

The God of Abraham

Acts 3:13-16

A man has just been healed. A paralytic lame from birth is now shouting and dancing in response to that display of the divine power of Jesus.

v.8 “So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God...10...they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

And Peter, ever faithful now in proclaiming the gospel, declares the supernatural, divine power of God alone. He had performed the miracle with these words, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk,” and now he urges the crowd to recognize Jesus presence and power in that miracle with the words of,

v.12. “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

As we begin our text this morning with verse 13, Peter is explicit and definitive as he declares and defines the identity of the one true and living God, the only one!

v.13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus.”

That’s where we begin this morning, with reference to...

I. THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB.

Now, that’s not just a formula. It’s a familiar expression from the Old Testament, referring, of course, to the first three generations of the patriarchs, the first three generations of the covenant people of God, the nation chosen by God to be his own

special treasure out of all the nations of the world. That covenant promise goes all the way back to,

Gen. 17:1 “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

So that is the covenant between God and his people, a relationship defined by those simple but profound words, “I will be your God and you shall be my people.” And that is obviously Peter’s emphasis here, expressing to the New Testament church that this same God, the God who has revealed himself to the nation of Israel throughout history, this God is the one and only true God, the same God. And, I might add, it is the same covenant by which God and his people are joined. And so the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is,

A. The God of the covenant.

The God who healed this lame man is the God who has promised to be the God of his people, he has promised that they would be his people. And that covenant is, and always has been, a covenant of grace. A covenant founded upon God’s own grace,

his willingness to choose and to love his people, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, a book that would have been written before the foundation of the world, whose existence is the foundation upon which we as believers give such great blessing and praise to God for what Paul refers to as "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. The words of Ephesians 1 continue,

Eph. 1:4 "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."

Isn't that a wonderful expression, a wonderful idea, that God would have a registry, a book of life, a book that identified and listed all of his covenant people. And that is the emphasis of this identity to which Peter refers, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers." The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament. And the New Covenant is not fundamentally different than the Old Covenant. It's new in its administration, how it is practiced. We no longer have animal sacrifices because Jesus died once and for all. There is no more shedding of blood for the forgiveness of, for Jesus shed his blood, once for all. And there is no more temple built upon the earth with human hands in which God promises to dwell, for he dwells in every place now, every place where just two or three are gathered in Jesus' name. And the essence of God's covenant relationship with his people hasn't changed. Because we, the church, the covenant people who belong to this New Testament church, we...

1 Peter 2:9 B "...are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous

light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God."

So Peter emphasizes all of that with this great declaration of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And then immediately refers to Jesus, Jesus the son.

B. The promised son.

v.13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus."

You see, Jesus was promised in the Old Testament. The God of Abraham, the God of Old Testament Israel, is the God who promised Jesus. And the word for servant, His servant Jesus, is really the word for child. Even with reference to a small child. And that child was clearly proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets.

Is. 9:6 "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

That child is Jesus! And he would be born by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

Is. 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

That son, that child, would be great suffering servant of, Is. 53:3 "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of

sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

That is who is responsible for this great miracle of healing in Acts 3. It didn’t have anything to do with any power that Peter might have. But rather,

v.13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus.”

But Peter had an additional message for the people who were celebrating this great miracle, and that was to clearly expose their sin.

II. THE REBELLION OF SIN.

As verse 13 continues,

v.3 “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.”

So God has revealed himself, his power, through his son, Jesus. But what was so obvious was their rebellion against God.

A. The rebellion of putting Jesus to death.

This is Peter’s consistent theme, for it was the focus of his sermon on the day of Pentecost as well,

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,

a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.”

You killed him. You, with lawless hands, put him to death. Deliberately. Intentionally. You delivered him up, you turned him over to the Roman governor, Pilate, to be crucified as a common criminal. And to emphasize that rebellion, remember that Pilate himself had sought a way to let Jesus go free without inciting the crowd. Pilate concluded, “I find no fault in Him at all.” So he said to that Jewish crowd,

John 18:39 “But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” 40 Then they all cried again, saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.”

Luke adds further detail,

Luke 23:18 “And they all cried out at once, saying, “Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas”— 19 who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. 20 Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. 21 But they shouted, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” 22 Then he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go.” 23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. 25 And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

Such total, utter, and complete rebellion! And Peter make it clear that it was,

B. The rebellion of rejecting the author of life.

v.14 “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life.”

That’s how Jesus was identified, as the prince of life. The author of life. The source of life. The wages of sin is death, the curse of God pronounced upon fallen men was the curse of death, and Jesus brings life to those who are subject to that condemnation. Jesus is the author of life, and yet, wicked men put him to death.

Jesus is life, the way, the truth and the life, he himself declares in John 14:6. And then, when visiting with Mary and Martha, whose brother Lazarus had died, he says so plainly,

John 11:25 “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

That was the implied question for Peter as well, and the question I posed even as I preach this morning. Do you believe this? Do you believe these words...

John 3:15 “...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Further we read,

1 John 5:11 “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

Peter emphasizes the sinful rebellion of those who rejected the author of life, that he might then proclaim to them,

III. THE PROMISE OF THE GOSPEL.

Which is the promise of life! It is,

A. The promise of the resurrection.

So Peter declares Jesus’ resurrection!

v.14 “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.”

You killed him, but God raised him for the dead! That’s what Peter says. You have sinned, and rebelled against God. But God offers life through Jesus, through his resurrection. And this promise of the resurrection is the very heart of the promise of life proclaimed in the gospel, the promise of forgiveness, the promise of redemption or release from the condemnation of the law imposed upon our sin.

You killed the prince of life, but God made him alive. So this becomes the expression of the gospel,

1 Cor. 15:1 “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

That chapter continues, of course,

1 Cor. 15:14 “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”

1 Cor. 15:20 “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

Made alive, freed from the condemnation off death, redeemed from the curse of death. That’s the promise of the gospel, the promise of the resurrection, the promise of life. So this is the encouraging hope of the gospel for which we give praise,

1 Peter 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

But one thing is still missing, one question is still unanswered. How? How do I receive this promise? How do you receive this blessing, this promise of life? The answer is actually quite simple, very straightforward. The promise of the gospel is given to those who have,

B. Faith in Jesus’ name.

Faith to believe, to believe in Jesus.

v.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.”

Peter refers back to the miracle of healing, and it is not that faith was the instrument by which that man was healed, nor the power which accomplished the miracle. God did it. God’s power accomplished it. And faith is the willingness to believe, to trust in that power. Faith is the willingness to believe that God’s word is true, always true. Faith is the willingness to accept the gift freely offered to you in the gospel.

So when the question is asked, as it was by the Philippian jailer in,

Acts 16:30 “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” [We read the apostolic answer] 31 So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 4:10 “...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Paul would later repeat this same emphasis upon the resurrection and the necessity of faith.

Acts 13:36 “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 but He whom God raised up saw no

corruption. 38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Who can be justified, that is to say, released from the penalty of the law? Who can be acquitted in the courtroom of Almighty God? Can anyone be acquitted on the basis of their own good works or personal effort? The answer is no. Whose sins will be forgiven? Who will receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of life? The one who believes. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

Eph. 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

That gospel has always been the gospel, the good news proclaimed by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God who said to Abraham, “I will be your God and your will be my people” is the same God who says to us, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” And so, rightly understood, we are the children of Abraham and he is our father, we who have faith in Jesus’ name.

Gal. 3:5 “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— 6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

Rom. 10:9 “...confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”