

## Peter's Second Sermon

July 1, 2018

Last week we were talking about how a man, who had been crippled from birth, had received physical healing and spiritual acceptance in Jesus' name. He received his healing while he was sitting at the gate called Beautiful.

After he was healed, he went into the temple with Peter and John, walking and jumping for the first time in his life – and he was praising God. When people realized that he was the man who used to sit begging at the temple gate they were amazed.

Starting where we left off last week, **Acts 3:11 says, "While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade."**

This verse is setting the stage for Peter's second sermon in the New Testament church. Last week we mentioned that a lot of people were in the habit of attending the sacrifices and prayer services at the temple; and that Peter and John were more than likely taking advantage of that, and were using the opportunity to spread the gospel message.

The fact that they were always trying to stay sensitive to where God was providing opportunities to reach people can serve as a reminder to us today. Instead of flying through life at ninety miles per hour, trying to get things done or pursuing only our own interests, sometimes God wants us to slow down long enough to see where He is working around us and to hear His voice directing us.

**Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."**

Sometimes we need to slow down and quiet ourselves before God so that we can sense His presence and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We also need to regularly and intentionally slow down and quiet ourselves before God so that, like Peter and John, we can recognize the opportunities God is giving us to reach the people around us and accomplish His purposes.

As I was thinking about this passage, and about the fact that we are going to be celebrating Independence Day this coming Wednesday, I was reminded that we also sometimes need to slow down and quiet ourselves before God to see if we are heading down the right path or if we need to make corrections, both individually and as a nation – a nation that was founded on biblical truths.

After setting the stage for what he wanted to discuss in his sermon, verses twelve through sixteen say, **“When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.”**

After the way people responded when they realized that the crippled man had been healed, Peter wanted to make sure that everyone knew whose power had been at work and accomplished the miracle. Not just in this passage, but throughout all of Scripture, people like the prophets and the apostles are quick to point out that any power being displayed through them is God’s not theirs.

When you think about it, that’s the exact opposite of what our world is telling us to do. Instead of giving God the credit for everything He has given us and everything He accomplishes through us, we sometimes like to take the credit. We sometimes like to take a step back from things and say, “Wow! Look at what I’ve accomplished.”

Continuing on, verse seventeen through twenty-six in our main passage read, **“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ,**

who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 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. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.'

**‘Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.’”**

Peter then went on to discuss how many of the Jews had acted in ignorance when they called for Jesus to be crucified. They acted in ignorance because, if they had realized that He was the Son of God, they would have never crucified Him.

What Paul said to the Corinthian church in **1 Corinthians 2:6-10** still applies today. That passage reads, **“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.”**

A lot of people today are continuing to go through life not acknowledging or realizing that Jesus is the Son of God. And that's causing both individuals, and our nation as a whole, to fall away from God. But we can't blame the direction our country is heading on the lost who don't know any better. The bulk of the responsibility for the direction we are heading lies squarely with us.

In a column I recently read, author and Pastor Chris Sonsken pointed out some unfortunate facts like how currently “only 39 percent of active

believers in America consider the Bible to be the literal Word of God. And that less than 20 percent of professing believers follow the biblical principle of giving, and only 5 percent have shared their faith with a nonbeliever.” (Chris Sonsken, “I’m a pastor and I want you to quit going to church. Now!,” Fox News (6/23/2018))

**2 Chronicles 7:13-14 reads, “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”**

Whether or not our nation and its people will turn back to God and continue to experience His healing and His peace depends on whether or not Christians answer the call from God given in second Chronicles. We need to get our focus and our priorities in order and live for Him.

In January 2013, Sabine Moreau, a 67-year-old Belgian woman, was driving to pick up a friend in Brussels, about 90 miles from her home. But based on the faulty directions she got from her GPS, she drove all the way to Croatia—nearly 1,000 miles away. The journey took the woman across five international borders. She stopped several times to get gas and take naps, but she kept pressing onward until she hit Zagreb, the capital of Croatia.

After not seeing her for a few days, her son got worried and called the police, who located Sabine by checking her bank accounts. She told a Belgian reporter, "I was distracted, so I kept going. I saw all kinds of signs, first in French, then in German, and finally in Croatian, but I continued driving because I was distracted. When I passed Zagreb, I told myself I should turn around." (Ryan Grenoble, "Sabine Moreau, Belgian Woman, Drives 900 Miles Off 90-Mile Route Because of GPS Error," The Huffington Post (1-15-13))

God had chosen and richly blessed the Israelites, but most of them still ended up getting distracted by the things of the world and their own pursuits- and they chose to ignore the signs and warnings He was giving them to turn around. And it led them down a path that led away from

Yahweh. That's why, in his second sermon in the New Testament church, Peter emphasized the need for the people to repent and turn back to God. In fact, the word "repent" means to turn around.

The same thing holds true for us today. The solutions to the problems we are facing today as a nation aren't going to be solved politically. They will only be solved through a true heart change that involves turning back to God in true repentance – and it begins with us – it begins with you and me.

There is still hope for our nation and for anyone who is willing to repent and turn to God because Peter said, **"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,"**