



## **Pointing People to Christ-Part 2**

Telling the Truth

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Well, I've noticed a dialog box on my computer that pops up and also on my phone. Same thing. A dialog box that simply reads something has gone wrong. I don't know. I just don't think that's all that helpful, really, to tell me something has gone wrong. I know that usually by the time that pops up that something's not right. Things aren't the way they're supposed to be. And then it just says, "Hey, Mike, something has gone wrong." Now, I'm not trying to say that the programmers are lazy or anything like that, these app developers. But I do remember a day when the dialog box would pop up and it would tell you what was wrong. They just tell me what's wrong and maybe even how to fix it would be helpful. Don't just tell me something went wrong. I mean for sympathy, maybe C+, but for helpfulness, that dialog box is an F. It does not help.

Now, I know if you're a programmer you'll say, "Well, Pastor Mike, the computers they're complicated. These programs, they are complicated. You just can't explain everything." No, I get that. It's kind of like life. Life is complicated. But sometimes we really need when we know things aren't the way they're supposed to be is we just need a clear, honest diagnosis. We need some steps to figure out clearly, intelligently, how do we make it right? How do we fix it? That's always helpful. Super helpful. And I guess before you even give that information, you've got to get a person's attention. And I give you an A+ for the dialog box that just jumps up in the middle of the screen. It does that, it's framed, it's right there. Whatever you're working on, it just covers that all up and says, "Hey, look here," and that's good.

And when God tries to get our attention to tell us what's wrong, he does it in ways that are very dramatic. In the Bible, when he's got some things to say to us, his creation, that here's your problem and here's how to fix it, it started with the first five books of the Bible and a series of miraculous events that took place at the hand of Moses and certainly got people's attention. Then here comes God with the information. The information's about our sin, his holiness and here, you want to fix the problem, here's how you do it. Certainly when Jesus came on the scene, he did the same thing. That's the pattern, these miraculous signs, he did several of them, more than anyone else in the Bible, and then here came the information. It was a diagnosis that really wasn't all that popular. Matter of fact, they crucified him for what he was saying and yet it was needed. It certainly had clear steps as to how to fix the problem.

Everyone intuitively knows there's a problem. I mean, if you really are honest about your conscience and you think about your life, you realize things are not the way they're supposed to be, certainly in the world. We'd like to know if God can help us. Like, how do we fix this? How do we get this right? In the acts of the apostles, you don't see the rash of miracles you saw in the gospels, that's for sure. Jesus healed many people to show his divine power and it certainly got people's attention. But in the book of Acts, you do have five healings and this is the first one that we started studying last week in Acts Chapter 3. The first 10 verses were all about this man who everyone knew, for years, who sat there as a fixture on the Temple Mount. When everyone was coming into the temple there at 3 o'clock in the afternoon for prayers that day, all of a sudden



now, through the name of Christ, the authority of Christ, he gets up and starts leaping around. He's trying to find a basketball team to sign up for. He's now healed and everybody is like, "Wow, this guy who's begging for money every day is now healthy, in perfect health."

Well, that got people's attention. And in that moment, it was like God slid Peter the keyboard and said, OK, tell him what's up. Give them the information they need. And I'll tell you what, it took a lot of courage to effectively do what Peter is doing in this passage. As promised, we're going to get today in verse 11 with the beginning of what Peter was saying and they're hard words. But I'll tell you what, that's what God needs is an honest diagnosis and clear steps to remedy the problem. We get that from Peter and I hope it will serve as an example for you this morning, because I know we're going to need courage in our day, just like he needed it in his day to say, here's what God says the problem is. Next week, more on here's how to fix it.

But today, since it's very unpopular, it seems increasingly so in our generation, to really be honest about the problem, to tell the truth about what's wrong with human beings. I think we need to focus on these first six verses of Peter's sermon and let them sink in so that we might leave motivated afresh to be honest to tell the truth with people about what they need to do to get right with God. And it all starts with understanding the problem.

So take your Bibles, if you haven't already, and let's look at the first six verses of Peter's sermon, which starts in verse 11. So we'll look at verses 11 through 16. I want to read it for you. You might remember the setting. Everyone's attention now is fixated on Peter, and he'd gotten to a place where he could address the people. We're going to look at what he says here beginning in verse 12, but let's get the context in verse 11 when it says, well, "He," that is this formerly paralyzed man, "clung to Peter and John," not because he needed their support, by the way, he's leaping around. So his legs are fine, but he's clinging to them just like I suppose you would if someone had just fixed your life-long paralysis. You're going to be clinging to them and so he was.

And "all the people were utterly astounded and they ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's." Portico. That's a word maybe you don't use every day. Portico, the colonnade, the covered porch. If you've ever looked at the recreations of Herod's temple, this reconstructed, refurbished temple, you saw a very impressive set of columns that went all around the edges of it and that was called Solomon's Portico or his colonnade. It's his covered porch. It was a good place for a speaker to stand because you get the vocal, you know, the acoustics of that voice projected. You could just stand with just a sea of people out there on the Temple Mount, it was huge. So he's got their attention and the keyboards been slid to him and now, here, tell them what's up.

So in verse 12, here's what happens, "Peter saw it," the crowd, "and he addressed the people." Here's what he says now. "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though through our own power or piety, we've made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name -- by



faith in his name -- has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of all of you." You've seen it. You've watched it. Here's what you need to realize.

Those are hard words right in the middle of this passage, verse 13. "You've delivered him over. You denied him in the presence of Pilate." Pilate. Remember the Roman official who was going to release him and he wanted to release him. His wife had even warned him, don't have anything to do with this man. He's an innocent man. And he tried to, he kept saying to the crowds, he hasn't done anything wrong. Why should he be crucified? And yet they chanted for him to be crucified. And even when he said, I know how I'll get out of this, I'll put forward the worst criminal that we have in custody. So he chose Barabbas and he said, I'm going to bring him out, as was the custom at the Passover when Jesus was about to be crucified at this festival, all the people were there. He said, I'll give them the option. I'll release one of the prisoners and I got two of them here, one that I know is innocent who was delivered up because of envy and jealousy and now I've got this terrible insurrectionist, this murderer. I know that they'll pick Jesus to be released and they didn't. "You denied the Holy and Righteous One and you ask for the murderer, Barabbas, to be granted to you. And you killed the Author of life." Those are harsh words. They're hard to hear. So you've got to give Peter credit for being just brutally honest about what's wrong with the people in their heart, their frustration, their anger, their hostility, their revolt, their rebellion against Jesus.

But it starts with something that I think is worthy of our consideration, though, it may not be something you think you need in verses 11 through 13, and that is the people thinking Peter's great power and piety had done this miracle. And you say, "Well, you know, I don't think anybody at my office is going to think I'm a miracle worker because I'm not working any miracles. And they're probably not going to be clinging to me like I'm some kind of powerful figure. So, you know, I really don't need this." Well, you may not think you need this, but I think it's not a bad thing for us to at least take the lesson of deflecting any kind of attention from us to Christ. I think that's a good thing. It's a good thing in particular, because when we're trying to point people to Christ, sometimes people say, I don't want to go to Christ because they end up pointing at Christians. Right? So that's what I want to think through as Peter goes, look, don't look at us. It's not our power and piety that have done this miracle. I'm thinking when we talk about Christianity and we try to do what God is doing here, to glorify Christ, to put him up on a pedestal that Christ is the one you ought to follow, you ought to worship him, you ought to obey him, you ought to give your allegiance to him. Sometimes non-Christians, they look at Christians, they go, well, that's why I'm not going to follow Christ.

Matter of fact, Gandhi, remember Gandhi, this lifelong Hindu, this leader, this guy that everyone respected? Well, he often talked about Jesus Christ. Matter of fact, people would interview him and say, you seem to be really into Christ. He'd say, "I am. I love the Sermon on the Mount. I want to embody his principles." And he was asked on several occasions, "Well, why don't you become a Christian?" He said what many people will say, and that is, "Well, I don't like Christians. I mean, I like Christ. I just don't like Christians." From Gandhi all the way to the worker who was in my house this week when presented with Christ and the gospel, his response is, well, I'm not



interested in hearing your message about Christ because Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites. Ever heard that?

So in reality, this principle of saying, OK, when we're thinking about pointing people to Christ, let's make sure that we deflect the interest in us as a group. We're not calling people just to our church. We're not calling people to some kind of loyalty to our pastor. We're not just trying to get people to be impressed with the movement of Christendom. What we're interested in is them seeing Christ, the greatness of Christ. Glorified. That's a word that's kind of a churchy Bible word, but that word, I often explain it from the, really, the lexical heart of it, etymologically from the Hebrew word "kabob," which is the weightiness, the gravity. But you see this word here, even in the verbal form "to glorify." It's like, I mean, here's a good lexical definition of it: to appraise something as valuable, to look at and say that is a valuable thing, to put it on the top shelf and put a spotlight on it and say this is the thing we ought to honor and value. That's the picture of trying to exalt and proclaim the greatness of Christ. We want people to see Jesus Christ as Lord, as king, as boss. We want people to be loyal to Christ.

So if you're going to do that, as you should do that and we're going to take our cues from the apostles and represent in our generation the message of reconciliation, to be ambassadors of this message, be sure to deflect people's interest, even their accusations, against what they don't think is worthy in Christians and say, wait a minute, this is really not about Christians, this is about Christ. Matter of fact, I'll put it this way. Number one, if you're taking notes, we need to "Promote Christ Not Christians." That's just a good starting point for us as we think about diagnosing their problem. We'll get to that. And I know they don't like that. But one of the reasons they rebuffed that is they keep making accusations about us.

Matter of fact, there's a good little passage in Second Corinthians Chapter 4. I'd love for you, if you're deft in your Scriptures, to get to this passage. I'd like you to look at this and even highlighted it in your Bibles, because this is such an important, simple phrase that would just be a good emblazoned banner for us to think through when you consider your job to point people to Christ this week. You are to be someone trying to do, in the eyes and minds of people, what Jesus here is being proclaimed as. In other words, he is the exalted, glorified one. Let's make that happen.

Second Corinthians Chapter 4, Paul, I'll get you right in the middle of this paragraph. Look at verse 5. Here's just a good line for us to remember. Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 5. "For what we proclaim," Paul says "we," he's in a team of missionaries, "is not ourselves." We're not trying to promote us. We're not trying to proclaim us. We're not preaching us. "But Jesus," this one from Nazareth, the Christ, the Messiah, as we're trying to preach him and present him as, now here's a word that is related to glorify, we're promoting and proclaiming him "as Lord," as the boss, as the king, as the top of the pyramid. The one that everyone should submit to, like Daniel 7. Everyone's loyalty, everyone's honor and praise and glory, it should all be about Christ. So "Jesus the Christ as Lord," and you want to talk about us. What's our role in all this? Look at the next phrase: "with ourselves," we're proclaiming ourselves "as just your servants," we're your servants, "for Jesus' sake." We're just trying to get you to see that we're here to serve you in answering questions in directing your thoughts and explaining things so that you can see the



greatness of Christ. We're deflecting all that attention to say, listen, don't stumble over us, don't look at us, don't exalt us, look at the greatness of Christ.

It's back to that illustration I gave you not too long ago about being on a campaign election committee. You know, if you serve on that committee, you are about getting that candidate elected. That's your goal. So you're about promoting that person. You want him or her to be the focus of the attention and all your job is, is to get everyone to see how reasonable and appropriate it is for them to put their vote in that person's direction. And that's the idea here. We're promoting them. We see ourselves as just objects of God's grace that he even would use us to be on the campaign committee.

Look at the context of this particular verse I've just showed you in Second Corinthians 4, look at verse 1. When he thinks about his role, he says "we have this ministry," we do this thing, we're serving on this election committee, if you will, "by the mercy of God." We know we don't even deserve it. We know that we even got turned on to this concept of the greatness of Christ by God's grace. It's a merciful thing. We don't lose heart, we're going to stick at it even if we don't see a lot of success in changing people's hearts. We'd love everyone to see the greatness of Christ. But we're not going to lose heart.

"We've renounced disgraceful and underhanded ways." We're not car salesmen, even if we're accused of being that. We're not charlatans, we're not in it for the money or the power or the recognition, even though people claim that. "We've renounced all the disgraceful, underhanded ways." I'm trying to get your attention off of us, not because we want to be charlatans or that we are. No, "We refuse," he says, verse 2, "to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word." More on that in a minute. We certainly don't want to adjust the diagnosis or the truth of the gospel, "but with an open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves," to be good campaigners, "to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." We want you to see that we are servants for your sake, to see you recognize the greatness of Christ.

So we want to be doing this right. We would like to be people of integrity, "even if our gospel is veiled." Even if you write us off and you write God off. "It is veiled to those who are perishing." And why? Verse 4, because "In their case, the god of this world," small "g." We're talking about Satan here, the enemy of God, that spiritually working in the minds of people, he's "blinded the minds of the unbelievers," to keep them from seeing. Here's what we're promoting. "Seeing the light of the gospel of the glory," there is the word again, the glory of Christ, "who," how glorified is he? Is the image of God. As Jesus said, you ought to honor the Son just as you honor the Father. You ought to see Jesus, this human being, as God, and that God-man as the one who you give your complete attention to. You'd much as soon offend everyone in the world that you know than to offend him. You see him as God, as Lord, as king. That is what we're all about. We're about proclaiming him, not ourselves, but him. "Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness'," think about people who can't see this. "he has shown in our hearts," that's why it's an act of mercy for even us to be on the campaign committee. "He has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." The greatness of God. And where do we see it? When we look at Christ, "in the face of Jesus Christ." We'd like the world to see how great Christ is so that they can do what everyone





should do. Bow their knee, confess with their tongue, live in obedience to Christ, and follow him with all their hearts.

By the way, sidebar, when they say those things, "You Christians are hypocrites, that's why I don't want to hear your message about Christ," whether it's Gandhi or a repairman in your house, I want you to respond intelligently to that. There are a lot of people like to say, "Oh, we're all hypocrites." And the response is, "Well, there's room for one more." That's not a helpful answer. Right? That's probably not what you want to say. But let me give you some things that I think you should say. Next time they say, "I want you to just stop with all your God talking, Bible stuff and Jesus stuff. I think Christians are a bunch of hypocrites." OK?

Here's your response. Let me give you some suggestions. Number one, I would ask them this. Two words: "Is Christ?" Let's start with that. OK. I want to separate Christians from Christ and I want to say this. "Hey, you think Christians are a bunch of hypocrites? Let's not only address that. I'm just asking you this. Speaking of hypocrisy, is Christ a hypocrite?" I think Gandhi would say, "Well, of course not." Well, let's start with that. I hope my repairman would say the same thing. "No, I don't think Christ is a hypocrite." OK. "Well, that's who I'm talking about." Let's start with that. "Is Christ a hypocrite?" No.

Then I would ask him a second question. I would say, "Is he in favor of being a hypocrite? Is he in favor of hypocrisy? Is he promoting that? Does he want that?" Even there, I'm distancing whatever you might see as hypocrisy from the one that you're about to reject. You don't want to hear about Christ because Christians are all hypocrites. Well, I want to ask, "Is Christ a hypocrite?" And I hope they're going to say no. I assume they would. Pretty daring to say he is. And secondly, I'm going to say, "Is he in favor of hypocrisy?" And I trust they're going to say no to that.

So already I'm off to a good start. I would say thirdly, the third thing I would say to someone who says that I don't want to hear your message about Christ, because all the Christians are hypocrites, I would say this. I would say, "Are you telling me that you think ALL Christians are hypocrites?" That would be something I would ask them. Well, of course, in their mind, even if they have fodder for this accusation, they're thinking of one or two people. Maybe if you're thinking of 12 people, I don't care who you're thinking about. You probably aren't really saying that every single person you've ever met that claims to be a Christian is just a flaming phony car salesman, charlatan, hypocrite. I don't think you're saying that. And usually they'll say, "Well, no, I'm not saying that." OK. Well, that's good.

As long as we're making a list, here's number four question for you to ask him. I would say this: "Are you telling me that you only associate with groups that have no hypocrites in them? Is that what you're telling me? Really? I mean, you only get to buy an Apple computer if everyone who works for Apple Computers does not buy a Windows machine." I don't think that's the case. "I'm only going to drink Pepsi if everyone who works for Pepsi drinks Pepsi and not Coke at night. I can find hypocrites in every corner of the world. So I just want to make sure you're not saying that you only associate with groups in which there are no hypocrites." See, I want them to recognize, well, that's a silly thing.



And I guess the thing I always say, even if I don't get through all of those, my response every time that someone says to me, "Hey, don't be pushing your Jesus on me because all Christians are hypocrites," I always get around to this illustration and I've used it incessantly and forgive me for being redundant. But I say if this world is a sinking ship, we're on a cruise ship and it's going down. And you are about to drown in the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean. And I bring you to the deck where the lifeboat is, and I say, here's your salvation right here and you look in the lifeboat and you say, I ain't getting in it because there are a bunch of hypocrites in that boat. Are you telling me you wouldn't get in?

You may have trouble holding your nose, sitting next to someone you don't like. But I'm hoping you have enough reasonable self-interest to say, you know what? You're right. The people who are in this boat are not going to prevent me from the salvation that is offered in Christ. All of these diagnostics that I try to get through with people who say your church is full of hypocrites, the people that follow Christ are all hypocrites, I just want to separate the distinction between the Christians and Christ. I'm promoting a Christ who is not a hypocrite, who's not in favor of hypocrisy. And you know what? There's a lot of people who are not hypocrites in this. And by the way, you don't even live consistently with that. You got a lot of groups you're involved in that are filled with hypocrites or at least have hypocrites in it.

Not to mention the fact that you'd be stupid to say no to something that would give you any eternal advantage because you think that people in the lifeboat are not up to your standards. That's silly. That's ridiculous. The offer of forgiveness is on the table. God will take everything you've ever done and wipe it clean from your slate, clothe you in the righteousness of Christ. You will be saved and never hear, "Depart from me. I never knew you." "Out into this eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." You're never going to hear that. And you're saying I'm not going to do it because there are some people at your church I don't like, because I found some hypocrites in my past who claim to be Christian.

By the way, all the accusations that Peter is making here, you'll notice he uses one word twice, the word "deny." But you know in the context, as you denied releasing Christ when you could have released Christ, when Pilate didn't want to crucify Christ, but you denied him a release and you picked Barabbas to be released instead. Interesting that he'd picked the word "deny" in all this. I'm glad that Jesus, when he was looking for someone to tell the truth about the problem of sin, he picked a guy who had never denied him, Sunday school grads. You're supposed to chuckle with a sarcastic response.

Well, OK. If anyone should know that they can preach an uncompromising message of God's standard and the right response to Christ, he's going to know that you don't need to be perfect to be giving that message to other people in an uncompromising way. In other words, he is someone who has denied Christ. Matter of fact, when Christ said, you know what, I'm praying for you guys. And Peter said, "Ahh. Save your prayers for other people, because, you know, here's the thing I would never deny you. I would never... Everyone else could fall away, I will never. Matter of fact, I'd go to my death for you." If you read that either in Matthew or in Luke, you'd find you can't get through the chapter until you get to that paragraph where it's headed by our translators and the



editors, they just put it above in our English translation, "Peter Denies Christ." Yeah, he's denied Christ. You may be sitting there talking about the fact that Jesus demands that we not be hypocrites, and you may be in your own mind going, "Well, you know what? I have been myself."

You may be in your own thinking, recognizing that your repentance is not a textbook example of what great repentance is about, but you're still going to call people to repentance. You may recognize that even in your own life, you've struggled with your faith, but in reality, you're calling people to put their faith in Christ. I get that. God is asking you to point people to Christ, to bring the standard and the diagnosis and the remedy to them even if you think, "Well, you know what, I'm not a perfect example." That's fine. I understand that. That's why God chose Peter I'm quite sure, a man that he was going to say things about that were so heady. I mean, here he's going to be the preacher. He even uses his name in association with the building block of the Church. The profession of Christ is "I'm going to build my church." And just in that statement was because Peter had just confessed that he's the Son of God.

I mean, it's a heady thing to be thinking in those terms. I can see why you think, "Well, I'd never... God picked a good, healthy quarterback here." Well, you're not the best quarterback. And the point of this all is that you and I recognize that what we're promoting is not ourselves, not our track record, not how perfect we are, not how great our church is, not how fantastic we are as Christians. We're trying to promote and glorify Christ, to put him on the highest pedestal and say, you know what? He's not a hypocrite. He is perfect. You should put your allegiance and trust in Christ. Promote Christ, not Christians.

I think that's a super-duper necessary thing for Peter because, of course, there are lots of reasons to put him on a pedestal after you just healed or at least was the agency, the conduit of healing this paralytic. Yet it's a principle that we can utilize today, particularly because people are pointing at Christians instead of Christ when we're trying to present Christ. Put the focus and the directional point back on Jesus.

Well, that's all well and good and so far we might even have a decent presentation of something that might be palatable to non-Christians. "Oh, look at you, humble Christians. You're pointing to Christ. That's great." Well, for all the points we score in verses 11 and 12 and half of 13, we lose them all here in the middle verse 13. Go back to our passage, Acts Chapter 3 verse 13. After talking about the "glorification of his servant Jesus," he then says, oh, Jesus, as long as talking about Jesus, let's make it really clear. Here's the problem. "You delivered over and denied him in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him. No. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and you asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life." Pause right there. That is a mouthful. It is a hard, hard diagnosis.

You may be envisioning in this scene the people who just months earlier, and maybe some of them were in that crowd, had chanted to have Christ crucified. You picture this revolt, this rebellion against God and his Messiah. You may think, "Well, I'm glad that my neighbors and my co-workers that I'm trying to point people to Christ, I don't have to say that about them, because, you know, of course, they're not in that camp."





Let's stop and think about that for a second. There's a phrase, if you grew up in church and even if you're kind of new to this, surely you've heard it and you probably said it many times. Here is a very simple truth that will never exonerate you from extracting yourself or anybody you know from this passage. Here's the phrase, we find it in First Corinthians Chapter 15. You find it everywhere in the Scripture. Here it is. You've said it often and that is this: that Jesus died for your sins. Jesus died for your sins. Paul says, "I'm going to deliver to you of what I received of first importance: that Jesus died for sins, according to the Scriptures."

Okay, let's think about the connection. There's a correspondence there between his death and our sin. Now, in this case, he's looking at the sin of delivering him over to death and calling for his crucifixion. You may say, "Well, I wasn't historically there for that. So that doesn't apply to me or my neighbor that I'm sharing with wasn't there. I don't have to use such harsh words for him." Well you may not have been in that crowd, but if you're really claiming that sin was the reason for the crucifixion, that the reason he died was to pay for sin and he's dying for your sin, then you have to see the correspondence between God treating Christ as though he were the sinner of the sins that you committed. My sins, no matter what they might be, the sins of omission, the things I didn't do that I should have done, or commission the things I did that I shouldn't have done. All of those things placed on Christ. If there's a real correspondence between my sinful actions and Christ's death, guess what? Then there was a cause. I can see the causal connection here. I know it was a willing thing, but a causal connection, a correspondence between my sin and his suffering. My decisions causing his suffering.

Were you in the crowd going "crucify him, crucify him?" We'll no. You just wanted to do your own thing. And in that sense, you may think, well, that's kind of a passive deal. I wasn't really chanting for his death. My neighbors weren't chanting for his that, my coworkers really weren't just revolting "against God and his Anointed." Well, I use that phrase, because Psalm 2 equates people who don't want to see Christ for who he is as not only denying God and his anointed, but revolting "against God and his Anointed."

That's a good passage to ponder this week. We won't take time to go there. I don't have endless hours this morning, but I would like you at some point this week to look at Psalm 2 and remember that our waywardness, our unwillingness to exalt Christ to the right place as the passage says, "Kissing the Son," which was an act of homage to the anointed. My unwillingness to see Christ as Christ is an act of treason and rebellion against God. That I am choosing to do things that in reality are a treasonous and rebellious, revolting act against the God of the universe. I'm saying I want my rules, not yours.

It goes back to the Garden as simple as Eve reaching out her hand and taking that fruit from the tree after, in her mind, she was tempted to say because of Satan, "Listen, God didn't really say that. And even if he did, I want to do what I want. I see it. It's good for the eyes. I liked the way it looks. It's going to be good for food. I'm going to eat it anyway." That's a rebellion against God. You see this picture throughout the Scripture. I think of Isaiah saying, "You guys are rebelling against God. You have all the advantages of being in God's world, receiving God's grace," and Israel even more, "being the covenant people of God, and because you refuse to do what he says," that seems like such a passive act, "you're in active, open rebellion against God." That's the truth



for every sinner on the planet. It might be really hard to diagnose and you may not be able to quote this word for word and say, you know, "You stood before Pilate and you asked for Barabbas." I understand that, but the principle of rebellion and revolt is there and you've got to uncover that.

Number two, if you're taking notes, jot this down, this is our job before we get to the good news of salvation and the love of Christ, we've got to "Diagnose the Revolt Against God." There is a revolt and an active kind of revolt against God because of our sin.

Bear with me on this illustration, because there's a connection here. But let's start with this. The idea of sin in general, the word sin, both in Hebrew and in the New Testament Greek, Old Testament and New Testament words, they both have this picture of not measuring up, which again, most people will say, "Well, I don't measure up. That's, you know, God's going to love me anyway." If you ask people if they're going to heaven, "Yeah, I'm going to go to heaven." Why? "Well, I'm a good person." Good based on their definition of good. Based on the fact that I compare myself with other people. So let's just talk about the word sin. Sin is the word "falling short," missing the mark.

Which, by the way, even if you don't believe the lexical definition of that, you know that in one of the first verses you ever learned, Romans 3:23, it says "all have sinned," Hamartano, the Greek word, "fall short," you don't measure up, "and fall short of the glory of God." It couldn't be any clearer than that. It's almost a redundant phrase. You missed the mark because you missed the mark. You missed the mark because you fell short of God's standard. Now, we don't struggle with that as an open act of rebellion because we're so used to no one measuring up. So when we say I'm going to be OK with God when I die because, you know, I'm a good person. We shrug our shoulders because that's a relative term based on comparisons.

Here's the illustration. Maybe it'll help. Pastor John, on staff, you know Pastor John? At the end of the year, December, at end of December, he got his first hole-in-one on a 225-yard par-three with his old three iron. It was an impressive shot. I got texts all the sudden from all the witnesses. "Pastor John just got a hole-in-one," which clearly demonstrates he's not spending enough time in the office working and studying (audience laughter).

Now, I got two possible responses to a 225-yard hole-in-one. I got two responses, two possible options. I can say this, I can say, "Wow, that's amazing. That's really impressive. That's great. You are a great golfer." Or I could say, "Isn't that what you've been trying to do every time you hit the club? I mean, right? You get up there every time, aren't you aiming at that every time? Is this the first time you've aimed at that? (audience laughter) Or are you just telling me for the very first time the ball went where you wanted it to go? You've spent all these years playing this game and you've never been able to put the ball where you wanted it to be. Oh, wow. Congrats." (audience laughter) I mean, you know, I got two responses I can have.

Now, the reason I said graciously what everyone else says and that's "WOW!!!" is because we are comparing that to everyone else. And for an amateur golfer, for an amateur golfer, I wrote down the stats. What are the odds here? The odds of a hole-in-one, let's see Pastor Mike, is 12,500 to 1.



OK? So, yeah, I'm kind of impressed because you probably haven't teed it up at a par three 12,500 times. So I guess you're above average here because the average golfer takes 12,500 shots to get that one shot in the hole. And if you're a professional golfer, it takes 2,500. It's a 2,500 to 1 chance, statistically speaking, that you're going to hit a hole-in-one. So we all say, Wow! Why? Because everyone stinks at this game. Right? That ball can physically go in that hole every time you hit it if you could just put it where you want it to be. Right? That's the point. That's why most of you don't play the stupid game, because it doesn't go where you want it to go.

Sin, as long as we're talking about golf, (audience laughter) sin is missing the mark. We are so used to missing the mark, when someone doesn't miss the mark all the time we hailed them as a wonderful person. And you may be saying, well, look at what I did and you think of the good... When you stand before God you're thinking that thing that you did last Thursday between 1:00 in the afternoon and 1:07. Man, that was good. In reality, you want to forget all those missed shots. OK. That's harmarano. That's falling short.

But the open act of rebellion is calling good everything else, calling good coming close, calling good, which really is how this works, people sticking a flag and digging a hole wherever their ball ends up after they hit it. That's how most people play this moral game of life. They say this is a good life. It's a really good life. And I'm going to define goodness by my life because this is how my life went. I'm not even sorry for any of the mistakes I've made because they've made me who I am. That's drawing the bull's eye after you took the shot. Right? That's painting the bull's eye on the side of the barn after you shot the arrow. That's you digging a hole in the fairway or in the weeds or in someone's backyard and saying, well, that's where I meant to hit it. And you know what? That's the open rebellion against God.

Because here's the thing, at some point we're going to say, "Who is God to layout this course anyway? I kind of like where I hit it. I kind of think it's OK. I think it's only reasonable that I would end up here. So how can God really judge me for not putting it in the hole?" Can you imagine playing golf with Jesus? Can you just imagine what that would be like? Let's just say that the physics of golf are like the moral and ethical decisions people make, and every time he got up there, he knocked it in the hole.

Which, by the way, is the reason people don't want to hear this message of the gospel. Because it starts with the bad news of a holy standard and you falling short of it. You think to yourself, you're telling me the only scorecard that counts is an 18? Every single time you step up you get a hole-in-one, even if it's a 580-yard, you know, par five, you're going to say every single time it's got to go in the hole? Well, that would be how the game should be played, I suppose. If you had superhuman strength and superhuman aim and superhuman swing every time, that ball would go exactly where you wanted it to go. If the pin in the target is there, you'd get up and it would go right in that hole every time.

The Bible says what Jesus came to do is to post the perfect score. He said, this is what God requires. He laid out the course. He expects you to do what he says. You and I have failed and we're sitting there saying hooray because you're better than the guy on your news feed, because you're better than that guy at work who did all those terrible things, because you think of the



person in your family and you think you're more together than they are. And we're all sitting around relatively defining what good is. That's the problem. And for you to say it's good is an act of open revolt against the God who made you.

The only person who has the right to decide what is moral is God. He is, by definition, the golf course architect. He is the builder and he's the one who can step on the course and put it in the hole every single time. That's the godliness of God. It's the holiness of Christ. It's the perfection of God's Spirit. That is exactly what God would demand of us and you say, "Well, then it's hopeless then." Well, it would be we're it not for the fact that the ship is sinking, but he's provided the answer. And your non-Christians are afraid who they're going to have to sit next to in church? That's ridiculous. You right now have a solution, but you have to admit that you are in open rebellion against God.

Why? Because there are three basic things. We don't like authority. I don't like someone else being in charge. I don't like them imposing their standard on me, and I don't want them judging me if I don't do what they expect. All of us hate that. We are human beings. We want to be the master of our own fate, the captain of our soul. We want to make sure that we're in charge, we make the rules and no one judges us. That's what matters. Matter of fact, a lot of that nonsense is even put in a cloak of Christianity and people, they think that's Christianity. You can think that's God. "He's loving and I've been to church and they're talking about God and hell and judgment and holiness. I don't like that, my God's loving." I'm probably going to hear that from someone on the patio today. "Well my God's loving."

Dude, you can hug the pillow of your imaginary God all you want. The real God is standing right before us and he is perfect. He demands holiness from you and you have not measured up. The love of God only becomes precious when you recognize the chasm between where you are and where God expects human beings to be and to say I got to bridge that chasm. I got to actually take my scorecard, throw it out, and I got to exchange it with the perfection of Christ. Peter's going to get into that in our next section. But the point of this is you've got to diagnose the problem. You've got to see the revolt, the rebellion. You've got to see how sin itself is an act of saying, "I don't want someone in charge, I don't want them setting the rules and I don't want any judgment when I die."

And the Bible saying just the opposite. God is sovereign over all things. His law is holy. "It's appointed unto man once to die and then comes the judgment." You can ignore all those passages and you can put your hand over your mouth and not tell your neighbors those truths. But you would not be a good messenger of God's gospel. You'd be telling people, "Hey, there's something wrong. Yeah, I feel for you." Man, I'd give you a C+ for sympathy, but I'd give you an F for accuracy.

You've got to tell the truth to the non-Christian world. Point people to Christ by making it clear their sins delivered Christ over to be crucified. They took the Holy and Righteous One, something you're not, and you would rather dismiss him from this world than you recognizing that you don't measure up. They killed Jesus, just as we would have, because we cannot stand the perfect



golfer. We don't want to play in that foursome. Especially if he's going to write our score down every time we take a shot. We don't want that judgment.

Well, there's no other place to be. You can't make your own course. You can't live in your own world. If you do live in your own world and you imagine your own God, well, then you're just an idolater and you're living in a fantasy land. The truth of the gospel has hard edges, and the goodness of the gospel starts with the badness of our own sin. Diagnose the revolt, make it clear.

Can you do it sympathetically? Do you think Peter might have been sympathetic about people denying Christ? I think he was. Matter of fact, in the letter that he wrote in First Peter 5 he says you ought to "clothe yourself in humility." But just because he was a humble person and had sympathy for the people he was preaching to didn't mean he didn't preach the truth. As Paul says later in this book, "I did not shrink back from telling you the whole counsel of God." I'm going to tell you the whole story. The whole story begins with some bad news and that is that our sins put Christ on a cross, the Author of life.

Middle of verse 15, back to our passage in Acts Chapter 3. The good news is and you might even see the paradox of kill the Author of life. How can you "kill the Author of life?" Well, in his humanity he could be killed, but of course, he was not going to be abandoned to decay, as he put earlier in quoting the psalmist, quoting David. Peter says, "Oh, of course, God raised him from the dead," and to this resurrection, you know, "we are witnesses." I mean, he sat there and appeared for 40 days. He was someone who appeared to people, as First Corinthians 15 says, in his resurrected body, his glorified body, to more than 500 people at a time. "No. We were witnesses to this."

"And his name," his authority, his power by trusting, "by faith in his name -- this man has been made strong," he's been made strong, "to whom you see and know," you know this guy. You know this is not some gimmick, it's not a trick. "And the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all." You see it.

Now, we said this last week and we didn't hear last week's message you really should or at least understand the fact that in the first 10 verses, the point of this whole section is not the healing of sick people. That was the "dialog box" to be thrown in your face, to say, "Hey, now that I got your attention, you need to know that the real problem is not your illness, the real problem is your forthcoming death." That's the problem. What you need is to survive that, not just your software intellectually conscious beyond the grave, is you being restored in your body, more than restored, glorified in your body, so that you can have a redeemed body and inhabit an eternal place, ultimately called the New Jerusalem. That's what God's plan is.

If that's to other-worldly for you, well then you just got some religion, as Paul said, that you ought to be pitied for, because if you're trusting Christ in this life only, if the results and benefits of Christianity are somehow just for this life, then you ought to be pitied more than anyone else, because it doesn't work that well. As a matter of fact, you make more enemies by preaching the gospel than you would if you just went along with everyone else in society.





So, it's about the next life as we preached last week and not about this life. It's not about the healing of lame legs because those same legs are going to be put in a casket one day. It's about a resurrected body that comes out of that casket that God re-constitutes, revitalizes, glorifies and puts into a place where there's no mourning, no crying, no death, no shame, no pain, none of that. It's all taken away and gone. That is our hope. Our hope is in heaven. Our citizenship is there. We await a Savior who with the great power that he has to subject everything to himself, is going to change your lowly body, "transform it to be like his glorified body," to quote Philippians Chapter 3.

So if that's our hope, where are we going to look to? Where's Gandhi going to look to? As a lifelong Hindu, rejecting Christianity but admiring Christ, who are you going to look to raise YOU from the dead? Jesus said this: There's no other way. "I am the resurrection and the life." Do you want to trust in me? Great. "Even if you die, yet shall you live." And "if you live and believe in me, you will never die." He said that at a funeral at the one of three people he raised from the dead personally in his earthly ministry, so that we could put our trust in him.

The whole point of Lazarus being raised from the dead was not that he was going to be in a glorified body after that. It was a resuscitation of his fallen body, and he would die again. The point is that you put your trust in Jesus so that when you do die, you will have a resurrected body, you will inhabit a new place, and you will live there without any reference to your sin, having all the blessings of God and none of the condemnation that your sins deserve. That's the gospel. It's reasonable for you to look to him and not to Gandhi and not to Mohammed and not to any other religious system or philosophy, but exclusively Jesus. That makes perfect sense.

The healings are an example of why it's reasonable that you trust in the Author of life. This problem you have of mortality that is fixed in the one who gave life to all people, he is the one "in him is life, and that life is the light of men," to quote John Chapter 1, "and the darkness couldn't overcome it," in his death. It couldn't keep him there. He was raised and you need to trust in him, and you should trust in him exclusively. That makes perfect sense because of what he proved through his own resurrection and even in this healing on the Temple Mount at 3:00 in the afternoon on one day when all the people went up there to pray.

Number three, you need to show people that. You need to "Show the Reasonableness of Faith." This makes perfect sense. Even though you may think it's other-worldly and it seems like a fantasy and a pie in the sky, and I could think about Meet the Press talking about what a fairy tale fantasy world we live in. You know what? They can say all they want. One day they'll be on their deathbed and guess what they're going to need? They're going to need immortality and there's only one way to get that. You're not going to find it in the world religions of a bunch of wise people sitting around telling us principles or proverbs to live by. You're going to find it in the Author of life who conquered death for us. That's the only hope you have. It's the only message we have. "There's no other name given among men by which we must be saved." That is the message that we're going to unpack in this next section as Peter goes on to Chapter 3, Chapter 4, defending the truth and the exclusivity of the gospel.



Show the reasonableness of faith. Christ has the power to give life and he can give life to your dead body. Not a resuscitation, but a glorification. And that all starts by you recognizing the problem of sin. We're going to unpack all that next week. But in the meantime, I'm here to tell you to not give up on pointing people to Christ and being truthful about the problem of sin.

When Paul stood before King Agrippa, we're going to get to this, Lord willing, in our study of Acts. He's standing there talking about these things and giving this message of hope for the next life. He, of course, anchors it where we all should at the bodily resurrection of Christ. When he brings that up, you might remember Festus was there, one of the Roman officials, and he hears Paul say this and he says to him, I know you're a really smart guy and all that but "your great learning has driven you insane," you're crazy. You're talking about dead bodies living. You're talking about your hope in the next life being on this man from Nazareth. You're crazy.

And Paul's response is so good. He said my words, he said, are "true and reasonable." This makes perfect sense. Non-Christians have a hard time seeing that and that's going to discourage you, because you're going to try to show them the greatness of Christ and the love of God demonstrated in a Christ who has given his life for you and offers you eternal life, and they're going to say you're crazy. All I'm telling you is don't be discouraged for the dozens of people who will tell you you're crazy, there's going to be a person there who God has prepared and like we learned in Second Corinthians 4, he's going to take those scales off their eyes. He's going to remove the grip of the enemy in their life and they're going to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. That's the goal. Don't give up.

If you were to go this afternoon to take your dog for a walk, head out. Maybe it'll be that way tonight. We've had some great sunsets lately, haven't we here over the ocean? Maybe you take a walk down to the ocean and walk down those wooden steps and you get to the sand and it's one of those sunsets that's just breathtaking. It's amazing. Maybe one of those nice houses on the hill is cooking dinner and you get the smell of something that takes you back in your life to a former time, and the cam fire that's just started down the way, the vision, the sand, the birds, everything is just perfect. And to you, you're just taken in by the majesty of God's creation at that moment and you're just overwhelmed and even a non-Christian would see it and be like, this is amazing.

I know we like to anthropomorphize our animals. Right? We like to call our dog a man's best friend. But your little irrational friend that you're taking down to the beach there has no sense of the majesty of what you're taking in. He's not breathless. He may pant a little, but he going to sit there and yawn at you and chase the seagulls around and kind of nudge up against your leg trying to see when you're going to throw the ball and you're like, "Look at this Bowser, look at it. It's amazing." He does not give a rip. Why? Because he doesn't see it. I mean, he sees it, but he doesn't see it. He sees it, but he doesn't get it.

Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians. "The natural man does not accept the things of God. They're foolishness to him," like Festus, foolishness. I cannot accept them. Because they are spiritually discerned, they're spiritually appraised. The only way you can see it for what it is if God gives you the sight to see it and you're going to sit there after giving this message to people that we are guilty, we are sinful, we are revolting against God, but God's grace forgives us and you



can embrace Christ. Not adding him to your plate like Gandhi is, another word of information to you to help you live life, but as the exclusive king and lord of your life. You're going to get rejected, and you're going to have people say that's nuts. And all I'm telling you is don't give up.

Because even when Festus was writing off Paul for his "true and rational words," King Agrippa, of all people, sat there and equivocated as though he was someone thinking long. He said, are you going to convince me in a short time to become a Christian? Paul goes, "Oh, not just you, everyone. I want everyone to be saved." That's a passion you've got to have to have a courage to stand up for the truth. God did not, to quote Paul to Timothy, a young pastor, God did not give us the spirit of timidity, "of fear, but of power and of love and of self-control." There's a great triad of things right there. Power, not fear, love. Why are we doing this? We care about people. You're not going to give up on this message. You're not going to give up on these people. You going to keep sharing the gospel.

Self-control, when you want to change it, you want to mitigate it, you want to tamper with the Word of God, you want a kind of conform it to what people's appetites are? Sorry, we can't. The greatness and the glory of the gospel in Christ, it needs to be maintained and retained and it needs to be proclaimed, and we need to keep pointing people to it. Don't give up. Speak the word and the truth to people. Do it out of love and compassion, but do it and do it clearly this week. Tell them the sin problem can be solved in Christ.

Let's pray. God, we want to point people to Christ. That is our job. Just as it was Peter's job. You handed him the microphone on Solomon's colonnade and you said, tell them. He did and he was faithful as imperfect as he was. He could look back with shame at his own life and be tempted to alter the message, but he didn't, and he said it, "You guys are sinners. You need to repent." God, I thank you we get to study this next section next week, but this week we want to pause and just say thank you for the courage of Peter, and I pray we would have the courage to do the same this week.

"We're not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." We want to be the person who keeps sharing the message without altering it, without tampering with it, without tailoring it. Even if the people around us just sit there and yawn and think, "I don't get it." God, we're going to hit, we're going to have success, we're going to see people saved if we just don't grow weary and give up.

We've got some people in this room who've given up. They just don't share the gospel anymore. Some of them maybe have been so timid about it, they've never shared the gospel. God, help them to start talking to people. When people start saying things like, "Well, I'm not going to do this. You Christians are hypocrites." God, help us to have good, rational answers to that. Let us remind them that we're promoting Christ, we're proclaiming him, not ourselves. God, give us a week this week of success. Open the doors of conversation. Let us see some people come to Christ in this church this week.

In Jesus' name. Amen.