospel, the natural faculty of man cannot discern the things of God or enjoy the refreshing water of salvation (Luke 16:31). Indeed, the exodus and deliverance of Israel is a type—an event that points to something greater and eternal—the salvation of God’s people. **In every way, Jesus is greater than Moses; in every way, God’s true Israel is greater than the ethnic and religious Israel of the OT.** In the closing verses of the chapter, Peter once again presses the Jewish audience to respond to the person and work of Christ. Moving from Moses to Samuel and all the prophets that came after him, Peter argues that **there has been an unbroken line of prophetic expectations that Jesus Christ has now fulfilled.** Jesus is the culmination of their story, and all they can do is to recognize that, in Christ, God has fulfilled His promises, “God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness” (v.26). To and through the Jews the law came. In Jewish flesh Christ has come, in the temple and in synagogues He taught, and during Passover weekend He died, showing proof that He came first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16-17; 2:9-11; Matt. 15:24; Isa. 2:3). Therefore, **the problem of humanity is not the lack of information but the lack of repentance.** The Gospel offends because it calls people to repent. If you have not yet come to repentance and faith in Christ, Peter’s sermon calls you to change your mind.

To Ponder:

1. Why is it dangerous for churches/believers to be accepting of sin/sinful lifestyles?