

RESTORED LIVES

Acts 3:1-4:4

I find that one of the most rewarding things to do in life is to restore something. My grandma restored antiques like old steamer trunks. My dad did body and paint restoration on old cars. One thing I've restored recently is a walk-in shop door at my house. It was one of those doors you didn't want to use. It didn't shut right, the handle was worn out, it was weathered with no paint. But I put a lot of time and elbow grease into it. I put longer screws in the hinges, straightening it out so that you didn't have to lift up on it to close it. I put a new lever handle on, sealed it with a couple of fresh coats of paint. Even put a cat door on it for our mousing friends. It's a new door! It opens and shuts so smoothly now and looks so good that I wish I'd done it earlier.

I don't think it's an accident that we like to restore things. We're made in the image of God and **God has a heart for restoration.** *Have you ever noticed how the Bible is full of words with an re-prefix?* Restoration, redemption, reconciliation, regenerate, renew, repent, return, resurrection. All of these words suggest a coming back to an original state that has been ruined or lost. It's bringing something back to its former glory.

When man sinned against God in the garden of Eden, there were physiological effects that came with it that neither us nor God likes – thorns, thistles, disease, death. But the physical problems reveal and are the result of a spiritual problem in that man's relationship with God was broken. And aren't you glad that when that when man sinned, God didn't just obliterate man and throw the world away? No, He started working towards restoration. Step by step, He's been carrying out a restoration plan. Right there in Genesis 3:15, He promised a Messiah Savior, someone who would come and restore man spiritually (2. Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23-24) and even the physical world that is longing to be set free from the curse (Rom. 8:20-21). We get a taste of both of those in our passage today and how we are a part of God's plan of restoration.

Where we're at as we come to Acts 3:1 – the Spirit has come and the Church has been born. There's just over 3,000 newborn, baby Christians at this point and news is starting to spread that Jesus is the promised Messiah who can bring the spiritual restoration we long for.

“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour [3 in the afternoon], the hour of prayer. 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. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, “Look at us!” And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 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!” And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the

people saw him walking and praising God; 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.”

I. THE MIRACLE. (3:1-10)

So the first thing we see today is the **physical restoration** of a lame man by Peter and John. Acts 2:43 said, *“Many signs and wonders were taking place through the apostles”* and this is only one of them but Luke singles this one out because of the ripple effect it has. It becomes **a pivotal moment in the history of the Church**, bringing many people to faith and sparking adversity against the Church for the first time. The miracle happens as the two apostles are on their way into the temple to pray during a regular Jewish prayer time. The Church doesn’t have any conflict with the temple or meeting there yet but that’s about to change as Judaism forces Christians out and they can no longer peacefully meet in the temple area like in **Solomon’s portico**, a colonnaded and covered porch in verse 11.

As they’re walking into the temple they encounter this disabled man who was a regular at one of the temple gates where he would beg as a crippled panhandler. **Acts 4:22 tells us he’s been with this congenital defect more than 40 years ago.** So he’s never really had a childhood. Never ran around and played soccer and climbed on the jungle gym. Never played tag, let alone stood up. And he likely can’t work much even with his hands because in this society his defect is likely seen as a punishment for sin somehow (Lk. 13:2; John 9:2). He’s a man people avoid. Just like the folks standing at the Walmart exits, we get used to them and we drive by or walk by without eye contact, sometimes for good reason. I realized when I lived in Lincoln, NE long enough that some of those folks were professional panhandlers on a rotation to the various Walmart’s and stores.

This man, however, is truly needy. So when Peter locks eyes with him, he’s locking eyes with a man most people wouldn’t look at. *“Peter fixed his gaze upon him and said, “Look at us!”* Expecting to receive some money, Peter says, *“I do not possess silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!”* And Peter reaches down and pulls him up and it’s an immediate, miraculous healing. The man stands upright, starts walking, and then before you know it, he’s leaping up and down and praising God! It’s an ecstatic moment! No physical therapy or anything. His shriveled-up tendons, atrophied muscles, and weak ankles are strengthened. **He has new life! New capabilities! He is restored!**

Restoration Step #1 Acknowledge we all need restoration.

But let’s just stop consider that just like this man, we all need to be restored physically and spiritually. Sin has brought spiritual need and because our bodies wear out and die, we’ll need our bodies transformed someday. This man’s physical healing is great but it will soon wear out and if he doesn’t know Jesus, the root of the problem isn’t really dealt with. You see, miracles in the Bible aren’t just there to amaze us, but to teach us spiritual truth and give us hope in Jesus.

Apostolic miracles affirm apostolic authority and the good news of the gospel. Recently in Mark we studied Jesus' miracles: **the physical healing was always representative or symbolic of something spiritual that needed healing** (example: Jesus heals a blind man to show the disciples their spiritual blindness). This miracle proves Jesus is the Messiah and He is our hope for both. We'll talk more about that in a bit but let's take note of another restoration principle.

Restoration Step #2 **Expect divine opportunities at unexpected, busy moments.**

If we're going to see ourselves as part of God's work of restoration, we've got to expect divine opportunities at unexpected moments, especially when we're busy. It's rarely an ideal time when we sense we need to share Christ. It would have been easy for Peter and John to say, "*Sorry, can't help you. We've got a prayer meeting to get too.*" But they gave the man their attention and it gives Peter another opportunity to explain. Peter's 2nd gospel message in Acts.

*"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. 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? **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. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince [Author/Originator] of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 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.**"*

II. THE MESSAGE. (VV. 11-26)

So the miracle with this man's excitement causes quite the scene and draws a crowd and Peter takes full advantage of the opportunity to point people to Jesus. He's quick to deny it was him who did it by his power or godliness. Peter is drawing power from someone else, **drawing all the attention to Jesus!** It's one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread!

Because he's speaking to Jews, he points out that it's **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** who healed him. Not only that, but Peter uses **3 OT messianic titles for Jesus**: the Servant, the Holy and Righteous One, and the Author of Life.

During this time in history and during Jewish festivals, it was common for someone to come along and falsely claim they're the Messiah. *How would you know whether they are or not?* Well, they would have to be confirmed by miracles. In the OT, **it's prophesied that the Messiah will bring a righteous kingdom that lifts the curse of sin** by overruling things like disease and death and deformities. **Isaiah 35** describes the Messianic kingdom as a place where the deserts will flourish and **verse 5**, "*The eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then*

the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.” Jesus did all of that. He even raised the dead. He alone has been proven to be the Messiah. If we’re going to be restored and bring restoration to the world, we’ve got to understand Jesus is the only one who can restore.

Restoration Step #3 (the main one)
Jesus is the only source of true restoration.

Like Peter and John we’re just the conduit through which He works. The problem in the Jewish mind now though, is, ***“If Jesus is the Messiah, what we do we now that we’ve crucified Him? And if Jesus is the Messiah, where is His kingdom?”*** Peter explains that next in **verses 17-21**.

“And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 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; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 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.”

So among the Jews there was a lot of debate over the Suffering Servant prophecies in the OT like Isaiah 53 where the **Messiah was said to suffer**. This was because there were other prophecies, more desired prophecies, about **an unstoppable Messiah coming to rule** who would overthrow the Gentile rulers like Rome. The prophecies can be so different (*compare Daniel 7:13-14 with Isaiah 53*) that some argued there would be two different Messiah’s. Peter is explaining that Jesus is both. That He fulfilled the Suffering Servant prophecies in His first coming, but will come again to rule as the ancient prophets predicted.

Some hated hearing that. They wanted this Jesus thing to be done and gone. But Peter exposes their sin and exposes how their sin **paradoxically affirmed Him as their Messiah**. They were part of fulfilling the prophecies, but God still holds them accountable. God’s sovereignty in it, didn’t remove their responsibility. **Ignorance** did not alleviate their need to repent.

Restoration Step #4
Bringing restoration requires sharing the truth of Christ in love.

Peter says, *“if you want to be **restored** and find spiritual **refreshment**, you’ve got to **repent and return to God**.”* That word **repent** refers to an **inward change of heart and mind towards Jesus**. They’ve got to stop denying Jesus as Lord and Savior and instead accept Him as their Lord and Savior (2:36).

It’s amazing to think of **God’s grace** here. For one, to give them another opportunity to believe after denying Jesus while He was here. But second, the first people to hear the gospel and be offered the hope of forgiveness are the very ones who crucified Jesus –the greatest sinful crime in

man's history. *Tell me again, how you've done too much wrong for God to ever forgive you or show you grace? What have you done?*

Spiritual **restoration and refreshment** by the Spirit is available to anyone who will receive Christ. One of the ways you'll be refreshed is by knowing that **your sins will be wiped away**. Back then, ink wouldn't soak into the paper-like material they used so you could blot it out or wipe it off the page. Peter says, your sins can be wiped away forever if you'll accept the One who died for your sins in your place. *How refreshing would that be for you this morning to know that you can have your sins erased? The weight of guilt and shame for your sins relieved?* Some people carry heavy loads of guilt for what they've done. The director of a mental institution in England once told John Stott that he could send half his patients home tomorrow if he could only assure them of forgiveness. That's what Jesus can do. He can free you from that – even those who crucified Him.

Jesus dealt with the **penalty and power of sin** in His first coming. We can be judicially forgiven of our sin and by the Spirit, be empowered to war against sin in us. The actual **presence of sin** and the transformation of these earthly bodies into glorified, sinless bodies awaits until He comes again (1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Peter doesn't leave them hanging without that understanding: He is the Messiah but heaven must receive Him until the proper time when His kingdom will come.

Verse 22: *Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren; to him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. 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.' For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."*

All Peter does here is reinforces from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah and it's Scripture that calls for a decision. But take note how Peter in his sermons goes to the Word of God to convince men. The 300+ prophecies about the Messiah's coming should convince them Jesus is the one. It's undeniable. Restoration comes through faith in Christ and faith through hearing the Word of God.

Restoration Step #5 **The Word of God is the restoration manual.**

I like to think of it as the instruction manual from our Designer that shows us how we were intended to operate. It's a powerful, living and active book that pierces man's inner being and brings conviction (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16). It refreshes us. It explains how to live in Christ, to renew our minds and put on the new self which has been created in Jesus' image (Eph. 4:23-24, 32-5:1).

Peter's reference to **Deuteronomy 18** calls for a response. **Moses** prophesied about the divine "prophet" who would come and "every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly

destroyed from among the people.” This is a prophetic warning that if you don’t heed Jesus, you’ll be cut off from being God’s people. He also references **Samuel** and the other **prophets** and the promise to **Abraham** clear back in Genesis, saying Jesus was sent by God **to bless us** (v. 26).

III. THE RESPONSE. (4:1-4)

“As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

In the end, everyone has to choose. ***What am I going to do with Jesus? Reject Him or accept Him into my life?*** Some people refuse God’s blessing. You can lead them to refreshing springs of water, but you can’t make them drink. The number of those who did accept Jesus this day though was around 2,000. That’s **5,000 people experiencing the power of Jesus to bring restoration and refreshment to their lives**. Since then, throughout the last couple thousand years, lives have continued to be restored and people have found refreshment. The question is, *Have you?* If you haven’t, right where you sit you can express that to God in prayer right now in your heart, acknowledging you’re a sinner in need of a Savior and you want to accept Christ.

But if you’re already a believer here this morning, can I ask you: *Do you see yourself as part of His work of restoration? Are you depending on His strength and His Spirit to help bring restoration to the world?* I like to think that we live between two worlds: a completely fallen one and a completely restored one. Here we are, having experienced spiritual restoration, waiting for the physical restoration. And by the Spirit’s renewing us on the inside and the way we live our lives, we can live in such a way that the world catches a glimpse of what God intended in the first place (Ephesians 4:20-5:2). We live differently, speak differently.

One of our Berean Fellowship pastors, Bryan Clark, who wrote a book called *The Land of Ott*. In it, two girls find themselves struggling to understand why God doesn’t just correct everything wrong about the world right now. Why their brother is sick all the time and why there are bullies and why their friend’s mom and dad separated and how hard it is for her. And one day, they find themselves in a completely restored world – *the Land of Ott*. And I don’t want to ruin the book for you (I ordered several for our church that will be here this week) but they learn the way things “Ott” to be. There is a lot in this world we cannot fix. Only Jesus can fully restore it. But the more we think about the wonderful *Land of Ott*, the more we understand how it should be and understand how we should then live. By the way we live, speak, and trust God, we can help bring restoration to a world that needs it.