

Acts 3:12-26 FEFC Times of Refreshing

INTRODUCTION / REVIEW

Last week we heard Brian and Tommy glorify God through the power of their testimony. The last time we were in our Acts series we read about Peter and John going to the temple for prayer and running into a lame man. God's power was available for healing and this lame man jumped to his feet and leaped in joy for the healing grace that God showered on him.

In that day the role of a prophet was very important. The bible was not complete and people often heard from God through the prophets. The primary way that you could identify a prophet was if you saw unmistakable God-sized miracles like lame people getting healed.

The role of a prophet was to speak for God. After this amazing healing this crowd in the temple wanted to understand if it was Peter or John that was the prophet who healed this man. After performing a miracle prophets usually spoke a message from the Lord. the Lord authenticated the message through the miracle. So now people gathered around Peter and John to see which one was the prophet and which one also had the message from God that went along with the miracle. Peter knew this and here is Peter's message that followed the authenticating healing of his message from the Lord.

READ THE TEXT

Acts 3:12-26 (NIV)

12 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? 13 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. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 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.

17 “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 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. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’

24 “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. 25 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.’ 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.”

PRAYER

PREACH THE TEXT

POTENTIALLY HOSTILE CROWD

There were many people in this audience that did not believe Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Peter was not preaching to the choir. In fact Peter spoke very bluntly to this crowd which in the past had persecuted Jesus Christ and many of His followers. The crowds gathered and because of the amazing healing they treated Peter and John as if they were angels.

Acts 3:12-26 (NIV)

12 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?

Peter saw people looking at he and John as if they were something special. As if they had the power and holiness to turn the power on and off. So he called them “fellow Israelites.” The term fellow Israelites suggests that Peter and John are just like the rest of the people that gathered. They

had plenty to brag about and they could have acted in pride, but they deflected the praise away from themselves and always onto Jesus Christ. It takes a secure leader to deflect praise from himself.

RELIGIOUS PRIDE AND INSECURITY

Insecure leaders however, can be overtaken by pride. When God uses anyone in a powerful way, we have to be careful of religious pride. We must answer in the same spirit and attitude of Peter who spoke out of humility. And when the God sightings roll in by God's own hand we must keep our humility and reflect the glory back to Jesus Christ.

SECURE IN CHRIST; LOVED ACCEPTED AND NOT ALONE

In order to be in a place of humility we need to get our life and sense of well being from our position in Christ. We can be secure that God loves us for free not based on our performance but based on His work on the cross. The Messiah came to us because we have no way of going to Him.

His love is not based on our performance. What could we ever do to impress Him? And we are worthwhile to God. God thought it was worth His time to die for our sins and call each of us to salvation and ministry. Even while we were in our sin Jesus thought it was worth it to die for us. And in Christ we are capable people. We are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. We have a great God that lives among us and we are capable because God made us that way in Christ. And we are not alone. Jesus Christ is with us, always, even to the end of the age.

Scripture is clear. IN CHRIST...We are loved and accepted. We are worthwhile and capable. And we are not alone.

Once we have that settled we don't have anything to prove. What is there to prove if the God of Heaven and earth says you are okay? If the Lord of all Creation loves and accepts me for free based on what Jesus did then who is going to tell me I am worthless? If i need a bunch of people to tell me good things then I am slave to their opinions.

If you have been rejected by others, Jesus Christ loves you for free. You don't have to scramble and perform and beg for His love. He loves you for free. He wants to transform you into the glorious and holy creature that He is able to make out of you.

If you feel worthless and you can't ever please others. You feel like giving up. Or you have had others give up on you. know this, Jesus thought it was worth His time to die for your sin and call you by name.

I see dozens of Facebook posts that reflect the deep loneliness of many. Some do not have families that understand them. Some of you have no close friends that really know what you are thinking and how you are feeling. And when the party dies down and you go home and are sitting alone the deep sense of loneliness comes back to you. You went through this entire day surrounded by dozens of so called friends but no one really understood the pain that is inside of you.

Jesus understands your pain. He understands your loneliness. He was despised and rejected by all men. And yet he was never alone. And His promise to you is that no matter how lonely you feel today, if you cry out to the Lord and turn from your sin, and turn to Him to guide your life. you will never be alone again. It is His promise that He will never leave you

or turn against you.

But you need to surrender your life to Him and invite Him to live be the center of your life. You might feel like things are out of control but Jesus will take control and show you how to live. He will help you make all those decisions. He will keep you out of bad relationships that only make your loneliness worse in the end. But you must surrender control to Him.

MY HEALING FROM MY WEAK EGO

There was a time when I did not believe Jesus loved me for free. There was a time that I believed that I had to earn God's love even though I knew in my head that he died for my sins and forgave me of much. I did not feel appreciated or loved or understood by anyone.

I had to take credit for everything that happened around me. I had to make sure I showed others everything I had done and exaggerate things I did so that people would appreciate me and think that I was worth something. Perhaps I was worth loving if only someone could see that I was an amazing person.

None of that changed until the day I heard a sermon preached in which the pastor told me that God loved me for free. And when I went home i meditated on the passage ***“while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”*** Something happened in my heart that day. A sudden flow from God's Spirit entered me and healed me. And I dared to say out loud; “God loves me for free.” And then I said to God; “I receive your love.” “I will no longer try to prove to anyone that I am loveable because Jesus Christ the God of all Creation has the final word. And His final word to me,

and His final word to you is that he loves you for free and you do not have to ever again try to prove that we are acceptable, that we are loveable. He said; and that is the final answer.

Once I truly believed that God loved and accepted me for free based on the work of Jesus. No matter how poorly or how well I performed the issue of His love was settled. Then I was able to give up my quest for applause and comparing myself to others. I was able to let go of flashes of anger because it was not so easy to hook my shame and insecurity. And truly believing and embracing our identity in Christ leads to Godly confidence.

If we are not secure in Christ we will be on a quest to take credit for the things God is doing. If we are not secure in Christ then we have to go and find people to tell us we are pretty or smart or okay in some way. Even if we have to compromise our morals to hear words of love that never truly fill us or fully convince us.

Peter did not have to take credit for anything. He was secure in Christ. He was humble and he was able to highlight Christ and focus the spotlight on Jesus. He said “don’t look at me! I did not do this miracle. But even though we did not do the miracle we know who did and we carry His message for you. So here is who did the miracle.

13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.

JESUS THE SERVANT OF YAHWEH

Peter attached a powerful clause to this sentence that shaped the

focus of the speech. He said; The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had ***“glorified his servant Jesus.”*** By stating the name of God they identified themselves as people that worshipped the right God.

By calling Jesus a servant of God; Peter interpreted **Isaiah 42:1; 49; 52 and 53:11** for the crowds. Isaiah speaks of the Messiah as The Servant of Yahweh.

Peter basically said; I'm am just a man like you. However, Isaiah told us that God's Son, the Messiah would come as a servant. Well that servant has come and His name is Jesus Christ. We do not have the glory to heal anyone. But The God of our Fathers has given glory to His servant Jesus Christ. He was the Messiah. And if Jesus Christ was glorified, then it was Jesus Christ that did this healing. It was not my power but the power of Jesus Christ the servant of God that did this.

After identifying Jesus Christ as the Messiah Peter reminded the crowd of the way they treated The Servant of Yahweh. Peter said;
You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

You did not simply stand by and watch an innocent man be crucified. You intentionally lobbied to have an evil man set free and you insisted that Jesus Christ be crucified. Both the failure to punish a criminal and the unjust punishment of an innocent man are crimes of disobedience.

14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

Jesus Christ was one of us. Sometimes people disown their own

relatives if they turn away from God and live a terrible life. You disowned Jesus Christ. He was more than a brother or sister or son or daughter. In verse 15 Peter tells them;

15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

THE AUTHOR OF LIFE

Jesus is called the author of life. If you read a good book you know that someone took the time to write and edit and rewrite a story. He or she put the events in just the right sequence. And in the end the book turns out to be a compelling and seamless work. And you really appreciate the author.

Jesus Christ is the author of all life. He came up with all the characters and all the places and all the materials. And then he spoke all of life into existence. He spoke it in into perfect construction so that through His creation the author of life is still glorified through it today. Jesus is the author of life.

John 1:1-4 (NIV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

Colossians 1:16 (NIV)

16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Not only did Jesus Christ the Author of Life create everything, He created everything for His own pleasure and glory. Our lives are not about us as it turns out. Our lives and everything we see were really created for His glory. Imagine how foolish we are when we put God in the back seat of our lives. We were not even created for ourselves.

Let's jump back to our passage. Peter said; ***15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead***

In this passage there is a contrast in the action of two parties. Some of the people from this crowd killed the author of life. and the other party, God, raised the author of life from the dead.

That means the two parties are working against the other. Peter was clear, you are working against the purposes of God. You are not blessing the same things that God is blessing. In fact you are trying to stop the very things that He is doing.

Have you ever opposed something only to find out later that God was actually blessing the very thing that you opposed?

STORY: WORKING AGAINST GOD

There are times that I have been on the other side of God's will. I remember when a pastor joined our church staff at a large church. And he introduced a team concept. I learned management in the workforce in the early 80s. In my old line of work there was no such thing as teams that

cooperated. So this team concept was something that I was unfamiliar with. It sounded funny to me. And at the time I did not have the love of Christ settled in my heart. I was insecure and needed to take the credit for things. And I wanted things to be done my way so that I could take the credit and control thing. Ministry was there to show that I was worthy.

What was even worse was that this guy was hired to do the job that I wanted to do. So I have to admit that I was jealous and insecure. So how does an insecure, immature and uninformed person act when they do not get the promotion and do not get things their way? You can probably guess. You can end up really quick on the other side of God's blessing.

God took a church of 2200 to a church of more than 5000 under this man's leadership. And it was good growth. Not just numbers. God was for this person. And I was against this person for a while. If I really think about it I tried to stop something that God Himself was wanting to do. Thankfully I was not more influential than God.

How many of you are glad that you have not always gotten your way? How many are glad that you are not more influential than God? Have you ever opposed something that you did not understand only to find out later that God was really in it? Probably most of us if we are honest.

-----End of Story-----

THOSE TERRIBLE PEOPLE ARE LIKE US

We think of those terrible people that were against Jesus the author of life. But they were bible reading people that prayed three times a day. They were well respected. But Jesus came with a style they were not used

to. He came with a kingdom timing that was not to their liking. They wanted the full kingdom of David restored right now. And that is not what God was up to.

And so they turned against someone that God was for. Even more frightening was the truth that they were against Jesus Christ the Messiah and the Author of Life.

“God help us to never be against something that you are blessing ever again.” We do not need to be quick to judge other people. We need to be quick to examine the scriptures and examine our own motives with brutal honesty to see who and what gets our favor and who and what does not get our favor and blessing.

Peter explains how it was that Jesus Christ should receive the credit for this healing. Peter says;

16 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.

IN HIS NAME

Peter claims that He did not heal the man. Instead he gives credit to “The Name” of Jesus.

As we studied previously, “The Name” refers to the full identity of Jesus Christ. When you use the name of Jesus you are referring to His full identity as Creator, Healer, Messiah and Son of The Living God.

FAITH THAT COMES THROUGH HIM

Peter said that this healing was accomplished by the faith that comes

through Him. That means faith comes as a gift. It is not faith that one comes up with on his or her own. I have heard people blamed when they did not get healed after prayer because they supposedly did not pray with enough faith. But God does not play games with us like that.

FAITH AS A GIFT TO ACCOMPLISH “HIS WILL”

If Jesus wants to heal someone then he will give those whom are praying the faith they need to pray-in that healing. In this case God wanted to heal the lame man in order to teach about Jesus Christ. So God gave Peter and John the faith and spiritual power to heal on this occasion.

17 “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

There is no need to crush someone when you have them down. And so Peter takes a more gentle tone as he continues. The words; “fellow Israelites” comes from the Greek word; “adelphoi” which literally translated means friends. He tells his “friends” that he understands they acted in ignorance.

It was not because they hated God but because they did not recognize Him when He came looking and acting differently than they expected.

Peter also let them know that it was God’s own plan communicated through the prophets that the Messiah would suffer.

Isaiah 53:1-12 (NIV)

3 He was despised and rejected by mankind,

a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
4 Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Peter basically says; I know it was God's plan for the Messiah to suffer. But in light on how you treated Jesus His Son this is what you should do.

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

They had rejected, despised and killed Jesus Christ the Messiah. That is the bad news. That puts you in a pretty tight spot. However, the good news is that you still have time to repent. Repent of all your sins.
REPENTANCE FROM GETTING CAUGHT?

This passage tells us to repent and turn to God. It does not just say repent. Sometimes people feel sorry for what they did because they were caught and now they are embarrassed or have privileges taken away. Many people turn away from their sin because of what it cost them. But many who repent are not interested in the “turning to God” part.

Repentance (*metanoia* in the Greek) means to turn away from sin and at the very same time you turn toward God. Instead of getting your needs met by booze or drugs or bad relationships you are going to get your needs met by God. Instead of serving the flesh and the sinful desires in your heart you are going to serve the will of God for your life. Turn away from your sin and your desires and turn instead to God.

THE CHALKBOARD WIPING AWAY THE SIN

The result is that God will wipe away your sins. The language suggests that the *wiping away of sin* is like a chalk board that has all your sins recorded. Chalkboards are getting out of date. But I think we all know that sometimes if you wipe a chalkboard or a whiteboard you can still faintly make out some of the words that used to be there.

To wipe away our sins is like taking a wet rag and wiping down the chalk board. Not only is the writing gone, but now there is no trace that there was ever writing on the board. All your sins are forgiven when you repent and turn instead to following hard after God.

Psalm 103: says your sins will be erased as far as the east is from the west.

Isaiah 1:18 Speaks about Scarlet sins being made white as snow. If you

have ever tried to get blood out of clothing you know it stains very badly. But Jesus knows how to shout out the red stains of our sin. He speaks the word of forgiveness and there is no more stain.

WALKING OUT OUR NEW IDENTITY

I do not know how long I lived as a Christian under the shame of my old sins. i don't know how long i thought I was saved by grace but because of temptation or occasional slips of the mind heart or flesh i doubted God's love or salvation.

The truth is that if you are in Christ you are a New Creation. The old has gone and the new has come. Our goal is not to undo our past. Our goal is to take hold of the person that God now declares us to be In Christ. (SEE VERSES 20-25 AFTER "TAKING IT HOME SECTION")

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."

Peter raised a point that is still valid today. God went to His own people first. God sent Jesus to straighten out those who claimed to know Him first. And then when God's people repent and have peace with God, they will have the message, the spiritual power and the authentic heart and message to reach the world in Christ.

If God's people are filled with spiritual pride and are not willing to do things God's way then Jesus has to call us to repentance first? If we dislike those not at all cleaned up, then we need to turn from our sin of pride before we can be a blessing to the world. If we are giving away the law instead of grace, then Jesus needs to start with us first. If we are not

living in the power of Christ and living like the people God declares us to be in Christ, then God needs to start with us. So that we can get up to full truth, power and holiness in Christ to then be a blessing to the world.

God went to the Jews first with the message of salvation through repentance and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. God starts with whom He has and calls them to holiness, repentance. If there are things we want to see changed in this world and in this city, then let God begin with us. How are we move in or holding back the blessing of God?

SUMMARIZE THE LESSON

So Peter and John healed a man that could not walk. This week we learned that a prophet has a message. The healing authenticated the message. And the message was all about Jesus Christ.

This healing came because God gave Peter and John the gift of faith to heal the man with crippled legs. And this faith came through the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we learned that Peter and John were not interested in taking credit for healing. They were secure in Christ. They were so secure in Christ they could speak to a potentially hostile crowd with a message of confrontation. You killed Christ our Messiah, but you can repent and turn to God today.

And then we saw that sometimes we can be on the wrong side of God's blessing. And we have to be very careful and examine our own heart and motives and scripture to make sure we are always for the things that God is for.

God began with His own people. God called the synagogue attending, bible reading, moral people to repent of their sin. God cleaned up His own people first. And He offered them salvation first. And then the world.

And next week we will look at the two reactions to the message.

TAKING IT HOME

1. How can we make sure that we are never on the other side of what God is blessing?
2. What needs to happen in your heart and mind so that you do not need the credit or control?
3. What are some of the ways that God authenticates our words today?
4. How is God starting with you, so that in the end we can be a blessing to the world around us?
5. Is today that day that you will let God minister the truth to your heart that God loves you for free and you can quit trying to earn what you already have In Christ! You've got nothing to prove! You are a child of the Messiah, The Author of Life!

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Verses 20-25 BONUS TEXT

(vs 20 in context)...turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

There are two results of turning from our sins and embracing God's will in Jesus Christ.

1. The coming of times of refreshment, and
2. The return of Jesus, your appointed Messiah

RESTORING

The word for “refreshing aka restoration”: means to return something to its original state. It is used of restorative healing and pictures the Messiah's work. Peter explained that a national restoration could happen if the Jews would turn from their sin to God by accepting Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah.

This is hotly debated among scholars. This “final restoration” refers to the final era of salvation - the Second Coming, the promised coming kingdom of God, the Last Judgment and the removal of sin from the world.

I could be wrong, and this is not central doctrine. I think Peter is looking to see whether there is a wholesale acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. If there is, then that would tell Him that the final return of Christ to earth was going to happen immediately, like days or months.

Peter words this passage as if the return of the Messiah is dependent on the repentance of Israel. I am not sure if that is what he meant but a plain reading of this text in isolation from all the others leads to that conclusion. To broaden our understanding we would need to look at every one of Peter's references to the end time and also explore the historical understanding of the return of Christ.

22 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. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’ [Deut. 18:15,18,19]

Peter is quoting Moses. Moses in Deut spoke as a prophet about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Israel did not always listen to Moses. There were many factions and a lot of grumbling. And the grumbling and factions cost many people their opportunity to live in the promised land.

When the Messiah returns do not grumble or complain or raise up factions. Listen to what He tells you. Peter is speaking to Israel who did not listen to Moses completely. But now they have a moment of redemption and they have the opportunity to listen to Jesus the Messiah and obey Him without reservation. Then they would not be kept out of the promised land of the kingdom of God.

24 “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days.

If you thought the times of Moses were big, wait until you see the return of Jesus Christ. Many of

you wish you could have lived in the times of David and seen the wonders accomplished through the prophets. But all the prophets in all their greatness pointed to this time in which you live as the ideal time. The Messiah has returned. He has ascended for a time, but He has appeared and we are living in the last days. All history pointed toward the Messiah. Therefore there could be no better time to look forward to than the life of Jesus, and the time of Jesus lived through us via His Holy Spirit. And the ultimate of course is the time He returns to be with His people forever. Make no mistake however, the Messiah is with us right now. Let's not live like we are awaiting His first return. He has returned and His life, the life of the Messiah is being lived out through us NOW. PTL!

25 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.'[Gen. 22:18; 26:4]

This is a reference to the promise that Jesus Christ is not just the Messiah for Israel. But this promise of the Messiah came through a covenant promise to Abraham and Israel. Through your Jewish Messiah the whole world is open to the plan of salvation. This is your great inheritance and pride. Your Messiah is the Savior of the world.

The way that God chose to initiate His desire to bring Jesus Christ the Messiah to the world is through an unbreakable promise to Abraham.