

The Message of Repentance

Acts 3:12-26

Repentance is the central theme of Peter's sermon in Acts 3. After the miraculous healing of a lame man, Peter takes the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel message, calling his audience to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

I. **Credit** God for His Power (Acts 3:12-16)

Peter begins his sermon by correcting the crowd's misunderstanding about the source of the miracle. He redirects their attention away from himself and John and toward God as the true source of power.

Acts 3:16: *"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."*

Observation: This man was brought to this porch every day for decades. Surely, Jesus would have seen him during His earthly ministry. Why did Jesus not already heal this man? Though we do not understand God's timing on the miracle, we should realize that God used this miracle to open the door for the preaching of the gospel at that moment.

II. **Confront** Your Sin (Acts 3:13-15)

Peter does not hesitate to confront his audience with their sin. He reminds them of their role in rejecting and crucifying Jesus.

Peter's Indictments Against His Audience¹:

- Verse 13: You handed over Jesus.
- Verse 13b: You're worse than Pilate.
- Verse 14: You traded the Holy and Righteous One for a murderer.
- Verse 15: You killed the one who gave you life.
- Verse 17: You're ignorant.
- Verses 18–25: You don't understand the Bible.
- Verse 26: You denied your privilege.
- Verse 26b: You're wicked.

¹ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 53.

III. **Change Your Direction (Acts 3:17-19)**

Acts 3:19: *"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."*

Two Greek Words for Repentance

1. **Metamelomai** - This word refers to an outward sorrow or regret. Judas Iscariot experienced this kind of repentance. In Matthew 27:3, when it says Judas "repented himself," it indicates that he felt sorrow for the outcome of his betrayal, but this regret did not lead to a true change of heart or a turning back to God. Instead, it was a sorrow that led to despair rather than repentance that brings about salvation. This type of remorse does not lead to a genuine transformation or the fruit of true repentance.
2. **Metanoeo** - This is the word Peter uses in Acts 3:19. It means to change one's mind and attitude toward sin, to hate sin, and to turn away from it with all your heart and soul. This repentance is a complete turnaround—a change in direction. It's as if you were heading north, and you turn around and go south.

Warren Wiersbe writes, "Repentance is much more than 'feeling sorry for your sins.' **As the little Sunday School girl said, 'It means feeling sorry enough to quit!'** False sorrow for sin could be mere regret ('I'm sorry I got caught!') or remorse ('I feel terrible!'); and such feelings have a tendency to pass away. Repentance is not the same as 'doing penance,' as though we have to make a special sacrifice to God to prove that we are sincere. **True repentance is admitting that what God says is true, and because it is true, to change our mind about our sins and about the Saviour.**"²

Repentance is not optional—it is essential. John MacArthur explains there are four motivations for repentance:

1. **The knowledge of revealed truth** (Luke 16:27-31).
2. **Godly sorrow for sin** (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).
3. **God's goodness and kindness** (Romans 2:4).
4. **Fear of final judgment** (Acts 17:30-31).

IV. **Celebrate the Blessings of Repentance (Acts 3:19-26)**

Peter concludes by reminding his audience of the blessings that come through repentance.

1. **Forgiveness:** *"That your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19).*
2. **Refreshment:** *"So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).*
3. **Hope:** *"That He may send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:20).*

Peter's message also carried a **prophetic promise**. He spoke of a future time when Israel, as a nation, would repent.

Peter is saying to the Jewish nation:

1. **The Time of National Repentance is Coming** - Peter declares that the time is coming when they, as a nation, will repent. This has not yet happened, but it will happen.
2. **Sins Will Be Blotted Out, and Times of Refreshing Will Come** - When Israel repents, their sins will be blotted out, and there will be times of refreshing. This refers to a great revival in Israel.
3. **The "Times of Restoration of All Things"** - Peter says **"times"** of restoration, which is plural. This indicates there will be a series of events leading to the conversion of Israel and the literal establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, with Israel at its center.

From "It Is Well With My Soul":

***"My sin – 0, the bliss of this glorious thought, My sin – not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the lord, praise the Lord. 0 my soul!"***

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 413.