

(Through the Bible) Acts 3-4

by Chuck Smith

In Acts 3-4, Chuck Smith emphasizes the power of prayer, faith in Jesus, and the significance of the resurrection through the healing of a lame man by Peter and John.

Duration: 1:27:39

Scripture: Acts 1:11, Acts 3:22-23, Acts 3:25-26, Acts 4:12, Acts 4:21, Acts 4:23-24, Acts 4:31

Topics: "Faith In God", "Christian Witness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by offering a blessing to the audience, asking for the Lord's presence and protection. He emphasizes the importance of being a true witness for Jesus, not just through words, but through living a life that reflects His love and grace. The speaker shares a story about a fraudulent evangelist who claimed people needed to have faith in him rather than in God, highlighting the importance of placing our faith in God alone. He also mentions a personal story of a man who had a powerful conversion experience and the impact it had on his life. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the early believers' unity and the power of their witness to the resurrection of Jesus, accompanied by signs, wonders, and great grace.

Transcript

Shall we turn to Acts, the third chapter. Now, Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. The day started at six o'clock in the morning, sun up, and so the ninth hour would be three o'clock in the afternoon.

At two-thirty in the afternoon, the evening sacrifices were offered. They did not go to the temple for the sacrifices. Following the sacrifices, as the smoke of the sacrifice was ascending into heaven, it would be the hour of prayer and the people would stand and praise the Lord or pray unto God as the smoke of the sacrifices ascended heavenward.

And I think it's significant that they didn't go for the sacrifice. They knew that that was no longer valid. But they waited for the hour of prayer and went into the temple at the hour of prayer.

In the early church in Jerusalem, Christianity was not considered separate from the Jews, except for the belief that Jesus was the Messiah. There is a common misconception among Jews today that to become a Christian, you have to become a non-Jew. But that was not so in the early church.

They remained very Jewish. Going to the temple, worshiping in the temple, observing still the feast. However, the feast now to them had an entirely new meaning.

But they did not seek to make a radical break from Judaism, but only seek to proclaim that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah that God had promised. With Peter and John, you have contrasting personalities. Peter the doer and John the dreamer.

Peter always translated everything into activity. Remember the last question he asked Jesus concerning John is, What shall this man do? Peter always thought about doing things. But John wasn't a doer, he was a dreamer.

And so the Lord said to Peter, Look, if I will that he remains till I come again, what's that to you? I can imagine that Peter was often sort of irritated with John because John was the dreamer. And it could very well be that John in turn was irritated with all of Peter's activity because the dreamer likes more quiet and a serene atmosphere around him. Contrasting personalities and yet made one in Christ.

And that's always the way it goes. You know, Christ is the common meeting ground for all men. And though we may have contrasting personalities, still there is that beautiful unity in Christ.

And so we see them going up to the temple at the hour of prayer being the ninth hour. Again, Mark. First characteristic of these men are that they are men of prayer.

It is so important that we be men and women of prayer. Now, there was a certain lame man from his mother's womb who was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple. The beautiful gate of the temple is often thought to be the eastern gate of the temple.

And here is quite a contrast. This man, lame from birth, an ugly sight, lying at the beautiful gate of the temple, begging. And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked alms.

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, look at us. And so he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. No doubt holding out his hand, which is, of course, the typical gesture of the beggar.

And Peter said, silver and gold have I none. And I imagine that the fellow at that point was disappointed and probably even wondering of them, why are you trying to get my attention? But Peter continued, such as I have, I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping stood and walked and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. This Greek here in the description of his feet, ankle bones, and the word leaping up are medical terms.

They are used only here by Luke, who was a physician. And he is actually describing a condition of an ankle that was twisted completely out of joint. Lame, probably, with the ankle twisted completely and flat ways.

Because the word indicates coming into its socket and being straight. The medical term itself. It's being brought back into its socket and straightened.

So here's this man lying there with this crippled condition, unable to walk from birth because of this problem with the undeveloped ankle bone and all. And yet, Peter, with that faith that the Lord planted in his heart, took hold of the man, lifted him to his feet, and immediately the ankle, the bone, came into joint. And the man began to leap and praise God.

And he walked and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. I can imagine the stir and the excitement that this must have created. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

And they knew that it was the man who sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. And as the lame man, which was healed, held Peter and John.

All of the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. So here's a very notable miracle that attracted immediately the attention of all the people. Because this man, no doubt, had been there for years and was a common sight to those who went into worship.

And they saw this deformed condition of his feet. And now the feet are straight. Now the man is walking and leaping and praising the Lord.

And he's hugging Peter and John so that the people relate the miracle to Peter and John. They realize that somehow, someway, Peter and John are responsible for this man's ability to walk. And so a great crowd of people, at least five thousand men, gathered there on Solomon's porch.

Greatly wondering at what had happened. And when Peter saw it, he answered the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? They marveled at it because they had lost the sense of the greatness of the God that they served. If they really believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then that God should do such a thing should not marvel them or cause them to wonder because they would know that he is a God of miracles by reading the Old Testament.

And so the question is, why marvel ye at this? Now other people may marvel at it. The Gentiles may marvel at it. But you're the sons of Israel.

You're the sons of the most high God. Why should you marvel at this second question? And why do you look so earnestly on us as though by our own power or holiness we have made this man to walk? Now, people so often relate the work of God with the instrument through which God works. And this is wrong.

Why look ye on us as though we through our own power or holiness have done this thing? Unfortunately, there are many evangelists, healing evangelists, that try to give off the feeling that it is as a result of their righteousness or their holiness that marvelous works are wrought. I get so tired of these evangelists that come along with these big spectacular miracle campaigns and having the sheep come up and say, Oh, what do you think about Reverend so-and-so or Brother so-and-so, you know? Oh, I hear he's got a meeting over here and people are, you know, being healed and the blind are seeing and all kinds of things are going on. And I remember a while back I was told about one of these evangelists.

And it so happened that he was on TV, so I had had so many people question me about him. I thought I would listen, and I listened as long as I could, about five minutes. And I heard all I needed to know in five minutes.

For this particular evangelist, who is now serving time in a federal penitentiary for several felonies, this particular evangelist was saying, Do you have faith in me? I have power with God and all you have to have is faith in me. You know, and he was going on. That does it.

I don't need to listen any further. The guy's a phony. God never called anybody to have faith in the instrument.

But faith in God. And whenever a man begins to exalt himself, exalt the instrument, I know that there is something wrong, drastically wrong. Several years ago, my wife and I went to a meeting up in Buena Park area.

That used to be where all of the evangelists would set their tents here in Orange County. Another healing evangelist, and some people wanted us to go with them to the meeting, and so we obliged them. And I've never been in such a circus in all my life.

All of the gimmicks in the world to whip the crowd into a frenzy and get them all excited. They were boasting of all kinds of miracles. In fact, it was called a miracle rally.

That particular evangelist ended up dying from alcoholism in a hotel room in San Francisco. But drawing attention to themselves. I'm always leery when a person names buildings or universities or evangelistic associations after their own names.

I pray God that when he takes me that my name will quickly be forgotten. If they dare put my name on any kind of a building as a memorial, I'm going to ask the Lord to send an earthquake and shake it down. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name bring glory.

These men were not looking for a name for themselves. Why look on us as though we through our own power or holiness have done this thing? It's not that I'm a righteous man, and yet that is often the implication that is given. I have this power because I am so holy.

I am so righteous. Well, what's that do for the rest of us who know we're not holy or righteous? We think, oh, there's no way I can expect God to do anything for me because I'm not holy or righteous. But that's not so.

For God will work in answer to your prayer and in response to your call just as quickly as the Pope or anybody else. God is no respecter of persons. Man is a respecter of persons.

God isn't. And when I get to heaven, I can say, well, Lord, you know who I am. You know, I'm Chuck Smith.

After all, I was Pastor Calvary Chapel. There's a backseat over there. Go sit down, son.

Man respects the person. God doesn't. Why look you so earnestly on us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? By something within us, by something we possess.

It's nothing that we have. Peter is saying, I'm nothing. I have nothing.

This is the work of God that you are seeing in response to faith that he has given. Not that I even have myself. So careful not to receive glory or credit for the work that God had done.

For it is foolish to exalt the instrument. When we were living out in Las Heranas pastoring the community church out there, we had a lady that had begun to come to one of the Bible classes that I was teaching in Upland. And so she said, Chuck, I want you to witness to my husband.

He is the finest psychiatrist in the whole Pomona Valley area. He's recognized as one of the greatest neurosurgeons in this area. But he needs help.

He needs the Lord. And I want you to witness to him. So she arranged for Kay and I to come over to their house on a Friday evening.

And to have dinner with them. And then after dinner, she and Kay disappeared into the kitchen. And left Bud and I to talk together.

And we spent several hours talking together about God, about life. He professed to be an atheist. He was a very brilliant man.

And we planted seed. And then she had us come over again on a Friday evening. She said that he had started doing some reading and he was beginning to search.

And so we went over again. And after dinner, she and Kay disappeared into the kitchen. And left Bud and I to talk again.

And I finally said, Bud, you're a psychiatrist. You've probably been examining and evaluating me in the questions and all that you've been asking. And you've got a pretty good understanding of me by now.

You know my attitude towards life. You know the kind of a person I am. You know the joy that I possess.

You know the peace that I have. I said, tell me. What if Jesus Christ is not the Son of God? What if all that I believe is not true? And the joy that I have and the peace I have are based upon a false premise.

Yet knowing the joy and the peace that I have as a person. What do you feel I have lost by believing what I believe? And he looked at me very straight and studied me for a moment. And studied the question.

And he finally said, not a damn thing. I wish I were as happy and peaceful a person as you are. I said, well then, tell me this Bud.

What if what I believe is true? What have you lost by not believing? He said, you trapped me, didn't you? And I said, no, I think the Lord trapped you. So we got down on our knees. And he asked Jesus Christ to take over his life.

Had a beautiful conversion experience. As God changed his life dramatically. The next morning, when I got to the office, his wife was waiting for me.

She's a very demonstrative person. And she grabbed hold of me and began to just say, Chuck, Chuck, I knew you could do it. I knew you could do it.

Oh Chuck, it's so wonderful. This morning, Bud was reading the Bible before he went to bed. Oh Chuck, I knew you could.

Oh Chuck, you know, you're so wonderful. Hold on Edie, wait a minute, wait a minute. I said, your husband's a neurosurgeon, isn't he? Oh yes, he's the finest.

I said, what if after an operation, the patient should come back to his office and say he's opened up his skull and tied off an aneurysm. So the patient comes into the office and he picks up the scaffold. He says, oh, you're such a marvelous scaffold.

You did such a beautiful job in making that incision in my skull. Oh, you're marvelous. You're marvelous.

You did such an excellent job. I said, your husband would think that the patient was ready for the couch because you don't exalt the instrument. You exalt the one who used the instrument.

Therefore, Edie, exalt the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit that convicted Bud. It was the Holy Spirit that drew him.

And it was the work of God's Spirit within his life. It wasn't my work. God just used me as his instrument.

But that's all it was, was an instrument in God's hand. Don't give me any credit. Don't tell me how wonderful I am.

Just know how wonderful God is. But people have the tendency to exalt the instrument because they can see, touch, and feel the instrument. Though we may feel God, it's hard to see Him and it's hard to touch Him except through the eyes of the Spirit.

And thus man has a tendency to exalt the instrument rather than God who has used the instrument. But if you are an instrument that God uses, be careful that you don't take glory for the work of God. Why look on us as though through our power or holiness this man was healed? Now he starts on their level.

The God of Abraham, oh yes, we know Him. Of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers. In his preaching he started off at the level that the people understood and where they were at.

And I think that this is something that we need to learn from. When Paul was asked to give a speech on Mars Hill, there at the Areopagus, when Paul started his speech to these Epicurean philosophers, he didn't start off in the concept of justification by faith. He started his message at the level where the people were at.

You men of Athens, I realize that you men are very spiritual. You're aware of the spirit realm. For as I've been walking through your streets all over, I see these little idols and these little altars to the various gods.

And I happen to notice one of your altars, and inscribed above it was to the unknown God. That's the God I'd like to tell you about. You see, He is the God who created the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them.

He started out where they were at and brought them along. Peter is starting out where they're at. Make sure that you start out where people understand where they're at and bring them into the spiritual dimensions, but start out where they're at.

The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son, Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate when He was determined to let Him go. So they were all aware of what had transpired within the year there in Jerusalem. They were all aware of the crucifixion of Jesus.

And it is interesting that Peter here lays the blame squarely upon them. Pilate was wanting to let Him go. And, of course, in John's Gospel this is certainly indicated Pilate's desire to release Jesus.

But when Pilate was determined to let Him go, you insisted on His death. You denied the Holy One and the Just One and you desired a murderer to be delivered or to be granted unto you. And you killed the Prince of Life.

The word Prince probably is a poor translation. You remember in Hebrews where it talks about Jesus as the author and the finisher of our faith? That is the very same Greek word that in Hebrews is translated author. The word literally means a file leader, but that word doesn't do much for us in English.

A file leader. And we get a picture in our minds of the files in the office and one in front and it's the file leader. But the word actually means one who is first in a new order.

Jesus, the author of the new life. Or, as we read, He is the first begotten of those who rise from the dead. So He is the author, the Prince, the file leader of life.

That new eternal life that has been promised to us who believe in Him. He's the author of that eternal life. Even as He is the author and the finisher of our faith, so He is the author of this life that we possess through Him.

What a contradiction, isn't it? You killed the author of life. It really is a paradoxical type of a sentence. But, God has raised Him from the dead whereof we are witnesses.

Now remember, the first sermon that Peter preached was centered in the resurrection again. As he has an opportunity to preach to them, his message centers in the resurrection. Remember, when Paul was preaching there on Mars Hill, he had to get to the resurrection.

And when he got to the resurrection is when it broke the meeting. Ah, that's weird. Nobody rises from the dead.

And it broke up the meeting with the Epicurean philosophers. But Peter again is preaching the resurrection. This was the heart of the message of the early church that there is hope for eternal life because Jesus rose again.

And if Christ is not risen, then we're still in our sins. And we are in a hopeless condition. Those that have died have perished.

And we are of all men most miserable. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the gospel in the New Testament. Our hope is premised upon the fact that Jesus rose.

So Peter said thanks be unto God who has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It's the heart of the message of the gospel. You can't take it away.

If you do, you have no gospel. And so Peter gets to this favorite theme. God hath raised him from the dead whereof we are witnesses.

And so they are bearing witness to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And His name, the power of the name of Jesus. Jesus said, If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Henceforth you have asked nothing in My name. Ask that you might receive that your joy may be full. Oh, there is tremendous power in the name of Jesus when it falls from the lips of the weakest saint.

No, it isn't. You're probably thinking, Oh, the name of Jesus, yes, but I don't have enough holiness or righteousness at all to utter that name. I don't care how weak you are.

The power isn't in you. It's in the name of Jesus. You can be weak.

That doesn't matter. The power isn't in you. It's in the name.

And so Peter said, And His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong. Now don't look at me. Jesus Christ, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, it is His name.

And through the faith in His name that this wonder was wrought upon this lame man. He's the one that made the legs straight. He's the one that gave him the ability to walk.

Gave him this perfect health, this perfect soundness, this completeness in the presence of you all. And then he went on to say, Yes, it is by the, yes, the faith which is by Him has given Him perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Now the faith which is by Him, notice the preposition.

Peter isn't saying it was my great faith. Peter is saying it is the faith that is by Him. He's the one who gave me the faith.

Christ is the author and the finisher of our faith. We so often times talk about faith as something that we can develop, something that we can work up, something that we can, you know, sit and just meditate and develop faith or something. And we find ourselves in these attempts to, you know, increase our faith through more or less a mesmerization and different ways by which I'm trying to just, you know, increase my faith.

Faith is a gift. By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. That is, the faith isn't of yourselves.

It is a gift of God and not of works lest any man should boast. Even the faith is a gift. And as Paul is listing the manifestations of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and to some there is this gift of faith that God imparts at certain times for certain conditions.

And it's interesting because it is a gift of faith. There are times when I'm facing a situation and I have complete faith that it's going to work out. I have no qualms, no worries.

The Lord has given me faith and I'm just confident it's going to work. Now, there are other times I'm facing similar situations and God hasn't given me the faith and I'm worried and I'm wondering what's going to happen now, you know, and what if this doesn't happen, what if that... And it's all troublesome because God hasn't given me the faith in that particular situation. It's a gift.

It isn't something that I just possess and can exercise anytime I want. It isn't an Al-Kazam kind of a magic word that can bring to pass any kind of a situation that I desire. It is something that God puts in my heart in certain times for certain situations and it's just glorious when it's there and it's disastrous when it isn't there.

The gift of faith. It is the faith that is by Him. He's the one that gave me the faith.

When Peter was walking up, he saw that man and the Lord gave him the faith. He said, Peter, give him what you've got. What did he have? God gave him at that instant this faith for the man's healing.

And so Peter said, hey, I don't have silver and gold, but what I have I'll be glad to give you to him and took him and lifted him up and said, in the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father, stand at one. Oh, the power of the name. Faith in the name.

The faith that God gave to Peter at that moment. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. Now as Peter is addressing them more personally, talking of the crucifixion of Jesus, he said, I know that in ignorance you did it.

How did he know that? Because Jesus, when He was being nailed to the cross, said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. So I know in ignorance you did it. You didn't know what you were doing.

Jesus confessed that. He points out another interesting thing. In a little bit we'll read that 5,000 of them were converted.

5,000 of those who were guilty of crucifying Jesus but didn't know what they were doing are now brought to Jesus Christ to trust in Him as their Lord and Savior. And the prayer of Jesus was then answered when He was being nailed to the cross and said, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.

His prayer was answered on this day when Peter said to these people, I know through ignorance you did it. But those things which God before had shown by the mouth of all of His prophets that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. In other words, that which transpired was not an accident.

That which transpired in the crucifixion of Jesus was something that God had planned actually because it was predicted in the Scriptures, the suffering of the Messiah spoken of by the prophets. And so then Peter gets to the application. Repent, therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

And so he's calling to the people for repentance, for conversion, that they might receive the forgiveness of their sins and that glorious work of God's Spirit in the times of refreshing. And He, that is God, shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you. Jesus is coming again.

The Father is going to send Him again. Jesus said, and if I go away, I will come again. Last week in our lesson, Acts chapter 1, as Jesus ascended into heaven and they were standing there looking up into heaven into the cloud that had received Him out of their sight, the two men in white apparel standing by said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing into heaven? For this same Jesus shall come again in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

He's coming again. God is going to send Jesus Christ who was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all of the holy prophets since the world began. Now, upon this one little scripture, a whole doctrine has been developed of the final restitution of all things.

And that final restitution of all things will take place when Satan finally kneels down and confesses his guilt and is brought in again as a child of God. And God has finally restored everybody and everything, all sinners and everybody will be saved. The final restitution of all things.

And this particular heresy has been based upon this one little scripture. That he is not referring to the restoration of the wicked at some future date is obvious by the fact that he said it is something that all of the prophets have spoken about. And as we go back to the prophets of the Old Testament and their speaking of the restitution of all things, what are they referring to? They are referring to the restoration of the nation Israel into divine favor again.

Israel, because of their rejection of God, is to be cut off. They are to be dispersed. They are to be scattered into all the world.

They are to become a curse and a byword. They are to be burned in ovens as the prophets foretold. But each of them who foretold the awful, tragic misery that the Jews would endure during the great dispersion, they all saw through the darkness to the light on the other side when God would once again take his unfaithful bride, clean her up, dress her up, and receive her again as his wife and restore the unfaithful wife to her position.

And Hosea and all of the prophets speak of this restoration of God's work and grace to the nation of Israel. And that is what is referred to, not that God is going to finally restore all the wicked, including Satan. That's what all of the prophets speak about.

You won't find this other doctrine of the restitution of all things, that is, all men are to be saved ultimately, you won't find that in any of the prophets of the Old Testament. But it's always dealing with the nation of Israel. And you remember, he is addressing ye men of Israel.

Why marvel you at this? So this restitution is God's restitution of his work with Israel, which shall come. Paul the Apostle, in the 11th chapter of Romans, said that blindness has happened to Israel in part until the fullness of the Gentiles become in. But at that point, all Israel will then be saved.

For there shall come the deliverer out of Zion to turn the hearts of the children unto the fathers. And he makes reference to this restitution of the work of God among the Jewish people that shall take place. Now, Jesus said, you're not going to see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The earth has one more seven-year period to endure. For there were 77 determined upon the nation Israel to finish the transgressions, to make an end to sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to finish up the prophecies for the Messiah to come and to anoint the most holy place. And there would be 69 seven-year periods from the time that the prophecy would go forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah, the Prince.

But that leaves one seven-year period unfulfilled, which is yet future. During this seven-year period, God is going to deal with the nation Israel and that blindness that has been over their eyes for almost 2,000 years will be removed. Now, blindness has happened to Israel in part.

That is, for the most of them. There are a part of them who have not been blind. There are a part of Israel today that God has opened their eyes to see the truth.

And oh, what evangelists they usually make when God opens their eyes and they can see that Jesus indeed was the promised Messiah. But it's amazing how blind most of the people are. And they really don't know their own Scriptures that well.

But they know the traditions and they know the dietary laws and all, the Sabbaths. But they're really blind to the true work of God. And having forsaken the way of God, they've gone about to establish a righteousness through works, through good works.

But by the works of the law, the Bible tells us no flesh will be justified in His sight. The Bible also tells us, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin. So, God is going to restore Israel.

He's going to work again. He's going to put His Spirit upon Israel. According to Ezekiel, at the time that God destroys the invading Russian army who moves into the Middle East in the last days to take over the Middle East, in those days God is going to destroy Russia.

And when He does, He'll put His Spirit upon the nation of Israel. The beginning of the end, the last seven years when God will be working with Israel. And during this period of time, the world around them will be going through a Holocaust.

At least the last three and a half years of this period of time. A time of trouble such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. The time of the Great Tribulation.

Now, during this time, God dealing with the nation of Israel, they will begin to weep over their blindness. As a woman who weeps over the loss of her only son. They will weep that they were blind to the grace and the goodness of God and to the Messiah that God provided.

For they will recognize that Jesus indeed is the Messiah. As they see the Scriptures coming to pass that were predicted and they'll realize that they made a mistake in their national rejection of Jesus and they will accept Him and they will be saying, Oh, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. And at that point, Jesus will return with ten thousands of His saints to establish His kingdom upon the earth.

Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory as we come with Him to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. So, the heavens must keep Him until the times of restitution of all things which God has predicted in the prophets since the beginning of the world all the way back to the Garden of Eden where God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the heel of the serpent.

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your own brethren like unto me. Him shall ye hear in all of the things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.

Yea, and all of the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after him, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. And ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all of the kindreds of the earth be blessed. And unto you first, God having raised up His Son Jesus, send Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from His iniquities.

So God has kept His promise that He has made through the Old Testament prophets. They spoke of these days. They spoke of the Messiah.

And He came. And it shall come to pass if you won't hear Him that you'll be destroyed from among the people. You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with our fathers.

And so unto you first, God has revealed. So Paul, in talking about the gospel, he said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The gospel came to the Jew first.

You shall bear witness of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria to the Jew first and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. And when the Jew rejected the gospel, Paul turned and he said from henceforth, I go to the Gentiles. Since you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, I'm going to the Gentiles.

And the door was opened to us who sat in darkness to come into the glorious light of God's love and truth. Now as they spake unto the people, the priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. You see, the Sadducees, who were the spiritual leaders in those days, the priesthood was mostly made up of Sadducees.

The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, in angels or in spirits. So they were very upset over the preaching of the resurrection. That's the thing that got them upset.

There was a big argument, religious argument, going on among the Jews between the sect of the Sadducees and that of the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees did believe in a resurrection. They did believe in spirits.

And when Paul the apostle later on was brought before the council, he realized that he had Pharisees there and he had Sadducees there. And so he used that to free himself. He said, I'm here today and I'm accused because I believe the Scriptures that there is a resurrection from the dead.

And all the Pharisees said, well, there's nothing wrong with that. The Sadducees, of course, all got upset and they began to argue with each other. They had a big commotion and Paul walked out, you know, while they were fighting each other.

Smart move. So the Sadducees came upon them and they were upset, they were aggrieved because through Jesus they were teaching the resurrection of the dead. And they laid their hands on them and put them in jail until the next day.

For it was now eventide. Now, this thing all started at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, so it was now evening. So they threw them in jail overnight.

How be it? Many of the people which heard the word believed and the number of men was about 5,000. So there was quite an evangelistic service that day. It came to pass on the morrow that the rulers and the elders and the scribes and Annas the high priest and Caiaphas, these men that we were introduced before in the Gospels who stood in judgment against Jesus Christ, and John and Alexander and as many as were of the family of the high priest were gathered together at Jerusalem.

And when they had set them, that was Peter and John and the lame man, in the midst, they asked, by what power or by what name have you done this? Now, that question was no doubt asked by a shrewd attorney who knew the law. For in the law it declares that if someone comes and does a sign or a wonder before the people so that all the people are amazed at the wonder which is done, and if that person should seek to cause you to worship other than Jehovah God, that person shall be put to death. He is a false prophet.

Deuteronomy, I think it is 13th chapter. So, by what power or by what name did you do this? Now, Peter could have said, I take the Fifth Amendment. You know, I can't be required to testify against myself because they have the Fifth Amendment in their law.

That was recognized. You could not force a man to testify against himself. Peter could have taken the Fifth, but he didn't.

He took rather the opportunity to share Jesus Christ with these fellows. And knowing that the question was a league question and knowing the consequence of telling the people of another name other than, well, actually he told them the name of Jehovah God because he said it's through Jehovah Shua. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel.

My, what an august body. They're all gathered here today, all of the leaders, the religious leaders, the Annas and Caiaphas and the whole crew, all gathered here today. If we this day are examined because of the good deed done to the lame man by what means he is made whole.

In other words, he is pointing out, isn't this sort of ridiculous? This whole furor and fuss has been created because there was a lame man who had been lame for about 40 years and now he is standing here, his feet are straight, and he's standing up here with us. Is that what you're charging us for? Is that your charges that you're bringing against us? Because we made this man to be whole. What a peculiar thing to get so upset about.

Be it known unto you, now you want to know, and all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and I imagine he really drug it out to press it in, Yeshua Christos, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. You want to know how it happened? This is it. How does that grab you, you know? It's straight on.

This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which has become the head of the corner. Now, Psalm 118, a glorious messianic psalm, which they all knew to be a psalm of the Messiah, declares the stone which was set at naught of the builders, the same has become the chief cornerstone. This is the work of the Lord.

It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Save now, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And they knew this was a messianic psalm, and when Peter starts to quote it, they know exactly what he's quoting, and they know that it is a psalm concerning their Messiah, and he said, you guys are it. He is the stone which was set at naught by you builders, but he has become the head of the corner.

And neither is there salvation in any other. Oh, that's heresy in the Jewish language. To them, there was salvation through the sacrifices that they were offering.

And today with them, there is salvation through the good works that they do. But Peter boldly proclaimed to them, neither is there salvation in any other. Take note of that.

In a day when there is tremendous pressure for us to become more liberal in our thinking, when we are accused of being narrow and bigoted, the Bible declares, neither is there salvation in any other. You cannot be saved by chanting the um while meditating on your navel. It just won't do it.

Oh, now doesn't that sound narrow and bigoted? Because think how sincere that person is who is out there going, oh. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. The divine imperative, the must.

There's no other way by which we must be saved. Jesus is the way. He said, straight is the gate, narrow is the way that leads to eternal life.

Strive to enter in at the straight gate. When people say, oh, you're too narrow, Smith. I think, all right, I'm on the right path.

Oh, you need to be on the broad path. You need to, you know, be more liberal, accept other religions and other, you know, faiths and all. Neither is there salvation in any other.

Now when they saw the boldness, and hey, Peter was bold, wasn't he? This is the same crowd that he was standing outside when Jesus was facing them, and he was standing outside warming himself when the maiden said, aren't you one of his disciples? He said, no, not me. You've made a mistake, lady. Oh, I'm sure you're one of his.

I think I've seen you with him. No, no, no. Not me.

And those soldiers said, oh, yes, you are one of his. You're a Galilean. You've got the accent.

He began to swear and curse and say, I don't know the man. What a different man. How can you account for the difference? It's accounted for.

It's right there in the Scripture. But Peter filled with the Holy Spirit. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses unto me.

And here is Peter being a witness unto the power of Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin and the whole crew, all of the rulers, the elders of Israel. And Peter is boldly declaring to them that they made a terrible mistake. They crucified the Lord of Glory.

They are the builders, prophesied, who said it not. The chief cornerstone. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men.

Now this is the first many times the outsiders have a misconception of the Christian. And here we find, I think, two or three misconceptions. They perceived.

Their perception was wrong. But they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men. They did not have their degrees from the Hebrew University.

But they were far from unlearned and ignorant men. They had had three years of private tutoring by the greatest master who ever lived. Far from being ignorant and unlearned, they were probably the most scholarly of the whole group.

They knew the Scriptures so well. They had such a vast comprehension of the Word of God. So that was a first misconception.

But they marveled. And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. This is the second misconception.

Because they put their relationship with Jesus in the past tense. What they didn't know is that Jesus was standing right beside them prompting them what to say. Jesus said, where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them.

Jesus had said, they're going to bring you before the councils. Don't take any forethought what you're going to say. But in that hour, the Spirit will give you the words to say.

Jesus said, go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, and lo, I am with you always. And to think that they had been with Jesus was wrong. They were walking with Jesus into the temple when they were walking in to pray.

The presence of the Lord was with them throughout their life even as the presence of the Lord is with us and He is there for us to call upon Him at any time when we're in trouble or when we need help. In the name of Jesus, the power of that name is just as effective today as it was in that day. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And so the second misconception that they had been with Jesus, they were with Jesus at that moment. But this I like. Beholding the lame man which was healed standing with Him, they could say nothing against Him.

What can you say? Here's this guy, his legs are straight, he's standing up there and he's smiling. And he's standing. What can you say? You can't say anything against it.

Here is evidence that you can't deny. You can't deny the power of the name of Jesus when this guy is standing there just smiling so big and you know the condition that he was in all of his life. What the church needs today is more lame men standing whole in its midst.

That's the kind of evidence that cannot be denied. And thank God for that evidence here. So many of you were so lame as the result of your sins.

Messed up with drugs, with alcoholism, with sex, and you were living such a lame life that having come to Jesus Christ, He washed away all of the crud and the filth of the past, and now you stand with the children of God whole. And people who used to know you as you were see you as they are now, and they can't say anything because of the dramatic change that is quite obvious. You're standing there whole.

What can you say? It works. What can you say against it? There's nothing you can say when you see the lame standing whole. There's nothing that can be said against it.

That is always the most powerful witness that the church can have. Lame men standing whole in the midst of it. And all of us who were so lame at one time now made whole through the power of Jesus Christ.

How glorious. But when they had commanded them to go outside of the council, they conferred among themselves. And they said, what shall we do to these men? For that a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to everyone who dwells in Jerusalem.

We can't deny it. We can't say, no, the man isn't walking. Everybody in town knows what's happened now.

We can't deny the miracle. What are we going to do? What can we do to these fellows to keep it from spreading any further? And so they said, in order that it not spread any further among the people, let us strictly threaten them that they speak from now on to no man in this name. They're not to make mention of

this name again.

Now this is the third mistake that they made. Thinking that by threat they could shut them up. Could stop their witnessing by threats or by beatings.

That was the third mistake they made. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, you're going to have to judge for yourselves. You know, whether or not you're going to listen to God or listen to man, that's something you've got to judge for yourself.

But as for us, we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So they threatened them, now don't speak any more in this name. And he said, hey, whether it's right for us in the sight of God to hearken to you or to God, you know, whether a man should listen to God or man, that's something every man is to judge for himself.

But we know for us, we've got to listen to God. We've got to obey God. We must obey God rather than men.

We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. There is a time when as a child of God, if the laws of the land should be at variance with the law of God, as a child of God, I must hearken to God rather than to man. And God's law over my life and God's word over my life is supreme.

I am deeply concerned with the apparent government's infringement upon our liberties. I am deeply concerned when the government padlocks a church in Nebraska because the pastor feels a religious conviction not to register his school with the state. That bothers me.

You say, well, the pastor was wrong. Maybe. But yet when the state begins to exercise authority and power over a man's genuine religious convictions, that is a dangerous trend.

And I am deeply concerned with that movement on foot among the humanist within the government to silence the voice of the church. The humanist, who so many of them are editors in the magazines and newspapers who are speaking against the freedom that the church has enjoyed from the state's intrusion into its activities. A recent editorial in the San Antonio Register was aimed against the church's receiving tax-exempt status for the properties where the people worship.

That editorial bothered me because it made an assertion that by being tax-exempt, we were really being supported by the government. That's idiocy. The church is doing a tremendous welfare work among its people.

If the church wasn't doing that work, it would then become the burden of the government. Many of you people were a burden on the government until your lives were transformed by Jesus Christ. The government is making much more off the church than it would make in taxes of the church's properties.

Now, I do agree that if a church is engaged in businesses or if the church has properties that are used for something other than the worship of God, that if they are used for commercial purposes and all, I do agree that these properties should be taxed. I think that's only right. But to tax the church properties that are used completely for that worship of God, I feel to be wrong and an infringement.

And there is that movement on foot today to take away all tax exemption from the church as far as their properties are concerned. I feel that's dangerous. And should the day come, if the government continues its trend towards this endeavor to control the activities of church by government rules and regulations, then I'll be singing, Daddy, get your baby out of jail.

Daddy, won't you please go on my bail? And I'll be calling Vernon and saying, Hey, I need your help. Whether it is right in your eyes to obey God or man, you're going to have to judge for yourself. But we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

There was a time when the prophet Jeremiah got upset with God because he was thrown in jail for giving God's message. God said, go down and give him this message. He went down and gave him the message and they threw him in jail.

And he said, that's some way for you to treat your servant. I go down and do what you tell me to do. And now you let them throw me in jail.

I'm through. I resign. Here's my resignation.

I'm not going to speak any more in your name. I've had it. And then he said, But the word of God was in my bones like a burning fire and I could not but speak.

That's what Peter is saying. Hey, it's something that's burning in me. I can't stop speaking the things which I have seen and the things which I have heard.

And so when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them because of the people. For all of the people were glorifying God for that which was done. Oh, isn't that interesting? All the people were glorifying who? Not Peter, not John.

They were all glorifying God. Let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they will glorify your father, which is in heaven. You know, you can do your work so that men are glorifying you.

Draw attention to yourself. But all the people were glorifying God for what was done. For the man was over 40 years old on whom the miracle of healing was showed.

And so being let go, they went to their own company. Now they've been in this hostile environment and so they retreat to that friendly environment of their own company, the church. And they reported to them what the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

And when they heard that, that is the church, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and they said, and notice now their prayer. And this, to me, is a excellent model for prayer. I think that a excellent study for a person to make is to study the prayers in the Bible.

I think you'll find them extremely fascinating. Study the form. Study the patterns.

In this prayer, they begin, Lord, thou art God, which has made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything that is in them. First of all, the recognition of the one that they were praying to. Hey, Lord, you're over all.

You made everything. So many times I think that when we go to God, we're not aware of the greatness and the vastness of God. We're too aware of our problem.

And we rush right in and our problem is so large and so big. Oh, God, I don't know what we're going to do. We're about to go down, God.

We're about to go under, Lord. Because my eyes are on my problem. And I've lost the perspective.

I don't see the vastness of God. The first thing in prayer is to take some time and just meditation in the vastness of the God that you are talking to. Imagine, I am sitting down to talk with the creator of the universe.

Thou has created the heavens, the earth, everything that is in them. And if I will start off with that quiet consciousness of the greatness and the vastness of God, I'll find that my prayers don't take on that desperate ring so much. I only get desperate when I lose sight of God.

When my problems seem so large that they block my vision of God. Because I've lost perspective. And so, it's a good way to begin your prayer very slowly, remembering who it is you're talking to.

Oh Lord, Thou art God. You've created the heaven and the earth and everything that is in them. The second thing, still in recognition of God.

Who by the mouth of Your servant David has said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Messiah. For of a truth against Your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together. Lord, You know everything that is happening.

These things didn't take You by surprise. You spoke about these things before they took place. Lord, You're perfectly aware of all of the circumstances that surround my life.

That to me is comforting to know. God, who is my heavenly Father, created the universe and He is completely aware of all of those circumstances that I face and that surround my life. He has spoken in advance of these things.

Lord, this has not caught You by surprise. You spoke of these things by Your mouth of David and just as You said, it has happened. For they have gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done.

God, You're in control. You are the one that determined these things that were to be done. You were in control.

And that is again a glorious, comforting thought. God is in control of my life. God is in control of the circumstances that surround my life.

We panic because we think that it's out of control. Not so. God is in control of those circumstances surrounding your life tonight.

And now, Lord... Notice, they didn't jump right into their request. They spent a little time in their prayer just assuring their hearts as they spoke of God, His greatness, His power, His wisdom, His sovereignty. And now, Lord, we get to the request.

Behold their threatenings. Look at the way they just threatened us. And grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness we may speak Your Word.

Now, they've just been told not to speak anymore. We're going to really get you if you speak again in His name. And what are they praying for? Power to do exactly what they were warned not to do.

Don't let us shut up just because of their threats, Lord. Don't let us be cowed by their threats. Don't let us keep quiet just because we've been threatened on this.

But give us all boldness that we might speak Your Word by stretching forth Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child, Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the Word of God with boldness. Quick answer to prayer.

The place was shaken, and they spoke the Word with boldness. Years ago when I was in Bible college, I'd been studying this particular verse, and I was impressed by it. The power of prayer.

That the place was shaken where they were praying. My, that's marvelous. I underlined it, and I spent the evening meditating on that, just thinking of the tremendous power of these fellows' prayer.

So it happened at that time I was a student body at the college, a student body president at the college, and it was my duty to have charge of the morning prayer meeting, and to close the morning prayer meeting and send the students to class. And there was a pulpit somewhat like this. And so as I called the students for the final prayer before we went to class and was leading them in prayer, suddenly I felt the pulpit beginning to rock like this.

And my first impression was is someone getting blessed on the other side, you know? And I sort of peeked over the top to see if there was someone pushing the pulpit from the other side, and there was no one there. And then peripherally I saw that everybody was looking around wide-eyed, and the whole place was shaking. Earthquake.

And I thought, my, what an interesting coincidence. Right after I'd studied this the night before, probably the Spirit brought it to my attention just to prepare me so I didn't panic in an earthquake. But it was quite an interesting experience where as I prayed, the place was shaking.

Now, I don't think it was the power of my prayer at all. But it's just one of those interesting coincidences. And if you live in California very long, you're apt to have one of those earth-shaking experiences.

Now, the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, of one soul, one mind. Neither did any of them say that the things that they owned were their own, but they shared everything. And with great power, the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

With great power. That is, through the signs and the wonders and the healings and all. They gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

And great grace was upon them all. God's glorious grace. Yet, in view of this verse, the beginning of our next chapter is quite interesting.

For though great grace was upon them all, yet there was that powerful, righteous judgment of God in their midst also. As does testify the case of Ananias and Sapphira, which we'll get into the first thing next week.

But great grace was upon them all.

Neither was there any among them who lacked. For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought in the prices of the things that were sold, and they laid them down at the apostles' feet. And distribution was made to every man according to as he had need.

And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted as the son of consolation. Beautiful name, Barnabas. No doubt because of his characteristics and that it's borne out as we continue in the book of Acts and we read more about Barnabas.

He was the son of consolation. He was just a great mediator. A Levite, that is, he was of the tribe of the priest, and of the country of Cyprus.

Having land, he sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Now, in a sense, this was an attempt in the early church for a form of communism. That is, a sharing together of their assets.

Seeking to sort of divide among themselves the assets of the entire body. It should be noted that it was a failure. That in time, the early church in Jerusalem became broke and destitute.

And Paul the Apostle went among the Gentile churches taking up an offering for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. And then Paul later writes about the work ethic. If a man doesn't work, he shouldn't eat.

There are some among you who are acting disorderly. They're not working. They're trying to live off the body.

Parasites. Don't support them. If they don't work, then don't feed them.

Let every man work, laboring with his own hands in order that he might provide those things which are honest. So, this was a move that was motivated by love. It was very commendable.

And I don't fault them for what they were doing. I think it was a marvelous, commendable, beautiful thing that was happening. As they sought for equality among the brethren.

But unfortunately, it didn't work. And it ended up disastrously. Though the motive behind it was right and all.

Yet, God has declared that man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. And we can't just, you know, say, well, we're not going to work anymore. We're just going to serve the Lord and get holy and righteous.

And God is going to take care of us. And God will feed us. God will provide for us.

We don't have to work. We can just trust in God after all. Our Father feeds the birds and He'll feed us.

No, the Bible doesn't teach that kind of haphazard living. Jesus said, occupy till I come. Let every man work, laboring with his own hands.

So, it was beautiful. The motivation was correct. A glorious thing that they endeavored to do.

It did have its problems, as we will find out next week, with Ananias and Sapphira. But yet, in spite of that, I look at the motive of the people's hearts and I say, hey, that's neat. I love it.

Certainly, their hearts were right in this thing. So, we stand. Now, may the Lord be with you and watch over and keep you in His love.

And may you have that Word of God so burning in your heart that you with the Apostles cannot but speak the things which you have seen and heard. That's the true kind of a witness. Hey, that's just my life.

It's not something I do. It's something I am. Witnessing for Jesus is the most natural thing in the world.

It isn't programmed. It isn't a little packed formula that I have learned. It's just something I am.

I cannot but speak the things which I have seen and heard. May you just bear witness of His love and of His grace. So, the Lord be with you.

Give you a beautiful week. Look forward to that opportunity that God grants to us to gather together again in the name of Jesus and just study His Word and learn of Him and grow together in our love for Him and with each other. In Jesus' name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/6/SID6550.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/through-the-bible-acts-3-4/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net