

INTRODUCTION

Peter uses the miracle of the crippled man to proclaim Christ to the large crowd that gathered. The crowd had gathered no doubt confused about the miracle and looking for an explanation to the miracle. Before giving that explanation Peter asks two questions designed to clear up any confusion about the source of the healing.

His first question “why does this surprise you” (v 12) is a mild rebuke, for as Jews they knew from their history that God was a miracle working God.

They also must have witnessed the miracles performed by Jesus to demonstrate that He was the Son of God. Therefore why should they be surprised that God could work another miracle through His apostles?

Peter’s second question was (v 12) “why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk.” The crowd should have known that two ex-fishermen had neither power nor godliness to perform such a miracle on their own. The questions left the crowd in a dilemma. While they acknowledged that God alone had power to do miracles, yet they denied that Jesus was God and that his followers had been granted power by God to perform miracles in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore they were left with no explanation of what they had just witnessed although the explanation was simple if they only believed what was clear to them.

But Peter like every good preacher directs attention away from himself and John and focuses upon Jesus Christ.

1. THE SERMON (vs. 11-18)

Peter describes Jesus Christ in five ways to highlight the fact that He is the Messiah approved by God yet rejected by the People.

a) Servant (v 13) - As Peter is preaching to a Jewish audience, he describes God in typical Jewish fashion the God of Abraham etc. to stress God’s covenant faithfulness to Israel. By using this description Peter claims continuity with the Old Testament prophets since he is declaring the same God they preached and the same Messiah that they promised.

Peter proclaims that the God of the covenant, the God of the Patriarchs and the prophets, has glorified His servant Jesus. The word “servant” here is an unusual word to use for it’s not the normal Greek word for servant but it is used here to describe Jesus as God’s personal representative or ambassador. However the term servant was a familiar Old Testament title for the Messiah and in Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 the servant is depicted as suffering, being obedient even unto death.

Matthew in his gospel identifies this suffering servant as Jesus (Matthew 12:18-21). Even Jesus said that he did not come to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). This is the servant whom God glorified through his resurrection and ascension into heaven.

b) Jesus (v 13) - This servant is identified as Jesus and the name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means, “The Lord is salvation.” His name tells us about his purpose, which was to be the Saviour. He did not come into our world to be a leader, healer, guide or friend but to be the Saviour of sinners.

But instead of welcoming this Saviour the people rejected him because they wanted a Saviour who would deliver them politically and militarily from the power of Rome. They did not want a Saviour who confronted their sin in order to offer deliverance from it. This same Jesus whom God glorified was handed over by the people to be killed and disowned. Even though Pilate had decided to let Jesus go free because he was aware that it would be unjust to have Jesus killed yet the people led by their leaders insisted on his death. Peter here boldly confronts his Jewish audience with the seriousness of their sin look at the word “you.”

All true gospel preaching must confront sinners with this fact and pronounce them guilty before God. Men and women will never see the need for salvation until they see the truth that they are guilty before God and in need of salvation.

c) Holy and Righteous One (v 14) - To emphasise their guilt Peter repeats his charge that they disowned Jesus who is the Holy and Righteous One; But more than that they asked that a well-known murderer should be released instead of Jesus. The word “holy” means to be separated to God. Jesus is not only holy by nature but also separated to God to do his will.

Of course the Holy one is also an Old Testament Messianic term (Psalm 16:10). What Peter is saying is that the people’s rejection is unthinkable. Jesus was their Saviour He was holy, separated to do God’s will yet they killed him and that placed them in rebellion against such a holy God. The word “righteous” carries the idea of innocent of any crime. The people were faced with a choice between a guilty murderer and Jesus the innocent one and they chose the murderer in the place of an innocent man. Peter is piling on their guilt.

d) Author Of Life (vs. 15-17) - Peter has been presenting a series of paradoxes. Although Jesus was a servant, God exalted Him; He was the people’s Saviour yet the people put him to death. They rejected the Holy and Righteous One in favour of a murderer. Now he comes to the greatest paradox of all. They put to death the “author of life,” while asking for the release of one who took life.

The term “author of life” refers to the originator or beginner of life and that term alone is claiming that Jesus is God for only God is the author of life. Throughout the New Testament we are told that Jesus is the source of life (John 1:4; 1 John 5:11 & 20). Jesus himself claimed to be source of life (John 5:26 & 11:25). The One who gives life is the very One that the people handed over to death.

Yet death could not contain him for God raised him from the dead and that fact cannot be disputed because Peter and John are witnesses of that fact (v 15). If Jesus did not rise from the dead then their claim would have been easy to disprove, all that had to be done was to produce Jesus dead body and those claims by Peter and John and the rest of the disciples would have been killed instantly.

But of course they could not do that because Jesus did rise from the dead and the testimony of the apostles could not be discredited.

Peter’s point in all this is that the Jews who were listening to Peter claimed to love and serve God, yet Peter clearly shows that they were in rebellion against God. They came to the Temple to worship him yet by their actions towards Jesus they proved themselves to be enemies of God. The one God approved off they had handed over to death and disowned.

The people's guilt was enormous but their murder was unsuccessful because Jesus was alive and the miracle that they have witnessed is proof of that fact for it was done in his name and by his power (v 16).

However Peter acknowledges that although the people were guilty they acted out of ignorance, they followed their leaders (v 17). But their ignorance was inexcusable because the evidence that Jesus was God and their Messiah was clear from the Old Testament prophecies and from the words and works of Jesus, including his death and resurrection.

But what Peter is saying is that there is hope for them, even though they acted in ignorance there was no excuse for it yet if they repent and turn to Christ they would be forgiven (v 19). We too are guilty before God, we have no excuse for our sin and our rebellion but there is hope for us, as well if we turn to God in repentance we will receive forgiveness.

e) Christ (v 18) - In the final section of the first half of the sermon Peter reassures his hearers that their rejection and execution of Jesus had not frustrated God's plan. The crucifixion did not alter God's plan in fact it was all part of God's plan.

God had foretold through the Old Testament prophets that the Messiah would be rejected and killed and now what these people have done and witnessed is in fact the fulfilment of God's eternal plan. This did not make the people less guilty but it did offer to them forgiveness for their sin because the reason Jesus entered our world lived died and rose again is so that sinners could receive forgiveness. He died so that sinners could be restored to a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, which brings us to the application of the sermon.

2. THE APPLICATION OF THE SERMON (vs. 19-26)

Peter's sermon must have left the people with a question. What shall we do? Now Peter is going to apply the sermon by telling them what they ought to do. Peter's sermon is an example of good gospel preaching. Before anyone can understand the good news of salvation through Jesus they must be faced with the bad news of their sin and guilt.

Now Peter like a good preacher is going to call sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ

a) Reasons To Repent (vs. 19-26) - Peter clearly gives a number of reasons why the people should repent from their sins and turn to God.

i) God Will Forgive Sinners (v 19) - Peter calls upon the people to repent in order to receive forgiveness. The literal meaning of the Greek word for "repentance" is to change's one's mind and purpose. Therefore repentance involves much more than a mere decision to follow Jesus, it involves a change of mind that leads to a change of behaviour. To repent means to turn to God and when one turns to God in repentance then the good news is that your sins will be wiped out.

The term "wiped out" pictures the wiping of ink from a document. Unlike modern day ink, in New Testament times ink had no acid content. Consequently it did not bite into the papyrus that was used for documentation. It remained on the surface and was easily wiped out with a damp sponge. This is what God does with the sins of a repentant sinner he wipes them out completely, so that they can never be retrieved again.

Even the sin of rejecting and executing the Messiah could be wiped out if they will repent and turn to God. Imagine all sin; no matter how horrible can be wiped out by God because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He died in our place; he bore our sin therefore all who repent and turn to him can experience total and complete forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Therefore instead of standing guilty and condemned before God repentant sinners stand righteous and accepted by God. Therefore sinners who are guilty and feel guilty as a consequence can experience freedom from that guilt and that guilt can be replaced with a sense of joy of knowing God through Jesus Christ.

ii) Times of refreshment will be experienced (v 19) - The Greek word for “refreshment” can mean “rest” “relief” “respite” or “refreshment.” It is the positive counterpart to forgiveness, for God does not only wipe out our sins but he adds refreshment to our spirits. Let me illustrate it for you like this.

We have a thing called respite care. When a carer needs a rest, a chance to recharge their batteries, they ask for the person they are caring for to go into a Nursing home for respite care. Well in the same way in our Christian life there are times when we need the Lord to give us respite care.

Many of us go through times when we feel stale as Christians. Christianity has become a routine we come to church every week but it's not as it used to be, we simply feel spiritually stale. We feel spiritually flat. We all go through dry spells spiritually and we need a bit of respite care from the Lord, we need spiritual refreshment. Sometimes this dryness is caused by our employment, which has also become stale, boring and unrewarding. Sometimes it's caused by poor health or stress or sometimes it is caused by our sin. But whatever the cause we are told here that when we repent and receive God's forgiveness then there will be many days when the Lord will refresh us. Has that been your experience?

Have there not been times when Jesus becomes so real to you and the gospel is so vivid that your whole spirit has been revived. You feel like a new person, you regain your excitement for the things of God and you experience freshness in your relationship with God.

You see God not only promises us forgiveness but he promises to be with us and one experience of his presence is to know times of refreshment in the midst of the routine of life.

iii) Future prospect (vs. 20-21) - Not only will our past be dealt with through forgiveness and the present dealt with through periods of refreshment but the prospects for our future is extremely exciting as well. One day God will send Jesus back to our world then He will restore all things as He has promised to do. In other words Jesus is in heaven now and comes to us by his Spirit to refresh us spiritually but there is coming a day when he will leave heaven and return to earth and bring everything back to its intended and original purpose.

Christians have a bright future because we will enjoy God's new heaven and new earth but these present and future blessings are only enjoyed when we repent and receive God's forgiveness through Jesus. Unrepentant sinners only know guilt in this world for them there are no times of spiritual refreshment, but there is also no bright future because they will not receive heaven but hell.

That is why you must repent now, don't leave it any longer turn to God and receive these blessings in Christ. But there are two more reasons why we should repent.

iv) Judgement will be avoided (vs. 22-24) - As an example of a prophet through whom God spoke, Peter quotes Moses, Israel's first and greatest prophet. In Deuteronomy 18:15, which is quoted here by Peter, Moses spoke of the coming Messiah (v 22). The prophet predicted was interpreted by the Jews to mean the coming Messiah (John 1:21, 25 & 6:14). Now Moses warned the people of the consequences of rejecting the Messiah (v 23 cf. Deuteronomy 18:19). Rejection of the Messiah would mean that they would be cut off from God's promised blessings to his people (v 23). That was the condition that Peter's hearers found themselves in by rejecting God's Messiah Jesus Christ.

But not only did Moses warn the people so did all the prophets from Samuel's time onwards. But Peter's audience like their forefathers refused to listen to the prophets. The nation was without

excuse for their failure to accept Jesus as their Messiah. The evidence was clear and undisputed yet the people refused to turn to God therefore “they will be completely cut off from among his people” (v 23).

This is why they should turn to God in repentance and receive his forgiveness and refreshment. By so doing we will receive blessings, both now and in the future, rather than judgement. My dear friends the only way that we are going to escape God’s judgement is to repent and receive God’s gift of forgiveness. We like Peter’s listeners are guilty before God of rejecting Jesus the Saviour.

Therefore repent now otherwise we will be cut of from God and His people for all eternity.

v) Privilege That Belonged to Them (vs. 24-26) - Peter’s audience were Jews they therefore knew the prophets message, God had sent his word to them and had made covenant promises to them as a nation. They knew that through Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed (v 25). That blessing of course was ultimately spiritual for all who believe in Jesus Christ are true children of Abraham (Romans 4:11).

The Jews were a very privilege nation indeed therefore they had no excuse for not turning to God even the gospel was preached first to them (v 26). Remember Jesus mandate to His disciples was to begin in Jerusalem before going further afield with the gospel (Acts 1:8). That is what Peter is doing in this sermon therefore what must they do? They must turn from their wicked ways (v 26).

Repentance was the key that unlocked everything. Peter has clearly shown the people that the claims of Jesus were consistent with what was predicted in the Old Testament, therefore the people should respond in repentance and believe in Jesus their Messiah. However sadly most of the Jews who listened to Peter that day never did repent and ultimately they were cut of from God and his people. They ended up in hell. My dear friends that is the destiny for everyone who refuses to repent including you. God offers you forgiveness and salvation. We are all sinners before Him.

Therefore what must we do? Repent and receive his offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Amen