

14a ACTS

Chapter 3 and verse 20 tonight, by taking a moment at the outset to go before the Lord and acknowledge Him and acknowledge the ministry of His Holy Spirit, acknowledge the preeminence of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the reason that we have a life that is worth living at all. He is the one that has rescued us from eternal damnation.

He has given us a standing and the privilege of going before God directly. We enjoy benefits and blessings and potentials that the greatest prophets and heroes of the Old Testament never saw. We have opportunities that Moses and David and Daniel and Job never enjoyed.

But to avail ourselves of those, we have to know what they are and we have to know how they are obtained. That is information that is contained in the Word of God and it is made clear to us by the Holy Spirit. So we pause at the outset to be sure that that process can take place.

Otherwise we will stumble about in the dark as if we were spiritually blind. So let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank You for this day.

Thank You for preserving us, providing for us, protecting us and blessing us in so many wonderful ways. We know that Your faithfulness is great. Your mercies are renewed to us every day.

And we thank You especially as we come to the end of another week and review the course of our lives and the small bit of it that we can see in front of us that we have the opportunity to assemble ourselves to enjoy the blessings that come from fellowship with believers who value Your Word and understand Your plan and purpose. And most of all we thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ who has secured our salvation and who has given us a hope for the future that goes well beyond the grave and well beyond the limitations of this mortal life. We ask that as we study Your Word tonight You will prepare our souls for the coming kingdom and the coming eternal future.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find our hearts ready and able to understand and accept these things so that we can live in a way that's pleasing in Your sight. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said we are in Acts in the vicinity of verse 20 tonight where Peter is delivering the second of three great sermons that we find in the book of Acts. This one, the first one was occasioned by a miracle. Do you remember what the miracle was? It was the speaking in foreign languages that occurred on the day of Pentecost and that occurred in Jerusalem.

This second sermon is also occasioned by a miracle. Do you remember what that miracle

was? It is also in Jerusalem. It occurs at the outer gates of the temple courts where the man who was born with twisted lame legs and has spent all of his life begging at the gate beautiful was healed.

There's a wonderful song called Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. In fact words of that song say there is life for a look at the Savior. That is really what is going on in the representative realm, in the spiritual truth realm of this miracle because this man is told to look at the apostles.

They say we don't have earthly riches to give you. We have something greater. This physical healing is a great thing.

You see people who have disabilities taken care of by physicians, by surgeons, by doctors and they are very grateful. We have technology now that can enable deaf people to hear, blind people to have a kind of sight. We have amazing and marvelous technologies that can either fix or compensate for a lot of physical disabilities.

But this miracle, while it is wonderful for the lame man to hear, is more wonderful for the nation of Israel because it means something. It represents something. The man is alive.

Now God could have chosen any miracle to launch this second sermon and to occupy this third chapter of Acts. But this particular miracle is a man who is alive, who has his sight, has his hearing, has his hands, it's his feet that don't work. Any time, now this is something, I'll give you this for sort of a perpetual homework assignment.

Any time you find somebody who has a physical problem in the Bible, that particular problem is symbolic, always. There is never a diseased person in the Bible whose disease does not represent something specific in the spiritual realm. I'll leave it to you to go look up one of the kings of Israel who did a pretty good job but he was diseased in his feet.

He wasn't completely obedient and it was reflected in the physical realm. Blindness has a signification. Deafness has a signification.

Leprosy has a signification. And the significance here of being lame, think about the sanctification of the priest. He was lame.

They put blood on the ear, on the thumbs and on the toes. Why? There are things that you take into your mind and into your soul and of course they're not going to say here's blood in your eye and stick it in your eye so they put it in your ear because that is an intake port for the computer that is our mind. That's input.

We take in, we listen, we hear things and that's what we digest and decide that we are either going to believe or reject. So to sanctify our ears means put a filter on what you take in. There are things that are evil, there are things that are disruptive, there are

things that are distracting.

Our culture and our society is full of what I call bubble gum for the brain or chewing gum for the mind. It passes the time but it does not benefit, it does not edify. I've never seen it but I would assume that one could watch The Bachelor or whatever its subsequent incarnations are or one could watch Temptation Island or Survivor 1, 2, 3 and 4 or whatever these other, Big Brother and I see the commercials.

I would think that one could spend hours watching that and agonizing over whether Bill is going to make it to the next round or whether Aphrodite is going to get kicked off the island or whatever. But if we sanctify what we take in, we say you know I've only got a limited amount of time. There is an hourglass of my life and the sand is constantly running and one of these days that sand is going to run out and I will never get this time back.

I won't be able to recycle it. I won't be able to bring it back and use it for some good purpose. If I waste it now, it's wasted and it's written in the eternal record of God's book in heaven.

And that is very convicting because I waste a lot of time. I have a perpetual sense of guilt about the time that I waste and then I stop and I look and I say why am I doing this? It's because there is a perversity in my nature that just goes to the wasteful, useless. It's like the flavor in bubble gum.

It tastes good, you chew it, there is some sort of a pleasure involved. It has no nutritional value. It has no benefit other than just burning energy and occupying time.

So we want to think if we are good stewards of our time, our time is just like the parable of the talents. We are given these coins and we are told, the apostle Paul says, we need to be redeeming the time because the days are evil. If you don't do something to redeem the time, the time is going to be evil.

It is evil by default. Isn't it Galatians chapter 1, didn't I finally decide it was Galatians 1, that says that Christ died to deliver us out of this present evil age, this present evil time. The time will be evil unless we do something to make it good.

It's evil by default. Then they put blood on the thumbs and that represents the work to which we set our hands. Jesus said a man who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is not worthy to be my disciple.

He is not worthy of me. Once you decide and you commit to something, you need to keep your hands on the plow. Have you ever seen hand plowing? Have you ever seen a film of somebody in some third world country plowing by hand? You've got the mule or the ox or whatever going up ahead and you've got this hand plow.

Why would it be bad, do you think, to look back while you are plowing by hand? Well, for the same reason that if you were driving down the highway at a high rate of speed and turned around to have an extended conversation with someone in the back seat, it's because you won't go where you're supposed to go. You'll plow crooked furrows and you won't be able to grow a crop. Back then, no crop, no life.

Whatever we set our hands to should be sanctified. Then the feet, you get to the blood that goes on the big toe of the priest. By the way, it also was similar for the cleansed leper of Leviticus 14.

He also was sanctified in the same manner as a priest with blood on his ear and his thumb and his toe. Why? Because if we can get these three areas squared away or at least reasonably pushed in some forward motion and maintain some sort of momentum in these three areas, we are well on our way to growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord. If we restrict what we take in so that we don't expose ourselves to the kind of thing that results in the garbage in, garbage out syndrome, if we sanctify our hands, what do we decide to do? What do we decide to implement? What do we decide to pursue and to undertake? Then the feet represent our walk.

This is our life. Peripateo, which literally means to walk around in Greek, is used in the New Testament as lifestyle. Walk worthy of the Lord.

Walk in a manner well-pleasing. Walk in the light. We have all of these uses of peripateo and it's not talking about lacing up your shoes and moving yourself over the concrete.

It's talking about the way we live. What is the pattern? What is the climate of our life? What are we known for? There is nothing like going to a funeral. There's nothing like reading a eulogy.

I can't retrace how I arrived at this, but I was looking at Johnny Cash's website, maybe because he came up on my homepage for being nominated for a music award this year. I went to the Johnny Cash website. I like Johnny Cash.

I always have. I've enjoyed his music. He's a very prolific songwriter.

If you look at his discography, the man has, I have no idea, well over a hundred albums going all the way back to the 1950s. If you like country music, if you like that particular style, Johnny Cash is about as good as it gets. His wife, second wife I think, June Carter Cash, passed away last year.

There was a tribute page. Roseanne Cash wrote a tribute to her stepmother. June would not allow that language.

When she married Johnny Cash, he already had a couple of three daughters and she had two daughters and then they had a son together. But she said, we're not going to have

any of this step language. I am your mother.

You are my daughters. She was very adamant and very proud on that point that they were all her daughters and she was their mother and that's the way they went. Roseanne Cash gave this eulogy.

But when you read one of those, you read one for anybody, you hear the pattern, the peripeteia, the lifestyle, what was the impact, what was the effect, what was the impression left by a person. If any one of us, we think about ourselves, everybody think about yourself for a minute, it's not that hard to do. We think about ourselves and we think, well if I left Bible class tonight, stepped out here and got hit by a speeding vehicle and was killed, what would be said at my funeral? What kind of eulogy would be given? That is part of our peripeteia, that's part of our lifestyle.

But not all of it. The more important part is what God sees, what God knows, what God has written in His book. A lot of us have had hidden struggles.

A lot of us have had hidden battles. A lot of us don't know about all the battles. Sometimes there's been a great attack and a great temptation and we just sat there with our Indian face on, betraying no emotion, looking like the Sphinx, a riddle inside a mystery wrapped in an enigma and nobody knew that we had just won a tremendous battle and a tremendous victory against bitterness or against hatred or against anger or against impatience or against the urge to speak and use our tongue as a weapon and commit sins of the tongue.

And we restrained ourselves and held ourselves in and someone looking at us would say, well there's a person sitting down, I don't see anything going on. And yet, the angels on the home team side are cheering, saying, finally, after umpteen years, look, a battle has been won. Temptation was resisted.

Divine good was created that will reflect the glory of God for all eternity and all we did was refrain from doing something that everything in our sinful nature wanted us to do. That's a part of lifestyle and that doesn't always show up in the eulogy. It doesn't always show up at the funeral.

But it shows up in God's book. That's what is represented by this man that got healed. This is a long introduction, but you think about this man sitting at the gate beautiful.

Of all the gates he could have been at, he is at the beautiful gate. He is at the entrance called beautiful. He's at the door of beauty, the door of the things of God, the door of the dwelling of God, the door of the place where the worship of God takes place, the sacrifice that pleases God takes place inside those walls.

He's at the door, but he can't go in. Why? He doesn't have working feet. He has sat there for decades, unable to enter.

We are, we can understand that there are things we should eschew and stay away from and we can sanctify our ears. We can refrain from bad activities and not join in with those who do evil with their hands. But ultimately, whether we arrive in the place of God's presence, whether we are in the place of proximity and the location of the glory of God, whether or not we can walk through the gate beautiful depends on what we establish as a pattern of life.

It requires consistency. A pattern requires consistency. You see people knitting.

You know, you can knit and knit and knit. You can do row after row after row, but if you get distracted and slip a few stitches here and there and then you go back, whatever that was, a muffler or a sweater sleeve or a whatever it is people knit. My grandmother used to knit bandages.

My grandmother Dorothy, I remember way back in the Vietnam War and I was a little boy riding in the car and she was knitting away and she taught me how to knit which is a skill I have not really pursued, but it was a long car trip and I got to where I could knit. But one thing I noticed is if you get distracted and you mess up, it doesn't matter how many great rows you have made, those bad rows are what catch your eye, right? In the Marine Corps there is a saying which I can paraphrase very loosely for you that a thousand attaboys can be wiped out by one oh no, right? You can show up for formation on time with a spick and span sparkling uniform 364 times in a year, but the one time you don't show up is the one that is going to get written into your record. The one time you are AWOL, the one time you are egregiously late, that is what stands out.

How do we establish a pattern? How do we have feet that walk that can take us through the gate beautiful, can take us into the place of worship, the place of the presence of God, the place of blessing, the place of fruitfulness? It is the only real place of happiness. We think we know what will make us happy and we don't. I read you that Brad Pitt thing.

He says, you know, people think having it all makes you happy. He says, I have it all and I am here to tell you that ain't it. He says, I am not sure what it is, but whatever it is I have got, ain't it.

I still don't know if he remains married to Jennifer Aniston or not, but at the time that he had the interview he was and she is considered by many to be a wonderful person and a pleasing appearance and that kind of thing. He has success, he has money, he has got everything you could imagine and he said, this is not it. He said, I don't have the answers, but it doesn't help me sleep any better at night and it doesn't make me feel any better when I wake up in the morning.

And it is true. The old poem about Richard Corey is another reflection of that same truth. So, who would know what it is that fulfills the human soul? Who would know what it is that really makes us happy and fulfilled and fruitful and productive? Well, how about the

manufacturer? When all else fails, go to the person who built it and ask them.

God knows. God designed us to be complete in Him. We were created in His image and apart from His image we will ever be hollow, corrupted and incomplete.

So, our task is to walk through the gate beautiful. This is what Peter's sermon is about. Does that make sense? The reason this particular healing, it's not a leper, it's not a blind man, it's not a man with a withered arm, it's not a guy with excessive hair loss, it is a man with twisted feet.

And there is a specific reason why. Because this is the condition of the nation of Israel. And as long as there is a nation of Israel, at any stage in the Bible, they represent the believer, the individual believer in the church age.

We draw truths from national Israel and apply them individually and personally. So, here is this man representing Israel and they are alive. People in Israel are assumed to be saved.

They are not hell bound godless pagan reprobates. They are saved. They are going to be resurrected.

When Jesus comes back, the dust, many who sleep in the dust, Daniel says over in chapter 10 I think, many who sleep in the dust will awake. We had a turn there. Go to Daniel chapter 10.

It's right toward the end, if my memory serves, it is toward the end of the chapter. Then again, maybe I'm not right. Maybe it's 12.

Where is the sleeping in the dust of the earth? Yeah. At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.

Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. There's going to be a resurrection for all believers, but we have a choice of what kind of resurrection it is going to be.

Everybody find it Daniel 12 too? Many who sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life. Now why doesn't it say all of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake? Because those who were outside Israel, those who were outside the fold, the mixed multitude who lived in Israel but were not seed of Abraham are going to remain asleep. The rest of the dead live not until the thousand years were complete it tells us over in Revelation.

But of these who do awake, some are going to awake to everlasting life and some of

these who awake are going to awake to shame and everlasting contempt. Now I ask you this question. We're living our life right now and we have a clear choice.

We either live it to please ourselves or we live it to try to please God. Puts it very simply over in the New Testament, Galatians it says, be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows that's what he's going to reap.

If you sow to the flesh you will of the flesh reap corruption. You know what corruption is? Corruption is putridity. Corruption is what you smell when an animal has crawled into your bushes and died.

I found a dead possum back behind our hedge in the front yard. I found it by scent location. As I walked in my front yard admiring my handiwork, having mowed and trimmed, an unpleasant aroma assaulted my senses.

And using proximity location, the stronger it became as I got closer to it, I looked behind and there was this decaying, corrupted, has-been possum. That is corruption. He that sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption.

It says don't fool yourself. Don't let anybody fool you. God is not fooled.

God is not mocked. God has not gotten around. We don't get past him.

We don't get by him. Whatever we sow is what we're going to reap. So if we live to please ourselves, we're going to wind up in the rotten stench resurrection.

Now that is not a popular topic. You won't turn on your TBN preachers and get people saying, hey, there's a rotten stench resurrection. It's in the word of God.

I can't help it. That's what it says. People can say, well, now see, it doesn't say everybody who sleeps in the dust of the earth will awake.

Okay, so who is it that is going to awake when Michael stands up, the great prince who watches over the sons of your people? At that time, your people shall be delivered. Everyone who is found written in the book. It is safe to say that the people who are raised from the dust are those written in the book, right? And of those who are raised, some are raised to everlasting life and some are raised to shame and everlasting contempt.

This passage does not address those who remain asleep. That's your great white throne judgment a thousand years later. These are the sons of your people.

These are the ones written in the book. They are saved. They are believers.

And some are raised to everlasting life. This doesn't mean that the others don't have a life that lasts forever. This is life in the sense of eternal quality, of divine blessing,

fulfillment and reward.

Others are going to be cotton choppers. There is segregation in the kingdom. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is.

Actually, I'm not sorry. I'm sorry to have to tell you. Sorry to be the one to tell you.

But there is a class system in the kingdom. There is a striation. Everyone is not equal.

We are not all. You know, there's this weird misconception about everyone walking the streets of gold and playing harps and walking around munching on manna and just saying, hi, how do you do? And don't you love Jesus and that kind of thing? It is not so. There will be the privileged and there will be the nearly naked.

There will be those who look like they just escaped the fire. That's what the Apostle Paul says. Some will be saved, yet so as by fire.

You ever seen the show on the news where an apartment complex burns down and here's some poor gal shivering in the night with nothing on but a t-shirt because they banged on the door and said, get out, get out. The place is burning down. And she didn't have time to grab anything.

These people are standing out there in their boxer shorts and their t-shirts and their, you know, people are handing them fireman coats and stuff because they have nothing. All of their earthly possessions went up in smoke. This is not my idea of the thousand year millennial kingdom existence that I want to live.

I don't want to be standing there with somebody saying, hey, you want my fireman coat? You're looking kind of, looking kind of unclothed there. But a lot of us are going to show up that way. Why? Because we don't listen to the warning passages of scripture that tell us.

Israel, the men of Jerusalem are standing around Solomon's porch and Peter is appealing to them. He's saying, you see the power that healed this man's feet and gave him the ability to walk in here and be in the presence of God and be in the place of worship? That power is available to you, but you have to do something to get it. It doesn't drop on you out of the sky.

You have to choose it. You have to want it. That is the message of his sermon.

Otherwise, there is going to be a resurrection of shame and everlasting contempt. This word contempt, if you look, I think your new King James may even have a note on this. It says everlasting abhorrence.

Now, how can this be? How can somebody who's a child of God get resurrected at the return of the Lord? These are the Israelite saints, right? They get raised at the beginning

of the millennium and have a resurrection of shame and everlasting abhorrence. What does that mean? Well, think of something that you abhor. I abhor reality television.

So what do I do? I stay as far away from it as I can. I try to not expose myself to it. If it comes on, I turn it off.

If it's commercials come on, I turn them off. If reports about it on the morning TV shows come on, I turn them off. I cannot tolerate it.

I abhor it. Lima beans, I abhor them. Pickled beets, I abhor them.

There are no lima beans and there are no pickled beets anywhere in my domicile. The closest you can get, they must be in somebody's cabinet down the street. When something is abhorred, there is a distance.

There's a separation. It's pushed away, right? What does the Lord say over and over again about those who reject and who are apathetic and indifferent? They will be outside. They will be away.

They come to the door and they say, let me in. It really looks wonderful in there. I don't know you.

Depart from me. Go away. Sing back there, further back, further back.

Keep going further back. When you get far enough away that I can't hear you, then you can sing. This is the idea.

Same thing in Romans chapter two. We've looked at that passage in recent times. There are two different kinds.

If you think, well, this is only for Israel and we get a free, you know, get out of jail free card because we're in the church and we're united with Christ. Romans chapter two, verse four, do you despise the riches of his goodness? Do you despise the riches of his forbearance? Do you despise the riches of his long suffering? Not knowing that the goodness of God is leading you to change of mind, trying to get you to change your mind, but in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart. That in accordance with means proportional to.

In the proportion that your heart is hard, in that proportion you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to each one according to his deeds. This is not Old Testament. This is not Israel.

This is New Testament. This is Romans. This is the church.

This is you and me. You are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of judgment. God

will render to each one according to his deeds.

Notice render according to deeds. What kind of judgment is this? Is this deciding who's in heaven and who's in hell? No, it's not even an accurate comparison to make anyway. This is a judgment of works.

These are believers. What did you do after you got saved? Did you say, well, I've got my get out of hell free card so I'm going to live it up and please myself. God will render to each one according to his deeds.

Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good are seeking for glory, seeking for honor, and seeking for immortality. But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, there will be, and it sounds just like Daniel 12 to indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, the Jew first and the Greek. He says, you got your 12 to and you got your Romans to eight and nine.

There will be glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good. So let's just do the math here. This life, let's say that we're really healthy and we live to 80.

So we get 80 years and we live totally to please ourselves. And let's say that we achieve it. We get all the money we want.

We go all the places we want to go. We get all the stuff we wanted to have. We get next to all the people we wanted to get next to.

We achieve whatever it is we want. That lasts 80 years and then we die and we lose it all. We cash in all of our chips and they go away.

Now you're a believer. You get raised for the thousand year millennial kingdom and we were self-seeking. We did not obey the truth and we obeyed unrighteousness.

So now we had 80 years of funds, quote unquote. Now we have 1000 years of indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish. Just common sense would say this is not a good trade.

This is not a good philosophy. It is a very short sighted view of life, right? But this is what God puts in front of us. And every pastor, every teacher of the Word of God is commanded to put this truth before the people of God.

When you go to Timothy, Paul says, preach the Word, be faithful in season, out of season, rebuke, correct, instruct, exhort. Warn every man. So this is the warning.

It comes out of the sermon that Peter gave. When you go back to Acts chapter 3, this is the background of the man with the twisted feet. Why does he have twisted feet? Because he is not walking and God is giving him the ability to walk.

Peter says in verse 12, men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? It's not our power that did it. You've crucified the Lord of glory and you get down to verse 19. Change your mind therefore and be turned around.

Epi strepho. Strepho means to turn and epi means upon. It's kind of like spinning something on a table.

Be turned around so that your sins may be blotted out. Wait a minute. If these people are saved, why do their sins need blotting out? Well, this is something we're going to look at when we come back from the break.

What is he talking about when he says so that your sins may be blotted out? I thought my sins got blotted out when I got saved. So our working understanding here is off if he's telling people who are saved that they need to turn so that their sins can be blotted out. Maybe these are unbelievers after all.

Well, we will see what the Word of God has to say about sin being blotted out when we come back from our break.