

A Sign of Restoration

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Date: 29 September 2019

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- [0 : 0 0] Lord God, this morning, help us to hear, to listen, and help me to speak clearly, so that your name might be glorified. In your name we pray, Amen.
- So have you ever done a big restoration job? Maybe a house or a car? Maybe not as big, maybe a couch? I don't know.
- I know there's those TV shows where they restore old houses, like The Block or whatever's on. I don't watch TV. But I can tell you one story.
- It's about a car that my dad has restored. It's a 1950-something Triumph Mayflower. Yeah, some of you might know what it looks like.
- I won't show you yet. So I was quite, oh, oh well, now I will. So I was quite young when we got it. Dad bought it from someone, I think in the newspaper.
- [1 : 0 0] And the day we picked it up, we drove about half an hour and dropped it off at someone else and left it there for more than 10 years. So I found out later that that was the mechanic.
- But when we finally got it back, it still wasn't done. It needed paint. It needed, the seats needed to be fixed, the dashboard. Everything had to be changed. And now when it was finally done, there's the picture.
- It's pretty nice, isn't it? Or maybe you don't really care about cars. I don't know. Well, in our passage today, it starts with a person who has not their car, but their legs restored, which was the same thing back then.
- And then, after that, Peter will begin to talk about an even greater restoration that is to come.
- So why don't we get into it? It begins, in fact, all the way back in chapter 2, which we did last week. It ends with that beautiful picture.
- [2 : 0 6] The church is gathering and growing. In verse 46 of chapter 2, they met every day at the temple. And this is where we pick up here in chapter 3.
- So as I read the first few verses, imagine yourselves as that lame man. What's he thinking when Peter and John come? So let's start with the first verse of chapter 3.
- One day, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer, three in the afternoon. And now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate, called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.
- When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, look at us.
- So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. So Peter and John, here they are on their way to the temple. And when they pass this gate, the man is begging.

[3 : 15] Imagine being that man and seeing them coming. You ask them for money? Money? Just like you'd ask anyone for money. After all, caring for the poor, giving alms, was part of what was expected for the Jews.

It was in the law. Then Peter looks and says, look at us. What do you think he's going to be thinking? Verse 5 tells us, he turned to them, expecting to get something.

What are you expecting? I guess it would be money, right? Or food? Or a blanket? Or any of the things that you need to survive?

Then how would you react to what Peter says next? In verse 6, Peter says to him, silver or gold, I do not have.

Oh, or maybe you think, that's a shame. Or maybe you think, why is he talking to me? Did he just want to disappoint me?

[4 : 17] No, well, Peter keeps going, doesn't he? He says, silver and gold I do not have. But what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.

And then taking him by the right hand, he helped him up. And instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk.

And then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. In Jesus' name, Peter tells him to stand up and walk. And he does.

His legs have been completely healed. And look at him go. Like, he's jumped up. He's walking. He's leaping. He's praising God. He's really happy.

He was expecting arms, but God gave him legs. Let's, yeah, let's move on. So it's a bit like, you know when you get a letter from the power company or from the internet provider?

[5 : 21] You know exactly what it's going to be before you open it. You know it's going to be a bill. But a friend of mine was telling me about what happened to her.

The power company had been overcharging for some time. So imagine her surprise when she opened a letter from them and found a massive refund. Friends, this is what happened.

It's truly amazing, isn't it? And the people, they know it too. The people, in verse 9 and 10, when all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him. They know he's the same man who begged at the same gate. They know the gate.

It's the beautiful gate. That's why Luke told us about it twice. Twice. They couldn't deny what happened. And so they're filled with wonder and amazement.

[6 : 23] And it's especially amazing because it's not only his legs that have been restored, is it? Friends, his whole life has been restored. For the first time ever, he can work.

He can earn his own living instead of begging. For the first time ever, he can go anywhere he wants without being carried there. His whole life has been restored now.

Now, if we saw something like that, I don't know about you, if I saw something like that, I would want to find who did that. Maybe ask what they can do for me. But as we'll see, it's not Peter and John who've restored his life.

We're now at the second point, if you're following on the outlines. We're at verse 11 to 16. Let's read. While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.

When Peter saw this, he said to them, Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

[7 : 37] The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

You disowned the holy and righteous one, and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.

We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

So Peter and John have not restored this man's legs or his life. Rather, it was Jesus. This is the same Jesus the people had disowned before Pilate.

The Jesus who they killed, but God raised from the dead. It is this Jesus, the author of life, who has restored this man's life. Now they thought they got rid of Jesus, didn't they?

[8 : 42] And usually, killing people does that. But now, there's a Jesus-only miracle that has occurred again.

It's proved unto them that their strongest move was not enough. They thought they had won, but Jesus is back. Jesus has won. But then how does Jesus restore the man?

Peter says it was by faith that Jesus restored him. It could be the apostle's faith. It could be the man's faith. We're not clearly told.

But we are clearly told that it is by faith in Jesus that this man is completely healed and that his whole life is restored. Well, Peter goes on.

He doesn't stop there. And he's going to teach them how both this restoration and this Jesus had been part of God's plan that he promised long ago.

[9 : 43] So we're at the third point now. Peter's illustrating God's promises being fulfilled in three different ways. So the first one is in verse 17 to 18.

Let's have a look. Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he'd foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

So Peter explains, even though they killed God's Messiah, the anointed king, they had been following God's plan without even realizing it.

God had planned the Messiah would suffer. And he'd even told them about it beforehand through the prophets. A few weeks ago in Sunday school, we did something like this.

We were looking at a story of the Israelites and Moses, and it was one, like many, where the Israelites failed to follow God's instructions. And so we wanted to illustrate this to the kids.

[10 : 49] So we chose to run a game where we knew they would stop following the rules. So the game, it involved carrying balls from one place to another in teams.

They could carry one at a time only, and only one from each team could run at a time. And naturally, very quickly, they stopped following the rules.

It was chaos. People were throwing balls, carrying huge piles of them. But it was exactly what we had expected. The kids didn't realize that we knew they'd stop following the rules.

But especially, they didn't realize we had planned it. They just thought they were cheating. God had already planned, and he'd already promised that the Messiah would suffer.

It was part of his plan to rescue us from sin, that Jesus would suffer and die in our place as a sacrifice. Peter has made the sin of those people quite clear to them, since they'd rejected Jesus, since they'd sent him to the cross.

[11 : 56] But God had planned for Jesus' death, which would be the sacrifice to pay for even that sin. And he'd also planned it, so that the other promises here could also be fulfilled.

So that brings us to the second one, the second promise. It's in verse 21. So skip down there for a moment, and let's read. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything.

as he promised long ago through the holy prophets. So as through the prophets long ago, God promised there'd be a time when he restores everything.

This includes physical restoration, like that man, like legs, also arms, hearts, brains, everything. This miracle here, with the lame man, was a living sign of that restoration.

It showed what it will be like. And as Christians, we have this same promise. It means one day, there'll be no more sore backs, no more broken bones, no more teeth aches, or any of the other things that we have to deal with.

[13 : 11] Whatever it is that we suffer from. But we don't know when that time will be. Until then, we also have the third promise.

This third one, it's in verse 22 to 26. So let's read there. For Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people.

You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days, and you are heirs of the prophets, and of the covenant God made with your fathers.

He said to Abraham, Through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you, by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

So Moses had promised that God would raise up somebody that they should listen to. Peter also says, The other prophets spoke about these days.

[14 : 21] Jesus is that person, and they are now living in those days that the prophets spoke about. And listening to Jesus is serious, isn't it?

Moses had said in 23, anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their own people. But what is the kind of promise that God made about these days?

Well, in verse 25, he promised to Abraham, Through him, that's Jesus, all peoples on earth will be blessed. What kind of blessing?

Is it physical healing, like that man, like the lame man? Well, no. We see what that blessing is. If we look at verse 26. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you, by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

When God raised up his servant, Peter's using this like a pun. Because God had raised Jesus up from the dead. Because Jesus was raised up from the dead, the blessing for his people is being turned from their wickedness and from their sin.

[15 : 35] It is a restoration, isn't it? But it's spiritual rather than physical. There's a complete spiritual restoration that's promised to us even right now, since Jesus has come and died and been raised again.

So for those people, those Jews at the temple, even though they had rejected God and they had killed him, rejected Jesus and killed Jesus, God had promised that they would be restored spiritually.

If they put their faith in the risen Jesus, their sin would no longer make them ignorant, no longer cause them to hate God's righteous one.

But if they don't listen and continue to reject him, they'll be cut off. It's likewise for us too, isn't it? God's promise of spiritual restoration is for our lives even right now.

So the healing of this man's legs, it was a sign, a sign of the promises God is fulfilling. First, spiritual restoration right now, the blessing of turning from wickedness and finding forgiveness.

[16 : 52] Second, physical restoration later, when that time comes for Jesus to return and when God restores everything. And the man's healing not only points to the type of restoration that we look forward to, but also how we receive it.

Remember, the man was restored not by the prophet's power or their godliness, sorry, the apostle's power or godliness, but by faith in the crucified Christ.

Jesus is the one we're to listen to, to turn to, and to trust in. And this brings us to point four on your outlines. I'll come back to the verses that we skipped before to verse 19 and 20.

Repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.

If we want to enjoy a restored life, spiritually now and physically later, we must repent or turn to God. This is the flip side almost of putting faith in Jesus' name from before.

[18 : 10] It's the same thing. Turning completely 180 degrees away from sin and instead towards God. It even means rejecting sin like the people had rejected Jesus, handing sin over, despising it, disowning it, and killing it, since Jesus had already killed our sin on the cross.

Then, the promise is that sins will be wiped out immediately, isn't it? Repent so that your sins may be wiped out and that times of refreshing may come.

Now, if you're like me, you're thinking, I didn't kill Jesus, I wasn't there like those guys. And that's true, we weren't physically there. But we still know what it is to disown him, don't we?

We still know how we live as if we've killed him, living like he's not important. And I'm sure we all have friends and family and others we know who still live like this, who also kill Jesus in the way they live, ignoring him.

It doesn't feel as bad, oh, I wasn't there. it's the same thing, isn't it? Now, since even those guys, the ones who did it, who were personally responsible for killing Jesus, are offered this chance, how much more can we be sure that this forgiveness is offered to us and to our friends and our family as well, should we tell them and keep praying for them?

[19 : 48] then along with sins being wiped out and the time of refreshing, verse 20, Peter says, God will also send his Messiah, Jesus, who's been appointed for you.

And that's when we'll enjoy the physical restoration, when that time comes. So, Peter's application for those people is pretty clear, isn't it?

Repent, believe in God, so our sins will be wiped out. And life will be restored now, spiritually, and even physically, later on, just as God had promised.

Now, we can see how the people respond as well. If we look at the beginning of chapter 4, we'll read the first four verses. The priests and the captain of the temple guard, the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people.

They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.

[21 : 02] But many who heard the message believed. So the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000. I said Peter's application seemed pretty clear, and I think it does.

And this promise of restoration seems really good. And yet the priests, the temple guards, the Sadducees, all of them are, it says, disturbed.

Why are they disturbed? Because Peter was telling them about the resurrection from the dead, that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Remember, the one that they tried to kill.

I'd be worried too if I was them. I mean, come on, isn't it obvious? They've just witnessed this lame man have his whole life restored, along with his legs.

This Jesus-only miracle, that only a risen Jesus could do. Peter has shown to them this restoration of life that was promised throughout the prophets in the Old Testament.

[22 : 05] And aren't these people experts on the Old Testament and on God's promises? But for whatever reason, they don't believe. They arrest Peter and John, they put them in jail.

And you'll have to come back next week to find out what happens. But on the other hand, we still see many people who do believe. In verse 4, it tells us the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000.

Back in chapter 2, it was only about 3,000. That's a lot of people. Friends, it was all because of this lame man who was healed at the gate.

Having seen that and heard what Peter says, they have recognized the need for the restoration that comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Now, all of them, they're not lame, and indeed, none of them were physically healed here, were they?

But what they've understood is the need to be restored spiritually, for God to bless them by turning them from their wicked ways. And because of this, they trust in God, and they trust that He will restore everything physically when Jesus returns.

[23 : 24] So, what about us? Do we recognize our sin, that we need it to be wiped away? do you trust in God's promises, that He will restore everything completely in the future, along with the spiritual restoration we can have right now, sharing in Jesus' new life?

Now, I'm sure many of us do, but then we ought to be challenged by this. Do we trust in the promises of God even enough to tell others?

the healing in this passage is kind of, it's a sign of the times, isn't it? Peter has said it's like a sign pointing to what God is doing.

And I don't know about you, but when I hear things like sign of the times, you think of those crazy Americans, or people on the internet, the ones who are pointing to this and pointing to that and saying Jesus is going to come back on this day.

Now, we don't know when Jesus will come back. But we do know for sure that one day he will. And knowing that, it's an encouragement to us to share it with the people who we care about, with our friends, with our family.

[24 : 47] Now, they might think Christians are crazy, they probably do, some of us are, but this is an encouragement for us to challenge them to repent and to turn to God.

God. Now, there's another challenge here for us as well. Though we may trust in God and in this restoration, many of us still struggle, don't we?

maybe we struggle with things that we need physical healing for right now, that we want him to heal us like the lame man. Or maybe it's our struggle with sin, which we all have all the time.

God has done. So our challenge here is to persevere and to remember those promises and even to remind each other when we see our brothers and sisters here at church struggling, to remind each other and to persevere of the promises that God has made and the time when he will come back and restore everything.

God has demonstrated the restoration that comes from faith with this lame man. He's made it clear for all to see. And God has promised that the time will come when all things are restored.

[26 : 06] So hang in there until that day. And then when it comes, all of our struggles, all our suffering, it will be like nothing compared to how good that day is.

It's just as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 17 and 18. It's up on the screen. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Let's pray.

Lord God, thank you that you are God who sees, who knows, who cares. I thank you that you are God who restores.

We thank you for the promise of this great restoration to come, this promise of spiritual restoration that we have in Jesus Christ. Christ. Please help us to continue to trust in you.

[27 : 14] Give us boldness to share of that restoration with others and give us perseverance as we wait until the day when your son Jesus returns. In whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen.