

Acts 3:1–26

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[0 : 0 0] scripture text is Acts 3 verses 1 to 26 on page 1009 of the White Bibles. Please stand for the reading of God's word. Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour, and a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the temple that is called the beautiful gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, look at us. And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 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.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astonished, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 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.

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. But you denied the holy and righteous one, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

And you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. In 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 help in the presence of you all. And now, brothers, know that you acted in ignorance.

[2 : 3 1] I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom you must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke to, spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Moses said, the Lord God will raise up, raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.

And all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and those who came after him also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your father, saying to Abraham, and in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

You may be seated. Just a brief prayer as we get started.

[4 : 10] Father, your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Would you give us life, oh Lord? Lord, according to your word.

We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. What does the church have to offer the world?

What do the people of God have to offer? Let's put it this way. What is the greatest gift the church has to give?

Historically, the church has offered much to the world. Music, art, political systems, ethics, social reform, education, all good and great things.

But if you were to press into this question, what is the greatest thing the church has to offer? What must it be? It must be something unobtainable by any other means.

[5 : 15] What is it that the church has to offer that no other source can offer? This morning may be clear from the outset that the greatest gift the church has to offer the world is the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can and we do and we will continue to produce art and music and literature, political change. We will uphold ethics. We will push for social reform and lay claim on education.

But these offers are all subservient to the greatest offer. Namely, the good news of Jesus Christ. Do you believe this?

Do you believe this? My views were challenged when I encountered a quote from a 19th century Scottish theologian, George Smeaton.

He writes this, To convert one sinner from his way is an event of greater importance than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

[6 : 20] Let me reread that. To convert one sinner from his way is an event of greater importance than the deliverance of a whole kingdom, a whole nation from temporal evil.

It's quite an assertion, is it not? It's quite outlandish. George, you're saying that the salvation of one individual is greater than the deliverance of all social ills in the United States of America.

Wow. Wow. May our time this morning move us in this direction to the understanding that our greatest gift to the world is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the promises bound up within him.

We continue our year-long march through the entire book of Acts this morning. Continuing on from last week, we saw this incredibly dynamic summary statement of what was taking place in the early days of the church.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. And in verse 43, we read, in chapter 2, verse 43, And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

[7 : 42] It might have jumped out at you. It did to me. Because my initial question is, what wonders? What signs? Well, Luke anticipates this.

Because immediately after, here in chapter 3, we find the first recorded miracle done by the apostles. Following Jesus' ascension back to the Father.

We will find that the miraculous work being done through the disciples is indicating to you and I, the reader, that the power of Christ continues in the world. He is continuing to do work.

The miracle, chapter 3, verses 1 to 11, however, is insufficient in itself. It's not self-authenticating. It doesn't convert everybody.

It doesn't make a believer out of everyone. It's not fully convincing. Incidentally, Luke is establishing a pattern for us in Acts, that miracles are often accompanied by messages.

[8 : 44] We've seen that already in Acts, chapter 2, and now again in Acts, chapter 3. The miracle itself is a staging for the message.

Verses 12 through 16. Miracles are purposed in the Bible. They are not random acts of divine intervention or interruption in the world. They are often followed by an explanation because they themselves are not clear.

The miracle we'll find this morning requires a message, an explanation. And the message we'll find announces a makeover.

I had to stick with the alliteration. The miracle required a message. The message announced a makeover.

I don't even like that word. But I'm in it. The miracle. The apostles, along with the other believers, were in the habit of daily entering the temple.

[9 : 48] We see that at the end of chapter 2. On this day, in the middle of the afternoon at 3 p.m., they approached the temple again. And they were encountering a man born unable to walk, begging at the temple gate.

It's doubtful that this is the first time that they have encountered this individual. For he was laid at the gate daily, the Bible tells us. The gate that is called beautiful.

The gate in the background may have been beautiful, but the scene in the foreground was ugly. The life of the lame was one of confinement, restriction, dependency. He was socially outcasted, dependent on the mercy of worshipers, dependent on the kindness of friends and family.

The man is a picture of complete helplessness. One writer puts it this way, pretty provocatively, asserts that the individual was most likely exploited for gain.

Those who carried him there were doing it not out of love, but for profit. Humanly speaking, it is a life we wish upon no one. Even today, with all our advancements in technology and medicine, the lame man, he is completely alienated, and his physical position is noteworthy.

[11 : 06] He is outside the gates to the temple. And it is being contrasted by Luke, intentionally, with all those entering and going into the temple.

Jewish law prohibits the offering of blemished animals. You see that in the Old Testament. Those possessing physical defect, you were not allowed to offer to God.

The law itself prohibited the disabled to serve as priests in God's temple. In Israelite society, the lame were often seen as lesser individuals, lesser humans, even despised.

They were lumped. If you're familiar with the Gospels, they were lumped in this group of people as social and religious outcasts. Even the disciples themselves believed this. You remember the story.

The disciples are walking with Jesus, and they see a man in John chapter 9 who was born blind. And their question to Jesus is, Jesus, this man born blind, whose fault is it?

[12 : 10] Is it his parents' fault? Did they sin? Or is it this man's fault that he's blind? Or did he sin? And Jesus answers them, Well, it's not that this man sinned or his parents, but his condition is there so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Peter would soon demonstrate this reality in our passage this morning. As the lame man fixed his attention on Peter, the apostles declared, I have no silver. I have no gold. But what I do have, I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Rise up. Rise up and walk. Peter reached out his hand, raised him by his right hand. Strength was infused into his feeble legs.

Muscles were restored. So much so that the text doesn't actually just say that he limped up, but that he leapt to his feet. He began to walk.

And then he ran around and went and told everyone. No, actually he didn't. He didn't run home to tell his loved ones. He didn't run through the streets of Jerusalem. He did not run home.

[13 : 25] He did not run and go find his friends. The Bible is so intentional to tell us what he did next. He entered the temple with Peter and John, walking and praising God.

From the place he was shunned from entering, he was now shouting praises to God Almighty. The man, the lame man, who was relegated to begging outside the temple for the entirety of his life, was now found leaping and praising God inside the temple.

Well, the lame now leapt. The muted tongue was now singing for joy. The one who was outcast was now brought in.

This was long foretold by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 35. And I'm just going to read a portion of it. Isaiah 35, verses 3-6.

The prophet writes this, Strengthen the weak hands. Make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance.

[14 : 41] With the recompense of God, He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened. The ears of the deaf unstopped. Verse 6. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute shout for joy.

Luke understood something. What Isaiah foretold as prophecy, Luke is recording as history.

Luke understood that the life of Jesus, The death of Jesus, The rising of Jesus, The ascension of Jesus, Changed something.

Inaugurated something. Started something. A brand new era. Everything that was about to transpire, Was fulfilling what had been foretold.

Lacking silver and gold, Peter offered what he had. Namely, Jesus and his saving, Restoring power. The reality of the matter is this. Peter could have offered all the gold, And the silver in the world.

[15 : 52] But the man's condition would have remained. He could have offered all the riches of the world. But still, Only Jesus could have restored.

All the riches in the world pale in comparison. Because Jesus is far more valuable. Well, the miracle required an explanation.

Which leads us to Peter's message. The message. The miracle drew a crowd. You begin to see that. The formerly lame man, In verse 11, Is still clinging, The Bible says, To Peter and John.

And they're assembling, In what is known as, Solomon's portico. A giant crowd. Peter's sermon can be viewed, Rhetorically in three parts.

He reviews past events. You see that. What God has allowed to be done, In verses 13 to 18. Generally, Second half of 13 to 18. What was done in the past.

[16 : 58] He explains what God is doing, Right now in the present. The front half of 13. And verse 16. And then he outlines, The future.

In verses 19 to 21. His sermon is about, What God has done in the past. What God is doing in the present. And what God will do, In the future. And Peter addresses the people, Men of Israel.

Why do you wonder at this? Why are you, Why do you stare at us? The message is largely, An indictment. Declaring the audience guilty. It's quite scathing, And accusatory, If you follow it along, As it was being read.

It's reinforced by Luke's usage, Of the second person, Plural. You'll see it. God glorified his servant, Whom you delivered over. You. You delivered over. Verse 13.

Oh, Incidentally, You denied, The holy, And the righteous one. And you asked, For a murder, To be granted to you. An incredible play of words, In verse 15.

[17 : 59] And you killed, The author, Of life. It highlights, The corporate rejection, Of the people of Israel, Of the one God had chosen.

The one that Israel rejected, Was the one that God had, Actually selected. Namely, Jesus. The one who they had, Overlooked, Was now the one, Overlooking, Them.

Peter is saying, You're astounded, That a lame man, Was raised. But you're ignorant, To the fact, That a dead man, Was raised.

You're astounded, By this miracle, That a lame man, Was raised. But you're entirely, Ignorant to the fact, That a dead man, Was raised. The message, To the Jewish crowd, Is full of content.

So much content, That it's actually difficult, To unfold in our time together. But there are two things, That must be mentioned. The first is, What has taken place, Has been purposed, By God, From the beginning.

[19 : 00] The number of times, That God is mentioned, In the passage, Is noteworthy. The gospel is the record, Of God at work, In the history of his people. You'll see it. I'll point them out.

Verse 13, God glorified. Verse 15, God raised. Verse 18, God foretold. Verse 21, God spoke. Verse 26, God sent.

What is taking place here, Is God's idea, From the beginning. His purposes, His plans. You see, When you, When, Religion in general, Is accused of being, This man made, Formulaic invention.

Humanly crafted ideas. The bible actually goes, To great lengths, To confront that very notion. This was not your idea. Your idea was, You delivered Jesus over.

You denied him, In the presence of Pilate. You denied the holy, And righteous one. You killed the author of life. But God, Is reminding us, That this plan, Is his plan.

[20 : 13] Secondly, Secondly, What has taken place, Has been foretold, By the prophets, And fulfilled in Christ.

The number of Old Testament characters, Who are mentioned, Is quite many actually. All that to say, That these Old Testament, Passages are cited, And these characters are mentioned, Because, Luke is trying to show us, That the trajectory, Of God's unfolding plan, According to the Old Testament, Is all culminating, In Christ.

And the message, Summons all these, What Peter is doing, In his message, Is he's summoning witnesses, So to say. He's summoning witness, To testify, And they're all attesting, To the same thing.

Namely that God, Raised up, And glorified Jesus. So you have Moses, Being called to the stand, In verse 22. And Luke cites, A passage in Deuteronomy 18, Where in verse 22, It says this, Moses said, In verse 22, The Lord God will raise up, For you a prophet like me, From your brothers.

You shall listen to him, And in whatever he tells you. John Christos, A fourth century, Early church father, Puts it so vividly, He says this, Christ, Sent the Jews, Back to Moses, So that, Through Moses, He might draw them, To himself.

- [21 : 49] And in the same way, Moses, Hands over his disciples, His followers, To his teacher, And commands them, To believe him, In all things. Another character mentioned, Is Abraham. Interestingly, He's the first and the last, To be called forth. And Luke makes a staggering assertion, That the promise given to Abraham, That his offspring, Would be a blessing to all humanity, Does not speak, To the nation being a blessing to others, Rather it speaks to one in his family, Who will be the blessing.
- The religious leaders, Of the day, Likely interpreted, The original promise to Abraham, To mean this, That the nation of Israel, The people of Israel, Were going to be a blessing, To the world.
- Which would go, Along the lines of, The world is better, Because, The Jews are here. Yet Luke confronts them, And says, No, actually.
- The world is not, Blessed because of the nation of Israel. The world will be blessed, Because of the individual, Who emerges, From Israel. Namely, Jesus of Nazareth.
- [23 : 03] It's actually, It's a quite, It's a punch to the gut. From our present vantage point, The nation of Israel, Is far, More a point of contention, Than a blessing.
- The region, The region is filled, With tension. The nation is filled, With conflict. The future is filled, With uncertainty. That may change, In my lifetime.
- And I may have to, Rescind these words. But I can assure you this, That the Lord, Is far more obsessed, With the servant, He has raised, In verse 26.
- Than the rising, Of falling of nations, Who are falsely believing, That they are God's hope, For the world. We must dispel, Any notion, Of this, In our thinking.
- Those who heard, Peter's sermon, Were rebuked, For such thinking. That in their minds, The people of Israel, Were going to bless the world. They were God's gift, To the world.
- [24 : 16] But Peter, Actually says, No. The gift, According to verse 26, Is God raised up, His servant. And his servant, Is the hope, For the world.
- We need to hear this, For we aren't, Far from sharing, The same sin. We hold our passports, Proudly. We declare our, Citizenship boldly.
- And pledge our allegiance, Faithfully. As if our country, Is the hope for the world. And please don't, Misunderstand me. I love being an American. I love all that it affords. But America is not the hope for the world.
- Jesus is. All the families of the earth, Are not blessed, Through the United States of America. Or any country for that matter. All the families of the earth, Are blessed, Through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Amen. And so we offer Jesus. We offer citizenship, Not to any earthly nation, But we offer citizenship, To a heavenly nation. We offer the one, Who is able to be, An eternal refuge, From life's wars.
- [25 : 23] We offer the one, Who blots out sin, From debilitating, Guilt and remorse. We offer the one, Who refreshes, And gives rest, To the one, Who is overwhelmingly, Crushed by the burdens of life.
- We offer Jesus. We offer Jesus. The miracle. The message. And now the makeover.
- In light of the gospel, What God has done in Jesus Christ, The listeners are urged to respond. The gospel was presented, In Jesus' first coming. And he was ill received.
- He was actually rejected, In chapter, You'll see it in chapter 4, Verse 11. His ministry was denied. Yet the message, Is presented again here, By Peter. And they are entreated, To repent, And to turn back.

The one they had rejected, They are now urged, To receive. And it would be demonstrated, In their repentance. Repentance is a rich theme, In the Bible. It perhaps, Is best encapsulated, By the words, Turn back, Or return.

[26 : 29] It is more than, The changing of the mind. It is a complete alteration, Of the basic motivation, And direction, Of one's life, To turn or return, In repentance, We turn or return, To a faithful relationship, With God, When we were once, In a former state, Of estrangement.

It is the admission of guilt, And the renouncing, Rebellion, And defiance against God. The makeover. When the gospel is presented, It requires a response.

It's not news, That you and I, Simply discard, Or put aside. When repentance is embraced, And when Christ is received, And submitted to, One's sins are blotted out.

Refreshment is given, Blessing bestowed, And the restoration, Of all things, Will be, Witnessed to. Note what is promised.

Verse 19, The blotting out of one's sins. We see personal forgiveness. We see times of refreshing. In verse 20, With God being present, We see a spiritual refreshment, And divine accompaniment.

[27 : 47] It's like other usages, Of this idea in the Bible, It's like taking a good drink of water, When one is incredibly thirsty.

It's the soothing of one's spirit. Most intriguingly, In Exodus 8.15, The only other usage, Of this word, It's actually respite, From divine punishment.

We see blessing, A divine blessing, In verse 26. And we see, The restoration of all things, In verse 21. A universal restoration.

Note this salvation. It is not just, A personal salvation. It is not just, The blotting out of sins. It is also the promise, Of spiritual refreshment, God's accompaniment, Through all of life, In this life, And the life to come.

It is divine favor, And blessing. And the promise of salvation, Is not only personal, But it is cosmic in scope.

[28 : 55] There is a promise, Of the restoration, Of all things. A universal restoration. It's a reminder, That we not only experience, The fallenness of humanity, Within one another, But the curse of creation.

He is making, And will make, All things new. It is the extreme, Makeover, Not the home edition, But the world edition. God is performing, A makeover, And it has commenced, Following his ascension.

The healing of the lame man, Is just an illustration, Of what God in Christ, Will do to the entire world. He will restore, To perfect health, Taking the language of verse 16.

The entire world. In other words, We must realize, That part of preaching, The gospel message, Is not preaching, Hey, Personal salvation.

We must also declare, The salvation of the entire universe. The personal is a vital part, But it's just a small part, In the greater whole.

[30 : 04] I remember from my youth ministry days, Meeting with a young teenager, As she was entering, Another year of high school. I asked her, How she was feeling, Going to another year, And whether she was looking forward, To the year or not.

And she expressed, Great excitement and thrill, That was quite unusual, For a high school student. And I inquired, What she was looking forward to. And she responded to me, I'll never forget it.

She said, I'm ready to reveal, The new me. And I said, Well, What do you mean by that? And she said, Bing, Well, I got this entirely new wardrobe.

And, And I, I'm, I'm going to, To dress this certain way, So that, I'll be accepted, And I might be popular, And I, I just want to give off, This brand new, Image.

And I, I hope I didn't say it out loud, But I chuckled, And, And I said, Oh, If it was only that easy. The student had brought in, Into her mind, The idea that the makeover, Was only external in nature.

[31 : 12] You can repaint, The outside of the home, Over and over, And over, And over, And over, And over again. But the inside, Could still be in shambles.

Jesus is not, In the business, Of exterior, Painting. He is in, The business, Of eternal, Demolition, And reconstruction.

In the language, Of real estate listings, If you ever have the opportunity, To look for homes, In our area, We have many old, Homes. And, Realtors, Sell their property, With these two words, Gut, Rehab.

Meaning, That a crew, Went into this house, Built in 1888, Destroyed, Destroyed, The entire, Inside of it, Left only the beams, Took down all the walls, Gave it new floors, New walls, New windows, A gut rehab.

If you want, A genuine makeover, Turn back to Christ, In repentance. And yeah, He's not going to just, Paint the exterior.

[32 : 22] He's going to go in, And gut it, And rehab it, And refashion it, And make it a place, Where his spirit can dwell. Well, The promise, Of forgiveness of sins, Times of refreshing, Blessing from heaven, A front seat, To watch, The eventual restoration, Of all things.

It's the miracle, The message, The makeover. And as I conclude, I stumbled across the story, There's different accounts of it, And I don't know which one to tell, But they get to the same point.

It tells the story, Of Thomas Aquinas. He was invited to, The Vatican, Under a pope, During the 12th century.

And one account says, As they walked around the Vatican, The pope was showing, Thomas Aquinas, Just the beauty, The treasure, The wealth of Rome.

And it reads this, The pope pointed to the gold, And the silver, And the ornate buildings, And the magnificence of it all, And said, You see, Thomas? The church, Can no longer say, Silver and gold, Have I none?

[33 : 39] And Thomas replied, I do see. I do see. But I see something further. And he replied with this, She also cannot say, Rise up, And walk.

But isn't that the church's commission? I don't have silver and gold. But what I do have, I give to you. The church is not here.

The greatest thing the church can give, Is Jesus. It is Jesus. It must be Jesus. Give the world Jesus and his gospel.

Give them the story of the lame man raised to his feet. Give them the story of the dead man raised to life. Give them the assurance, In the same way God raised his son from the dead, That he will raise you up, And you and I up in his power.

Give them the comfort that God raises the poor, From the ash heap, The dust, Raises the needy from the ashes, And makes them sit with the princes.

[34 : 48] Give them the good news, That out of our perishable and frail bodies, That we will be sown into the ground, But we will be raised in glory. Give them the good news, That we will not all sleep.

That in the twinkling of an eye, In a moment, At the last trumpet sound, The dead, Sown into the ground perishable, Will be raised imperishable.

God raised the lame man. God raised his son. God will raise his church. And whether you are buried, In the deepest part of the ocean, Whether you are buried, At the bottom of the deepest valley, Know this, In the same way God raised this lame man, To walk and leap.

In the same way God raised his son, To rule and to reign. He will raise you. He will raise me. And we will be together, For his glory.

All under the banner, Of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no one else. For no other name, In heaven, Has been given to men, Whereby we must be saved.

[36 : 06] Repent. Turn to Jesus. Turn to Jesus. Let's close our time in prayer.

Father, We could search, High and low, Far and near.

And we would be left empty, If it were not for you, Your son, And your gospel.

And so Father, As we close our time, I would actually be quite naive, To think that all who sat, Assembled in this room, Have clung to Christ, As Savior.

And so Father, I pray, That you would seize, The lost, And claim them, As your own.

[37 : 13] That you have, Raised up your servant, The Lord Jesus Christ, And you have enthroned him. And the kings of the earth, May bicker, And lash out against him.

But you sit enthroned, And you laugh, You laugh from heaven, At the affairs of men, Who try, To thwart your rule.

And so Father, I pray for those hearts in this room, Those hearts who have battled long enough, Those hearts who are restless and weary, Those hearts who feel abandoned, And lost, Left, And beaten.

Father, As you have promised in your word, Would you raise them up? Raise them up. That they may be, Seated in heaven with you.

As we close, I, I, I, I'm actually just going to ask Tim, Maybe to play, And,