

Repent and Return
Grace Bible Chapel
Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 3:17-19
April 23rd, 2017

Context: Peter's second message leading to 5,000 believing (Vs. 4:4) continues. He has shown these Jews their guilt because these were actually engaged in the crucifixion of Christ. The crucifixion of their Messiah was the most horrid and unrighteous act of human history. Peter has used the circumstance of healing the lame man in the name of Jesus, and the power of the Scriptures to reveal to them the depth of their sin.

In our study today Peter moves beyond the convincing of their sin, to place the conviction of the message into "good news" – the Gospel. He states in verse 19 "that your sins might be wiped away." Peter shows the pathway leading to God's forgiveness and right relationship restored. First, Peter informs them from the Scripture the crucifixion was God's plan and means from the beginning. This does not mean they are excused for their great sin, but it does mean that God even uses evil to produce that which is good. These men are then commanded to "repent" and "return." These two terms are very significant in salvation giving the attitude of seeking forgiveness and agreement with God, and also the necessary corresponding activity "return" that shows the change. Both of these terms are incorporated into a right understanding of true faith – a faith that agrees with God, and is obedient to His claims on the life (2 Cor. 5:17).

Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).

- VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)
- D. Salvation Message (Acts 2:22-42)
- E. Saved Living (Acts 2:43-47)
- F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:12)

Key Words

- fulfilled
- Ignorance
- Repent
- Return
- Wiped away
- refreshing

Introduction:

I like tracts, Good ones hard to find - No such thing as a perfect tract.

This tract has a picture of a basketball on the front. It is a typical evangelical conservative tract of our day & our culture – Not to make light of, but to provide understanding of today's Christian climate.

"Most games in life have an allotted time from start to finish. You know when it will end. However, life is not a game. We do not know when our life on earth will end. God made a way for you to go to heaven when you die, but you must choose."

Quotes without comment:

Rom. 3:23 (all have sinned) ; Rom. 6:23 (for wages) ; Rom. 5:8 (but God demonstrates His...died for us). Rom. 10:9 (If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God raised ...you will be saved).

"To believe on Jesus as Savior means to believe that He died for you, paid the price for your sin, and is the only way to heaven. You can express your belief on Jesus through prayer."

"Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner and deserve hell. I believe you died on the cross and paid the penalty for my sin and rose from the grave three days later. I am placing my faith in you alone to forgive my sin and save me. Thank you for giving me eternal life! In Jesus name amen!"

This is sort of Microwave Christianity – attempt to be very succinct – press only the essential buttons – snappy & quick – focus is going to heaven.

Not only do these verses need to be understood in context bringing a conviction only God can bring – much needs to be said, but there is one sure essential missing – that is conversion, or new birth, seen by radical change in the person.

As a comparison - here is a tract written 150 years ago by C H Spurgeon – the title speaks for itself. "Turn or Burn" – you get the idea of the difference.

- Rather than from our culture, the real issue is the pattern to understand and follow from God's Word. That is where we are today in Acts within Peter's message.
- Peter had pointed to Christ Jesus as the power & source of healing (Acts 3:14-15).

- He references the Old Testament Scriptures using Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob.
- He did not compromise the message, but rebuked them for their actions.
- Now, he begins the heart of his message – the Gospel or good news found in Jesus Christ as the only Savior & His work on behalf of sinners that fallen people (all of us) might be made righteous before God!
- We will see in Vs. 19 – “that your sins might be wiped away” – that is the best news anyone can hear!

3. **Sincere appeal** (Vs.3:17-26) So beginning in verse 17 he makes his appeal.

- His message is not mechanical, but made in the form of a deep appeal – a summons or challenge enveloped in sincere empathy & concern.
 - There is a sense of tenderness - note – “and now brethren” – his kinship by Jewish race “I know you acted in ignorance.”
 - This does not excuse or diminish their personal guilt – they still did it! The phrase *ignorance is no excuse for violation of the law* is applicable here.
 - It was their will & their decision to crucify Jesus Christ.
 - They can only blame themselves – they cannot even blame their rulers, for they went along with their evil.

Point: Such is the same with all of us today in whatever sin we engage. We are guilty, & cannot point the finger & excuse our guilt onto anything else, or redefine sin – we have no excuse.

- But, at the same time, Peter is showing his understanding of the natural man’s condition in sin & acting in genuine tenderness toward their state.

a. **Sin’s deception** (Vs. 17)

- **Vs. 17** – All unsaved are living in ignorance. Ignorance – agnoia – a lack of knowledge or an inability to put facts together. The word has its root in “a level of quality” here inadequate quality resulting in a “deficiency” of the facts.
 - This is inherent ignorance that is purposeful – not a lack of information!
 - This is what unsaved do – they ignore the truth, they suppress it (Rom. 1:18) acting out of self-propitiated ignorance.
 - The idea is not that sufficient evidence is not obvious, but they override it.
 - 1 Cor. 2:8; 12; 14 – It is both a capability & will issue: God provides truth, but men are both naturally blind, & unwilling to believe.
 - Why? - Doctrine of total depravity – man by nature is corrupted (ruined) by sin (Rom. 1:18-3:20) – it affects the understanding, the conscience, & the will.
 - (Eph. 4:17-18) - The spiritually blind not only see no beauty in truth, & are insensible to all its realities, but are incapable of embracing it.

Point: If we are born again, have the life of God within, we see the Word, the world, & people differently – there should be pity, sorrow for the lost. Not that the unsaved are excused, but a pity that sees them engulfed in a “to-be-pitied ignorance” resulting in their foolish & evil decisions.

- We see this concept of pity in the words of Christ on the cross (Luke 23:34) “Father, forgive them...know not..do” – I believe (by context) that was a prayer specific to the Roman soldiers carrying out the act of crucifixion. Had not Christ so prayed they would have been annihilated as they nailed the nails.
- Acts 17:30 “Paul Mars Hill” – God graciously takes everything into perfect account.

Point: In patient grace God righteously measures & mitigates the fact of pitiful ignorance. Were it not so, none would last one second on the earth.

Point: Ultimately, Peter, under inspiration pities their ignorance of what God is doing in the world that led them to their horrid rejection & crucifixion of their Messiah.

b. **Sovereign facilitation** (Vs. 18)

- **Vs. 18** – “but” – is added as a shift or contrast – the “but” here shows that God was not thwarted by their rejection of His Son, but instead it facilitated His plan.

How great is our God!

- Their rejection “fulfilled” God’s plan – how do we know? Look at what Peter says: “God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets” (Ps. 22; 69; Isaiah 53; etc..)
- “fulfilled” – playro-o – finish, complete, fully accomplish.
 - God always does exactly what He promises to do.
 - Joseph would say to his brothers who sold him into Egyptian slavery - “you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.” (Gen 50:20)

Point: Our sovereign God uses evil for good – the cross being the greatest example, but He never excuses sin, nor sweeps sin under the rug – He is holy, holy, holy!

c. **Supernatural change** (Vs. 19) – here is the difference in our tract messages.

- **Vs. 19** – “therefore” – means Peter brings it back to them – knowing what you now know, what is the appropriate & only reasonable response?
 - Note: absent here is some of the modern approaches found in many tracts:
 - Ask Jesus into your heart; accept Jesus; make a profession of faith – all things that have a contextual element of truth within the bounds of the Gospel, but what is the immediate need or essential?
- **Repent** - “repent” – metan o-eh o – to experience a compunction to think differently.
 - To change one’s mind & purpose. It involves the intellect & attitude.
 - Peter is in particular addressing Jews who were in the privileged position of having the promises & the prophets, yet crucified their Messiah – the highest degree of accountability. But, as Christ is rejected by every man – a general application also applies!

Point: And as every man is naturally sinfully in opposition to God, Peter provides the essential need – his first priority – “repent.”

- The priority to repent is not unique to Peter’s preaching – repentance is found in all redemptive history: In 2 Kings 17, the writer (likely Jeremiah) records a summary of the history of Israel & Judah & the evil they did. The summary emphasis is the compounding of their sin by refusing to repent. Same in Rev.
 - Repentance as an essential is found in all major & minor prophets – the primary ministry of the prophets was to bring Israel to repentance.
 - In NT – first preaching we see (Mat 3) is John B – preaching “repent...hand.”
 - Mat. 4:17 – (John B) arrested – what did Jesus preach! Get ready for God.
- Is repentance necessary in salvation? NT theology is by Grace thru Faith alone.
 - Faith is the gift of God & the meritless means God uses to show the transforming work of God – It is faith alone that saves, but faith is never alone.
 - There are all manner of life issues incorporated into understanding real faith – works, fruit of the Spirit, love for God, obedience, hunger for His Word, love for His people, & clearly shown in our text is the necessity of repentance!
 - Repentance is change – a genuine change of attitude - an agreement with God as to who we are & how we have offended Him.

Point: How can anyone have a right relationship with God while at the same time not agreeing with God? Repentance is full agreement – that is taking God’s position against ourselves.

Why is dialogue on the meaning of repentance important?

- Some teaching today declare salvation as mere acknowledgment or “accepting of Jesus” as sufficient without any expectation of change or repentance – they would argue adding repentance is a works salvation, & is a denial of His grace.
- Others focus the Gospel on “God’s love” thinking that God loves everyone in such a manner He will ultimately compromise all other aspects of His character & Word.

- This sort of watered down view of salvation is not seen as conversion, or a transformed life, but a life that has acknowledges God, & because it does, God is obligated under grace & love to save.

Point: Love to God is the great command – the essential command. For the recipient of this kind of superficial message the real issue is not God’s love for them, but do they love God? – Has there been real change in them?

- Rom. 2:4-5 – context of judgment – God’s enduring of the sinful is not because God compromises His view of sin, or will not judge, but to lead to repentance – you see repentance is a requirement under the concept of faith.
 - It is very clear Paul is addressing Jews who believe in God (Vs. 2:17).
 - So it is not sufficient for one to merely believe factually in God – there must be a transforming belief in God, belief in His Son, leading to the new birth.
 - It is never sufficient just to believe or profess God (Jms. 2:19 “demons”).

Point: This I believe is part of the increased superficiality in the theology of many modern assemblies. Real change or the work of God is not taught or expected.

- Since repentance is Peter’s priority, what does it mean really to “repent?”
 - 2 Cor. 7:8-10 – Paul reflects on his first epistle to the Corinthian’s – it was a scathing rebuke, not fun, but necessary. The Bible rebukes us as sinners!
 - Vs. 8-9 – Paul’s rebuke caused them sorrow, but a good sorrow for it led them to repentance – same thing we see in our passage of Peter’s preaching in Acts!
 - Vs. 10 – “produces a repentance without regret” (focusing on the outcome) “leading to salvation” – implied was its necessity as an instrument in the incorporation of true faith or saving faith.
 - Sorrow of the world, or sorrow without purpose just leads to death, but sorrow over sin – this purposeful sorrow with a righteous rebuke produces necessary repentance leading to life.

Point: Righteous sorrow comes from truth / correction by the Word leading to repentance / change! Without real change, agreement with God over our sin, there is no saving faith granting a right relationship with God – peace with God (Rom. 5:1)!

- But more – it is one thing to have the attitude of repentance, but how is that repentance is seen in action?
- **Return** – “return” – turn – epistrefo – convert, turn about – a word used to denote the action taken of the whole turning of the person to God (1 Thess. 1:9) – “turned” is the same word.
 - The right attitude (repentance) affects the actions of living.
 - There is no passivity here, or mere surface acknowledgment.
 - It means a new active path because of a spiritual change (2 Pet. 2:22) - a true change of nature – new birth (2 Cor. 5:17).

Closing: There are three key factors Peter mentions as a result of true salvation – two are given in our Vs. 19:

- Vs. 19 -“sins wiped away” – wiped – exalifo – ablated – accounting term – to totally destroy the record. No sin held against those in Jesus Christ – He took them all.
- “Times of refreshing” – is related back to the truth of change. When truly saved, a person becomes the temple of the living God. God Spirit abides within.
 - The person has a new life, a new perspective, and an altogether different future.
- The grand passage that sums it up when discussing the issue of complete change in turning to Christ is Gal. 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live (my old self) but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
- This is the change of repent and return that is supernatural, given of God in the new birth, and essential – do you have this kind of change?