

Let's open our Bibles tonight. We're going to continue our study through the book of Acts. We're going to start in verse 11 tonight.

This book is the second book that Luke wrote in his very detailed report to his buddy, a lover of God, about the ministry of Jesus from the time that He started His public ministry in Luke all the way forward until the resurrection; and then this book, the book of Acts, picks up to tell us how did the church go forward after the death of Jesus. When we were born again, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon us, how did that go? How did that work? And what does it mean for us today? You have in the book of Acts about thirty years' worth of reports, so you'll get to go through them. And we really see this book as the blueprint for how the church should behave - what we should emphasize, the things we should be pursuing, how we need to rely on the Holy Spirit to do the work we can't, how we need to have great faith in the work that God can do through the lives of His people. And so we looked at the early appearances, if you will, after the resurrection of Jesus to His own. We saw His final words to His own in verses 7 and 8 of chapter 1 - they were to "wait for the promise of the Father, 'which you have heard from Me that before you go out to be My witnesses throughout the world, I want you to wait for the power from on high, the Holy Spirit, to come upon you.'" And then ten days later, though they didn't know that, God poured out His Spirit upon these 120 that were hiding in the upper room, were gathering together, and we read about the amazing things that took place when the Lord poured out His Spirit to signify this was His work. We saw Peter's first sermon, and, by the power of the Spirit, 3,000 people in town that Pentecost were saved. We looked at 33the sermon in depth. I think they are there for a reason. It really does show us about how we can begin to share our faith and to be able to preach, if you will, to others; and what constitutes a good way of reaching people around us. We looked at the practice of the early church, beginning in verse 42 of chapter 2. It really is a template, I think, for us. The body was committed to the Word and to fellowship, to worship and to prayer. And then last week, the first eleven verses or so, we looked at John and Peter heading for the afternoon prayers at the Temple. And we mentioned to you that until such time as the Jews really began to reject the church and they were forced out of the Temple, the believers gathered with the Jews in the Temple weekly; so did Jesus when He went to minister there

as well. The Jews had three times of prayer every day (they still do) - 9:00 in the morning, noon and 3:00 p.m. And Luke writes about this encounter that (this particular day) Peter and John had with a lame man who was laid down at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. It separated the men and the women's courts. And he had been there for a long time; everyone knew him. He was over forty years old. He had never walked. And he was there asking for money, getting support.

In our outline of last week (and we've been trying to get you to do it every week because I think because this is such an outline for us to look at - to ask yourself what kind of people does God use), we saw that God uses people of prayer, as Peter and John had gone to pray; that they were sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. You would have to be to pull some guy up off the ground who was lame. God uses those who have pure motives; Peter didn't have anything to offer except his faith and his trust in the Lord and the leading of God's Spirit. He responded by faith. He was flexible to stop and to minister to this fellow. He was prepared. He had been walking with God. He had something to offer. It wasn't a challenge, if you will, to his faith. And then he was willing to just have the Lord honored and died to himself.

Well tonight (and actually next time we meet in chapter 4), chapters 3 and 4 really all revolve around this miracle of God there in the Temple both in terms of the healing, the preaching, the arrest; Peter's address to the Sanhedrin (the same people that Jesus had stood before just a couple of months earlier) and then their gathering together (at the end of chapter 4) just to continue to do the work even though things had gotten a lot more dangerous. But it all kind of comes off of this one miracle, so chapters 3 and 4 kind of come together, and you can remember them, I think, together as well. So tonight we want to finish chapter 3 down to verse 26. We want to look at the sermon of Peter. It is the conclusion, if you will, in one sense of this wonderful work that God did of healing this man who was now "leaping and walking and," we read, "praising God" and all the while just hanging around with Peter and John on the porch that is called Solomon's Porch. You might suspect that a guy that everyone had known, lying around for many years, would cause quite a stir. And it does seem to be the case here that either the afternoon prayer was interrupted or didn't happen at all, I don't know, or people came running out when they heard the commotion that was going on outside. But for sure this miracle was done at a place of worship at a time of God being sought in prayer. And now we get this sermon of Peter's.

There are lots of sermons, by the way, in this book. And you might want to say to yourself, "Well, why do we have all these sermons to learn from?" But I think it teaches us a couple things. God's Word saves, and it doesn't even need to be delivered in really flashy tones or slick or very (I won't say entertaining but I'll say) outwardly loud and pushy terms. They're all different kinds of audiences. Peter, in chapter 2, preaches to the Pentecost people who were there by the hundreds of thousands (according to Josephus) because of the Feast Day; there were religious folks there. Here, in chapter 3, he preaches to a much smaller group in Solomon's Porch. But he's preaching to people that have come to the Temple to fulfill their religious obligation of prayer. They were devout in their belief that God wanted them to pray. In chapter 6 and in chapter 7, you will have Stephen's message to the Sanhedrin before they kill him, and he becomes the catalyst (his death does) to push the church away from Jerusalem and to be heading out towards the end of the world, if you will, because they were all kind of staying put. In chapter 10, there is Peter's sermon to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. In chapter 13, there is Paul's pretty long sermon in Antioch of Pisidia. In chapters 21 and 22, there is Paul's sermon to the mob in Jerusalem, as they gathered to try to tear him apart. He's preaching to a really angry mob that wants him dead in the worst way. And then, in Acts 26, there's that sermon that he gives to Agrippa. So there're a lot of sermons in here, and I think they are set before us with the intention of having us learn that here's how you deliver the message; here's how you become sensitive to the various audiences - whether it's a Roman big shot, or it's a mob that wants to kill you, or it's Gentiles that are not sure (and you're not sure you should be speaking to them at all), or whether it's religious Jews on a Feast Day. So you get all kinds of audiences. You get to look and see what was said. The results are obvious - the work of God's Spirit. But it's good to know your audience. It is wise to speak to them of things that you know that they can relate to.

So, notice verse 11 from last week, "Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed." So here's the second sermon in the book of Acts; it is Peter's second sermon. We've called it, "Peter Preaching on the Porch." And he was preaching, notice, to the "greatly amazed" religious folks who had gathered.

Verse 12, "So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: 'Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?' " Peter, in response to the crowd that was obviously large, gathered, excited, asks them two questions. They're important.

The first one is, "Why are you marveling? Why does this blow your mind?" Now that's an interesting question because in the history of God's people, the Jews, they as a nation, more than anyone else, had a history that is replete with miracles and healings and the work of God delivering the nation - whether they were greatly outnumbered, whether they had nothing to drink, whether they needed to have food fall from the sky. They, as a nation, had history that would say, "Our God can do the most amazing things." But yet Peter says, "Why do you guys look so amazed? Why are your eyes so big? Why are you oohing and aahing so much?" No doubt the Greeks might have been surprised. The Babylonians might have been surprised. The Romans would have been beside themselves. But they should marvel because they served gods that were powerless - they were made of stone or carved out of wood. But why should the people of God, whom He had chosen and shown Himself to for so many generations, why should they be so surprised? It's a great question, and I think it deserves an answer. Peter challenges them to remember the God who parted the Red Sea, who gave them victory over the enemy, who gave water to them out of a rock. I see it sometimes today, and I guess it shows how far we have yet to go in our faith and in our growth. But you will see the same kind of amazement some day when God answers the prayer of His people, and people will talk about, "And He answered my prayer!" as if, "That's a shock! I didn't think He was going to come through, but He came through. I didn't think He could do it, but He did it!" And somehow the church shouldn't be so shocked. The world, I get it. They pray to nothin'. We pray to Almighty God. Why should we be so moved by that? I think about Elisha (there in 2 Kings 4) when he was caught and Gehazi was with him, and this woman came to him and spoke to him about her child, and the biggest frustration for Elisha was that God hadn't shown him what needed to be done or that there was a situation that he needed to go and to minister. And Elisha was amazed that God hadn't told him ahead of time. We're amazed when God tells us anything! So, to a whole room full of prayer folks hangin' around the Temple in Solomon's Porch at a late-afternoon prayer session, they come, and Peter goes, "You guys are surprised? You just came from a prayer meeting! What were you prayin' for? You think God would listen? You think God would hear? Yooo!" We shouldn't be that amazed.

And second of all, it kind of goes along with the first one, "Why are you looking at us? Why are you so intensely looking at us that you think somehow we've pulled this off by ourselves?" It's the same issue. They forgot God, the God that they had served as people for generations, and though they were at a prayer meeting, they didn't expect God to do a thing. Now, for these young couple-of-month-old

believers, Peter and John, this is a dangerous place to be because now the people are looking to them. Right? Peter is the first one to say, "Quit lookin' at us! We didn't we're not that holy or that faithful." But here the people begin to look at them because that's obviously what we have to see. People, when there're supernatural works of God, are often drawn to the instrument rather than to the Lord. And people will try to put God's vessels on pedestals because we have this tendency to honor what we can see. And these young men are now in a dangerous spot because everybody's looking at them. "Pray for me, dude." Later Paul and Barnabas, in Lystra, will be in a similar situation when Paul, in his preaching, sees a man in much the similar position. He is a man that is crippled from birth, and we are told that Paul "perceived that he had the faith to be healed." I'm not sure what that means other than Paul felt led of the Lord to minister to this guy. And when he ministered to him, and he got up immediately, and the crowd was large, the people immediately ran off to go get stuff to worship Paul, to sacrifice to Barnabas, and they had the hardest time (Acts 14, it's a while yet) slowing these folks down. "No, no, no! No on the sacrifice." And the people got so embarrassed that they turned on Paul, and there were people in town trying to kill Paul (who had followed him there), and they joined the opposition. First they were (Pastor Jack claps), "Oh, you're like a god. You're amazing." And then, when he said, "No, don't worship us, worship God," they turned on him. They were embarrassed about what they had done in their response.

Be careful (in serving God) not to draw attention to yourself in the manner in which you serve Him. Because you don't want anyone walking around saying, "Now that guy is somethin' else." You really do want people leaving your presence saying, "Isn't Jesus something! Isn't He amazing!" You don't want to be introduced as the "man of the hour," or, "The anointed one of God is here to speak to us," or, "Can I just lay my hands on you and pray for you, my brother? I'm anointed, you know." No, you're an idiot, you know. "Boy, can he teach. Boy, can he sing. Boy, can he serve." The praises of men. Making a name for yourself. Be careful. Because the minute you go that route, you're finished with God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). I always worry about, and I see it sometimes at Christian concerts, people running to get autographs from singers - in their Bibles. And I thought, "Are you out of your mind? He's just a dude like you are. Stop!" There is this cult of personality, and our flesh loves honor, and I'm sure that it's hard for people to deal with. But isn't it better to just realize like Peter does (and he's right, and he says it immediately), "It's not our power, it's not our godliness. We don't qualify for

this. God did this." What kind of people does God use? Those who know their place, who know who is the One doing the work. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images." "I just want all the credit. I'll do the work, but I want the credit." And I say, "Praise the Lord. Take the credit. But work through my life." The minute you begin to capitalize on the work of God in you, you're on your way out. Those who seek His glory and not their own are perfectly suitable for His use.

So Peter asked them two questions. He then starts his message, his sermon, if you will, and we'll call this, "Preach, Peter." Verse 13, " 'The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.' " Now, put yourself in Peter's shoes. Here's the Jewish crowd at the Temple doing the religious stuff of praying, and a miracle's taken place, and you have their attention. Notice that Peter questions them about how they're viewing them, and, "Why don't you have hope in the God that we've served?" But then he immediately turns their thoughts back to God. "Quit lookin' at me like that! Our Father in heaven, our God that we know to be the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God of our fathers." And he refers them back to God and then immediately points them to Jesus. Right? His Son, His Servant Jesus, the Healer of this lame man. "It was Jesus, the One you denied, the One you coughed over and dragged to Pilate a few months ago, the One that you pressed on Pilate to have Him killed even after Pilate said, 'He hasn't done anything wrong.' " And go back and read the accounts in the gospels. You will find Pilate time after time after time saying, "He hasn't done anything wrong. I'm going to let Him go. I'll beat Him and let Him go. I don't want any trouble, but I've got to let Him go." His wife said, "Let Him go." Had there been no pressure, Jesus would have walked. Now Jesus wasn't coming to live; He was coming to die. But they had liability in this thing. They were culpable in their responses, if you will. And so the crowd was unyielding. They knew about Jesus. They'd seen Him. Many of them had seen His work, certainly. They browbeat, if you will, a very weak, vacillating man - Pilate - to have their way. They demanded that He be crucified. And notice that Peter takes this crowd, this religious crowd, back to the brutal days of Calvary. "You want to know how he's whole? Let me tell you. It's all about Jesus, the One that you guys have set aside." And he brings the crowd face to face with their guilt in terms of the death of the Lord. He says, in verses 13-14, "God glorified His Servant Jesus.

'You denied Him, the Father glorified Him. He's the Holy One, He's the Just One.' " Jesus had lived a life without sin. His power was proved by what He said and by what He did. "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" Jesus said in John 8:46, to these religious leaders. "I tell you the truth. You don't believe Me." "The Father hasn't left Me alone. I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). They had ignored the attributes of Jesus' life. They had set aside the powerful proofs that only He could point to. And instead, at this trial, they had screamed out (with the prompting of the religious leaders) for the release of a very well-known murderer, "Kill Jesus, give us Barabbas. Hook Him up to the cross. Let Him die. Give us a guy that deserves to die." How often people tend to choose something or someone over Jesus, foolishly believing it would be the best part of their life is to set Him aside and head in their own direction. That's what the people did. "If we can just get rid of this irritant, we'll be fine." And Peter wants them to think about that. "You made a choice here to set Him aside." In fact, he says almost paradoxically, "You killed the Prince of life. You killed the Prince of life." The word "Prince" is the word "*archegos*." It means author. "He's the One who came to give life. You killed the Author of life, seeking to take the life of the very One who had come to give you life to begin with. You turned on yourself." In reality, we know that you couldn't really take His life unless He wanted to give it. But that doesn't get them off the hook. God'll still have His way. Man'll be responsible for his decisions. It was intentional, and they were guilty. "You killed the Prince of life. You handed Him over. You wanted a murderer released when Pilate was determined to let Jesus go. He's the Son of God. He's the Servant Jesus. He came, and you rejected Him, and you killed Him, and you stood away from Him. But I want to say to you God raised Him up from the dead" (verse 15 - it's the resurrection), "we're His witnesses."

You see, the heart of the gospel, every time you go to share your faith, has to be the resurrection. If Jesus didn't rise, there is absolutely no gospel. It is the hope and the foundation of your faith. The lame man, and the healing of this lame man in the name of Jesus, would do nothing if Jesus was dead. "Well, do you believe in Jesus?" "Yeah, but He's dead, and He hasn't come back yet." If He's dead, this man has no hope. But notice, in every place that you find the disciples preaching, what motivated their boldness was their conviction that Jesus was alive. It was the resurrection that moved them. "Hey, if He came from the dead, we're good, and we can go out and preach." It was their witness to the resurrection. The big debate in the Bible as to what happened to Jesus' body - especially you go to Matthew 28 - the soldiers that were sent to guard the tomb (Matthew tells us)

were offered an awfully large sum of money, a bribe, to say that Jesus' body had been stolen while they were asleep. I guess the first question in any decent courtroom would be, "How do you know if you were asleep?" But nobody asked that question. And so there was that struggle between the disciples' testimony of seeing Jesus alive - even the 500 at once that were mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:6 - and this story that was circling about a theft of a body. But all you've got to do is remember the Jesus that was alive and the miracles that He did. So convinced were these early saints that they would go to their deaths rather than deny the truth of it. Who does God use? He uses people that are completely convinced of His Word. Because then there's nothing to fear. Paul would write to the Corinthians, "If Christ isn't risen, your faith is futile; you're still in your sins! And everyone who's died or fallen asleep in Christ has perished. If in this life only we have the hope of Christ, we are the most pitiful people" (1 Corinthians 15:17-19). That's what he wrote. If it's all a joke, and we're just living like, "Hey, there's life after death," we're ripped off because we should just "eat, drink and be merry." But we know better. And because He rose, we live a different kind of life. Now Peter goes right to Jesus. He puts the pressure on the people to recognize their sin. All he does is rehash history, and it's very present-tense history, if you will. And then he says to them, "You killed Him, but God raised Him up. Your plans to eliminate Him from your life didn't work. God raised Him up. God raised Him up."

And then notice, in verse 16, that Peter then focuses on this Jesus who's alive because "we're His witnesses." He says this, " 'And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.' " Peter presses home the fact that Jesus is alive. That's why this healing could take place. It's His name. It's faith in His name. It's the faith that comes through Him. That's about as much as you can involve Jesus in anything. It's the name of Jesus, it's the trust in His name and who He is, it's the faith that He gives me. Right? Peter is about to distance himself from any credit at all. "It's all about Him." We often make the mistake of trying to work up our faith, especially when we're faced with difficult circumstances. You'll hear people say, "I just wish I had more faith." But here Peter does speak about faith, but it is a conviction just that Jesus is the Savior, and He is the Lord. And he adds that faith in His name and by His name recognizes the fact that anything that is done through me by Him, He gets credit for. Right? He's the One who did the work. He's the author and the finisher of my faith, according to Hebrews 12:2. "**Archegos.**" Same word. He's the pioneer or the architect or the author. And notice it was Peter

(back in verse 6) who, by the Spirit, was stirred in his heart to, this time, reach out and pull up this man who was weak. Look, this is the faith that the Bible talks about needing to grow daily - your faith and mine; that that faith that comes by hearing, and then hearing that comes by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Your faith should grow as you understand and know God better, as you put Him to the test, as you watch Him respond to your walk of faith. The more you know Him, the stronger your faith should become. This is something God's interested in, like a muscle, working out in your life. There's a gift of faith - can't really plan for that. God puts you in a situation, He gives you overwhelming confidence to act in a way that you wouldn't normally do, He honors it, you respond, trusting, "All right, it must be the Lord" (like Peter did). But that's not a faith you can really work at very much or strengthen, if you will; just led by the Spirit. But you can learn to hear His voice. And then Paul even writes to the Ephesians (in chapter 2:8) doesn't he, that, "By grace are you saved by faith, that is not of yourself; it's a gift of God." So even when you walk around and go, "Yeah, and then I smartened up, and I got saved." No. That wasn't you. Thank God He opened your eyes. Thank God that He took you the way you were. Thank God that He looked ahead and went, "Well, he's not going to be a problem child, but I'll take him anyway." He didn't just look back and forgive your sins; He looked forward and went, "Whoa, he's going to be trouble, but I'll take him anyway." And He did. So nobody can brag.

So Peter says, "Look, I didn't heal him. He was lame. As the Lord wills, God can. God did. It was in His name, in Jesus' name, Jehovah Yeshua - God is salvation." It was in His name that the healing came. And Peter was sure of it. The power is in the Person and in the name of Jesus. This is why he stands here. "Oh, Jesus did this." Are you all right with saying Jesus did this in your life? Then God can use you.

Now, I think it's a big hammer to hit people in the head - what Peter just said. I just try to put myself in that position. I'm a Jewish guy at prayer, and I just want to come and be the holy guy that I am. Right? I think I'm pretty holy. And then this guy just - a miracle happens, and he starts beatin' me around the head, "You killed Jesus. But he didn't stay dead, man. My Father" (Pastor Jack makes slapping sounds) and you just feel like you're bloodied. But there has to be an awareness of sin. You going to share with people, you've got to get to sin sooner or later. It's the one subject no one wants to speak about. It's the offensive part of the message. Getting' saved isn't offensive. Eternal life for nothin' isn't offensive. Goin' to heaven forever - that's not offensive. It's the first part. "You're a

sinner." That's offensive. "Call me names? You should see your own life." Peter has beaten them around the head.

But I want you to notice what he does in verse 17. He says, " 'Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance,' " (oh, that's nice) " 'as did your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.' " Now I want you to think about what Peter says. He gives them strong words of responsibility, but then Peter allows them to get off the hook or, if you will, to know that there's a redemption here. He says to them quite clearly, "I know you didn't know what you were doing, but now you do. You have rejected Jesus in ignorance." Paul will say that he did the same thing (1 Timothy 1:13). They followed the vocal few. Go back and read the accounts there in the gospels, and you find that, except for these scribes and Pharisees (loudmouthed and manipulative), the people were just kind of caught up in the web of their pushing and shoving and manipulation. They weren't thinking for themselves. He tells them there was still great mercy and tremendous grace available to them. They didn't know Him. Peter says, "You did it in ignorance. You didn't know who He was."

But he adds, in verse 18, "You should have known who He was because you, of all people, should have seriously considered what your own prophets had said about a suffering Messiah." Isn't that what he says in verse 18? He says, "Everything that the prophets said would happen to the Messiah, the Christos, the Christ, that He would suffer, He did suffer. It was absolutely fulfilled. His Word was absolutely right." The problem for the Jews was they never embraced the thought that the Messiah would suffer. Jesus often spoke about the ignorance that they held of the Word. He spoke to them (you remember, in Matthew 22) when they tried setting Him up (some of the scribes did), and they asked Him about the guy that had been married seven times and which wife would he have in heaven. They were just trying to discredit His Word altogether. And Jesus looked at them (in Matthew 22:29) and He said, "Look, you're mistaken. You don't know the Scriptures. You don't understand the power of God. The reason you don't have an answer is you don't really know what you're talking about." And He spoke to them about having been misled and not understanding very well. The Jews prided themselves in their supposed knowledge of the Scriptures. But when Jesus saw the Pharisees teaching, He said to His own (Matthew 15:14), "Let the blind lead the blind. They're both going to fall into the ditch." He spoke about their lack of understanding. Peter does so, too. "Look, we're guilty of sin. But I understand,

and so does God, that we maybe didn't understand what God wanted. But, look, here's what He wants. Now that you know, now you're responsible." And Peter met them halfway, if you will. Nicodemus asked Jesus about getting to heaven and not understanding, and you might remember what Jesus said about being born of God. But He also said (in John 3:10), " 'Are you a teacher in Israel, and you don't understand these things?' " "You're the guy in the pulpit. You're the guy that the person comes to, asking questions of, and you don't have an answer? You should have an answer. It demands an answer." Even on the cross, Jesus said (Luke 23:34), "Father, forgive them." Why? "They don't know what they're doing." So Peter's not just trying to give them a way out like, "Hey, we'll just nod and wink and look the other way." He is saying to them, "We're culpable for what we even don't know. We're still responsible." But the Lord understands. Peter wasn't looking for an excuse to get them off the hook with their actions, but he wants to highlight the fact that not knowing the Scriptures makes you far removed from what God's love and grace is or what can be found.

The Jewish view of the Messiah throughout history was a man who would come like Moses and rule the earth, would set the Jews at the top of the mountain. Everyone would bow to Jerusalem. That was everything they believed in and everything they clung to. They didn't distinguish between the First and the Second Coming of Jesus. They missed it. They went to Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9 - and rather than saying, "The Messiah, when He comes, is going to die" (because that's what those verses say), they say this, "This is metaphorical, and God is speaking about us as His people dying in the world as we're mistreated, waiting for the Messiah." They spiritualized the text, never wanting to apply it to Jesus. Didn't the disciples do the same thing? Didn't Peter say (Matthew 16:22), "Oh, far be it from You to die, Lord!?" And Peter, being told, "You are of your father the devil. Get behind Me, Satan!" because he clung to what everyone else clung to. They missed God's demonstration of love. They saw no need for forgiveness. They couldn't understand why a Messiah would have to die to help them. They were absolutely ignorant. Now they'd go to Isaiah 35, for example, which talked about the glorious reign of the Messiah and how, from Jerusalem, the whole earth would have peace. They'd quote that sucker word for word. They knew that comin' and goin', man. "That's what Isaiah tells us. We're gonna rule!" "How about Isaiah 53?" "Oh, yeah, brother, you don't understand. Those are spiritual statements about our history." And, like I said, even the disciples felt that way. They argued for important positions. In fact, they didn't understand, until after the resurrection, what took place. They didn't begin to understand - until after the resurrection -

what God's plans were. You can read in John 12 (which is Palm Sunday, the week before). It says this, "His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him" (verse 16). It came to life after He rose. That's all Peter was saying. "Look, you don't get it. I get it. You didn't grow up with this, you don't have a handle on this. Let me tell you what the Bible says." And Peter went out of his way to share with the folks what the Bible says. Luke 24 - the angels meeting with the ladies in the morning, there at the tomb - said to them (verse 7), "Do you remember how 'the Son of Man was delivered in the hands of sinful men and crucified and on the third day He would rise again,' " and it says, "And they remembered His words." They finally got it. But they didn't get it before then. So even back here in chapter 1:6, "Will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" "No. It's not really for you to know." Jesus had prayed the Father forgive them, they didn't know what they were doing.

Peter is finished with this short message, and by the time he's finished at the end of the chapter, the church has grown significantly (according to chapter 4:4) to over 5,000 men plus women and children. It was 3,000 people in chapter 1; by the time you get to chapter 4, it had almost, maybe, doubled in size or even more. And there're two significant sermons. That's all that we read about. But Jesus' prayer was being answered. Right? "Father, I pray that they might be used. Pour Yourself through them." (John 17) And He even prayed for you and me, that "those who would believe in Me through their word in seasons to come." That's you and me. That's the hope I have - that His Word still brings life to those that are sitting in darkness. Even if they don't get it, you still have to go out and share it. So, ignorant of God's Word, yet God had said Jesus will die, Jesus will rise, and He has.

Ultimately, when you preach like this, the gospel climaxes with a call to choose. Right? You can't let someone walk away now. There's a decision that has to be made, a path that has to be followed, sin that has to be turned from, a Messiah or a Savior that has to be turned to. And in all of these sermons in the book of Acts, you will find a reminder of sin, a reiteration of what God said (having come to pass), but ultimately a call to action. What are you going to do? How are you going to respond?

Verse 18 - everything that the Lord said about His suffering Messiah has come to pass. Verse 19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be

blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.' " Remember verse 18? What God said about His suffering to the prophets has happened. What God has promised about what is coming next, "He also spoke by the prophets since the world began." Peter's just staying on point, and he says what he says in chapter 2:38, as well, to the big crowd, "Repent." It is the number-one continued use of that word that you'll find. Turn away or turn around. It is an attitude of understanding my sin and His Person. Right? Jesus said (Luke 13:3), "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." He said to the Ephesian church (in Revelation 2:5), "Unless you repent, I'll come and remove the candlestick from you. The light will go." You have to repent. So, repent, "*metanoia*," turn around, and then be converted, "*epistrepho*." It means to turn towards. If "*metanoia*" means turn around, the next word, converted, means to turn towards. Turn away from your way of life, turn around, and now face Jesus. Go where the life can be found. Go to the name above all other names. Turn from your sinful life - repent. Turn from your self-confidence, and be converted. Turn to Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord, so that your sin may be blotted out. Don't you like the words "blotted out"? I like the way that sounds. Don't you? Especially when it involves my sins which are spilled all over my life. He's just going to blot them out. Jesus is. Expunge them. Remove them. No longer find them. Modern term - He's going to delete them. Isn't that good? My greatest button on my typewriter is that backspace. It's worn out before anything else because I'm a horrible typist. Every fourth one is a delete. I think the Lord looks at my life that way. "Delete...mmmm, delete..... mmmm, delete." By the blood of Jesus, whom I turn to and repent and look to be converted by, God promises to send into my life times of refreshing from His presence. In other words, you can find life with Him for the death that you have without Him.

Notice that Peter first spoke of the Scriptures and now how they had prophesied of the suffering, but they have also prophesied of what He's going to do next. He's going to come and restore all things - these times of refreshing, this grace that's being poured out, the glorious return of the Messiah, the exaltation of Israel as a nation as God has promised. All of that, in preparation, is to draw you and me to Him so that we might be forgiven and converted and find life. And Jesus will return when all of that stuff is accomplished according to His plans. The Church Age has got to end at some point. The rapture of the church has got to take place

at some point. The Great Tribulation will begin at some point. There will be a preparation for the Lord until everything is restored, and then the Great Tribulation will end and culminate in the Second Coming and the 1,000-year-reign of Christ. It's all coming. But Peter's argument to this group of religious people is, "You killed Him. You did it ignorantly. You should have known better. You have the Bible. Everything that the prophets said happened. And, by the way, everything that the prophets said about what you could have now is happening, too - healing and life and forgiveness and refreshing and power for healing the lame. It comes from His throne. It comes from His name. It comes from His hand. It comes from Him." It's a pretty good message, isn't it?

Verse 22, " 'For Moses' " (remember, he's talking to a Jewish audience) " 'truly said to the fathers, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." ' ' " Now Peter quotes out of Deuteronomy 18. This was a message that came from Moses to the people when they stood in great terror in front of Mount Sinai. They had been in Egypt, locked up for hundreds of years. They didn't know the God of their fathers. They came face to face with Him six weeks after they got out of Egypt and had gone through the Red Sea, and there's fire and brimstone and lava and shaking and earthquakes and thunder, and they just finally said to Moses, "Yeah, that's our God. You go talk to Him. Don't make us talk to Him. You just go find out what He wants and just tell Him we'll do whatever He wants. We'll be over here waitin'." Terrified. And that's when Moses said, in prophecy, "God's going to raise up a Prophet like me who is going to bring the people to God." In the midst of a holy God and a sinful people, terrified to even approach Him, God's going to set up a substitute, a Redeemer, One who's going to hold both sides. The people pleaded with Moses, "You go talk to Him." Now we know that that Prophet is none other than Jesus Christ. But understand the people wanted Him to come. They said to John the Baptist (John 1:21), "Are you the guy? Are you the Prophet?" They were referring to Deuteronomy 18. And he said, "No, it's not me. I'm just the forerunner." Moses said, "When He comes, hear Him or you'll be judged." Jesus had been with them, had given them His Word, had offered to deliver them out of bondage even as Moses brought the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, took them through the Red Sea. This man stands before them - healed - as an ongoing testimony of the work of Jesus who lived and ruled and should be believed and followed. Now there are a lot of people today that will take that prophecy out of Moses and will say, as they did in Jesus' day, "Moses was

talking about a man. It was 'like him.' And Jesus would be more than him. He's God, not just a man." But Moses didn't say it would be 'like him' in the sense of certain tall or wide or bearded. He was referring to the fact He was the representation of God where He brought God and the people together; He brought deliverance from bondage; He did the work of a deliverer. Jesus came to do that for all mankind. If you go to Isaiah 9:6 (good Christmas verse), "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." It points out very clearly He's Jesus. He's the Prophet. He's the One that was prophesied. In Psalm 2:7, it says, "The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' " "The government's going to be on Your shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus the Prophet is fully God and fully man. Peter makes that wonderful confession in Matthew 16:16, and Jesus confirms that that was a revelation from the Father. So he quotes the Scriptures. And remember he's been referring to the prophets the whole time. Right? "You should have read the prophets. They'll tell you the Messiah was going to suffer and die. You should have read the prophets. He's promised He's going to give life."

And then he says this, verse 24, " 'Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days." From Samuel, who was the last judge (and the first one, by the way, in the Bible designated as the office of a prophet that you'll find in the Old Testament), through all of the prophets that followed him, each spoke of a promised Messiah; 330 prophecies (in the prophetic books) about this Jesus that was to come - just for His First Coming.

Verse 25 " 'You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." To you first,' " (to the Jews first) " 'God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you,' " (and here's how He blesses you) " 'in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.' " "All of you are privileged descendants of the promise of a coming Messiah that God promised first to our father, Abraham." Back in chapter 22:18 of Genesis - this is where this quote is from. You can go back there and look that the word "seed" is used. Paul points out in Galatians 3:16, that the Hebrew word for "Seed," there in Genesis, is singular. It's not "seeds," as in many; it is "Seed," as in one. "One Jewish descendant will bless every nation upon the earth, and that descendant, that one individual, is Jesus. He has come to reach all men, but He comes to you Jews first. And here's His offer - cleanse you from your sin. You, of all of the people of the earth, should recognize the promised Messiah. He came to bless you first. And that's His

offer." Peter presents to them the gospel based on the resurrection, its proof, the fulfillment of the Scriptures, their guilt and God's promises. He has it all. He has it all in fifteen verses. He didn't talk for an hour like I have. He got to it and got done with it, and God used it.

I can't imagine anybody not wanting to receive this blessing that you find in Jesus. I am of the conviction, as a pastor, that if I can just clearly teach God's Word, people will come to Christ. Because the only thing that's keeping them away from Him, I think, is their misunderstanding of who He is, the ignorant part. Right? Sin is going to destroy everyone anyway, but it's the ignorance of who He is and what He's come to do that Peter addresses. And he has a basis to do it with the Jews - he just holds the Bible out and goes, "This is your Bible. You've been readin' your Bible. You've got the Bible. This is the Word of God, isn't it?" He can't do that with the Gentiles. He's got to take an entirely different route. He can talk to them about guilt and weakness and the self-realization of what you are and are not. But he can't take a Bible out. But you can do that with these folks.

Now before we finish tonight, let's read the first four verses of chapter 4. We'll take those up next time. But it says, "Now as they spoke to the people," (and by "they," I suspect that it was Peter, but John was with him and this lame man made whole) "the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them," (not to pray for them) "and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening." (So, it was 3:00, now it's getting close to sunset). "However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." The illustration of the lame man's healing was a spiritual example to the fact that God could change lives. We are crippled by sin. We can't walk with God on our own. We sit outside the Temple, outside of God's presence. We're left to fend for ourselves. There's hopelessness. And then Jesus comes to take us by the hand and makes us whole, sheds His blood, so that we can come into God's presence, and we can come walking and leaping and praising God. We don't have to live under the curse anymore. We don't have to live under the law of sin and death anymore. We can live under His blessings.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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