

Signs of Life: Repentance

Acts 3:13-26

4/11/2026

Scripture

Acts 3:13-26 (NKJV) [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. [14] But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, [15] and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. [16] 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. [17] Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. [18] But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. [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, [20] and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, [21] 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. [22] For Moses 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. [23] And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' [24] Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. [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.' [26] To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

Introduction

The second recorded mass open-air gospel presentation follows the healing of a man who has been lame from birth through faith in the name of Jesus. The miracle is a platform to call people to repentance. The entire presentation revolves around Peter's statement found in verse 19:

[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

Repentance is a message rooted in Acts. The command to repent is found 5 times in Acts, and believe it or not, the word is found mostly outside the book of Acts, coming out of the mouth of Jesus. Six times in Revelation, He uses the word addressing the churches.

The Greek word most commonly translated as "repent" in the New (metanoem). It literally translates as "To change one's mind." But both the action and outcome of repentance. Repentance has fruit. It begins with conviction, but it doesn't end merely as a thought. It's a change of mind, heart and lifestyle away from that which is contrary to God and toward that which reflects God. Here's a starting definition of biblical repentance:

Custom

"A wholehearted, Spirit-enabled change of mind, heart, and direction away from sin and toward God, resulting in faith in Jesus Christ and a transformed life."

For many, this has become the "R" word in Christianity. We don't want to tell people they need to repent and turn from their sin. We don't need to preach in church for people to stop doing ungodly things; we might make them uncomfortable, and they might not want to come back to church!

But repentance is the best word there is when it comes to opportunity. Repentance means God is still offering a chance to avoid the destruction of sinful decisions!

Custom

Repentance is not punishment; it is God's invitation into restoration, rooted in Christ and required of all.

Main Point

Point 1

Sin must be exposed (13-16)

The path to repentance is found in Peter's sermon.

Scripture

Acts 3:13-16 (NKJV) [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. [14] But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, [15] and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. [16] 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.

Context - The WHO:

Peter knows his Jewish audience and desires to build the connection between the God they know and the Messiah they missed.

Scripture

John 4:22 (NKJV) [22] You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

He makes the unmistakable connection between the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, and Jesus, the Messiah, Whom Peter describes and “The Holy One and the Just.” We might easily miss this, but “The Holy and Just one” are descriptors of the titles of God in the Old Testament, directly connecting Jesus both to God Himself—frequently called “the Holy One of Israel” in Isaiah—and to the promised Messiah, especially the “Righteous One” of Isaiah 53:11. By using these titles, Peter proclaims that Jesus is not only the fulfillment of messianic prophecy but also shares in the unique holiness and righteousness of God. As John Stott summarizes,

Quote

— *John Stott*

“By calling Jesus the ‘Holy and Righteous One,’ Peter ascribes to Him titles used of God Himself in the Old Testament and designates Him as the perfectly sinless Messiah.”

Quote

— *David Guzik on Acts 3:13*

Holy One: Here, Peter exalted Jesus as God. The term Holy One is used more than 40 times in the Old Testament as a high and glorious title for Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel.

Context: The WHAT:

Peter wastes no time and pulls no punches. He declares, "This is the Holy and Just one, divine and human, Messiah and Creator, that YOU Delivered up, denied, traded for a murderer (Barrabas), and killed the prince of life!

The term prince of life is more accurately translated "Author of Life." You killed the one who created and sustains life itself! Talk about a direct line of communication!

Their sin didn't stop God's plan, in fact it seems to have been used and redeemed to accomplish it, because God proved His power by raising Jesus from the dead, and displaying that ongoing power by healing a lame man through His powerful name.

The risen Jesus was witnessed by the disciples, and now Jesus was alive and working still, bringing wholeness to this broken man through faith in His name.

Application

Don't miss what Peter's doing: You just saw the power of the risen Messiah, Jesus at work. It's faith in His name that brings forth healing power and salvation. But this is the One you tried to stop, silence, reject and murder.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Repentance doesn't begin with feeling bad because we got caught. It begins with seeing sin clearly. And not just that we sinned, but Who we sinned against.

True repentance starts when we are willing to be exposed and confronted about the reality of our sinful actions. God doesn't tell us we are sinners in order to embarrass us in front of others. Neither does He expose us so that he can mock as as we stand morally bankrupt and naked in our shame. But He is willing to expose the reality of our guilt in order to bring forth repentance and become clothed again with His righteousness.

We live in an age that has perfected the art of diffusing personal guilt into collective excuses. We say things like "systems are broken" and "people are flawed" and "nobody's perfect" — and all of those things may be technically true, but they become convenient ways to avoid the one sentence that can actually change a life:

I have sinned against a holy God.

Quote

— *Thomas Watson*

"Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet."

Not "I've made mistakes." Not "I've had struggles." Not "I've been through a lot." I have sinned.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Before the grace of God can do its deepest work, the honesty of God has to do its necessary work first.

Application

Here's what I want you to wrestle with this morning: What have you been calling something other than what it is? What sin have you dressed up as a wound, or a weakness, or a tendency, or a personality or pattern — anything to avoid calling it what God calls it?

“But,” some might say, “They didn’t all realize what they were doing at the time!”

Main Point

Point 2

Ignorance must be confronted (17-19)

Scripture

Acts 3:17-19 (NKJV) [17] “Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. [18] But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. [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;

Exposition:

This is where Peter surprises us, and where we have to be theologically careful.

Peter acknowledges that sometimes rejection of Christ happens in ignorance. And this isn't weakness or soft-pedaling. He's drawing on a distinction built into the Mosaic Law itself. Numbers 15 distinguishes between sins committed in ignorance and sins committed with a "high hand," with defiant, knowing rebellion. The law provided sacrifice for sins of ignorance. For defiant sin, there was no sacrifice — only being cut off from the people. He references this later in expressing the consequence of rejecting Jesus as the Messiah.

Peter is saying: You sinned in rejecting Christ, but you sinned in ignorance. The door is still open. the sacrifice will still apply.

But — and this is critical — ignorance explains the initial sin. It does not excuse it.

Notice that Peter does not say "because you did it in ignorance, you're automatically forgiven." He says "because you did it in ignorance — repent." The ignorance determines the opportunity, not the outcome. They still need to turn and receive Jesus by faith.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Ignorance may explain some sin, but it never excuses it. When we receive the truth, we must repent of sin.

Scripture

1 Timothy 1:13 (NKJV) [13] although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Scripture

Acts 17:30 (NKJV) [30] Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

And then comes the theological depth that most people miss in this passage:

"Those things which God foretold... He has thus fulfilled."

Peter is making a staggering claim: God used your sin to accomplish His purpose. The crucifixion — the greatest act of human evil in history — was simultaneously the greatest act of divine love. Acts 2:23 has already said it plainly: "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."

Human responsibility. Divine sovereignty. The same event. No contradiction.

This is not fatalism, it's not "God made you do it." It's something far more profound:

Quote

God is so sovereign that He can work through your worst moments without excusing them.

Judas is responsible for his betrayal. The Sanhedrin is responsible for their verdict. Pilate is responsible for his cowardice. And God sovereignly wove all of it into the redemption of the world.

[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;

Application

Many people want the refreshing without the repentance. They want peace without purity, blessings without obedience, and ease without commitment. But that's not how God works. He doesn't pretend with us that we can somehow reap the benefits of the truth while we insist on holding on to the lie. For the unbeliever, God wants to refresh them by His Spirit, to heal and forgive. Some of you have been using "I didn't know" as a permanent exemption. And maybe when you first heard the gospel, that was true. But you're here now. You've heard the truth. You've seen it clearly. The category of ignorance has a shelf life. The moment truth is revealed, the clock starts. And you are no longer in the category of those who didn't know — you're in the category of those who know and haven't responded. At that point, the most dangerous place in the world isn't an atheist's living room. It's a church pew.

Scripture

Hebrews 10:26 (NKJV) [26] For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins

That's not talking about losing your salvation every time you stumble. It's talking about the posture of sustained, knowing, deliberate rejection of what you've clearly seen in Christ. This principle is true of any sin:

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Sin that is not dealt with by repentance will deal with you by destruction.

Main Point

Point 3

Jesus must be exalted (20-21)

Scripture

Acts 3:20-21 (NKJV) [20] and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, [21] 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.

Eschatology:

Peter now widens the frame of God's greater plan. Peter lifts their eyes from their their sin to the sovereign Christ.

Repentance isn't just turning from sin. It's turning toward a reigning, returning Savior

Jesus has not retreated from earth, He is received in heaven. This word translated "receive", *dechomai*, carries the sense of welcoming a distinguished guest. Jesus didn't retreat to heaven in defeat. He was received in triumph. Hebrews 1:3 says

Scripture

Hebrews 1:3 (NKJV) ...when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

But He is not staying there forever. He is coming back. The entire Bible speaks of it.

And when He comes, Peter says, it will be for "the restoration of all things." The Greek is *apokatastasis* — a comprehensive restoration. Not a patch job. Not a remodel and flip. Not spiritual therapy. A total renewal. The prophets saw it:

Isaiah's new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65–66) Ezekiel's restored temple and renewed land (Ezekiel 40–48) Micah's vision of nations streaming to Zion in peace (Micah 4:1–4). Peter says: all of that is tied to Jesus. All of that moves through Him.

Christ is not a helpful religious idea. He is a living King who is on a mission to restore everything under His authority.

Application

A lot of people come to church hoping Jesus will improve their situation: a better marriage, more peace, less anxiety, clearer purpose. And listen, He does care about all of that. But that framing puts you at the center of the story. And the story isn't about you. History is moving toward a fixed point. Not toward your comfort. Not toward a better economy or a more stable culture. Toward the return of Christ and the restoration of all things under His reign. Repentance is not just about leaving something behind; it's about aligning your life with where everything is headed. To live in unrepentant sin is not just morally wrong, it's supernaturally backwards. It's like swimming upstream against the current of all creation which is headed toward the renewal Christ is bringing.

Main Point

Point 3

Rejection will be judged (22-24)

Scripture

Acts 3:22-24 (NKJV) [22] For Moses 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. [23] And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' [24] Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days.

Peter reaches back to Deuteronomy 18 - Moses' prophecy of the Prophet to come. This is one of the most significant messianic promises in the Torah. Moses tells the people: someone is coming after me. Someone greater. And the posture required is not merely admiration, it is hearing, obedience, and submission.

And Moses attaches a consequence: "every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed."

The word here is *exolothreum* is strong. It means complete destruction of the covenant community. This is covenantal language, the same structure as the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27–28. Covenant relationship with God always comes with covenant accountability and responsibility.

Peter's point is this: the entire prophetic tradition from Moses to Samuel to the writing prophets was building to this one person, Jesus. The gospel is not Peter's novel idea or some newly invented Jewish theology. This is the unanimous testimony of Israel's entire prophetic line.

And hear Peter's logic: If all the prophets pointed to Jesus, and you reject Jesus, you have not just rejected a rabbi, you have rejected the entire redemptive plan of God and the Messiah He sent to accomplish it.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Repentance is an invitation, but refusal has everlasting consequences. To reject God's Savior is to be placed outside the New Covenant and the eternal salvation it delivers.

Scripture

Hebrews 10:28-29 (NKJV) [28] Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. [29] Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Illustration

Medical diagnosis analogy: A man is diagnosed with a treatable disease. He says, "I don't like that diagnosis, so I'm going to ignore it." The issue is no longer the disease—it's his refusal of the cure. When the gospel is made manifest, the issue is not the sinners' sin, it's their refusal of the sacrifice made for its removal.

Application

This is important. Maybe even just for one person. Hearing truth is not passive. Sitting in a church service is not neutral. Every time the gospel is proclaimed clearly and someone walks out unchanged, something has happened in their soul. Either the soil has softened toward Christ, or it has hardened. There's no third option. Jesus Himself said it in the parable of the soils: the seed does something when it lands. The question is what the soil does with it. To whom much is given, much is required. You are accountable for what you have heard. And if you've been in churches for years, if you've known the story of the cross since you were a child, if you've heard sermons that gave you the clearest possible view of who Jesus is and what He did, then your accountability is significant. To reject Christ is not merely to decline an invitation. It is to step into the place of judgment with your eyes wide open.

Main Point

Point 4

Grace must be received (25-26)

Scripture

Acts 3:25-26 (NKJV) [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.' [26] To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

Peter ends not with the gavel but with the open hand and invitation.

He reminds the Jewish audience of their covenant identity: sons of the prophets, sons of the Abrahamic covenant. And the Abrahamic covenant always carried a universal scope: "in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, 22:18). Paul unpacks in Galatians 3:16 that the "seed" is singular and it refers to Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. Every family on earth was always supposed to come to blessing through Him.

And then this: "To you first."

Scripture

Romans 1:16 (NKJV) [16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

This was Paul's greatest burden... that my countrymen according to the flesh would come to know the messiah! God's heart for the Jewish people is that they come to recognize and submit to Christ, and one day they will. Prophetically, Jesus will return to His people, fulfill every covenant promise to them when they receive Him as their King.

But this is amazing. Not only was it to the Jew first, but it was to the greatest offenders first: To the people who rejected Him. To the ones who handed Him over. To the crowd that may have been screaming "crucify Him" just weeks before. To them first. That is not accident. That is the character of God on full display.

And the blessing is defined: "in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." God does not bless by accommodating sin; He blesses by removing it. His kindness is not the kindness of a permissive uncle who looks the other way. It is the kindness of a Savior who sees the sin, suffers for the sin, and takes the sin away entirely.

This is what theologians call "Prevenient Grace," or, the grace that goes before. God doesn't wait for the worthy to come to Him. He sends His Son and His gospel to the unworthy, to the rebellious, to the ones with the most reason to be excluded, and He says: you first.

The fact that people sin is a great tragedy... but the greater tragedy is that they refuse the grace that extends to them in their sin.

Conclusion

We have walked through five unavoidable realities in this passage:

Sin has been exposed — not managed, not minimized, exposed. Ignorance has been confronted — and the window of unknowing has closed. Jesus has been exalted — the Lord of history, the centerpoint of all things. Rejection has been declared as judgment. And grace, wide and undeserved has been offered.

The question this passage leaves us with is not complicated. It is clear and it is urgent.

What will you do with what you now know?

Peter stood in the public arena of Solomon's Porch, surrounded by thousands of people who had been present in Jerusalem for Passover. People who had watched a lame man raised from the ground moments earlier, people who had the full weight of covenant history in their blood. He gave them hope, but it wasn't a soft landing. He told the truth. And then he offered the grace.

That's what I'm doing this morning.

The only right response to a risen Christ who died for you, who reigns over all things, and who offers you grace before anyone else is repentance. Not "forever guilty." Not self-improvement. Repentance. The full turning from your own way to God's.

God's kindness is not shown by leaving you where you are. It's shown by calling you out of what is destroying you and promising to bless you through the One you may have long overlooked.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Repentance is not God pushing you away; it is God calling you back.

The question is whether you'll receive it.