

Acts 3

- The end of Chapter 2 and the beginning of Chapter 3 are closely connected, so we study them together tonight
 - At the end of last week, we were in the streets of Jerusalem after the Spirit descended upon the Church
 - And Peter preached to the multitude gathered resulting 3,000 Jews baptized that day
 - Through baptism they entered the Church
 - And as Jews, they also became part of the believing Remnant of Israel
 - This is the same remnant Paul describes in Romans 11:5-7
 - Then at the end of this scene, we find a summary statement of what followed for this group

[Acts 2:42](#) They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- Those who came from Pentecost were continuously devoted to two activities, and to a lesser extent two other activities, Luke says
 - The Greek word for continuously devoted (proskartereo) means adopting a lifestyle
 - You can see it used in Acts later:

[Acts 10:7](#) When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his **personal attendants**,

- "Personal attendants" is the same word in Greek, indicating a vocational dedication to something
- So those who experienced Pentecost adopted a new lifestyle of personal dedication to two activities
 - Learning the Apostles' teaching and spending time together
- The grammar in the Greek sentence makes clear that the latter two activities - The Lord's Supper and prayer - were conducted somewhat less frequently

- This makes sense on a practical level
- The Jewish believers in the early church would have continued observing standard Jewish practice for prayers and meals, which occurred at prescribed intervals
 - But teaching and fellowship were continual and made a part of everyday
- Luke gave us this overview to help us understand the events of Pentecost better
 - Someone might have heard about the events of Pentecost, but then dismiss it entirely as an emotional response - mass delusion
 - After the excitement had died down, these people would come to their senses and forget the whole experience
 - Today, we might see some who make a profession of faith but within a fairly short period of time, they leave it all behind
 - The reality is that strong emotional responses are not an accurate measure of truth
 - People often experience strong emotions in response to some message or event
 - But as sincere as these responses may be, they can be sincerely wrong
 - So Luke gives us evidence that the huge response on Pentecost wasn't a flash in the pan
 - Over 3,000 people came to faith on the first day of the church, and that change was followed by a new personal lifestyle
 - And a bond of Spirit that drew this group together in a new ways
 - These people began to live and think differently – fundamentally differently – as a result of the indwelling of the Spirit
 - It changed their view of Jesus, which brought salvation
 - And it changed their view of the world and of each other in the Church, which led them to think and act differently toward one another

- Ironically, many have taken Acts 2:42 to be a recipe for a how to establish a healthy church environment, when it's really speaking of individual devotion
 - First, remember that the book of Acts is not intended as a manual for how to conduct church
 - We aren't supposed to mimic the first century experience
 - We're supposed to follow the Spirit
 - Secondly, these activities are good and necessary disciplines of faithful believers, but they don't create faithful believers by themselves
 - The believers themselves were continually devoted to these activities (i.e., new vocation or lifestyle)
 - They were outward signs of a new heart and Spirit...they didn't produce those things, they followed these things
 - So it must be the individual decision of a believer to become devoted to these disciplines as a matter of lifestyle
 - But the activities themselves are important
 - Teaching, Fellowship, Communion, Prayer

[Acts 2:43](#) ¶ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

[Acts 2:44](#) And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

[Acts 2:45](#) and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

[Acts 2:46](#) Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

[Acts 2:47](#) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- Finally, Luke provides a snapshot of life in the early church
 - There was a feeling of awe or fear (phobos) as they witnessed the miracles performed by the Apostles
 - Throughout Acts we'll hear of miracles happening in the early church, but notice that they are always performed by Apostles or delegates who received the laying on of hands

- They are not performed by the congregations as a whole
- Nor could they be handed down except by the Apostles themselves
 - The gift of Apostleship was unique in the early church, and after the last Apostle died, the spiritual gift of miraculous powers ended
- This new church in Jerusalem was living close together, sharing all they had and helping the needy among them
 - This was a unique church for a unique time
 - And the Jerusalem church was unique even in its own day
 - We hear nothing of communal living outside of Jerusalem in Acts and it disappears entirely in the narrative after Acts 5
- We also know from the epistles that Jerusalem was a poor church and often depended on gifts from wealthier Greek churches
 - It makes sense then that these early poor believers in Jerusalem would have seen good reason to adopt communal living to help with their individual needs
 - But here again, the unique experience of these believers in the first church shouldn't be used as evidence for how other church bodies should operate
 - For example, these early Christians also spoke Hebrew, wore tunics and sandals, and they bathed once a month
 - If someone wants to argue that all churches should operate like this church did, how far are they willing to take that comparison?
- If we want to make useful comparisons to the first century church, we should focus on making personal applications
 - Am I continually devoted to receiving God's word?
 - Spending time in fellowship with other believers?
 - Participating in communion and praying?

- As a result of their faithful dedication to the Lord and their open practice of their faith in the Temple grounds and in the city, they gain favor
 - First, they gain favor with God
 - They are praising Him and He is adding to their numbers daily
 - Secondly, they gain favor with the people in Jerusalem
 - Among the Jewish people of the city the early believers are viewed favorably - probably from piety and sincerity
- But obviously, they wouldn't have found favor with the Pharisees
 - And in fact, Luke ends chapter 2 with this statement because he wants to set up a contrast with what comes next in Chapter 3
 - Over the next two chapters, Luke portrays a single day in the life of the church in which a miraculous healing leads to confrontation with the Jewish authorities

[Acts 3:1](#) ¶ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.

[Acts 3:2](#) And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.

[Acts 3:3](#) When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms.

[Acts 3:4](#) But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!"

[Acts 3:5](#) And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

[Acts 3:6](#) But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!"

[Acts 3:7](#) And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.

[Acts 3:8](#) With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

[Acts 3:9](#) And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

[Acts 3:10](#) and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

- On one day in the life of the early church, the Apostles went to the temple as they usually did
 - A man crippled from birth is set down in his usual place at the gate to the Temple
 - Later we learn that his condition for forty years
 - 40 is a number associated with testing or a trial
 - So this man's condition seems to have been instituted by God as a test until the day when God would correct it through the Apostles
 - Similar to the blind man in John 9
 - The Beautiful Gate was the gate between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women
 - Only Jews could pass through this gate
 - And this man was placed here to beg for alms, financial gifts given from one Jew to another as a demonstration of virtue
- This man is begging when he makes a request from Peter and John for money
 - Rather than give him the money he wanted, they tell him to look at them
 - The man had probably been looking down asking without making much effort to look at anyone in particular
 - When Peter calls upon the man, he looks up eagerly, probably in anticipation of receiving money
 - It's interesting to note that though Peter and the rest of the church had pooled their possessions, Peter makes no effort to give this man the charity he requested
 - Meeting physical (or "felt) needs among unbelievers is not the ultimate aim of Christianity
 - Nor is it the best expression of the Gospel
 - James instructs us to be generous with our giving in supporting believers' physical needs

- But Acts teaches us to be generous with the message of the Gospel to the unbelieving world
 - In Peter's case, he says I don't have much money, but I have Apostolic authority to grant you a miracle
 - And Peter commands the man to walk, but he does so in the name of Jesus
 - Invoking the name of Jesus means in the authority of Jesus
 - Peter knew he could produce this result because he was acting in accordance to the will and direction of Jesus
 - The Apostolic gift included the ability to perform such miracles
 - But like any spiritual gift, the power resides with Christ working through us
 - It is not our power to wield as we desire
 - This distinction is important in the story, because of what Peter says next to the crowd
- After the healing, the man just sits there, which makes sense since he has never walked before
 - So Peter reaches down and lifts him up and immediately he's walking - a true miracle
 - The result of the miracle is predictable
 - People are amazed and praise God
 - Before we look at what follows on this day, give a moments thought to how this same process works in every Spiritual gift
 - When the Spirit works in the Body of Christ to produce a work, it always follows a similar pattern
 - First, the work is performed for the benefit of others
 - Spiritual gifts are given to the body to edify - build up - others
 - They are not for our own benefit
 - So they must be used corporately

- Secondly, they are made possible by God's power in us so that our work will result in glory to God
 - In this case, many people rightly credit God for the miracle
 - Though some looked to Peter himself
 - We must never turn our gift into a platform to glorify ourselves
- Thirdly, we must look for ways to redirect attention given to us back to God for the praise He deserves
 - In this case, we see clearly why the apostles were gifted to produce such miracles
 - In the earliest days of the Church, God determined that such public displays of His power were essential to giving His messengers the credibility they needed to bring His message to the people
 - This would also explain why these apostolic powers ended as the last Apostle died
 - By that time the church and the Gospel itself was firmly established, and such displays were no longer needed
 - In fact, they would begin to distract from the message itself if allowed to continue
 - Look at how Peter makes use of this display to focus attention on the Gospel

[Acts 3:11](#) ¶ While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.

[Acts 3:12](#) But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"

[Acts 3:13](#) "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

[Acts 3:14](#) "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

[Acts 3:15](#) but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.

[Acts 3:16](#) "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

- Naturally, Peter and John receive the peoples' attention and amazement
 - And they flock to them in the same way that people flocked to Jesus in His ministry
 - But these men redirect the crowd's attention from themselves to Jesus, Who was the true Source of the power to heal
 - Let's look at the structure of Peter's second sermon
 - First, he acknowledges what caught their attention
 - They are excited about seeing a healing, and they are looking to Peter and John to see what they'll do next
 - Second, Peter gives the true source of the power
 - The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is at work glorifying His servant Jesus
 - Using the three patriarch names was a shorthand way of referring to the Abrahamic Covenant
 - In other words, these events are a part of God's work to keep His promise made in that covenant
 - And that promise was fulfilled ultimately in the servant Jesus
 - Peter uses the term servant to describe Jesus in light of Jesus' suffering
 - The Jews knew of Isaiah's promise that the coming Messiah would be God's suffering Servant
 - Calling Jesus servant implied that He was the One Isaiah described
 - Third, Peter reminds the crowd that they previously responded in the wrong way to demonstrations of God's power through Christ
 - The Jews of the city were complicit in Jesus' death, demanding that Pilate kill Jesus and release a murderer
 - Remember the people told Pilate that the blood of Jesus should be on them and their children (Matt 27:25)
 - Peter uses a variety of names for Christ

- Holy One, Righteous One, Prince of Life
 - All of these terms reinforce Jesus as the Messiah and as Diety
- Fourth, Peter presents the undeniable fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead by the Father
 - Something these people witnessed
 - This is second time Peter has made this statement
 - It seems as though virtually everyone in the city of Jerusalem had witnessed Jesus alive after the cross
 - These are the essentials of the gospel message
 - Jesus is God in the flesh
 - He died though He had no sin
 - The Father raised him from the dead
- And then fifth, Peter calls upon the crowd to respond in faith
 - He says the lame man is walking because of faith in Jesus' name
 - The Greek in v.16 is difficult to parse, since the verse is a complicated sentence
 - The sentence actually begins back in v.13
 - Here's how it reads most literally in English

[Acts 3:16](#) and on the faith of his name, this one whom you see and have known, his name made strong, even the faith that through him did give to him this perfect soundness before you all.

- If we replace the pronouns, we can make it a little easier to follow

[Acts 3:16](#) and on the faith of Jesus' name, this lame man whom you see and have known, Jesus name made [him] strong, even the faith that through Jesus did give to the lame man this perfect soundness before you all.

- The NET Bible renders the text in a very readable way:

[Acts 3:16](#) And on the basis of faith in Jesus' name, his very name has made this man—whom you see and know—strong. The faith that is through Jesus has given him this complete health in the presence of you all.

- Clearly, Peter is crediting faith in Jesus as the means of the healing
 - The lame man was healed by faith in the name of Jesus
 - Yet consider that the man himself never received a gospel preaching from Peter
 - Peter simply commanded him to walk in the name of Jesus
 - How are we to supposed that this man's faith entered into the process?
 - Did he already have faith in Jesus?
 - This is one likely explanation
 - Perhaps Jesus gave Peter the awareness to heal the man because the man had already shown faith in Jesus
- But look again at Peter's statement, especially in the NET
 - Peter says that a faith in the name of Jesus - in the the authority of Jesus - made the man strong
 - And the faith itself, Peter says, is through Jesus
 - The NIV renders it "the faith that comes through Him"
- The faith that saves is a faith that comes to us through Jesus
 - Through is "dia" in Greek, and it simply means "because of"
 - Use that phrase instead of "through" and you see the full meaning of the sentence
 - NIV: "The faith that is [because of] Jesus has given him this complete health in the presence of you all"
 - And on the basis of faith in that name, he was healed
 - The emphasis on "through" is very important to understanding what happened in that moment

- The gift of faith (Eph 2:8-9) was delivered to this man so that he might be healed

[Acts 3:17](#) ¶ “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

[Acts 3:18](#) “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

[Acts 3:19](#) “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

[Acts 3:20](#) and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,

[Acts 3:21](#) whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

[Acts 3:22](#) “Moses said, ‘THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you.

[Acts 3:23](#) ‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’

[Acts 3:24](#) “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

[Acts 3:25](#) “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.’

[Acts 3:26](#) “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

- Peter acknowledges the Jews of the city were ignorant of what they were doing
 - They didn’t realize the man they were killing as the Messiah
 - Unlike many within the leadership of Israel who were not innocent in this way
 - And the entire episode was according to prophecy, that the Messiah must suffer
 - But now they were called to repentance
 - There is something interesting happening here
 - First notice that the word for repent in v.19 is plural in Greek
 - In Texas we say “y’all” repent
 - Peter is calling for the collective group to repent
 - Secondly, Peter says their repentance would result in the Father sending Jesus Who was appointed for them

- But Jesus was already sent, right?
 - In fact, Peter says in v.21 that Heaven “must” receive Jesus until a period of Restoration of all things which God spoke about
- Finally, Peter says that Moses among the prophets told Israel that God would raise up a prophet from among the Jews to Whom all Jews would give heed
 - And this generation was the first of Israel with the opportunity to see this prophecy fulfilled
- Putting this all together, we see Peter is preaching two closely-linked messages simultaneously
 - First, Peter is making a call for personal salvation, as he did at Pentecost
 - He tells them clearly they have the opportunity to see their sins washed away
 - But by addressing the crowd in the plural and by adding the additional promises, Peter raises the appeal to a national level
 - If the nation as a whole repents, Peter says they will enter a time of refreshing brought about by the presence of the Lord
 - This period of refreshing is a reference to the Kingdom or 1,000 years of Christ ruling physically on Earth
 - It will happen because of the presence of the Lord, His return from Heaven
 - And it will result in the restoration of all things promised by the prophets concerning Israel
 - And this coming Kingdom is predicated on a national repentance by Israel and their acceptance of the Messiah
 - Peter offers his generation that opportunity
 - At the very least each individual has the call for personal salvation
 - And should the entire nation receive that call, then it will result in a national salvation and restoration
 - We know from Zech 12 that this moment awaits for the last days of Tribulation