

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter we have a miracle and a sermon: the miracle wrought to make way for the sermon, to confirm the doctrine that was to be preached, and to make way for it into the minds of the people; and then the sermon to explain the miracle, and to sow the ground which by it was broken up.

I. The miracle was the healing of a man that was lame from his birth, with a word speaking (v. 1-8), and the impression which this made upon the people (v. 9-11).

II. The scope of the sermon which was preached hereupon was to bring people to Christ, to repent of their sin in crucifying him (v. 12-19), to believe in him now that he was glorified, and to comply with the Father's design in glorifying him (v. 20-26). The former part of the discourse opens the wound, the latter applies the remedy.

~~408~~ ACTS 3:1-11

THE HEALING OF A CRIPPLE

We were told in general (~~408~~ Acts 2:43) that *many signs and wonders were done by the apostles*, which are not written in this book; but here we have one given us for an instance. As they wrought miracles, not upon every body as every body had occasion for them, but as the Holy Spirit gave direction, so as to answer the end of their commission; so all the miracles they did work are not written in this book, but such only are recorded as the Holy Ghost thought fit, to answer the end of this sacred history.

I. The persons by whose ministry this miracle was wrought were Peter and John, two principal men among the apostles; they were so in Christ's time, one speaker of the house for the most part, the other favourite of the Master; and they continue so. When, upon the conversion of thousands, the church was divided into several societies, perhaps Peter and John presided in that which Luke associated with, and therefore he is more particular in recording what they said and did, as afterwards what Paul

said and did when he attended him, both the one and the other being designed for specimens of what the other apostles did.

Peter and John had each of them a brother among the twelve, with whom they were coupled when they were sent out; yet now they seem to be knit together more closely than either of them to his brother, for the bond of friendship is sometimes stronger than that of relation: *there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother*. Peter and John seem to have had a peculiar intimacy after Christ's resurrection more than before, ^{<B10>}John 20:2. The reason of which (if I may have liberty to conjecture) might be this, that John, a disciple made up of love, was more compassionate to Peter upon his fall and repentance, and more tender of him in his *bitter weeping* for his sin, than any other of the apostles were, and more solicitous to restore him in the *spirit of meekness*, which made him very dear to Peter ever after; and it was good evidence of Peter's acceptance with God, upon his repentance, that Christ's favourite was made his bosom friend. David prayed, after his fall, *Let those that fear thee turn unto me*, ^{<B19>}Psalms 119:79.

II. The time and place are here set down.

1. It was in *the temple*, whither *Peter and John went up together*, because it was the place of concourse; there were the shoals of fish among which the net of the gospel was to be cast, especially during the days of pentecost, within the compass of which we may suppose this to have happened. Note, It is good to go up to the temple, to attend on public ordinances; and it is comfortable to go up together to the temple: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go*. The best society is society in worshipping God.

2. It was *at the hour of prayer*, one of the hours of public worship commonly appointed and observed among the Jews. Time and place are two necessary circumstances of every action, which must be determined by consent, as is most convenient for edification. With reference to public worship, there must be a house of prayer and an hour of prayer: the ninth hour, that is, three o'clock in the afternoon, was one of the hours of prayer among the Jews; nine in the morning and twelve at noon were the other two. See ^{<B17>}Psalms 55:17; ^{<B10>}Daniel 6:10. It is of use for private Christians so far to have their hours of prayer as may serve, though not to bind, yet to remind conscience: *every thing is beautiful in its season*.

III. The patient on whom this miraculous cure was wrought is here described, v. 2. He was a poor lame beggar at the temple gate.

1. he was a cripple, not by accident, but born so; he was *lame from his mother's womb*, as it should seem, by a paralytic distemper, which weakened his limbs; for it is said in the description of his cure (v. 7), *His feet and ankle bones received strength*. Some such piteous cases now and then there are, which we ought to be affected with and look upon with compassion, and which are designed to show us what we all are by nature spiritually: *without strength*, lame from our birth, unable to work or walk in God's service.

2. He was a beggar. Being unable to work for his living, he must live upon alms; such are God's poor. He was *laid daily* by his friends at *one of the gates of the temple*, a miserable spectacle, unable to do any thing for himself but to *ask alms of those that entered into the temple* or came out. There was a concourse, — a concourse of devout good people, from whom charity might be expected, and a concourse of such people when it might be hoped they were in the best frame; and there he was laid. Those that need, and cannot work, must not be ashamed to beg. He would not have been laid there, and laid there daily, if he had not been used to meet with supplies, daily supplies there. Note, Our prayers and our alms should go together; Cornelius's did, ~~Acts~~ Acts 10:4. Objects of charity should be in a particular manner welcome to us when we go up to the temple to pray; it is a pity that common beggars at church doors should any of them be of such a character as to discourage charity; but they ought not always to be overlooked: some there are surely that merit regard, and better feed ten drones, yea, and some wasps, than let one bee starve. The gate of the temple at which he was laid is here named: it was called *Beautiful*, for the extraordinary splendour and magnificence of it. Dr. Lightfoot observes that this was the gate that led out of the court of the Gentiles into that of the Jews, and he supposes that the cripple would beg only of the Jews, as disdainingly to ask any thing of the Gentiles. But Dr. Whitby takes it to be at the first entrance into the temple, and beautified sumptuously, as became the frontispiece of that place where the divine Majesty vouchsafed to dwell; and it was no diminution to the beauty of this gate that a poor man lay there begging.

3. He begged of Peter and John (v. 3), begged an alms; this was the utmost he expected from them, who had the reputation of being charitable men,

and who, though they had not much, yet did good with what they had. It was not many weeks ago that the blind and the lame came to Christ in the temple, and were healed there, ⁴²¹⁴Matthew 21:14. And why might not he have asked more than an alms, if he knew that Peter and John were Christ's messengers, and preached and wrought miracles in his name? But he had that done for him which he looked not for; he *asked an alms*, and had a cure.

IV. We have here the method of the cure.

1. His expectations were raised. Peter, instead of turning his eyes from him, as many do from objects of charity, turned his eyes to him, nay, he *fastened his eyes upon him*, that his eye might affect his heart with compassion towards him, v. 4. John did so too, for they were both guided by one and the same Spirit, and concurred in this miracle; they said, *Look on us*. Our eye must be ever towards the Lord (the eye of our mind), and, in token of this, the eye of the body may properly be fixed on those whom he employs as the ministers of his grace. This man needed not to be bidden twice to look on the apostles; for he justly thought this gave him cause to expect that he should *receive something from them*, and therefore he *gave heed to them*, v. 5. Note, We must come to God both to attend on his word and to apply ourselves to him in prayer, with hearts fixed and expectations raised. We must look up to heaven and expect to receive benefit by that which God speaks thence, and an answer of peace to the prayers sent up thither. *I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

2. His expectation of an alms was disappointed. *Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, and therefore none to give thee;"* yet he intimated that if he had had any he would have given him an alms, not brass, but silver or gold. Note,

(1.) It is not often that Christ's friends and favourites have abundance of the wealth of this world. The apostles were very poor, had but just enough for themselves, and no overplus. Peter and John had abundance of money laid at their feet, but this was appropriated to the maintenance of the poor of the church, and they would not convert any of it to their own use, nor dispose of it otherwise than according to the intention of the donors. Public trusts ought to be strictly and faithfully observed.

(2.) Many who are well inclined to works of charity are yet not in a capacity of doing any thing considerable, while others, who have wherewithal to do much, have not a heart to do any thing.

3. His expectations, notwithstanding, were quite outdone. Peter had not money to give him; but,

(1.) He had that which was better, such an interest in heaven, such a power from heaven, as to be able to cure his disease. Note, Those who are poor in the world may yet be rich, very rich, in spiritual gifts, graces, and comforts; certainly there is that which we are capable of possessing which is infinitely better than silver and gold; the merchandise and gain of it are better, ^{<BND>}Job 28:12, etc.; ^{<BND>}Proverbs 3:14, etc.

(2.) He gave him that which was better — the cure of his disease, which he would gladly have given a great deal of silver and gold for, if he had had it, and the cure could have been so obtained. This would enable him to work for his living, so that he would not need to beg any more; nay, he would *have to give to those that needed*, and *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. A miraculous cure would be a greater instance of God's favour, and would put a greater honour upon him, than thousands of gold and silver could. observe, When Peter had no silver and gold to give, yet (says he) *such as I have I give thee*. Note, Those may be, and ought to be, otherwise charitable and helpful to the poor, who have not wherewithal to give in charity; those who have not silver and gold have their limbs and senses, and with these may be serviceable to the blind, and lame, and sick, and if they be not, as there is occasion, neither would they give to them if they had silver and gold. *As every one hath received the gift, so let him minister it*. Let us now see how the cure was wrought.

[1.] Christ *sent his word, and healed him* (^{<BND>}Psalms 107:20); for healing grace is given by the word of Christ; this is the vehicle of the healing virtue derived from Christ. Christ spoke cures by himself; the apostles spoke them in his name. Peter bids a lame man *rise up and walk*, which would have been a banter upon him if he had not premised *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*: “I say it by warrant from him, and it shall be done by power from him, and all the glory and praise of it shall be ascribed to him.” He calls Christ *Jesus of Nazareth*, which was a name of reproach, to intimate that the indignities done him on earth served but as a foil to his glories now that he was in heaven. “Give him what name you will, call him if you will in scorn Jesus of Nazareth, in that name you shall

see wonders done; for, because he humbled himself, thus highly was he exalted.” He bids the cripple *rise up and walk*, which does not prove that he had power in himself to do it, but that if he attempt to rise and walk, and, in a sense of his own impotency, depend upon a divine power to enable him to do it, he shall be enabled; and by rising and walking he must evidence what that power has wrought upon him; and then let him take the comfort, and let God have the praise. Thus it is in the healing of our souls, which are spiritually impotent.

[2.] Peter lent his hand, and helped him (v. 7): *He took him by the right hand*, in the same name in which he had spoken to him to arise and walk, *and lifted him up*. Not that this could contribute any thing to his cure; but it was a sign, plainly intimating the help he should receive from God, if he exerted himself as he was bidden. When God by his word commands us to rise, and walk in the way of his commandments, if we mix faith with that word, and lay our souls under the power of it, he will give his Spirit to take us by the hand, and lift us up. If we set ourselves to do what we can, God has promised his grace to enable us to do what we cannot; and by that promise we partake of a new nature, and that grace shall not be in vain; it was not here: *His feet and ankle-bones received strength*, which they had not done if he had not attempted to rise, and been helped up; he does his part, and Peter does his, and yet it is Christ that does all: it is he that puts strength into him. As the bread was multiplied in the breaking, and the water turned into wine in the pouring out, so strength was given to the cripple's feet in his stirring them and using them.

V. Here is the impression which this cure made upon the patient himself, which we may best conceive of if we put our soul into his soul's stead.

1. He leaped up, in obedience to the command, *Arise*. He found in himself such a degree of strength in his feet and ankle-bones that he did not steal up gently, with fear and trembling, as weak people do when they begin to recover strength; but he started up, as one refreshed with sleep, boldly, and with great agility, and as one that questioned not his own strength. The incomes of strength were sudden, and he was no less sudden in showing them. He leaped, as one glad to quit the bed or pad of straw on which he had lain so long lame.

2. He stood, and walked. He stood without either leaning or trembling, stood straight up, and walked without a staff. He trod strongly, and moved

steadily; and this was to manifest the cure, and that it was a thorough cure. Note, Those who have had experience of the working of divine grace upon them should evidence what they have experienced. Has God put strength into us? Let us stand before him in the exercises of devotion; let us walk before him in all the instances of a religious conversation. Let us stand up resolutely for him, and walk cheerfully with him, and both in strength derived and received from him.

3. He *held Peter and John*, v. 11. We need not ask why he held them. I believe he scarcely knew himself: but it was in a transport of joy that he embraced them as the best benefactors he had ever met with, and hung upon them to a degree of rudeness; he would not let them go forward, but would have them stay with him, while he published to all about him what God had done for him by them. Thus he testified his affection to them; he held them, and would not let them go. Some suggest that he clung to them for fear lest, if they should leave him, his lameness should return. Those whom God hath healed love those whom he made instruments of their healing, and see the need of their further help.

4. He *entered with them into the temple*. His strong affection to them held them; but it could not hold them so fast as to keep them out of the temple, whither they were going to preach Christ. We should never suffer ourselves to be diverted by the utmost affectionate kindnesses of our friends from going in the way of our duty. But, if they will not stay with him, he is resolved to go with them, and the rather because they are going into the temple, whence he had been so long kept by his weakness and his begging: like the impotent man whom Christ cured, he was presently found in the temple, ^{<454>}John 5:14. He went into the temple, not only to offer up his praises and thanksgivings to God, but to hear more from the apostles of that Jesus in whose name he had been healed. Those that have experienced the power of Christ should earnestly desire to grow in their acquaintance with Christ.

5. He was there *walking, and leaping, and praising God*. Note, The strength God has given us, both in mind and body, should be made use of to his praise, and we should study how to honour him with it. Those that are healed in his name must walk up and down in his name and in his strength, ^{<380>}Zechariah 10:12. This man, as soon as he could leap, leaped for joy in God, and praised him. Here was that scripture fulfilled (^{<2386>}Isaiah 35:6): *Then shall the lame man leap as a hart*. Now that this man was

newly cured he was in this excess of joy and thankfulness. All true converts walk and praise God; but perhaps young converts leap more in his praises.

VI. How the people that were eye-witnesses of this miracle were influenced by it we are next told.

1. They were entirely satisfied in the truth of the miracle, and had nothing to object against it. *They knew it was he that sat begging at the beautiful gate of the temple*, v. 10. He had sat there so long that they all knew him; and for this reason he was chosen to be the vessel of this mercy. Now they were not so perverse as to make any doubt whether he was the same man, as the Pharisees had questioned concerning the blind man that Christ cured, ~~499~~John 9:9, 18. They now saw him *walking, and praising God* (v. 9), and perhaps took notice of a change in his mind; for he was now as loud in praising God as he had before been in begging relief. The best evidence that it was a complete cure was that he now praised God for it. Mercies are then perfected, when they are sanctified.

2. They were astonished at it: They were *filled with wonder and amazement* (v. 10); *greatly wondering*, v. 11. They were in an *ecstasy*. There seems to have been this effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, that the people, at least those in Jerusalem, were much more affected with the miracles the apostles wrought than they had been with those of the same kind that had been wrought by Christ himself; and this was in order to the miracles answering their end.

3. They gathered about Peter and John: *All the people ran together unto them in Solomon's porch*: some only to gratify their curiosity with the sight of men that had such power; others with a desire to hear them preach, concluding that their doctrine must needs be of divine origin, which thus had a divine ratification. They flocked to them in Solomon's porch, a part of the court of the Gentiles, where Solomon had built the outer porch of the temple; or, some cloisters or piazzas which Herod had erected upon the same foundation upon which Solomon had built the stately porch that bore his name, Herod being ambitious herein to be a second Solomon. Here the people met, to see this great sight.

ACTS 3:12-26

PETER'S ADDRESS AFTER HEALING THE CRIPPLE

We have here the sermon which Peter preached after he had cured the lame man. *When Peter saw it.*

1. When he saw the people got together in a crowd, he took that opportunity to preach Christ to them, especially the temple being the place of their concourse, and Solomon's porch there: let them come and hear a more excellent wisdom than Solomon's, for, behold, a greater than Solomon is here preached.

2. When he saw the people affected with the miracle, and filled with admiration, then he sowed the gospel seed in the ground which was thus broken up, and prepared to receive it.

3. When he saw the people ready to adore him and John, he stepped in immediately, and diverted their respect from them, that it might be directed to Christ only; to this *he answered* presently, as Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. See Acts 14:14, 15. In the sermon,

I. He humbly disclaims the honour of the miracle as not due to them, who were only the ministers of Christ, or instruments in his hand for the doing of it. The doctrines they preached were not of their own invention, nor were the seals of it their own, but his whose the doctrines were. He addresses himself to them as *men of Israel*, men to whom pertained, not only the law and the promises, but the gospel and the performances, and who were nearly interested in the present dispensation. Two things he asks them: —

1. Why they were so surprised at the miracle itself: *Why marvel you at this?* It was indeed marvellous, and they justly wondered at it, but it was not more than what Christ had done many a time, and they had not duly regarded it, nor been affected with it. It was but a little before that Christ had *raised Lazarus from the dead*; and why should this then seem so strange? Note, Stupid people think that strange now which might have been familiar to them if it had not been their own fault. Christ had lately risen from the dead himself; why did they not marvel at this? why were they not convinced by this?

2. Why they gave so much of the praise of it to them, who were only the instruments of it: *Why look you so earnestly on us?*

(1.) It was certain that they *had made this man to walk*, by which it appeared that the apostles not only were sent of God, but were sent to be blessings to the world, benefactors to mankind, and were sent to heal sick and distempered souls, that were spiritually lame and impotent, to set broken bones, and make them rejoice.

(2.) Yet they did not do it by any *power or holiness of their own*. It was not done by any might of their own, any skill they had in physic or surgery, nor any virtue in their word: the power they did it by was wholly derived from Christ. Nor was it done by any merit of their own; the power which Christ gave them to do it they had not deserved: it was not by their own holiness; for, as they were weak things, so they were foolish things, that Christ chose to employ; Peter was a sinful man. What holiness had Judas? Yet he wrought miracles in Christ's name. What holiness any of them had it was wrought in them, and they could not pretend to merit by it.

(3.) It was the people's fault that they attributed it to their power and holiness, and accordingly looked at them. Note, The instruments of God's favour to us, though they must be respected, must not be idolized; we must take heed of reckoning that to be done by the instrument which God is the author of.

(4.) It was the praise of Peter and John that they would not take the honour of this miracle to themselves, but carefully transmitted it to Christ. Useful men must see to it that they be very humble. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory*. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ; *not I, but the grace of God with me*.

II. He preaches Christ to them; this was his business, that he might lead them into obedience to Christ.

1. He preaches Christ, as the true Messiah promised to the fathers (v. 13); for,

(1.) He is Jesus the Son of God; though they had lately condemned Christ as a blasphemer for saying that he was the Son of God, yet Peter avows it: he is *his Son Jesus*; to him dear as a Son; to us, *Jesus*, a Saviour.

(2.) God hath glorified him, in raising him up to be king, priest, and prophet, of his church; he glorified him in his life and in his death, as well as in his resurrection and ascension.

(3.) He hath glorified him as *the God of our fathers*, whom he names with respect (for they were great names with the men of Israel, and justly), *the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*. God sent him into the world, pursuant to the promises made to those patriarchs, *that in their seed the families of the earth should be blessed*, and the covenant made with them, *that God would be a God to them, and their seed*. The apostles call the patriarchs their fathers, and God the God of those patriarchs from whom the Jews were descended, to intimate to them that they had no evil design upon the Jewish nation (that they should look upon them with a jealous eye), but had a value and concern for it, and were hereby well-wishers to it; and the gospel they preached was the revelation of the mind and will of the God of Abraham. See ~~406~~ Acts 26:7, 22; ~~417~~ Luke 1:72, 73.

2. He charges them flatly and plainly with the murder of this Jesus, as he had done before.

(1.) “*You delivered him up to your chief priests and elders, the representative body of the nation; and you of the common people were influenced by them to clamour against him, as if he had been a public grievance.*”

(2.) “*You denied him, and you disowned him, would not have him then to be your king, could not look upon him as the Messiah, because he came not in external pomp and power; you denied him in the presence of Pilate, renounced all the expectations of your church, in the presence of the Roman governor, who justly laughed at you for it; you denied him against the face of Pilate*” (so Dr. Hammond), “in defiance of his reasonings with you” (*Pilate had determined to let him go, but the people opposed it, and overruled him*). “You were worse than Pilate, for he would have released him, if you had let him follow his own judgment. *You denied the Holy One and the Just, who had approved himself so, and all the malice of his persecutors could not disprove it.*” The holiness and justice of the Lord Jesus, which are something more than his innocency, were a great aggravation of the sin of those that put him to death.

(3.) “*You desired a murderer to be released, and Christ crucified; as if Barabbas had deserved better at your hands than the Lord Jesus, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him.*”

(4.) *You killed the prince of life.* Observe the antithesis: “*You preserved a murderer, a destroyer of life; and destroyed the Saviour, the author of life. You killed him who was sent to be to you the prince of life, and so not only forsook, but rebelled against your own mercies. You did an ungrateful thing, in taking away his life who would have been your life. You did a foolish thing to think you could conquer the prince of life, who has life in himself, and would soon resume the life he resigned.*”

3. He attests his resurrection as before, Acts 11. 32. “*You thought the prince of life might be deprived of his life, as any other prince might be deprived of his dignity and dominion, but you found yourselves mistaken, for God raised him from the dead; so that in putting him to death you fought against God, and were baffled. God raised him from the dead, and thereby ratified his demands, and confirmed his doctrine, and rolled away all the reproach of his sufferings, and for the truth of his resurrection we are all witnesses.*”

4. He ascribes the cure of this impotent man to the power of Christ, (v. 16): *His name, through faith in his name, in that discovery which he hath made of himself, has made this man strong.* He repeats it again, *The faith which is by him hath given him this soundness.* Here,

(1.) He appeals to themselves concerning the truth of the miracle; the man on whom it was wrought is one *whom you see, and know, and have known;* he was not acquainted with Peter and John before, so that there was no room to suspect a compact between them: “*You know him to have been a cripple from a child. The miracle was wrought publicly, in the presence of you all; not in a corner, but in the gate of the temple; you saw in what manner it was done, so that there could be no juggle in it; you had liberty to examine it immediately, and may yet. The cure is complete; it is a perfect soundness; you see the man walks and leaps, as one that has no remainder either of weakness or pain.*”

(2.) He acquaints them with the power by which it was wrought.

[1.] It is done by the name of Christ, not merely by naming it as a spell or charm, but it is done by us as professors and teachers of his name, by

virtue of a commission and instructions we have received from him, and a power which he has invested us with, that name which Christ has above every name; his authority, his command has done it; as writs run in the king's name, though it is an inferior officer that executes them.

[2.] The power of Christ is fetched in *through faith in his name*, a confidence in him, a dependence on him, a believing application to him, and expectation from him, even *that faith which is, di' autou* — by him, which is of his working; *it is not of ourselves, it is the gift of Christ*; and it is for his sake, that he may have the glory of it; for he is both *the author and finisher of our faith*. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that faith is twice named in this verse, because of the apostles' faith in doing this miracle and the cripple's faith in receiving it; but I suppose it relates chiefly, if not only, to the former. Those that wrought this miracle by faith derived power from Christ to work it, and therefore returned all the glory to him. By this true and just account of the miracle, Peter both confirmed the great gospel truth they were to preach to the world — that Jesus Christ is the fountain of all power and grace, and the great healer and Saviour — and recommended the great gospel duty of faith in him as the only way of receiving benefit by him. It explains likewise the great gospel mystery of our salvation by Christ; it is his name that justifies us, that glorious name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*; but we, in particular, are justified by that name, through faith in it, applying it to ourselves. Thus does Peter preach unto them Jesus, and him crucified, as a faithful friend of the bridegroom, to whose service and honour he devoted all his interest.

III. He encourages them to hope that, though they had been guilty of putting Christ to death, yet they might find mercy; he does all he can to convince them, yet is careful not to drive them to despair. The guilt was very great, but,

1. He mollifies their crime by a candid imputation of it to their ignorance. Perhaps he perceived by the countenance of his hearers that they were struck with great horror when he told them that they had *killed the prince of life*, and were ready either to sink down or to fly off, and therefore he saw it needful to mitigate the rigour of the charge by calling them *brethren*; and well might he call them so, for he had been himself a brother with them in this iniquity: he had *denied the holy One and the Just*, and sworn that he did not know him; he did it by surprise; “and, for your parts, *I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your*

rulers," v. 17. This was the language of Peter's charity, and teaches us to make the best of those whom we desire to make better. Peter had searched the wound to the bottom, and now he begins to think of healing it up, in order to which it is necessary to beget in them a good opinion of their physician; and could any thing be more winning than this? That which bears him out in it is that he has the example of his Master's praying for his crucifiers, and pleading in their behalf that they knew not what they did. And it is said of the rulers that *if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. See ^{<42B>}1 Corinthians 2:8. Perhaps some of the rulers, and of the people, did therein rebel against the light and the convictions of their own consciences, and did it through malice; but the generality went down the stream, and did it through ignorance; as Paul persecuted the church, *ignorantly, and in unbelief*, ^{<50B>}1 Timothy 1:13.

2. He mollifies the effects of their crime — the death of *the prince of life*; this sounds very dreadful, but it was *according to the scriptures* (v. 18), the predictions of which, though they did not necessitate their sin, yet did necessitate his sufferings; so he himself saith: *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer. You did it through ignorance* may be taken in this sense: "You fulfilled the scripture, and did not know it; God, by your hands, hath fulfilled what he showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer; this was his design in delivering him up to you, but you had views of your own, and were altogether ignorant of this design; you meant not so, neither did your heart think so. God was fulfilling the scripture when you were gratifying your own passions." Observe, It was not only determined in the secret counsel of God, but declared to the world many ages before, *by the mouth and pen of the prophets, that Christ should suffer*, in order to the accomplishment of his undertaking; and it was God himself that *showed* it by them, who will see that his words be made good; what he showed he fulfilled, he so fulfilled as he had shown, punctually and exactly, without any variation. Now, though this is no extenuation at all of their sin in hating and persecuting Christ *to the death* (this still appears exceedingly sinful), yet it was an encouragement to them to repent, and hope for mercy upon their repentance; not only because in general God's gracious designs were carried on by it (ant thus it agrees with the encouragement Joseph gave to his brethren, when they thought their offence against him almost unpardonable: *Fear not, saith he, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good*, ^{<08B>}Genesis 50:15, 20), but because in particular the death and sufferings of Christ were for

the remission of sins, and the ground of that display of mercy for which he now encouraged them to hope.

IV. He exhorts them all to turn Christians, and assures them it would be unspeakably for their advantage to do so; it would be the making of them for ever. This is the application of his sermon.

1. He tells them what they must believe.

(1.) They must believe that Jesus Christ is the promised see, that seed in which God had told Abraham *all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed*, v. 25. This refers to that promise made to Abraham (^{<0118>}Genesis 12:3), which promise was long ere it was fulfilled, but now at length had its accomplishment in this *Jesus*, who was of *the seed of Abraham*, *according to the flesh*, and *in him all the families of the earth are blessed*, and not the families of Israel only; all have some benefits by him, and some have all benefits.

(2.) They must believe that Jesus Christ is a prophet, *that prophet like unto Moses* whom God had promised to *raise up to them from among their brethren*, v. 22. This refers to that promise, ^{<0188>}Deuteronomy 18:18. Christ is a prophet, for by him God speaks unto us; in him all divine revelation centres, and by him it is handed to us; he is a *prophet like unto Moses*, a favourite of Heaven; more intimately acquainted with the divine counsel, and more familiarly conversed with, than any other prophet. He was a deliverer of his people out of bondage, and their guide through the wilderness, like Moses; a prince and a lawgiver, like Moses; the builder of the true tabernacle, as Moses was of the typical one. Moses was *faithful as a servant*, Christ *as a Son*. Moses was murmured against by Israel, defied by Pharaoh, yet God owned him, and ratified his commission. Moses was a pattern of meekness and patience, so is Christ. Moses died by *the word of the Lord*, so did Christ. *There was no prophet like unto Moses* (^{<0126>}Numbers 12:6, 7; ^{<0310>}Deuteronomy 34:10), but a greater than Moses is here where Christ is. He is a prophet of God's raising up, for he took not this honour of himself, but was called of God to it. He was raised up unto Israel in the first place. He executed this office in his own person among them only. They had the first offer of divine grace made to them; and therefore he was *raised up from among them — of them, as concerning the flesh*, *Christ came*, which, as it was a great honour done to them, so it was both an obligation upon them and an encouragement to them to embrace

him. If he come to his own, one would think, they should receive him. The Old-Testament church was blessed with many prophets, with schools of prophets, for many ages with a constant succession of prophets (which is here taken notice of, from *Samuel, and those that follow after*, v. 24, for from Samuel the prophetic era commenced); but, these servants being abused, last of all God sent them his Son, who had been in his bosom.

(3.) They must believe *that times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord* (v. 19), and that they will be *the times of the restitution of all things*, v. 21. There is a future state, another life after this; those times will come from the presence of the Lord, from his glorious appearance at that day, his coming at the end of time. The absence of the Lord occasions many of the securities of sinners and the distrusts of saints; but his presence is hastening on, which will for ever silence both. *Behold, the Judge standeth before the door*. The presence of the Lord will introduce,

[1.] *The restitution of all things* (v. 21); *the new heavens, and the new earth*, which will be the product of the dissolution of all things (~~Rev~~ Revelation 21:1), the renovation of the whole creation, which is that which it grieves after, as its present burden under the sin of man is that which it groans under. Some understand this of a state on this side the end of time; but it is rather to be understood of that *end of all things which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began*; for this is that which *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of* (~~Jude~~ Jude 1:14), and the temporal judgments which the other prophets foretold were typical of that which the apostle calls *the eternal judgment*. This is more clearly and plainly revealed in the New Testament than it had been before, and all that receive the gospel have an expectation of it.

[2.] With this will come *the times of refreshing* (v. 19), of consolation to the Lord's people, like a cool shade to those *that have borne the burden and heat of the day*. All Christians look for *a rest that remains for the people of God*, after the travails and toils of their present state, and, with the prospect of this, they are borne up under their present sufferings and carried on in their present services. The refreshing that then *comes from the presence of the Lord* will continue eternally in the presence of the Lord.

2. He tells them what they must do.

(1.) They must *repent*, must bethink themselves of what they have done amiss, must return to their right mind, admit a second thought, and submit to the convictions of it; they must begin anew. Peter, who had himself denied Christ, repented, and he would have them to do so too.

(2.) They must *be converted*, must face about, and direct both their faces and steps the contrary way to what they had been; they must *return to the Lord their God*, from whom they had revolted. It is not enough to repent of sin, but we must be converted from it, and not return to it again. They must not only exchange the profession of Judaism for that of Christianity, but the power and dominion of a carnal, worldly, sensual mind, for that of holy, heavenly, and divine principles and affections.

(3.) They must hear Christ, the great prophet: "*Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. Attend his dictates, receive his doctrine, submit to his government. Hear him with a divine faith, as prophets should be heard, that come with a divine commission. Him shall you hear, and to him shall you subscribe with an implicit faith and obedience. Hear him in all things; let his laws govern all your actions, and his counsels determine all your submissions. Whenever he has a mouth to speak, you must have an ear to hear. Whatever he saith to you, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood, bid it welcome.*" *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* A good reason is here given why we should be observant of, and obedient to, the word of Christ; for it is at our peril if we turn a deaf ear to his call and a stiff neck to his yoke (v. 23): *Every soul that will not hear that prophet, and be directed by what he saith, shall be destroyed from among the people.* The destruction of the city and nation, by war and famine, was threatened for slighting the prophets of the Old Testament; but the destruction of the soul, a spiritual and eternal destruction, is threatened for slighting Christ, *this great prophet.* Those that will not be advised by the Saviour can expect no other than to fall into the hands of the destroyer.

3. He tells them what they might expect.

(1.) That they should have the pardon of their sins; this is always spoken of as the great privilege of all those that embrace the gospel (v. 19): *Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* This implies,

[1.] That the remission of sin is the blotting of it out, as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun (²³⁴²Isaiah 44:22), as a debt is crossed and

blotted out when it is remitted. It intimates that when God forgives sin he remembers it no more against the sinner; it is forgotten, as that which is blotted out; all the bitter things written against the sinner (~~EXE~~ Job 13:26) are wiped out as it were with a sponge; it is the cancelling of a bond, the vacating of a judgment.

[2.] That we cannot expect our sins should be pardoned unless we repent of them, and turn from them to God. Though Christ has died to purchase the remission of sin, yet, that we may have the benefit of that purchase in the forgiveness of our sins, we must repent, and be converted: if no repentance, no remission.

[3.] Hopes of the pardon of sin upon repentance should be a powerful inducement to us to repent. *Repent, that your sins may be blotted out:* and that repentance is evangelical which flows from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and the hopes of pardon. This was the first and great argument, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

[4.] The most comfortable fruit of the forgiveness of our sins will be *when the times of refreshing shall come*; if our sins be forgiven us, we have now reason to be of good cheer; but the comfort will be complete when the pardon shall be allowed in open court, and our justification published *before angels and men* — when *whom he has justified, them he glorifies*, ~~EXE~~ Romans 8:30. As *now we are the sons of God* (~~EXE~~ 1 John 3:2), so now we have our sins blotted out; *but it doth not yet appear what* are the blessed fruits of it, till *the times of refreshing shall come*. During these times of toil and conflict (doubts and fears within, troubles and dangers without) we cannot have that full satisfaction of our pardon, and in it, that we shall have when the refreshing times come, which shall wipe away all tears.

(2.) That they should have the comfort of Christ's coming (v. 20, 21): *“He shall send Jesus Christ, the same Jesus, the very same that before was preached unto you; for you must not expect another dispensation, another gospel, but the continuance and completion of this; you must not expect another prophet like unto Jesus, as Moses bade you expect another like unto him; for, though the heavens must receive him till the times of the restitution of all things; yet, if you repent and be converted, you shall find no want of him; some way or other he shall be seen of you.”*

[1.] We must not expect Christ's personal presence with us in this world; for the heavens, which received him out of the sight of the disciples, must retain him till the end of time. To that seat of the blessed his bodily presence is confined, and will be to the end of time, the accomplishment of all things (so it may be read); and therefore those dishonour him, and deceive themselves, who dream of his corporal presence in the eucharist. It is agreeable to a state of trial and probation that the glorified Redeemer should be out of sight, because we must live by that faith in him which is *the evidence of things not seen*; because he must be *believed on in the world*, he must be *received up into glory*. Dr. Hammond reads it, *Who must receive the heavens*, that is, who must *receive the glory and power of the upper world; he must reign till all be made subject to him*, ^{<15>}1 Corinthians 15:25; ^{<15>}Psalm 75:2.

[2.] Yet it is promised that he shall be sent to all that repent and are converted (v. 20): "*He shall send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you by his disciples, both before and since his resurrection, and is, and will be, all in all to them.*" *First*, "You shall have his spiritual presence. He that is sent into the world shall be sent to you; you shall have the comfort of his being sent; he shall be sent among you in his gospel, which shall be his tabernacle, his chariot of war." *Secondly*, "*He shall send Jesus Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and the nation of unbelieving Jews, that are enemies to Christ and Christianity, and to deliver his ministers and people from them, and give them peace in the profession of the gospel, and that shall be a time of refreshing, in which you shall share.*" *Then had the churches rest*; so Dr. Hammond. *Thirdly*, "The sending of Christ to judge the world, at the end of time, will be a blessing to you; you shall then *lift up your heads with joy, knowing that your redemption draws nigh.*" It seems to refer to this, for till then *the heavens must receive him*, v. 21. As God's counsels from eternity, so his predictions from the beginning of time, had a reference to the transactions of the last day, when *the mystery of God shall be finished, as he had declared to his servants the prophets*, ^{<10>}Revelation 10:7. The institution of all things in the church had an eye to the restitution of all things at the end of time.

4. He tells them what ground they had to expect these things, if they were converted to Christ. Though they had denied him, and put him to death, yet they might hope to find favour through him, upon the account of their being Israelites. For,

(1.) As Israelites, they had the monopoly of the grace of the Old Testament; they were, above any other, God's favourite nation, and the favours God bestowed upon them were such as had a reference to the Messiah, and his kingdom: *You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant.* A double privilege.

[1.] They were *the children*, that is, the disciples, *of the prophets*, as children at school; *not sons of the prophets*, in the sense that we read of such in the Old Testament, from Samuel and downward, who were, or are, trained up to be *endued with the spirit of prophecy*; but you are of that people from among whom prophets were raised up, and to whom prophets were sent. It is spoken of as a great favour to Israel *that God raised up of their sons for prophets*, ^{<101>}Amos 2:11. All the inspired writers, both of the Old and New Testament, were of *the seed of Abraham*; and it was their honour and advantage *that unto them were committed the oracles of God*, ^{<102>}Romans 3:2. Their government was constituted by prophecy, that is, by divine revelation; and by it their affairs were for many ages very much managed. See ^{<103>}Hosea 12:13. *By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.* Those of the latter ages of the church, when prophecy had ceased, might yet be fitly called *the children of the prophets*, because they heard, though they did not know, *the voices of the prophets, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath day*, ^{<104>}Acts 13:27. Now this should quicken them to embrace Christ, and they might hope to be accepted of him; for their own prophets had foretold *that this grace should be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (^{<105>}1 Peter 1:13), and therefore ought not to be neglected by them, nor should be denied to them. Those that are blessed with prophets and prophecy (as all are that have the scriptures) are concerned not to receive the grace of God therein in vain. We may apply it particularly to ministers' children, who, if they plead their parentage effectually with themselves, as an inducement to be faithful and forward in religion, may comfortably plead it with God, and hope *that the children of God's servants shall continue.*

[2.] They were *the children*, that is, the heirs, *of the covenant which God made with our Fathers*, as children in the family. God's covenant was made *with Abraham and his seed*, and they were *that seed* with whom the covenant was made, and on whom *the blessings of the covenant were entailed*: "The promise of the Messiah was made to you, and therefore if you forsake not your own mercies, and do not by an obstinate infidelity

put a bar in your own door, you may hope it shall be made good to you.” That promise here mentioned, as the principal article of the covenant, *In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*, though referring principally to Christ (⁴⁸⁶Galatians 3:16), yet may include the church also, which is his body, all believers, that are the spiritual seed of Abraham. *All the kindreds of the earth were blessed* in having a church for Christ among them; and those that were *the seed of Abraham according to the flesh* stood fairest for this privilege. If all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed in Christ, much more that kindred, *his kinsmen according to the flesh*.

(2.) As Israelites, they had the first offer of the grace of the New Testament. Because *they were the children of the prophets and the covenant*, therefore to them the Redeemer was first sent, which was an encouragement to them to hope that if they did repent, and were converted, he should be yet further sent for their comfort (v. 20): *He shall send Jesus Christ*, for to you first he hath sent him, v. 26. *Unto you first*, you Jews, though not to you only, *God, having raised up his Son Jesus*, appointed and authorized him *to be a prince and a Saviour*, and, in confirmation of this, *raised him from the dead, sent him to bless you*, to make a tender of his blessing to you, especially that great blessing of *turning every one of you from his iniquities*; and therefore it concerns you to receive this blessing, and turn from your iniquities, and you may be encouraged to hope that you shall.

[1.] We are here told whence Christ had his mission: *God raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him*. God raised him up when he constituted him a prophet, owned him by a voice from heaven, and filled him with his Spirit without measure, and then sent him; for to this end he raised him up, that he might be his commissioner to treat of peace. He sent him to bear witness of the truth, sent him to seek and save lost souls, sent him against his enemies, to conquer them. Some refer *the raising of him up to the resurrection*, which was the first step towards his exaltation; this was, as it were, the renewing of his commission; and though, having raised him up, he seemed presently to take him from us, yet he did really send him afresh to us in his gospel and Spirit.

[2.] To whom he was sent: *“Unto you first. You of the seed of Abraham, you that are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, to you is the tender made of gospel grace.”* The personal ministry of Christ, as that of

the prophets, was confined to the Jews; he was not then *sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and he forbade the disciples he then sent forth to go any further. After his resurrection, he was to be preached indeed to all nations, but they must *begin at Jerusalem*, ^{<024E>}Luke 24:47. And, when they went to other nations, they first preached to the Jews they found therein. They were the first-born, and, as such, had the privilege of the first offer. So far were they from being excluded for their putting Christ to death, that, when he is risen, he is first sent to them, and they are primarily intended to have benefit by his death.

[3.] On what errand he was sent: “*He is sent to you first, to bless you; this is his primary errand, not to condemn you, as you deserve, but to justify you, if you will accept of the justification offered you, in the way wherein it is offered; but he that sends him first to bless you, if you refuse and reject that blessing, will send him to curse you with a curse,*” ^{<304E>}Malachi 4:6. Note, *First*, Christ's errand into the world was to bless us, to bring a blessing with him, for *the Sun of righteousness rose with healing under his wings*; and, when he left the world, he left a blessing behind him for he was *parted from the disciples as he blessed them*, ^{<025E>}Luke 24:51. He sent his Spirit to be the great blessing, the blessing of blessings, ^{<244E>}Isaiah 44:3. It is by Christ that God sends blessings to us, and through him only we can expect to receive them. *Secondly*, The great blessing wherewith Christ came to bless us was the turning of us away from our iniquities, the saving of us from our sins (^{<002E>}Matthew 1:21), to turn us from sin, that we may be qualified to receive all other blessings. Sin is that to which naturally we cleave; the design of divine grace is to turn us from it, nay, to turn us against it, that we may not only forsake it, but hate it. The gospel has a direct tendency to do this, not only as it requires us, every one of us, to turn from our iniquities, but as it promises us grace to enable us to do so. “Therefore, do your part; *repent, and be converted*, because Christ is ready to do his, *in turning you from your iniquities*, and so blessing you.”