



Pointing People to Christ-Part 1

Proclaiming Christ's Power

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, as many of you know, my daughter is paralyzed, physically paralyzed from the knees down. And of course, she's been raised here in hypersensitive Southern California, which is the world headquarters for the word police. And you know what I mean by that. You cannot say that she is disabled. You have to say she is "differently-abled." OK. You can, of course, never use the word lame. You can't say her legs are lame. You have to say she is "mobility challenged." And forget the word handicapped these days. Did you know, that's out of favor? You're not supposed to say that. You're supposed to say that "she possesses a form of human variation." I am not kidding. That is an actual suggestion for a word substitution for the word handicapped. "She possesses a form of human variation." Well, after 17 years of this, my daughter has some thoughts about all these words substitutions. She thinks they're all lame. That's her word for it. It is just lame, she says. This is ridiculous. She has little tolerance for all of this kind of wordplay that people go through to try to downplay the problem. Right? She is paralyzed from the knees down. She would hope that her feet would work. She wishes that her feet were healthy. She sees it as a problem. She doesn't want to wallpaper over it with some words that make people feel better about it because in reality, they're broken and she'd like them to be fixed. I mean, that's just the basic desire of her heart, just like your desire when something in your life breaks. I mean, you would like it to be fixed. If something in your body is not working, it is your natural human yearning to say, I want my body to be fixed. And that is just what we all hope for.

The problem is, of course, my daughter can attest to this, there are some things in life that cannot be fixed. Matter of fact, there are things in this life, I would say all physical things in this life, that if you think about it logically, you'll recognize that everything in this life will eventually become completely unfixable. Completely unfixable in this life. Now, that may come as a surprise to hear that kind of thing from platform in a church on a Sunday morning, but you need to think through the reality of what I am saying. There are things in this age they are not fixable. They just cannot be fixed.

The hope of the Christian life isn't that God's going to come in and swoop in and fix the unfixable in your life. The hope is that this is not all there is. In other words, the present age and the unfixable nature of everything, let's just start with your body, in your body that gets broken and will eventually become completely broken and unfixable. It's the hope of the Christian life that this is not all there is. There is another age coming. It's called the Kingdom of God. It was promised by Christ and purchased by Christ. He said, "Hey, disciples, you ought to be praying for the coming of that kingdom every day." "Your kingdom come." That ought to be the expression of your prayer life. I can't wait for the kingdom to come. A kingdom that was looked forward to way back in the book of Isaiah. It was put this way: that the crooked things will be made straight. The rough places will be made plain. Every valley lifted up. Every mountain made low. The glory of the Lord will be revealed and then everything's going to be made right. Everything's going to be fixed to put in the words of Revelation Chapter 21, "There'll be no mourning, no crying, no



suffering, no pain." And it started with and I'll leave it till the end, there'll be no unfixable bodies. "There'll be no death." That's how it's put. No, no longer any death.

That's an amazing promise but it is the promise of the Christian faith. It is the focus of the Christian faith. And God sent his son to Earth to prove it so that you would trust that that kingdom is coming and you would be praying daily that that kingdom would come when Jesus returns and comes in glory on the clouds and sets up his kingdom, and heaven will echo that the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, where crooked things are made straight, rough places plain, and everything is fixed. That's the hope of the Christian life. Jesus came and one of the ways he tried to prove it so that you would trust him is he took 23 broken bodies. You can add these up in the gospels. He took 23 different broken bodies and in one way or another they were broken, either through a withered hand or blind eyes, or a paralytic, and he fixed their body on the spot.

He fixed them temporarily, because every set of eyeballs that he healed, every set of legs that he fixed, all of those eyeballs, all those legs, every withered hand ended up withering again and those legs stopped working and those eyeballs stopped working. They were laid in an unfixable tomb and they returned to dust. That was the reality of this age, of this life. But Jesus says trust me, if you die believing in me, yet shall you live. If you believe in me when you live in that state, you will never die. That's what he said at the funeral of his friend. It was one, by the way, of the three times, there were 23 fixed broken bodies, there were three completely broken bodies. One of them was Lazarus, and he said those words as he stood there at Lazarus' tomb. He said, I'm going to show you that I have the power to fix the unfixable and I'm going to fix it, temporary, it's just a Band-Aid because Lazarus is going to die again. Just like Jarius' daughter died again, just like the widow's son died again. They're going to die again because in this age we are stuck in a situation where Genesis 3 prevails and I promised you, everything in the fabric of the universe is going to be cursed. Everyone is going to get sick and everyone is going to die. That is the sentence and judgment of God. But take heart, I've overcome this world.

You trust in me, and I will take the perishable and allow you to put on imperishable. I will make your bodies impervious to disease and sickness and paralysis and arthritis and baldness and wrinkles and whatever else you want to add to it and I will fix it. You will live in a place where the unmitigated blessing and glory of God is granted to my people. The book of Acts that we've been studying is a record of the extension of that message into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and starting to go unto the ends of the Earth. That's what we read about in the 28 chapters of Acts. They're called the Acts because they're the acts of the apostles. The reason we should listen to what the apostles say, which God had ordained that they would inscribe the message, they would put it in writing, and eventually we could study the 27 books that came out of Jesus' ministry, as Jesus promised in the Upper Room, that they would be recalling to mind, miraculously by God's Spirit, the things that Jesus taught, and they would express the truth of all that theologically and doctrinally in the pages of the New Testament.

You can believe that because the authority of Christ could be brokered through them in the acts of the apostles. And there were five acts of broken bodies that just like Jesus did at a greater magnitude, 23 broken bodies, they took five broken bodies and fixed them in the book of Acts.



And just like Jesus took three completely broken bodies, there were two completely broken bodies that showed the act of them completely fixing. One in Acts Chapter 9, her name was Tabitha, and one in Acts Chapter 20, his name was Eutychus, and those two dead bodies were raised to life.

What kind of life? Eternal life? No, no, no, no. Not glorified bodies. Both Tabitha and Eutychus would die again, just like you and I are going die. That is the reality of this life. You may get cancer. You may have a kid with a congenital defect. You could have some kind of terrible thing happen to your body that it doesn't work right anymore, or you just might just grow old like the rest of us and things don't work right, you have a lot of pain. If you live in a comfortable environment, you may go to a nice, comfortable bed in some nursing home or maybe in a hospital or maybe hospice at home and this life will come to an end and your body will be completely broken. Hopefully you'll lay it aside respectfully and God then in his promise will be put on the line because your body will be laid in a grave. The Bible says, "at the last trumpet, the dead in Christ will rise," and the bodies of the dead will be reunited with their spirits and they will "inherit a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." That's the promise of the New Testament.

Those five broken bodies in the book of Acts were all about people listening to the message that would qualify them for that eternal kingdom. Note that carefully. Those five broken bodies were all evidence that the apostles could give a message to you about Jesus being the Messiah that would qualify you for that eternal kingdom. That's very important for us to recognize because most people preach these passages wrong. We hit the first one in our verse-by-verse study through Acts in Acts Chapter 3, and I want you to look at it with me. And it's almost criminal for me just to study the first 10 verses. But it's a lot, so let's just take the first 10 verses, but do not make the mistake that so many people make in studying this passage in thinking that these 10 verses stand alone, they don't.

This is the setup for a message that will allow people to be qualified, as it's put in the words of Peter here in our English text, the restoration of all things, "the restoring of all things." That kingdom is coming. How do I get qualified for that? Well, the sermon is going to start in verse 11 as the scene is set. Peter then starts preaching and he says, what you need is your sins blotted out, that's the real problem, so that you can have this right relationship with God so that you will be qualified. One day God will dispatch Jesus from heaven and he will come back and he will set up his kingdom. The restoration of all things. The crooked will be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the perishable will put on imperishable, and we will have the unmitigated blessing of God without any pain, without any crying, without any disease, without any mourning, without any death.

All of that is the important stuff that's going on in Acts Chapters 3 and Acts Chapter 4 as we see the opposition, the arrest, and then we see the resolve of the early Church saying we have a message that we need to be bold about. It's not a message of, "Hey, if your kid has paralysis, we can fix that." That is not the hope of the early Church. The hope of the early Church is this: that if you have sin, which we all do, you can have that completely blotted out and forgiven and you can



be qualified to be in the kingdom of God, where he will restore all things, including our broken bodies. The unfixable will be fixed with a resurrection that is provided in Jesus Christ.

The first 10 verses, unfortunately, are often held out to churches, and it will be, I'm sure, all over the world, some church is going to be preaching on Acts Chapter 3 verses 1 through 10, and unfortunately, as so many preachers have done and I hate to say it, I've listened to several of them. I'm not saying we're the only people who have it right. There are plenty of people who preach this properly. Unfortunately, I couldn't find one on YouTube this week. They were all telling us, "Hey, look at this passage. You know what? This guy, he was paralyzed. And then the apostles came along in the name of Christ, they healed him. Isn't that great? Man, you ought to be holding out for that. That'll be great. You need to be praying for that. Maybe you're not asking. Maybe you don't have enough faith. Maybe you need to work harder to get this healing and you can get your healing." That is not with this passage is about.

Does it depict a man who is healed? Yes. Does that make people happy? Makes my daughter happy. That'd be great. But you know what? That's not the point. It's really not the point. The point is are you qualified to enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, or will you hear from him, "Depart from me. I never knew you?" That's all that matters. Because guess what? 70 years from now, you're not going to be here. If Christ doesn't come back first, we're all going to go through the natural process of dying. The statistics on death are quite impressive, it's been said. Very impressive. 1 out of 1 people.

[00:12:05][0.0s] I want to look at this passage with you and be mature enough as biblical students to look past the immediate of saying, "Wow, that's great. When does that happen for me?" Because if you follow that logic, you'll end up like they did in Redding, praying for a 2-year-old who died saying, "Well, man, let's just pray for the resurrection, because anytime a kid dies, that's what we ought to be doing." Is it sad when a 2-year-old dies? Absolutely. I've been dealing with death in this job for three decades now. I hate it. It's painful. It is an enemy. I grieve. I'm mad at it. It is an enemy of all that God had intended in the kingdom. I realize that he's going to defeat that. Actually, he came to defeat that. I don't like any of this stuff called death. I don't like it.

But I recognize this, that is the outworking of the promise of Genesis 3 and you've got an appointment with that because the Bible says, "It is appointed," unto people, "for man once to die." And what really matters then is the next phrase, "and then comes the judgment." How am I going to fair that day? So I want to be ready. The people were going to be ready in the book of Acts by saying, let's listen to these guys called the Apostles and they will end up inscribing this in the thing that we have in our Bibles called the New Testament. We can either believe it or not believe it, but you'd be a fool not to believe it, because they're proving right here that you should believe it by doing things that no one else can do, by showing that God can fix the unfixable, even if it's a temporary fix as it was in this case.

Verse 1 Acts Chapter 3, "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer. The ninth hour." Now, there was a traditional time of prayer. They were not coming with sacrifices in tow. They knew that the temple veil had torn. They knew that Christ had fulfilled this. They were going to teach this and preach this: you no longer need circumcision, you don't



need to keep the Sabbath, you don't have dietary restrictions. All of this is the teaching of Christ and the apostles. When Christ died, it all ended, all the ceremonies ended. They were all fulfilled in Christ.

I don't even know if they made it to the morning prayer time, which they had one. That was the custom of the Jews on the Temple Mount. If you were near the Temple Mount, you could come for the morning prayers, you could come for the afternoon prayers. But I do know this, that Christ died at 3:00 in the afternoon and the tradition of them praying at 3:00 in the afternoon, probably was a time for Peter and John to go, "Man, not a bad time for us to go and be thankful that the Passover lamb has been slain." So who knows why? But they are there doing what all Christians are called to do whether you're in the old covenant or in the new covenant, you ought to be praying. And they said, let's go pray.

So they go up there at 3:00 in the afternoon. That's the 9th hour. Of course, your margin says that. That was the reckoning of time from 6:00 in the morning, 9th hour, 3:00 in the afternoon. It says, "A man lame from birth." There are some politically incorrect statements there about a man who can't walk. A "human variation" man. He was being carried, no wheelchair, being carried. Wheelchairs weren't invented, at least not the kinds that we think of until, to what, the 16th century. Carrying him on some kind of cot, mat. Just like Jesus when he healed that paralytic. Thankfully, he's got people, friends here bringing him on this stretcher of some kind.

"Whom they would lay daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate." But by the way. If you're looking for sick people statistically in the 120 who started the Church in Acts Chapter 1, how many sick people that had chronic problems do you think there were? Oh, by the way, the Church had grown in Acts Chapter 2 to 3,000. So we had over 3,000 people in this church. Do you think there was anyone who needed some kind of healing? Do you think there was no handicap, you know, donkey parking spots in the early church? Of course there were people who were sick. I mean, you had a lot of illnesses, too, that are really a problem. I mean, psoriasis here, arthritis there. You had some with migraines headaches over there. There was a lot of suffering that if Jesus really loved us, why doesn't he heal those? I'm thinking of Peter and John, "Hey, why don't you deal with us first?".

Because it wasn't about that. It's not about that. You can't read a text like this and think it's all about if you're suffering, pray and God will heal you. "You're put putting God in a box. You don't believe that God can heal." I'm not saying any of that. Putting God in a box? God can do anything with the world that he made. Matter of fact, he's told us what he's going to do. He's going to melt it with an intense heat, Second Peter Chapter 3. He's going to destroy it. He can start by destroying every single person that he's made. Physically, they will die. That is the promise of God. It doesn't preach well in Orange County, by the way, just to let you know. I realize that. But all of this is going to end poorly for us in the temporal age that we live in. And yet in this case, God chose someone who was a fixture on the Temple Mount. He sat there. Sat there? He laid there, sat there daily, He couldn't even get around. He was brought and plopped there. He was a fixture and everyone knew it. He'd been there for years.



The Bible says in Chapter 4, he was 40 years old, over 40 years old. You could only imagine how long he'd been there. Just like they take up the spot there at the Costco corner. There are certain places, you know, if you want a handout, there's a good place to go to get it. And I'll tell you, one good place would be right there at the entrance of the inner circle of the temple. Now, we don't know where the Beautiful Gate is. Matter of fact, everyone's got a guess at it and even the map people in the back of your Bible might have guessed at where it is and labeled something, but it is disputed and debated.

But there is one gate that a lot of people think it may be and it might be, because there's a little play on words here when we're about to hear Peter say, "I don't have silver or gold." Well, there was a gate. It was called Nicanor Gate or the Corinthian Gate. It was made a bronze. You can only imagine at 3:00 in the afternoon as the sun is coming down there on that Temple Mount, it was right there in the center. Josephus, the historian, describes it as being 75 feet tall. He said 20 men, 10 on each side, would shut the doors. It was the mitigating place, the portal between the court of the women and the inner court. You have people coming through there up fifteen steps and you have this big door and it was all so gilded, we're told by Josephus, by silver and gold. The Corinthian gate. It was called that because it was Corinthian bronze from Corinth. And maybe that, sparkling in the sunlight, you had this man who would sit right there, right in the main thoroughfare. And he'd say, "Hey, can you spare a few bucks?"

And of course, the Bible, it said in the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus, you're going to have the poor with you all the time. Jesus quotes that in his ministry. You'll always have the poor with you. The poor are going to be there. In those days, it was particularly clear that you were to give those people who could not earn their own living... These weren't people who just were lazy and didn't want to work. The Bible's always been clear about that. If you're not willing to work, you shouldn't eat. But if you can work, you should go to work and earn your own bread. The Bible is very clear on that. But those people who clearly couldn't, we didn't have wheelchairs, we didn't have rescue missions, we didn't have ways for them to deal with their need. You had people who would come and out of the goodness and charity and devotion of their Judaism they were going to give to make sure these guys got fed. So he's in a good spot. Even as historians say you can turn a fairly good living out of taking this, at least you'd have plenty of food. And so he's there, he's a fixture. Everyone knows him, he's over 40 years old and he sets himself up under this beautiful gate called the Beautiful Gate. Local knowledge, they knew which one this was. We're guessing at it.

"Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple," the temple environs there, "he asked to receive alms," the giving, the charitable gifts. Can you spare a few bucks? "Peter," verse 4, "directed his gaze at him." Now there are lots of ways to describe in the Greek language, and certainly as it translates in the English language, looking at someone. This is not just looking at someone. This is like wham, I'm gazing at you. That's the kind of thing you might say, even in the Old Testament translates to a Hebrew word, obviously, but coming into the temple and gazing at the beauty of the Lord. That's an interesting play on words in English for us. Here they're coming to the temple. It's beautiful, a beautiful gate. They're thinking of a beautiful God, a righteous and holy God. They're coming in with all these ethereal and high, lofty, transcendent thoughts. As they're coming in, BAM, this beggar sees them and "Peter fixes his gaze on this guy, as did John,



and they said," hey, talk about eye contact, "Look at us." Right? Look right at us. They're staring at him. Now he's staring at them. "And he," this lame, this paralytic, "fixes his attention on them."

I spent three years in downtown Chicago living right in downtown, not far from the Hancock Building and not far from Cabrini Green back in the day. If you didn't want to give any money to someone, you certainly didn't make eye contact. Right? I mean, you make eye contact and, I mean, you got that thing going on then. And so it is. He's thinking what anyone would think in that situation, this guy staring at us, I can't wait for him now to reach into his belt and pull out some money. He's "expecting to receive something from them." Peter said, "I have no silver and gold."

Which, by the way, time out. Sidebar. They did have money. Right? We know that from the end of Chapter 2. They had a till, they had a treasury, they had money. And unlike Judas, I guess, Peter wasn't carrying it around. I mean, you didn't bring it in the Temple Mount. It's like, "I left my wallet in the camel. I'm just here to pray. I don't have money on me." Not only that, he doesn't say, "Hey, wait right here. I'm going to go back and I'm going to get my money and come bring it to you." No, no. The point is, money is not the thing. Matter of fact, we see throughout the New Testament the priority of caring with the money of the people of God for the people of God. Should we give charitably? Absolutely. I'm not saying we don't give outside the walls of the church, but I am saying that there's a priority there. Read First Timothy Chapter 5.

So this wasn't about going around and just spreading the money that everyone had given to the disciples to use to care for the needs of the early Church. It wasn't like, "Oh yeah, let me go get the checkbook back there." No. "But what I do have I give to you." And by the way, he's about to see this guy walk. I get that. But please remember, what do Peter and John, what do they want to give to every single person on the Temple Mount who is miling around? Well, we're going to find out in verses 11 and following, "that their sins would be blotted out." That's what they want to give. That's the main thing. What are they going to do to make that happen? Well, they're going to call attention that God is active in authenticating the message that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

So the thing he wants to give, the thing that really matters is the forgiveness of their sins so that they're qualified to be in a place where those lame, paralyzed legs will never be paralyzed again. Because now he's being brought in on a cot by two people because his legs don't work. One day he'll be brought into some kind of service at some kind of cemetery when nothing on his body is going to work, even if his legs get healed right now. And of course, they were, and later they did, nothing worked, because his body in this era is unfixable.

So what do we have? We have a person who is picked out to have, in the authority of Christ, a healing that is now going to gather a crowd. We're going to see it next time beginning in verse 11. You're going to have the preaching of what really matters and that's the thing that we are giving to people, the hope of eternal life, not a better temporal life. We need to make that clear in our minds.

What's going to call attention to this? The same thing Jesus did 23 times in the gospels. We're going to fix a broken body in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that place that you despise, this Christ who you crucified. Which, by the way, is the message that he's going to preach. Do you



want to talk about how offensive the message is? Hey, "the Righteous and Holy One," I'm just quoting from next week now, "the Righteous and Holy One, you'd rather have Barabbas, a criminal released to you. You killed the Author of Life." I mean, that's rough. He calls them sinners and then he says this: "Repent, repent, that your sins can be blotted out, that the times of restoration and restoring of this world can come." That God, this heaven that has received this Christ, he can be dispatched again to start the renewal of all things. That's what we're waiting for. I can't wait for that. I need to get you ready for that.

Do you see that that's the priority always? When Jesus had a paralytic brought to him, he looked at him, saw the faith that he had that Jesus was the answer. Clearly, he had a short-term focus on what that was. But Jesus had a long-term focus and he looked at the guy and he said, "Your sins are forgiven." And everyone began to grumble. They didn't like it because the Pharisees said, well, that's blasphemy. "Who can forgive sins but God alone." But he knew that they were sitting there going, what are you doing? And he said, "Well, you tell me this," he asks a rhetorical question, "which is harder for me to say, 'Take up your mat and walk' or 'Your sins are forgiven.'" Which one's harder?

Now, the answer should be clear and it's not only harder, it's way more important. Right? Which one is harder and which one, let's just say it, is more important? Is it more important for this guy who can't walk to be able to walk around and get a job? Well, that would be nice. It would be certainly worth praising God for. But you know what really matters and heaven erupts in rejoicing over? One sinner who repents. Here was a repentant man who looked at Christ as the answer and Jesus said, "your sins are forgiven." And he said, "Just so that you know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. I'll tell him. Great. Watch now: 'Get up and walk.' And the man got up and walked." The point is that it really doesn't matter. What really, really matters is the fact that you will be qualified to inherit a kingdom and a glorified body which will never be paralyzed. That's what matters. This doesn't preach well on the elite coasts of our country. I get it. It doesn't preach well, but it's the truth. Do you want to find a church that's going to tell you it's all about the here and now? You can find plenty of those. But you know what? All they'll do is disappoint you because in the end you'll find out that all the stuff that we invest in, that we're just hoping God will put a nice little gloss and a little turbocharged fuel on my dreams so I can have my next vacation or my next house or my next, you know, gadget or the next furniture or my next makeover or whatever it is that we long for, that we think is going to bring us meaning and purpose, all of it's going to be gone.

The Bible says where your treasure is your heart will be also. You've got two choices as to where to put that treasure. Are you going to have stuff? You're going to have stuff. We're not talking about stuff. You can have stuff. The question is, where is your treasure? And so we look, as so many preachers and I think they poorly preach it. I'm not trying to be elitist and I'm not trying to be condescending and I'm not trying to be a hyper critic. I'm just saying they preach this all wrong because they see a guy getting healed and they say to people like my daughter, "Oh, wouldn't it be great? Maybe you just need to trust God more. Maybe you'll get up and walk."

Everyone who promises that has legs that will be broken and not walk and be put in a grave. What they need is what my daughter needs is what you need and that is we need a new



resurrected re-manufactured body that Christ has promised to those whose names are written Lamb's Book of Life.

"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. He took him by the right hand, he raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up," which I guarantee you, you don't have calf muscles, they're completely atrophied because you have been paralyzed your whole life. Your spine is not firing those electrical impulses to your body. You do not have in your lower extremities the ability to get up. I guarantee you're going to start leaping. And he does. "He stood and began to walk and he entered the temple with him walking" and leaping. I guarantee you, my daughter, if she could walk right now, would start to jump because she's never been able to do that. I mean, walking with the aid of leg braces and now to be able to stand up and walk and skip and jump, you going to spend some time jumping, as silly as that looks. Over 40 years old and never jumped, never walked. Yeah, he's excited and all the people saw him and they were praising God just like he was praising God.

You've been paralyzed for 40 years and you start walking, you're going to praise God for that, and so you should. You get over a cold. Hey, you ought to praise God for that. You get over migraine you ought to praise God for that. Every good gift is from God. I'm just worried about the distinction between temporal gifts and eternal gifts. I'm trying to show you that the Church of Christ is so focused on temporal gifts, they've lost track of what we're here for. You're here to recognize the brokenness, the systemic nature of the effects of sin all around this world. The whole point of your life and my life between now and the kingdom is for us to collect as many people as we can, calling them to see their sin for what it is and calling them to repentance so that they, as heaven rejoices, can have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, so that God can say enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

They recognize this guy, verse 10. This is why he was chosen to be the one that God said, I'm going to have this guy healed. I'm going to use Peter to do it. "They recognize him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple asking for alms." This is the beggar. We see him every day. "And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him," and that was not the point. Some people think that's the point. So that I can be praising God for the healing in my life and be in wonder and amazement of God, it's great, it's about worship. It's not about worship. It's about the gospel. It's about repentance. And that's where this passage goes.

What do you do with that wonder and amazement? Hey, look, you're a sinner. You crucified Christ. Your sin put him there. You would rather have Barabbas released than the Holy and Righteous One, you killed the Author of Life. But you know what? If you would repent and see your sins for what they are, you can have your sins blotted out, and then Christ can come and restore all things the way it should be.

Verses 1 through 5. I just want you to see the interesting contrast between them going up to a beautiful place, which, by the way, that's what the disciples said when Jesus went there. Look at the beautiful stones. Look at the [00:30:15] **ornate**. [0.0s] How beautiful is Herod's temple that he took 46 years to reconstruct. It's beautiful. Look, how beautiful it is. Not only that, in this text we



see in verse 2, they laid this guy at the Beautiful Gate and they're going to do a beautiful thing, verse 1, they're going to go pray.

But Peter instead looks his eyes on a man who has been paralyzed for 40 years. Wow! Talk about a contrast. That's rough. Shouldn't you be fixing your gaze on the Lord? No, I want to fix my gaze right here. I want to look at the affects of sin in this world, because every illness is the result of sin, not the John 9, what did they do? What immoral decision led to this blindness? I'm not talking about a direct correlation. I'm talking about a foundational correlation that everything that ever went wrong in your body from losing the hair on the back of your head to having arthritis in your knuckles all goes back to Genesis Chapter 3 and God cursing the foundation and the fabric of the universe. And he says, you're going to live with problems. You going to have a child with a congenital defect. You're going to have problems in your life, you're going to have diseases and sickness and pain and suffering. All of that's going to be the reality of your life between now and there. And he fixes his gaze on that.

Do you know what we don't do? We just don't see it. And you're never going to do what this series is all about, nine sermons in Acts Chapter 3 and 4, to have us get excited about our responsibility to point people to Christ. You are never going to be bold about pointing people to Christ if you don't see the problem. If you're too busy consuming the gifts of God in your life because you happen to have a neat family or a good job or a comfortable home or a new car or whatever it is that you have.

When the disciples came to Jesus in John 4 and said, "Here, Rabbi, we've got a great lunch for you. Eat it." He was busy sharing with this woman at the well, you might remember, this Samaritan woman. He sent her into this town and she comes back with all of these people who are inquiring about whether Jesus is the Christ. And he said, "I have food to eat, guys, you know nothing about." I have something satisfying that is important to me. I have meaning and purpose you don't know anything about. You don't get it. You're just trying to stuff your face with lunch. I understand that, you're hungry, you want to eat, but "lift up your eyes unto the harvest. They're white unto harvest." I want you to enter into the harvest that you didn't start and you didn't work for. I was here working for it. I was sharing my faith with this gal and what it means to trust me for salvation. And now I want you to put your sandwich aside and I want you to look at these guys and I want you as they come across the valley here in Sychar to Jacob's well, I want you to share the message of eternal life with them. Enter into the joy of this harvest.

I'm not saying a Christian life is a terrible thing. It's a joyful thing. But it's joyful with guys who have rumbling tummies and don't have lunch in their stomach who are saying, you know what's more important is for me to see this person saved. More important than your vacation next summer. More important than you having another night out, doing something fun that you like. More important than you having some new thing in your house, is you sitting with your neighbor and calling them to see their sin for what it is and pointing them to the solution. Their lives are broken, whether you want to recognize that or not. And you may say, well, I don't want to share with them because, you know, I don't know, they seem comfortable, they don't seem to need Christ.



Do you know every non-Christian needs Christ because every single person is going to face death and judgment? 70 people in our county statistically every single day, 70 people in this county die. There are bodies being wheeled into the morgue, there are bodies being loaded on racks in mortuaries. There are people picking out caskets for their dead loved ones TODAY because people are dying all around us. And your neighbor that you're afraid to share the gospel with is going to end up there. And everything in their body is going to be unfixably broken. If you looked hard enough, you'd probably see the brokenness right now. They got relationships that are broken. They had all kinds of hopes and dreams that are broken because they're dreaming and hoping for the wrong things, and you and I have the answers. You are ambassadors of a message. It's important for you to get excited about this job that we have to point them to Christ. "Well, they don't seem to want it." I don't know. Did you? Did all of you just say, well, I've been looking all my life to repent of my sins and see myself for the sinner that I am? You needed the conviction of someone coming to you, whether in sermon or in evangelism, and saying, listen, you got a problem that only Christ can solve.

The longest intro to the first point ever. But verses 1 through 5, can you just summarize it this way? You need to "Squarely Face Sin's Blight," and you might have every reason to ignore it, every reason to think my neighbors are fine, my co-workers are fine. "I don't know, I don't want to jam my religion down their throat." I'm not asking you to jam anything down anything. I'm asking you to point people to Christ because they need Christ. He's the only solution to their problem. "Well, they don't feel their problem." Well, then you better try to expose that problem. There may not be a felt need, but it's a real need. And you better at some point at least attempt with everyone around you to get them to see that they have a sin problem that only Christ can solve. That sin problem leads to disease and decay and death.

The foundational contingency, the foundational connection, is the fact that we suffer and struggle internally and physically because of the problem of sin. Christ came to solve that problem. He proved that he can do it with stuff like this, verses 6 and 7, being able to say to someone with an unfixable human problem, "Here, it's fixed." Peter said, "I have no silver or gold," at least not on me, "but what I do have I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong." Here is one of five physical healings, one of five in the book of Acts and it's done so that people can hear the message of repentance. But it is a sign, isn't it, that Christ can fix the unfixable. That's why the one of three resurrections in the gospels: widow's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus, when Lazarus was there at the funeral, Jesus said, "Believe in me. I am the resurrection and the life." I'm going to pop Lazarus out of this stinky grave four days later, and I'm going to show you that if you trust in me, even when YOU die, like Lazarus just died and will die again, you will live. That's the victory that we are proclaiming to a lost world. Don't think in those terms of the world, think of the people who you rub shoulders with every single week.

Number two, "Boldly Proclaim Christ's Victory." "Well, they don't think they're in peril." I understand that. You've got to expose them. You've got to see sin, systemic blight, that there are problems and ramifications and manifestations of the sin problem all around us. The government's not going to fix it. And the yoga's not going to fix it. And the health kick is not going to fix it. And they're eating right is not going to fix it. Christ is the only solution. You need to



proclaim the fact that he boldly came, and we are boldly now sharing the fact that he defeated death.

First Corinthians Chapter 15 says, "If we've hoped in Christ in this life only, you ought to pity us." Our focus has to be set there. Our hope and our eyes and our treasure and our heart need to be focused on the next life, not this one. And it is so important that we recognize that in maybe a way you never have before to realize that this is where we're headed. The next life is all that matters. Here's what the Bible says about this life. It's the reason that you're not going to get your healings throughout your life. By that I mean your body is going to be in an unfixable state in this era. It's going to, it's going to die just like every other generation of Christians have died. And here's the reason why. First Corinthians Chapter 15, because "the perishable cannot inherit the kingdom of God." In your present state, you've got to get through the portal of death. If it doesn't happen through physical death, the Bible says if you happen to be around when Christ actually is dispatched for his Church, well, you're going to be "changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye," to quote First Corinthians Chapter 15.

Start reading in verses 50 and following. Study this text and recognize that's what this is all about. "The perishable must put on imperishable, the mortal must put on immortality." So I got to go through this change. And the only way to get through this change is for me to get to death. "Oh, this is great. There must be Kool-Aid on the patio. And this is Jim Jones. I thought I came to some Bible-teaching church. I'm in a cult." I mean, that is going to be the response. I mean, there are people who will never come back to this church after this sermon. I know it. I'm sure of it. And you know why? Because you can go to another church which is going to tell you, "Get a little Jesus sprinkled on your life and you can have your best life now. You can get what you want. It'll be better." And I'm just telling you this. If you don't recognize that to die is gain. If you don't say with the apostle Paul, "I'd much rather depart and be with Christ. That is far better." If you're not there yet. Well, then you're playing around with Christianity. Either that or you've just not even grown in your Christian life.

I mean, you ought to be able to say with me, "Yeah, we're not going to go out and kill ourselves because that's murder and God does not allow it." But here's the thing. I desire to be done with this life. This world is not my home. I'm an alien and a stranger. My citizenship is in heaven and my treasure is there and my heart is there and my prayer every day is, "God, come quickly and send your Son. Kingdom. God, may your kingdom come." If you don't have that perspective then what are we doing here? We're playing around. I mean, there's a lot of other things you can do to make this life better as opposed to standing with Christ, who's going to get you in a lot of trouble with the world. Have you not noticed that? But what did Paul say in Galatians 6? "The world is crucified to me, and I to it." Oh, it's dead to me. All I care about, and Paul says this very clearly in Romans Chapters 9 and 10. All I care about is the lost people. "My heart is in unceasing anguish" over the fact that they're lost. I want them saved.

Man, if you want to take a hiatus from Compass, the book of Acts is the time to do it if you don't care about lost people and you don't want to share your faith. But I'm telling you what, this is the heart of what you and I are called to do, to be representatives of Christ. He calls us just like he called the disciples. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."



The celebrations in heaven aren't when you get over your arthritis, your migraines or your paralysis. Rejoicing in heaven takes place in the way it does in an unparalleled fashion when sinners come to repentance. That's the victory that we want to proclaim. And if you don't think that's biblical, just start reading the Bible with the lens on that Paul said to depart is far better. I'd much prefer it. Except I got to stay on in the flesh because that'll mean fruitful labor. I can get more done. I can see more people saved.

Romans 8, for instance, everyone thinks it's all about "all things work together for good," and "the love of Christ, nothing can separate me from that." Those are great passages. But, do you know what the context is? It starts in verse 18 of Romans 8. It says, "the present sufferings," that's the context, "are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." The present suffering, he can't even compare them with how great it's going to be. The glory, the greatness, the fulfillment, the fixing of what's going to be revealed to us. That's why we, here's what he says, here's the Christian life, "groan within ourselves. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly, we're waiting," we can't wait to be clothed in this new glorified body. We can't wait for the redemption of our bodies. "The creation is groaning. It's subject to futility." "My body is subject to futility." My heart can't wait to be there.

I mean, this is going to separate real Christianity from fake cultural Christianity. You understand that. Fake cultural Christianity can draw a crowd by telling people "Christ can make this life better." And I'm telling you this: the problem that Christ came to solve is that you and I need to be qualified for the inheritance of the saints in light, of the new coming kingdom. That's what matters. We're here to proclaim that. I'm here to proclaim it to you and to tell you that the sign of someone who was born paralyzed, who's now walking and jumping around is a sign that Christ can fix the problem when your body is in a casket. "We see through a glass dimly, but then face-to-face." That's the hope, the blessed hope of the Christian life. If that's kind of been swept to the back of your Christian life, time to just put it right up front and center.

Verses 8 through 10, the end of this, everyone's excited. This guy who has been laying around for 40 years, is leaping and standing and walking. He's entering the temple environs there leaping and praising God. All the people saw him as walking and praising God. They recognize him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple asking for alms. "This is the beggar. This is the guy who couldn't walk. This is the guy we saw hauled in on the mat every single day." They were filled with wonder, like, "What is this? What's happening? Amazing. I can't believe it." They couldn't believe what happened to him. There's a lot of rejoicing. There was a lot of praise. There was a lot of amazement, a lot of wonder. All of that is preparatory for what? For the message of you've killed Christ, you need to repent, then Christ will restore all things. That's the message in essence, it's coming.

The praising, I just want to say, it's more than you just learning to rejoice with those who rejoice when they get some temporal Band-Aid on something. I hate to minimize this healing as a Band-Aid, but that's all that it really was, because those bones now have rotted in a grave somewhere. They're not walking anymore. That body is waiting for the resurrection of the just and it's coming. But all I am saying is I want to not just rejoice with those who get some temporal



solution, I want to rejoice at the big issue, the big issue that he's about to unfold with sins being blotted out, qualification being found in Christ. I do think we should rejoice in that. I think it'll change everything about how you live the Christian life. If you think I've painted a picture cause Mr. Scrooge is preaching this morning and he's a curmudgeon and it's all bad and he's just so negative and his life must be terrible, I'm saying it's all about finding joy, but it's not about the here and now. It's being able to rejoice in the fact that I believe that God keeps his promises. All this rejoicing needs to be the kind of rejoicing that's far more profound, the kind of rejoicing that happens in heaven when sinners repent.

Number three, we need to "Joyfully Believe God's Promises." From my perspective, I can say this: if I die today, the hope that I have about what's going to happen, and we're saved in that hope. If you have a hope that you see what kind of hope is that, we were saved in the hope of this resurrection, this glorification, all of that's coming and that can make my disposition now be different, even if I get thrown in prison in Philippi with my back laid open in stocks. I can sing and say I know where I'm headed. My treasure is not here. It wasn't about being comfortable or having conveniences in this life. It's about where I'm going. My present reality can be really bad. I can be dying on a gurney from cancer in pain, and I can say this: I recognize I can rejoice about what's coming.

When a little kid is told that we're going to take him to the happiest place on Earth on Friday, they get happy, they get giddy. They recognize the fact that they can rejoice now and they do it intuitively because they think that's where I'm going. You can even leverage that and you parents have. Right? "Hey, just go to bed now. We're going to Disneyland on Friday. The happiest place and the most expensive place on earth. You're going to get to go there. It'll be great." And you know what? It works unless your kid is really messed up. It works. Right? It's like they're like, "OK, OK. Yeah. Yeah." Can I tell you one link in the chain that is necessary in all this? They have to believe you. They have to believe you that you're actually going to do it. If they don't believe you, I mean, they're going to have a hard time being giddy and excited on a Tuesday night at bedtime about a Friday trip, if they don't think you're actually going to take them there. And you know what? All that will really matter is whether or not they get to watch their video or have their dessert. They can put up with a lot of stuff if they have their hope fixed on something they think is the happiest place on Earth.

If we're on a plane at 40,000 feet and it's going down and the engines have shut down and we know we are cruising over some mountain range and we're going to die. And the flight attendants come down the aisle and they've got parachutes and they say when we get to jumping altitude this parachute will save you. If you really believe that, I mean, that's a scary scenario, but at least I'll recognize if I strap this thing on and you get this on my back, I'll be saved.

Now, usually when we're flying, particularly on United Airlines, all I care is if I get an extra set of those Biscoff cookie things. That's what I really want. Right? I try to be really nice to that flight attendant. "Can I get another one?" I mean, that's what I care about. If I see myself getting passed over while the guy across the aisle is getting a double portion of those crackers, those cookies, I'm upset. I am not happy. Do you see the folly that we have? The folly. We might have to go from 40,000 feet to 10,000 feet, to 8,000. Yeah, I understand. We got a ways until we get to this time



when we're bailing out. But when we're sitting here feeling bad for ourselves, cause that guy across the aisle got a pillow, he got a blanket. Why did he get, you know, beverage service and I didn't?

When you're sitting around with your disability, your paralysis, your chronic illness, all you're worried about is the fact that the guy across the street doesn't suffer the way that you do. What really matters is whether he's got a parachute on his back. All that really matters is if you have a parachute on your back. That's what matters. Would it be nice even if we're cruising down into the mountain range if I had some Biscoff cookies and a pillow? I guess that would make the next 30,000 feet comfortable for me, but it doesn't matter that much.

To tell my daughter from the time that she was born and could converse with me, do you know what really matters? It has nothing to do with whether your legs work or not. What really matters is whether you're right with God. What matters is your sins get blotted out. Because you know what? If you have those sins blotted out, trust me, you can save the leaping and jumping and the skip rope and all the rest till we walk through the gates to the kingdom. What really matters is whether you have your backpack, your parachute strapped securely to your back.

Peter can rejoice even if he's put in prison, as he will in the next chapter. Paul can rejoice if he's put in stocks and whipped as he was later in the book of Acts. You and I can rejoice because we believe God's promise. He proved it by the 23 broken bodies that were fixed, by the three resurrections, by the five broken bodies fixed in Acts, by the two resurrections there. We know he's good for it. I know who I believe. I know he's able to guard what I have entrusted to him. I put my life in his hands.

Have you ever enjoyed reading a novel? Do you like to read? If you've read a novel, professors of literature will tell you that you have some indebtedness to John Bunyan. John Bunyan in the 17th century, I mean those at least who are willing to recognize it, is really the father of modern novel writing. He wrote the most famous early, fictitious, allegorical work about the Christian life, John Bunyan did. It became something that just sparked an entire literary movement. It was the third best-selling book in colonial America. If you had enough money to have books, you had a Bible on your shelf, you had the Foxe's Book of Martyrs on your shelf, and you had Bunyan's, what's the book? (audience response with Pilgrim's Progress) on the shelf. And they devoured that.

Pilgrim's Progress. Pilgrim's Progress. I mean, those words ought to be enough to tell you where John Bunyan's mind was. John Bunyan was busy about his work and he came to Christ by overhearing two women who were very poor, as he's going about his business fixing household items that he did. He heard those women talking about joy, knowing where they were going. And it just confounded him. Oh, he had been exposed to Christianity. He'd read a few books about Christianity, but he's intrigued by the fact that these women who didn't have anything seem to have a hope that the next world mattered more than this one. And John became a Christian and he started to preach, he couldn't help it. Super intelligent, creative, imaginative guy. He was good at preaching, good at illustration, good with word pictures. But of course, England was trying to crack down on the church and so they outlawed preaching unless you were licensed under the Anglican Church. It's like what we're going to encounter in Acts Chapter 4, you can't shut guys



like that down. So we went out preaching and they put him in jail, in the Bedford jail, north of London. He spent 12 years on and off in the Bedford jails.

Pilgrim's Progress. What's a pilgrim? Picture moving through a land that's not his own. Progress? Where are you going? Have you read Pilgrim's Progress? He's going to the celestial city, that's the picture. We're headed to heaven. This earth is not our home. We are aliens and strangers here. Do you know the subtitle to the most famous fictional narrative of the 17th century? Here's the subtitle "Pilgrim's Progress." We're not done, here it is, "From this world to that which is to come." That was his perspective.

And I can only think perhaps like me, John had to be affected by his children. He had four children but maybe you don't know this. One of his children was handicapped, to use a politically incorrect term. Handicapped. She was blind from birth. You know, I think part of what he must have grappled with in terms of seeing that this life was not what it was about, was dealing with his blind daughter, who would find her way every time she could, regularly, to go bring him provisions in the Bedford jail. Here was his blind daughter. And he wasn't ashamed to say of those four kids, she was his favorite. He loved her. Mary was her name. And I can only think with an unfixable problem, which is just a foretaste of all the unfixable issues in our physical lives, he looked at his daughter and he recognized, you know what, this world is not what it's about. "Pilgrim's Progress: from this world to the one which is to come."

Of his four children, Mary was the only one who didn't outlive him. He had to bury his daughter. When Mary died and he grieved over the loss of his daughter that he loved and unabashedly favored, he wrote a book. Of course, his most famous book, Pilgrim's Progress. He wrote several books. I have his complete library of works. One of them that I was reading this week, I didn't know the fact that he sat down to write this after his daughter was buried. You know what it's called? It wasn't an allegory. It was a straight-up teaching on the resurrection of the dead. His heart and mind and treasure were there, not here.

And I thought, well maybe this is a book like Alcorn's book. You know, Randy. "Heaven." Joni Eareckson taught his book "Heaven. My Real Home." The first half is, it's great, talks about the blessedness of the resurrected life and how paralyzed legs will walk and how blind eyes will see. But the second half of the book is bigger than the first half. The second half of the book is about the judgment for those who reject the gospel. And he knew, as I hope you know, and I hope it affects the way you point people to Christ, that you either have this problem fixed in Christ or you face the penalty of your own sin. He wrote more in the second half of the book about the problem of people who will face the consequences of their sin because "it's appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment." He could rejoice that his daughter would one day get a resurrected body back with eyes to see that in this life never did. But his heart was broken. He was a tireless evangelist, a tireless evangelist. That's the whole reason he was in jail because he couldn't stop preaching. He told the authorities at one point, if you let me out of jail, I'm going to keep preaching. I mean, that was his attitude.

I hope this week, even if our government threatens to put you in jail and I think it's only a matter of time if you're uncompromising about the gospel, I hope you say it doesn't matter. You give me



a chance I'm going to point people to Christ. Because this is not about this life, it's about the next. I'm not trying to be comfortable. I'm not just trying to achieve more things. I don't want to store up treasure here. I'll have stuff. I have to have stuff. You may end up with a lot of stuff, but I hope it's stuff and not your treasure, because where your treasure is your heart will be also. Point people to Christ because all that matters is where they end up. I hope you have that settled. If by chance you don't, and I'm sitting here today talking to someone who does not have this settled, today's the day to see your sin for what it is and repent, so that God can send his Son and we can start the kingdom where everything is fixed. The crooked straight, the rough places plain.

Let's pray. God, help us in a day when it's easy to say that it's far better to be alive than dead. The world is telling us that, and yet the Bible says that those who have their hope in Christ, whose hearts and minds are set with Christ in heavenly places, that for me to live is Christ, I will be faithful to do what God calls me to do. But to die is gain, far better to depart and be with Christ. God, we have no rights over when our life ends. That's your business. But we want to be faithful as long as our lungs have breath and we can communicate the gospel to say to people be reconciled to God. Help us God in a day we're so tempted to just rearrange the furniture on the deck of this sinking ship and realize what we need is to get people in a lifeboat. Let's get that salvation securely strapped to our lives and worry less about whether we have a pillow or extra peanuts or comfortable leg room. Let us do what it takes to spend and be expended for the souls of those around us.

In Jesus name, Amen.