

Roy's sermon for 8/11/2020

Acts 3:20-26 'A Cripple Set Free Part 4: It All Points To Jesus!'

Last week's our sermon was entitled Acts 3:17-19 'A cripple set free Part 3: Ignorance. Repentance and Times of Refreshing'. Verse 17 "now brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance." I asked the question, how could Peter say this when they were without doubt not ignorant, but were in fact culpable and accountable? Well as we learned, it was Peter's way of softening the blow, because it was not his goal, nor is it Christ's gospel's goal, to convict people and leave them without hope. And he goes on to explain in verse 18 that it was indeed all part of God's plan all along: "That his Christ would suffer." Yet although he does mitigate the blow in verse 17, and explains it was God's Plan in verse 18, he doesn't excuse their guilt or withhold the truth!

So now that the veil of their ignorance had been taken away, it was time for them to act. Verse 19 "repent, then, and turn to God." And I explained, if the message was that they needed to turn to God, clearly they were living in a manner which was opposed to Him and were facing away from God! Verse 19: "that their sins may be wiped out." Psalm 113 verse 12: "as far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." But true repentance is also accompanied by and evidenced in, a change of direction in life. Changing from running away, into running toward God!

Then finally that wonderful phrase "that times of refreshing would come from the Lord." Whether it would be that moment of first coming to know Him as Saul did on the road to Damascus, or the restoration and renewal of our soul as with David in Psalm 23, or is Isaiah in chapter 6 before God's throne, who confessed not only his own, but also his nation's uncleanness before God. Yes, "times of refreshing" individually, or as revival in a church collectively, both come about by God's grace and mercy through repentance. Yes repentance is the key!

So now we return to the account as Peter continues his sermon. 'A Cripple Set Free Part 4: It All Points To Jesus!'

Friends, in my final point last time I spoke of verse 19 "that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." Verse 20 says "and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you, even Jesus." Now to understand what I'm about to explain next, we need to remember the context. The healing of the man crippled from birth. Peter rejecting their admiration and then laying the blame for Jesus' death down at the feet of his hearers. Verse 13 "you handed him over, you disowned him, you disowned him, you killed the author of life." Verse 19 "Repent, then, turn to God that your sins may be wiped out that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." And what the commentators explain is that what Peter does next in his sermon is point us to that ultimate, yes that eternal, "time of refreshing": the return of Jesus as Judge and Restorer of all things! And he does this by again giving his hearers, (those Jews in the temple courts of God,) an historically based biblical lesson. Showing them and teaching them that all of their cherished scriptures, pointed to Jesus, Gods' Christ, or Messiah! So verse 19 "that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" verse 20 "and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you, even Jesus." Firstly, let's remember that the word Christ literally means Messiah, Saviour, Deliverer, Anointed One, Redeemer. And let's remember also what Peter is seeking to do here. Verse 12 "men of Israel why do you stare at us." Verse 13 "the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus." So his goal then, is to lift Jesus up, and point them to Him. And he does this by way of a two edged sword! Because if Jesus has indeed

been “appointed for them” by God for their Salvation, Hallelujah praise God. But if they prove to be His instruments of wrath, by their refusal to come and bend the knee and submit the heart, then Jesus has been “appointed” by God for them, even as an Angel of death! Remember, their excuse and pretence of ignorance has been stripped away through Peter’s preaching. They can no longer say that our leaders deceived us. Yes that excuse has been taken away. And ignorance is no excuse anyway for breaking the law, as I said last time.

Brothers and sisters, we might not like the sound of it but here's the thing: Whenever we speak to someone about Jesus, whether that be sharing the gospel, or praying at a meal, or simply and openly declaring that we are Bible believing followers of Christ, we are always presenting to them both heaven and hell. And the scriptures tell us that Jesus has been “appointed” for every man, woman and child. First for the Jew and then for the rest of the world. Either for Wrath, or Redemption! He continues in verse 21 “he must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.” And he explains, what that restoration promise was, and the essence of that promise. Again, has always been pointing to Jesus!

Friends, the essence of this restoration is about God restoring our broken relationship with Him. And who would bring this about? Well of course that One whom “all the prophets spoke about” Luke 24:18-27 “one of them named Cleopas, asked him, are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days? What things? He asked. About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. He was a Prophet, powerful in Word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him, but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of Angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. He said to them, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.”

Yes, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.” So what was Jesus explaining to Cleopas and his friend? The whole of the Bible points to and is about Me, and how I would save My people! And what is Peter also seeking to explain to his Jewish hearers in the temple courts? That the whole of the Old Testament Bible has been pointing to Jesus! He has mended our broken relationship with God through His blood. He has gone back into heaven. And He is now waiting for that day when the culmination of all of His Work on earth for mankind finds its fulfilment. When that last person for whom He died, is called into His Kingdom. When this fallen world passes away and His people with God are completely restored. After Jesus has separated the sheep from the goats!

Look at how, (just as his master did,) Peter begins his biblical theological lesson with Moses. Verse 22 “for Moses said the Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people you must listen to everything he tells you.” And in Matthew 28:20 “and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And lo am with you always to the very end of the age.” So Jesus embodied, and lay hold of everything which Moses said of him some 1500 years before! And brothers and sisters, look at what Peter adds in verse 23 “anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.”

Now friends, we have looked at this idea of being “cut off” before. It literally means being “cut off” from the land of the living, or put to death. So if we think of the context, being of Jesus` Return and the judgement of mankind at the restoration of all things, then what Peter is speaking of here is not simply physical death, but spiritual death. That eternal separation from God , in hell! The older translation puts it this way “and it shall come to pass, that every soul which shall not obey that profit, shall be destroyed of the people.” And the reason why I make this connection, is the words which are used by God Himself in the Deuteronomy passage which Peter refers to. And the words are “call him to account.” So those who do not respond to Jesus` Words of His gospel, will be “called to account” yes they will have to give an account for their rejection and rebellion. The rebellion against God through their sin, and the rejection of His Mercy through His Son. For those things, all mankind must give, and be “called to account” by God, on that Great and Dreadful day, of Restoration and Judgement! No Beloved, there will be no fence sitting before the throne of Jesus. There will be only the sheep and the goats!

Now as I've just mentioned, like Jesus, Peter begins with Moses, and then in verse 24 (again just as did his master) he explains “indeed all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.” Or in other words, for nearly 1500 years they had been waiting for the promised Messiah. Every Prophet who has ever lived which you so proudly lay claim to, has been pointing to this day, Peter tells them. If you do not hear and respond to what God is telling you now through Jesus, His Own Son, there will be nowhere to hide come judgement day! Beloved, what we learn here, is that having a wonderful ancestry in Christ, (through even generations of godly people,) will do us no good if we do not come to know Him now personally, in this life. By taking ownership of His Son's death. We each of us will all stand before God. Neither good deeds, nor heritage, nor our own strength, will hold us in good stead on that day. No nothing will, but the precious blood of Jesus! Again from verse 24 “all the prophets spoke of these days in which we are living.” Peter tells them.

And friends, it is no different for us today. We are still living in “these days” the only difference being, that we are now 2000 years closer to Jesus` return. So I guess the warning and the imperative for us holds an even greater urgency. As we all here know, our bodies are wearing out. That day when each of us will stand before our Maker draws ever near, as each moment of each day passes by. And whether we meet God in death or are still here come the day of Jesus` Return, either way, how we stand before Him is what matters. As Peter Marshall said some weeks ago, Jesus` Return is imminent. Though much of Christendom seems to have forgotten this in its preaching today! And notice what he says in verse 25 . After Speaking of being “cut off” he now speaks of them being “heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your father's.” So he flavours his sermon with hope!

Brothers and sisters, preaching fire and brimstone, (which as you all know I'm all for, and there should be more of it in this day and age of fairy floss and sugar and spice emptiness kind of preaching,) but fire, brimstone and judgement, without the mercy of God through Jesus, will leave the lost, in only helplessness and despair. And without hope. But that's not what Peter does, no. He again speaks to them of hope in the midst of wrath bestowed upon them, since they are the “heirs” of God's covenantal preachings and warnings throughout the ages! Yes “God made a covenant with your fathers.” Peter reminds his hearers, of the trustworthiness and the believability in God, and of Him keeping His Promises. And he takes them all the way back to that initial promise of God to Abraham. You see God is not like men who forget their words. Who say one thing and do another. He is always true. And even though we break our promises to Him all the time, when we vow to do

this and vow to do that, and often don't follow through, God is not like that. He keeps His Promises, all the time.

So Peter reminds them of what God's Promise to His people was, to the father of their nation, Abraham. "He said to your father Abraham through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed." Yes Peter takes his Jewish hearers all the way back to the beginning of their nation, when Abraham was still living in Haran and worshipping the gods of his father Terah! Well, God either appeared to him or spoke to him in a Dream. Genesis 12:1-3 "The Lord had said to Abraham, leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." He didn't know where he was going. He'd never been there before. It does appear that this was his first meeting with God and yet he packed up his bags, his animals and his family, and he left! A journey of some 800 kilometres. And it does seem, (that in response to what happened at the tower of Babel, when men said let's stay here, let's build ourselves a city, and make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the whole earth) that God says to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you, I will make your name great and you will be a blessing." Yes that which men had sought to grasp for themselves, (rebellious against God's mandate for them to "go into all the earth") yes that which men thought to grasp for themselves, God said to Abraham I will give to you, if you would but follow me by faith! So, "A great nation, A great name, you will be a blessing."

And Beloved, if we do indeed examine these promises in light of their historical reality, surely we must confess, that God has kept these promises to Abraham! The nation of Israel did become great in the history of mankind. The name of Abraham also has become great in the history of mankind. So much so that we are still talking about him today. Indeed the Jews, the Christians and even the Muslims of the world, do claim him as the father of their history to some degree. Yes God has kept these promises to his servant Abram, and God even changed his name from Abram to Abraham as a sign, that these things would come to pass. Because he would become the father of many nations for so the name signifies! Yes God has kept these promises to Abraham and exceedingly so. Surely beyond the imaginings of his mind. And yet these things were not the pinnacle of those promises of God. Genesis 3:3 "I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse." Or in other words, you will be My treasured possession. Whoever comes against you comes against Me. Whoever harms you harms Me. Because I will watch over you and protect you! But even this wasn't the Crown of glory of these promises of God to Abraham, no. It's what He says next, which Peter refers to in Acts chapter 3:25 "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Then in Genesis 22:18 God explained how this would come to pass. "Through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed" Which are the words which we find in Acts chapter 3:25. So the question we must ask is; How are the peoples of the earth blessed through Abraham's offspring? And of course the answer is, only through Jesus!

So not only is Jesus the Crown and the substance of God's promises to Abraham 1500 years ago, Peter explains to them, He is also that One for whom we have waited for all of those years! Yes Jesus is the Messiah and Lord! And Beloved remember, only moments before he had told him that they were responsible for this Very One's death. And then finally he again reminds them of their privilege and also of the reason why the Messiah came. Verse 26 "when God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways". As I said some weeks ago, the preaching of Jesus' gospel should never leave us where it finds us. Deaf dumb and blind to the reality of our sin! The blessing is in Christ "turning us around" indeed "turning us from our wicked ways" as Peter puts it. While turning us toward God. Yes the blessing is in Jesus opening our eyes and hearts to the reality of how we are standing before God in our lost state. So that we would

Repent, turn and fall before Him. Yes it all is pointing us to Jesus! Brothers and sisters, as I close this morning, I want to encourage you with some parallels which we share with our brother Abraham. Because just like Abraham God has made us many promises which He is keeping. Jesus has promised "come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest". He has promised "in my father's house are many rooms, I'm going there to prepare a place for you". He has promised "I am the way in the truth and the life." He has promised "I will be with you." He has promised "he who believes in me, though he dies yet shall he live."

But do you see? That we also are travelling to a land which we have not yet seen. We've never been there before. And we have been called by God to go. To leave all of those things behind which tie us to the idols and entanglements of our past. Those things which prevent us from following Him with our whole heart. But beloved, though we've never been to that place called heaven, praise God, that he has shown us the way and He has gone there before us. Because Jesus Himself has said I am that way!

Let`s Pray!