

You Killed the Author of Life Whom God Raised

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[0 : 0 0] of backup announcements. The Missionary Outreach Fellowship is Friday week in the new sheet. And the new sheet also says that the men's group is this Tuesday, but it's the following week. Is that right?

Two weeks. So just check next week's new sheet for the men's group. Well, friends, let's bow our heads and prepare ourselves for God's word and reflecting on it. Lord God, we pray that you would open our hearts to meditate and ponder the goodness of the Lord Jesus as we see him so clearly at work in the book of Acts.

And we might hunger for him to be doing the same thing in our day and age and world today. I ask in his name for his glory. Amen. One of my great heroes, I don't know if I've shared this.

I probably have because one of my children is named after one of these heroes. But one of my great heroes is a man called Charles Spurgeon. He was an English Baptist preacher of the 19th century, a great Reformed Baptist.

And from a very early age, from the age of about 20 or 21, he took a chapel in London. And within a very short amount of time, he had to move to bigger and bigger buildings.

[1 : 1 1] And he was preaching to 5,000 people in, I think, the Surrey Music Hall. That's the biggest venue they could find in London in the 19th century. His church would be known as the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

And morning and evening, his congregation would exceed 10,000 people. And this was preaching in an age where you didn't have these and you didn't have amplification.

He apparently was just gifted with this great voice and kind of magical kind of way of expressing gospel truth that just carried in. So you'd be in a crowd of 5,000 people and you would hear a pin drop because people were just caught up on every word of this man of God and endued by God's spirit.

His sermons were published around the world. For a while, they used to transmit, kind of pre-internet, they used to transmit his sermon across the Atlantic and printed in the New York newspapers the Monday morning after or the Tuesday morning after it was preached on Sunday.

His sermon sold so well that they say his readership was over a million people just in his time. And they guessed that tens of thousands of people came to faith through the preaching of Charles Spurgeon.

[2 : 2 5] He was, I think, a one-man revival. He was a one-man revival. And he was also a preacher of revival. He was a very strong believer in a theology of Christian revival, that Christians should pray for revival and long for it.

It is said of Charles Spurgeon that God fits the man for the place and the place for the man. There's an hour for the voice and a voice for the hour. And of Spurgeon it said, By upbringing, by the possession of superb natural gifts, by the enduement of the Holy Ghost, Spurgeon was fitted to work in a reaping time in English church history.

My life, he could say, has been one long harvest home. I would have loved to be under Spurgeon. I would have loved to be part of his church.

I would have loved to see the thousands come to faith through his ministry. I would love to be part of a Christian revival. It would be a great thing. Toward the end of Spurgeon's life, though, though he enjoyed fruit in his ministry to the very end, something darker was going on in England that he sensed among the Christian churches of his time.

There was a sense in which Christians were getting bored of the biblical gospel and were hardening their heart against the evangelism and the preaching of the biblical gospel.

[3 : 57] And so Spurgeon said toward the end of his life, compared with what it used to be, it is hard to win attention to the word of God. It is hard.

I used to think that we only had to preach the gospel and the people would throng to hear it. That's what he used to think. And that's obvious he would think that because he preached and thousands came.

I fear, he says, I must correct my belief under this head. We all feel that a hardening process is going on among the masses.

And biographers of Spurgeon would point this out, that after him, his church kind of dissolved and the English church did go through a kind of a dark period where the revival that was happening with Spurgeon and those he trained dissolved and dissipated and came to an end.

And I love to read church history like that and think about our own age and think, well, what is the risen Lord Jesus doing in Australia today? And is the church longing for the same kind of revival that has happened throughout church history that Jesus has brought about?

[5 : 06] In Australia today, is there a harvest going on or a hardening? Harvest or a hardening? Is there a reaping for the word of God today in Australia?

Or is there a rebelling against the word of God among the church and then among the society? Where is the vision for a great harvest for the Lord Jesus in Australia and in fact our whole world today?

Where is the vision for that? Where is the gospel received with divine authority and spirit-filled power today? Where is the hunger for Christian revival?

All Christian revivals have their roots in the book of Acts. That's where we get our theology for Christian revival and I hope our hunger for Christian revival today.

And so what can Acts teach us about revival? Well, let's look at what happens in Acts chapter 3 and see what we can glean and learn and see what God can do in us to create and generate a hunger for a continuation of this kind of gospel preaching and gospel response.

[6 : 25] It begins with what was sung about an amazing healing of a crippled beggar. It's not an ordinary healing, by the way. It's not the kind of healing that we are praying for, say, for people in a private hospital room that they might be healed and recover so they can go back to kind of a normal life.

This healing is going to be a public trigger point in evangelism in Jerusalem and Judea and beyond.

This healing is going to set off a chain of events in the book of Acts that are going to end in Christian bloodshed and going to end in thousands coming to faith in Christ.

And so it's no ordinary healing. This man, it's a special case in a way because he doesn't have a disease. He hasn't had a fall and broken his legs. He has a congenital condition that from birth he's had no use of his legs.

He's never walked on his legs ever. And we learn later in chapter 4 that he's over 40 years old. So you wouldn't even call them legs. You know, he's just carried everywhere he goes.

[7 : 38] And I think what is happening is he is chosen by the risen Lord Jesus to be the kind of trigger point for maximum impact, for maximum evangelistic impact to this temple precinct and to the city of Jerusalem.

Peter and John are going to the temple and it seems like they're working in pairs. They're a pair of apostles, not unlike how Jesus sent off the people in pairs in Luke chapter 10, the 70 people in pairs to do mission.

And they're going to pray, but I think they're also going to preach the gospel. And he begs them. He asks them for alms. And Peter, with some special prompting of the Spirit, calls to him and says, look at us.

Look at us. Now the looking is really key here, so we'll come back to that. What we see is Peter, this is the new Peter, by the way. It's not the wimpy, cowardly, mistake-making Peter of the Gospels.

This is the empowered, transformed Peter by the risen Jesus. The reason he's so bold now is that he understands and knows and follows the reigning Lord Jesus that he preached about at Pentecost.

[8 : 57] And so the crippled beggar would be looking at Jesus, thinking he's going to put his hand in his pocket or he's going to get his money pouch out or something. Jesus says, but Peter says to him, without moving his hands, without his hands in his pocket, I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk, stand up and walk. The hand was Peter's, but the power was Christ's, in the name of Jesus Christ.

And the name of Jesus is going to be a very big theme of the next few chapters of Acts. Next week we'll see it's, there's no other name given on earth by which we can be saved.

The name of Jesus is going to be a critical thing. They're going to beg Peter to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. And he's healed.

And I wouldn't even call it a healing. It's not a restoration. It's an act of new creation in this man's legs that new muscles must have been formed and almost new bones must have been formed and he's jumping and leaping and praising God.

[10 : 12] And he enters the temple probably for the first time because as a cripple he wouldn't have been allowed into the actual temple area. But now he's allowed in those precincts and he's praising God and amazing the people and drawing great attention to Peter and John.

In fact, in verse 11, he's clinging to them and he's saying, he must have been saying, I've been healed by God and these men did it. I've been healed by God and these men did it.

Peter knows that a healing is not enough to bring glory to God. He knows that they must understand it's been done by the hand of the risen Jesus.

So he says, you Israelites, why do you ponder at this? Why do you stare at us? As if, as though by our own power or piety we made him walk.

He says, get your eyes off me and get your eyes to God. And in particular, your God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, your God, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus.

[11 : 31] The point of this healing is to give evidence to the fact that God has raised and glorified his son Jesus.

And later we'll see the healing is done by Jesus in Jesus' name. Just like the day of Pentecost, the giving of the spirit was a pointer to the fact that Jesus was risen as Lord and Christ.

And this healing is a pointer to the fact that Jesus is risen as Lord as Christ. They both direct the attention back to him. Now Peter goes into an aside about what they did to this Jesus.

It's quite scary. God has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate though he had decided to release him.

You rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be given to you and most amazingly you killed the author of life. You killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead.

[12 : 42] Peter solemnly points out their great offences that they made war on God. They declared war on God. And the contrasts are incredible that Jesus was God's Holy and Righteous One, the One they should have worshipped and listened to but they rejected him.

They condemned him even though he was declared innocent by Pilate and yet they condemned him. They exchanged him. He was righteous and they swapped him for an unrighteous One.

They swapped him for Barabbas, a murderer. He was the One through which God created the universe. Through Jesus, God gave life to all beings. He is the author of life and they killed the author of life.

In summary, the gospel there is, you killed him, God raised him, we saw him. You killed him, God raised him, we saw him.

Peter is Jesus intoxicated as he was at Pentecost. He says, don't look at us, look at Jesus. by faith in his name.

[13 : 53] His name itself has made the man strong. The healing is in the name of the risen Jesus. He must be Lord. He must be raised.

He must be glorified. He must be God's servant king because this man has been healed. And maybe you might think that it's going to be just a message of judgment.

In fact, I think some Christians think this, that the Jews killed Jesus, therefore God turns to Gentiles. That's not the way it works in Acts. In Acts, it's like what Paul says, salvation is first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Because he says, although you killed the author of life, there is a divine amnesty available. In verse 17, and now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

reflecting Jesus' own words in Luke's gospel as he hung from the cross, he said, forgive them, father, they know not what they do. Not saying that they are not culpable, but saying they did not perceive the plan of God being enacted through his death.

[15 : 10] They didn't know what they were doing, and they need forgiveness, but God knew what he was doing. because in this way, verse 18, God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

Divine amnesty for those who killed God. Sweet, sweet mercy. It's amazing that the very plan of God can overrule and use the sinful actions of those who would kill Jesus.

It was the plan foretold in the prophets. God had it all planned out, and they had no idea. God has this amazing sublime ability to turn evil actions of people for his good and great and perfect purposes.

If you are suffering, don't dismiss God that he's made a blunder or that he's not, it is out of his control or that he doesn't care for you, God is able to use our hardship and suffering to bring about his good purposes, and the cross is the flagship event where we see the evidence of that.

All the Old Testament, Peter says, speaks of this. So you must repent and turn to God, and you'll get three things. They're related, and they're three great promises.

[16 : 40] Firstly, verse 19, your sins will be wiped out, completely cleared. You'll no longer need, it's implicit, you'll no longer need to be sacrificing animals in this temple where we are, because Jesus died, your sins will be wiped out.

Secondly, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Now that's a very important phrase, and we'll go into that a bit in a minute. And the third thing is that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is Jesus.

So your sins will be wiped out, and times of refreshing will come. Now it sounds like Pentecost, because Jesus at Pentecost said, repent, and you get forgiveness and the Spirit.

And here he says, repent, and you get forgiveness and times of refreshing. So I think it's implicit that the times of refreshing come from the gift of the Spirit. That if God's people, God's old covenant people will repent, he will pour out his Spirit and refresh them and begin the new covenant with them and incorporate them into this new covenant in the last days.

God doesn't just wipe a slate clean and let people try again. What he does is wipe the slate clean and then regenerates our hearts. They can be born again.

[18 : 02] Times of refreshing will come and he will empower them to be his followers. This is a promise related to conversion, but I think it is also something that can be claimed and asked for in our Christian life, especially if there is a need for repentance in our Christian life, if there are sins that have worn us down, if we have drifted from the Lord, it is a great thing to try and turn back to God and plead with the risen Lord Jesus for times of refreshing.

Some of us actually are weary. Some of us have battled in the faith, we have battled against temptation and we have won a few and we have lost a few.

Some of us have taken public stance for being a Christian and we carry the scars of that. Some of us this morning need to come to the Lord Jesus and turn to him anew and ask him to pour out his spirit again and give us times of refreshing, to give us strength again, to give us that first love that we had when we first came to Christ.

Jesus, Peter says, is remaining in heaven to the restoration of all things, that is, his agenda is the restoring of the universe and his world through the preaching of the gospel.

And so I think we can pray for that to come and for more times of refreshing to come. I think in that phrase you have in essence the theology of Christian revival.

[19 : 44] The Lord Jesus might pour out again on the church that needs to repent, churches that have drifted from God, and also on cities that people would come to the Lord Jesus in conversion and be born again.

One of my great fears for Holy Trinity, and I've shared this with some of the leaders, is that we might simply become a kind of a life boat for Christians jumping ship from churches that are turning against the gospel.

I just think that would be a horrible situation to be in that we are simply a life boat watching in effect the Titanic go down. Our numbers might be okay, but they reflect the fact that the rest of the church might be going downhill.

And I know many people who have come to Holy Trinity from other churches have shared that with me, that concern. But I don't think that's not what I long for, that kind of negative, defensive, kind of Christian cluster in a world turning against God.

What I want Holy Trinity to be is part of the Lord Jesus revival of our city. I want us to be a place that sends out missionaries and evangelists, that sends out people to plant churches and revive churches.

[21 : 05] I want Holy Trinity to be a small ship in a giant gospel armada that's taking over our city and world of the good news of Jesus. Friends, we don't want to just be a lifeboat, a Christian kind of ghetto.

We want to be a place where we pray and long for times of refreshing, where we long for revival. Peter promises his people, those Jews, that Jesus will be sent to them.

if they repent, God will send the Messiah to them. Clearly, I think it's talking about the second coming, but there's a sense in which that happens that day at Jerusalem as well, that the Lord Jesus, as they repent, and next week we'll see more of the response, but as they repent, the Lord Jesus turns their face to them, and times of refreshing do come from the presence of the Lord.

Jesus must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced through his holy prophets. Sit at my right hand, God says to Jesus, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

And by the preaching of the gospel, Jesus' enemies become his forgiven followers, become his subjects, and become his servants. As the gospel is preached, God is transforming our world, and eventually it will culminate in his return, and the earth will be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea, and the promise of restoration given in the Old Testament, the whole world will be transformed by a new heaven and a new earth.

[22 : 56] It will be the age at which the angel promised Peter that he will return as you saw him leave and ascend into the heavens. The healing of the crippled man is both a sign of Jesus' lordship, but also it's a sign of the new creation or the restoration that is to come upon Jesus' return.

This is God's plan. Jesus is the prophet that Moses predicted would supersede him. For the Lord our God will raise up for you a prophet, and Jesus is the one who, when he was raised up, when he was exalted, superseded Moses as God's prophet, and he superseded David as God's king.

Jesus is that one that was predicted. And the promise is there, or the threat is there, that if you don't listen to Jesus, you'll be rooted out from God's people.

And we see that happen in the book of Acts, that many faithful Jews accept Jesus as Lord and become the nucleus of the Christian church, and many reject him and end up becoming the enemies of the gospel and the enemies of the God they claim to believe in.

All the prophets have spoken, all the prophets have predicted these days, these evangelistic days that we live in, the last days, the days of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

[24 : 24] I find it quite incredible that Jesus didn't just turn his back on the Jews and go to Gentiles right away. Isn't it just the amazing mercy of God that the first people to get the gospel are the very people that killed him?

That just shows the loving heart of God for the lost. The teaching that Jesus taught about loving your enemies is so embodied in that truth that he brings his gospel to those who were most his enemies who killed him.

friends we don't know yet what the response was to that sermon. We're going to look at it next week. The response is both good and bad.

But what we've seen so far is what happens in a revival. A true Christian revival is one where the exalted Lord Jesus pours out his spirit on people so they convict, their hearts are convicted and they repent and turn to him.

If a revival isn't about Jesus it's not a Christian revival. If a revival is not about the risen exalted Lord Jesus it's not a true Christian revival.

[25 : 39] Beware any Christian leader who talks up an event or an experience, even signs and wonders that aren't focused on the exalted Lord Jesus.

Jesus. It's so great that you can actually get to know Jesus as he is today through Peter's sermon. I was taught and trained and I've done this that when you have a friend and you want to introduce them to Jesus you give them a Bible and you say there are four gospels and you've got to read one of them.

Or you give them a little text of Mark's gospel. But actually you could give acts to someone and say read this book to get to know Jesus and they're beginning to know Jesus as he is today.

That would be a great thing. Many people, many Christians naively or falsely try and build their relationship with Jesus only on the Jesus of the gospels.

And they kind of end up with just the good teacher or just the hippie carpenter or the social activist. But you actually need to read the gospels in line with the exalted Jesus of the book of Acts.

[26 : 52] Many evangelical Christians I think in their zeal for the cross seem to exclude the present work of Jesus and just talk about the cross all the time.

But we don't actually pray to Jesus on the cross. He's not there anymore. He is the lamb that was slain but he is the lamb that was slain that sits on the throne who is executing the purposes of God.

We pray to the exalted risen Lord Jesus of the book of Acts and the book of Revelation. We don't pray to a Jesus on the cross. So that we do preach Christ crucified we preach him at the land that was slain on the throne of God.

Ruling, reigning, bringing about universal restoration. Friends you must see and listen to Jesus as he is presented in the book of Acts.

Just listen to some of these titles and soak up how great Jesus is and how intoxicated Peter is. He is Lord and Christ in Acts 2.

[28 : 00] In our reading today he is God's servant. He is the holy and righteous one. He is the author of life. He is the one who died to fulfill the whole Old Testament.

He is God's prophet, God's king. He brings times of refreshment. He brings the spirit. He reigns from heaven and from there he is bringing about the reversal of the fall, the reversal of sin, a new heavens and a new earth.

He is God's Messiah appointed for us. He is God's right hand man. Friends let us generate, let us beg the Lord Jesus to generate in us a hunger for revival, a hunger that he might be preached not as some kind of weak Christian crutch but as a risen ruling Lord who is offering divine amnesty to people like us today.

Let us beg him that the churches of Melbourne and of our country do not harden their hearts to the gospel. Let us pray that thousands of people would repent and that repentance would start with the people of God as it had to in the book of Acts.

That we might seek to stand up for him and tell others about him and that we might not draw attention to ourselves but like Peter defer their attention to the risen reigning Lord Jesus.

[29 : 34] Let us bow our heads and address him now. He is with us and let us ask him for these things. Lord Jesus we thank you so much for your great mercy.

We thank you that you brought your gospel directly to those who killed you. Thank you for your love for your enemies and your love for the lost. We pray that you would give us a hunger and a passion for revival in our city, revival as a church that we might not be going through the motions but be hungry to praise you and to worship you and to lean on you.

Father we pray for countries around the world where we know there is great things happening where thousands are coming to the gospel. We pray that we could see that happen in Australia.

Please Lord Jesus do not leave us behind. Do not let us be just a Christian ghetto but help us to reach out to seek and save the lost in the power of the spirit and with great confidence in you as a risen Lord who is powerful and able to act to restore our world.

Amen.