

# Acts 3 • The Lord heals a lame man through Peter and John

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier  
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Acts chapter 3. Open your Bibles there, please. As we are getting started with a new chapter and on our way through the Book of Acts here, let's begin this morning with prayer.

Father God, we open our hearts to you to the ministry of your Holy Spirit to speak to us through the scriptures this morning.

We thank you, Lord, that you are faithful when we dig in and study the Word. Faithful to speak, and faithful to minister, and faithful to open our eyes and our hearts to the things that we need to see. We ask you to do that today.

We humble ourselves in your presence and we ask you to be with us in Jesus precious name, amen. Amen.

We've been dealing, as you guys all know, with the first 2 chapters of Acts. We've been spending time talking about spiritual gifts. Now we get to see the apostles going out into the marketplace of life, into the world, and where we see the exercise of those spiritual gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Just to remind you how we defined spiritual gifts in our last study. Let me put this on the screen for you. Again,

Spiritual gifts are supernatural endowments given to believers by the Holy Spirit to equip and enable believers to function in a way that transcends the natural in order to fulfill the Great Commission of reaching the entire world for Christ.

Spiritual gifts are supernatural endowments given to believers by the Holy Spirit to equip and enable believers to function in a way that transcends the natural (in other words, it goes beyond, right) in order to fulfill the Great Commission of reaching the entire world for Christ.

When we say, transcends the natural, we're talking about enabling believers to accomplish things that they would otherwise not be able to accomplish through

natural means. We've made the point several times that we've all been given natural abilities. But where the gospel is concerned and where ministering to people is concerned, there are many times, needs that go beyond what you can naturally do. And that's where the Holy Spirit comes along to empower us through spiritual gifts to be able to do those sorts of things. All right.

And one of the last verses that we read in chapter 2 said that, many signs and wonders were done through the apostles. So as they went on and out into the world in which they lived, God began to work through them. And that's what we are reading and studying about here in the Book of Acts.

And as we get into chapter 3, we're going to see how spiritual gifts operate in the healing of a man who was born lame.

Okay, look now with me in chapter 3, beginning at verse 1. It begins saying, *“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.” (ESV)*

Now, that's a different way of telling time than you and I are accustomed to. The Jewish reckoning of time began a day at 6 a.m., so that's when the day began. 6 a.m. was the first hour and so if you go to the ninth hour, you would get to 3 p.m.

And the Jews generally observed 3 periods of prayer during the day at the temple: 9 a.m., 12 noon, and 3 p.m. And so this would be the later time of prayer. It was actually referred to as evening prayer because remember, the day basically comes to an end at 6 p.m. so this is that final time.

And what we notice first of all, as we read this passage, is that the early believers continued to follow the Jewish traditions of prayer, and Sabbath keeping, and food laws, and all the other things that went along with being essentially a Jew. They were born and raised Jews, they followed the Jewish ways, the Jewish patterns, the Jewish traditions.

And that's the way, when Jesus birthed the church out of these Jews who were believers, they didn't feel the need to abandon their Jewishness. Because the Jews who became Christians believed that they had now just made the next step in their Jewish understanding of what it meant to be a follower of God, and so there was no contradiction in their minds as it related to how the things that Jews did, whether it's prayer, Sabbath keeping, or whatever. But there began to be a separation between the Jews or Judaism, and Christianity as persecution began to rise against the early Christians.

And of course, that became even more pronounced when the church began to spread to the Gentile world. Because the Gentiles hadn't been raised with any sort of Jewishness, or traditions, or ways of doing things.

They knew nothing of the food laws or Sabbath keeping or anything like that. And so they simply, began to be Christians and do the things that that early Christians were doing.

But the question of how the early Christians were to view things like the Sabbath, and keeping the food laws, and circumcision, for example. Those were absolutely huge issues for the early Christians who had a Jewish background, and they didn't know whether or not they were supposed to relinquish those sorts of traditions and ways of doing things. They didn't know.

This happened gradually as the apostles taught on these things and a lot of the Jews really struggled with relinquishing those old Jewish ways. I mean, they wondered, so where does the Sabbath figure in for me as a believer now in Jesus? Where do the food laws figure in for me? I've been doing this all my life.

Can you imagine being in your 60s, 70s, or 80s and coming to faith in Jesus Christ, but raised all of your years previously with the Jewish traditions and the ways and so forth? Can you imagine what that would have been like? And you would have just carried on with your Jewishness, wouldn't you?

I mean, that's the way we are. We're very prone to sticking, with our traditional ways and this is just the way things go. And so there was a huge issue and a lot of struggling and a lot of confusion. But what amazes me really is that Christians are still struggling with these issues. That's what amazes me.

We're 2,000 years into this thing. You'd think we'd have this thing dialed in by now. But just this past week, a woman emailed me and said, is it wrong to buy things on the Sabbath? So these are questions that people are still grappling with.

They want to know, they read through the Old Testament and the things that God commanded to the nation of Israel as it relates to the covenant that He made with them through Moses and they want to know, how does this apply to me? Should I not eat pork? Hey, they want to know this. I get this question. Should I not be eating pork? Because that was an unclean animal for the Jews. Should I be going to church on Saturday? Because isn't Saturday the Sabbath? Big question I get all the time is people say, so when in history did God change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday?

And I say, never, He never changed it from Saturday to Sunday. Sunday's never been the Sabbath. Saturday was always the Sabbath, always will be. Well, then why aren't we keeping the Sabbath? See, that's the question people have. Although they don't even understand what it means. They cannot define what it means to keep.

Do you know that the Jews struggled with that even in the days of Jesus? They didn't understand fully what it meant to keep the Sabbath and they kept coming up with their own interpretations and so forth.

You know what God told them to do on the Sabbath? Rest. Rest. Here's what I want you to do on the Sabbath, rest. Do no work or regular work on the Sabbath. And the Jews had to come up with all these additional explanations of, well, what exactly does that mean to rest on the Sabbath? And it got ridiculous. And, those sorts of things can easily get ridiculous today, too.

But the very existence of the questions that people are asking tells me that there is still significant confusion among believers about these things. About the Sabbath, about Sabbath keeping, about food laws.

I don't know if you guys have heard of the Hebrew roots movement. It has affected a lot of Christians around the country and even around the world. If you don't know anything about it, the Hebrew roots movement starts off really good. It's really just a movement for Christians to better understand the historical roots of Judaism to have, to gain, a better understanding of their faith in Christ. And again, there's nothing wrong with the essence of just understanding more.

Unfortunately, Hebrew roots usually devolves into legalism with a lot of people. Pretty soon, they start getting into these things and they start thinking, well, I need to keep the Sabbath, I need to keep the food laws. I need to do this, I need to... And pretty soon they're locked in legalism and they're denying whole sections of the New Testament and it's a very dangerous sort of. Well, it can become a very dangerous sort of movement.

And again, there's so much confusion and I wish I had time to address with you all of the things related to this in terms of your relationship as a believer to the law of Moses, but I really don't. However, I have addressed it several times in the past.

If you're one of the individuals who are thinking to yourself, I'd like to know more about my relationship to the law and how that affects me as a believer.

Things like Sabbath and keeping of rules and so forth. There are 3 particular messages where I address this pretty thoroughly. Let me put these up on the screen. Those of you who have a phone, you might consider taking a picture of the slide that's up there. Those of you that are watching online, you've really got it easy, you can just hit pause.

**Colossians 2 (Part 4): 16-23 • Legalism and Spiritualism**

[ccontario.com/colossians](http://ccontario.com/colossians)

---

**Hebrews 4 (Part 1): 1-11 • Understanding the Sabbath**

[ccontario.com/hebrews](http://ccontario.com/hebrews)

---

**Our Relationship to the Law**

[ccontario.com/topical](http://ccontario.com/topical)

**Colossians 2 (Part 4): 16-23 • Legalism and Spiritualism**

[ccontario.com/colossians](http://ccontario.com/colossians)

Colossians chapter 2, and you'll find this at [ccontario.com/colossians](http://ccontario.com/colossians). It's a message entitled, Legalism and Spiritualism.

**Hebrews 4 (Part 1): 1-11 • Understanding the Sabbath**

[ccontario.com/hebrews](http://ccontario.com/hebrews)

And then there's a message in the Hebrew study. It's Hebrews 4, part 1, and it's called, Understanding the Sabbath and you'll find that at [ccontario.com/hebrews](http://ccontario.com/hebrews).

**Our Relationship to the Law**

[ccontario.com/topical](http://ccontario.com/topical)

And then finally, I did a Topical Message a number of years ago called our relationship to the law, meaning the law of Moses. And you'll find that at [ccontario.com/topical](http://ccontario.com/topical), right?

So those are all available on our website and you can just immerse yourself in what the Word of God has to say on those particular issues. Now let's move on. Look at verse 2 with me in your Bible, here in chapter 3.

It says, *“And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.”*

We don't use that word, alms much today, do we? Alms is a word that meant money or goods that were given to the poor, right? We might use the word, benevolence, today or charity, or something like that.

But this man, we're told, was brought daily, literally was lame. So he had to be carried and he was laid there at this gate where people would pass on their way in for prayer. And by the way, this is really smart. If you're going to ask for handouts, do it from people who are on their way in to meet with God because they want to probably impress God on their way in. And so this is way smarter than stay hanging out outside of Walmart, way smarter, way smarter.

Anyway, verse 3 goes on and it says, *“Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.”* He's looking for a handout.

*“<sup>4</sup> And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, (check this out) “Look at us.””* Now that's an interesting thing to say to somebody who is begging, right? To say to them, look at me, or look at us. You can tell by that statement, that Peter already had a sense of what the Lord was going to do through them.

Verse 5, *“And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!””*

Isn't this one of the coolest passages you've ever read in the Bible? I mean, I just, I love this. There's no doubt about the fact that when the Lord brings an abundance of money into the church, we can do some pretty cool things. I mean, like helping out an orphanage in Kenya, and making sure that all the kids in that orphanage have food, and a bed to sleep in, and their own personal Bible. And that's a lot of fun to do stuff like that.

But God help us if all we have is money and no power or authority any longer to say, *“In the name of Jesus..., rise up and walk!”* I mean, there's nothing wrong with the church having some money to spend that we can give away. There's nothing wrong with that. But if there is money only, and no power and authority, then we're really, truly destitute.

You'll notice it goes on in verse 7 and it says, *“And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.”*<sup>8</sup> *And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking (and not just walking but) and leaping and praising God.”*

You can imagine that probably drew a little attention, right? People are normally just walking into the temple for their time of prayer. This guy is leaping! He's leaping! I can hardly even leap anymore. But he's leaping up and down, and he's praising God, and he's making all kinds of noise.

And it says in verse 9, *“And all the people saw him walking and praising God,”*<sup>10</sup> *and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms.* (now, please notice this next statement that we're given) *And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”*

And I want to suggest to you that there are 2 reasons that this miracle took place, this day. The first reason is that God desired to pour out mercy on the life of a man who had been born lame and restore him.

Today we have so many..., being lame, even today, we don't call it lame anymore. Really, it's not a word we use. But today if someone lacks the use of their legs there's a lot of ways we can help. I mean, there's prosthetics, right? There's wheelchairs. My mother has been in one of those motorized, mobility chairs for probably the last 25 years because of arthritis and so forth. There's a lot of things we can do for people when their legs don't work.

That wasn't the case in the first century of Israel. If you lacked the ability to move about with your legs and you didn't have any family to take care of you, which may very well have been the case with this man. You were entirely dependent on alms, on gifts from people who might happen to walk by, who might drop a coin or two in your lap so that you could eat that day. And if you could not work or did not have family, there was a very good chance that you would starve to death, very good chance.

The Lord, when I say this was an act of mercy on God's part toward this lame man, this is a very significant statement as it relates to giving him his life back. His ability, to earn money and to work for himself and no longer have to be dependent upon individuals who happen to be walking by on their way in for prayer.

But the second reason that this miracle was done at this time was it was intended to stir up the wonder and amazement of the people so that they would start to ask questions and they would then hear the good news. And guys, that's what miracles are about. They're about God extending mercy and about people being made aware, something significant is happening here, I want to know more.

I believe that one of the biggest problems that has risen in the church, and I'm talking about that part of the church that believes in the present day activity of spiritual gifts, is that we've limited miracles to what's happening in the church. Like when we come together, we come in here, we close the doors and we expect miracles to happen. And we're all born again. We're all saved. And yet this is where..., and then we go out from here and there's nothing happening out there. That's backwards. Miracles were intended to draw people to the goodness of God to have that kind of wonder and amazement.

Look at verse 11. It even says, *“While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, (notice those words) ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. <sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: (and I want you to notice how Peter speaks, he says) “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”*

Here's this man, you got to have this. picture in your mind of what's happening. This man is literally grabbing onto Peter and John. He's holding onto them and he's praising God, and he's been jumping around, and leaping in the room, and everybody's running to see what the commotion is.

And they see this man grabbing onto Peter and John. He's just praising God. He's probably got a smile that you can't wipe off for weeks on his face, right? And all the people are looking at Peter and John. They're just staring at him.

And so Peter looks at them and he says, why are you looking at us? As if by our power, what does he mean by our power? He means by natural ability. Why are you looking at us as if by our own natural ability, we've made this man walk? No, no, no, no. There's no natural ability that can say to a lame man, get up. I know you were born lame.

Here, take my hand, stand up, and you'll be healed, and run around, and leap, and praise God. This just doesn't happen by natural means. Not, at least not in that instantaneous sort of a way and yet it happened here. And it is a supernatural thing. Because this is what God has gifted them to do,



supernaturally. A supernatural healing. In other words, that which transcends the natural.

And he goes on and he says in verse 13, *“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.*

*<sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”*

First of all, did you notice that this is a message that is very, very clearly geared to a Jewish audience. He begins by saying, *“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, ...the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers,”* right? So he's talking to Jews who understand and who would refer to themselves as the children or the offspring of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and so forth.

But you'll notice that he's giving them the bad news because I've said this many times. You got to give people the bad news. A lot of people who don't know the Lord wonder why we Christians talk so much about sin. Why are you guys all talking about sin? You're always bumming me out. You guys are just really downers. Sin, sin, sin, sin.

Well, you got to deal with the bad news because if you don't accept the bad news, you have no place in your heart to receive the good news. And the bad news is this, you're a sinner, you need a Savior. That's a summary.

He's giving them a uniquely Jewish version of the bad news. And that is..., because they lived in this very time frame when Jesus lived and was crucified. He goes through and historically lays it out for them and says, Pilate was determined to release Jesus but you wouldn't let that happen. You bullied him into doing what he actually didn't really want to do.

And you delivered, *“the Author of life.”* Did you catch that? Jesus is, *“the Author of life”* itself. You can't say that about anybody except God.

You delivered Him over, and you killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead. And it even goes on to say, *“To this we are witnesses”* at the end of verse 15. All right. Now that he's given them the bad news, he's going to begin to speak about what they're seeing in the healing of this lame man.

Verse 16, *“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 you all.”* All right, there you go.

Now he's told them what they're seeing and how this came about. You guys are wondering what's going on here. You're looking at us like we're special. We're not special. You're looking at us like we've done this healing. We didn't do this healing. We want you to know and understand, this healing occurred through faith in the person of Jesus Christ, that's how this happened, right?

And now he's given them the bad news, he's told them what they're seeing, and now they're ready for the good news. Now, even as he gives them the good news, you guys, this is still geared very much for a Jewish audience. So what I'm saying to you is, I'm not necessarily suggesting that you take Acts chapter 3 as a guideline for sharing the gospel today with Gentiles that are living, obviously in this day and age. Because these are, again, Peter is speaking to Jews who know and understand the Hebrew scriptures.

We're dealing with people today in our culture who only know the name of Jesus Christ as a swear word, most of them. I mean, they have no concept of what the Bible says, Old or New Testament. They are biblically illiterate. And so you have to share the gospel very differently with people who come from that sort of a, cultural background, don't you?

But again, Peter's not dealing with that kind of a crowd. He's dealing with a very connected cultural group of people in terms of understanding the Bible and so forth. So keep that in mind. And you're going to notice here as he talks, that he's going to appeal to them as a Jewish nation.

By the way, that's another thing we do when we're sharing the gospel and it's okay. It's not bad. But when we share the gospel, we don't speak to people as a nation. We speak to people as individuals, and we tell them you need a Savior because you were born separated from God. You were born broken and He wants to fix what's broken. And that's very personal, very individual.

But Peter is not going to speak as much to individuals here as he's going to speak to them as a nation. Because the Jews thought of themselves very much as a nation. All right.

Look what he says. Verse 17, he says, *“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.”*

What's he saying? He's saying, the scriptures, you were raised on the Hebrew prophecies, and you know that God prophesied it. That the Messiah would suffer it happened right under your noses, and you weren't aware that it was being fulfilled right while you were witnessing these things.

So he says in verse 19, *“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,”* And this is the first benefit that he's sharing with them. He's saying, *“Repent therefore, and turn back,”* which is almost a redundancy because repent means turn back. Okay. And so he says, why? *“...that your sins may be blotted out.”*

That's an interesting phrase. You know what that means to be blotted out. But what you may not know is that when they wrote on documents, whether it was parchment or leather or something like that, ink back in those days didn't have some of the qualities that ink has today. And ink stayed on the surface of the page or the leather parchment or whatever and it was fairly easy to take a slightly damp type cloth and just wipe it off. You could literally erase or blot out things that had been written because today we have ink that has a..., I don't understand the science. I slept through science class, sorry. But I know that there's some element or characteristic to ink today that it actually binds with the paper.

That wasn't the case back in those days. It could be blotted out. And he's talking about the benefit of coming to Jesus, that your sins might be wiped off the page. That's God's page, by the way. Do you ever think about your sins that way?

Do you ever think about them being blotted out, literally wiped away? That there's no further record of your sins. Have you ever thought about that? It's kind of a neat mental image when you think about it.

Anyway, he goes on and he says in verse 20, *“that times of refreshing may (this is the second benefit) come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ (which is the Messiah) appointed for you, Jesus,”*

Now, he's, again, he's talking to them as a nation and he's saying to them, turn to the Lord. He's saying, as a nation we need to turn back to God. First of all, the *“times of refreshing”* might come and that He may send the Messiah back to us because all the Jews knew the Messiah was going to come. They didn't think He'd come the first time, yet. Peter saying, He did come, you missed Him, but He's coming again. And if you will turn back to the Lord, that will open the way for Him to return.

Did I just freak out by what I just said? Because that's the truth. Do you understand that the Bible says that Jesus will not return until the Jews are ready to receive Him? Did you know that? You can hear this from the words of Jesus or from the lips of Jesus himself. Look at Matthew on the screen, Matthew chapter 23. It says, this is Jesus speaking.

**Matthew 23:38-39 (ESV)**

*“See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*

*“See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*

What did Jesus just say there? He said, that's going to be the key to my return to this earth.

Now, people don't confuse His return to this earth with His return for the church. There's nothing that has to happen before He comes back for His church, that could happen any moment. And I hope it does.

But there are 2 comings in that sense. He comes first for the church. We meet Him right, first, and then He comes to the earth. And that is really mostly a coming for Israel because we return with Him in that what we call the second coming. But what is the key to understanding when that's going to happen?

The Jews need to be ready and they will be and so if you want to read more about this, I would encourage you to do even do some studying in the Old Testament Book of Zechariah. Because Zechariah was given some amazing prophecies about how the Lord is going to bring that readiness upon the Jews for them to receive their Messiah.

And unfortunately, that readiness is going to be born out of great difficulty during the time known as the Great Tribulation. And all of the nations of the earth at that time are going to come against Israel to wipe her off the map, and it's going to appear very much like they will succeed, and that's when Jesus will return for His people. But believe me, they will be ready, and they will cry out, *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”* Zechariah is an amazing prophetic book related to that.

Anyway, Peter goes on to speak of Messiah in verse 21, saying, *“whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”*

If that verse is a little confusing to you, let me show it to you from the NIV. This is the 1984 revision of the NIV. It's Acts chapter 3, verse 21. It says,

**Acts 3:21 (NIV84)**

*He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.*

*He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.*

All right, that's what Peter is saying. In other words, God has set a time for Jesus to return and to restore all things.

In fact, we saw last week, that the apostle Paul referred to the time when Jesus comes to restore all things and he calls it, "*when the perfect comes*" in 1 Corinthians 13.

And by the way for those of you who are wondering, why He's taken so long. I mean, it's been 2,000 years, what's the problem here? Why is He waiting so long to return? Well Peter actually answers that one, too in one of his letters, let me show you on the screen. It's in 2 Peter, chapter 3. And he says,

**2 Peter 3:9-10 (ESV)**

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come...*

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but (He) is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come...*

Guys, the day of the Lord will come. As sure as Jesus came the first time, He will come the second time. The day of the Lord will come. Why is He waiting? Because He wants people to be saved, He wants people to be saved.

He goes on in verse 22 saying, "*Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. (again, Peter's speaking to a Jewish audience, he's referring them to the writings or the speaking of Moses. He says,) You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. <sup>23</sup> And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'*" (that's a

quote from Moses) <sup>24</sup> *And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.*”

Again, Peter is quoting and referring to Hebrew scriptures over and over to this, these people. That's not something you and I are going to do when we're sharing the gospel with people today. Because they haven't, they've never read the Old Testament and they don't know anything about the Old Testament prophets, or they may not even know who Moses is in a biblical sense. But again, Peter is speaking to people who did.

Verse 25, And, *“You (he says to these people) are the sons of the prophets (you're literally their descendants) and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’”*

That's what God told Abraham that through the offspring of Abraham the entire world would be blessed so you can see this is a very uniquely Jewish message.

And he says in verse 26, *“God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, ...”* Meaning the Jews. You know that right? Jesus came to the Jews...

He said that during his ministry. He said, I've come for the lost sheep of Israel, right? (Matthew 15:24) He says here, God *“sent him to you first.”* Why? This last statement is a very cool one and it also applies to everyone who turns to Jesus. *“...to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”* We're going to close with this thought, okay.

One of the greatest blessings of being a child of God is that He has taken our lives and He's brought us to a place where He begins to turn us away from wickedness. And that process is the lifelong process, but it's one that begins.

When I started walking with the Lord I got saved when I was about 15 or so, but I didn't start walking with the Lord until I was more like around 25. I knew the gospel. I knew the good news, I knew that Jesus died for me on the cross. I knew that, but I wasn't willing to give Him my life. I wasn't willing to really surrender my life to Him or for Him. And I just continued to live my own life, do my own thing, go the way I wanted to go. Well then..., and by the way, that included a life of wickedness.

And I was just walking in the wickedness of my flesh, and the wickedness that is common to the world. That's the way I lived. And I married that beautiful

woman over there, and then after we'd been married for about 5 years, we both gave our hearts to Christ. That's when we started walking with the Lord.

Then something enormous happened, it was a paradigm shift of incredible proportions because we both stopped walking the way we had been walking and we started walking a different direction. We started going a different direction. We were walking toward the world before, now we started walking toward Jesus, right? That's what happened to us.

But if you think about that, what that really means, what that means. What that really means is, God began to walk us away from wickedness and toward righteousness. Not by our own power, but by His power. And that's what He does when He gets a hold of a human life.

When someone finally says, okay, I'm done. I'm done. Hands off, I'm going to stop living for myself from this day forward, and I'm going to start living for you. Something radical begins that day, where they begin to walk toward the Lord, and away from worldliness, wickedness, and so forth. And honestly, isn't that what we see going on in the world?

When you look at the world, one of the things people say to me all the time about what's happening in the world today is they'll say, well, the world's getting darker all the time. And I frankly believe it, I've said it myself, the world's getting darker all the time. And that's what happens when you're walking away from God.

I mean, frankly, there's only there's only two things that are going on, and the only major difference between us and the world is that the world is constantly moving away from God and toward wickedness. And we, on the other hand, are constantly being brought closer to God and further away from wickedness. And that's the work that He wants to do in us.

But the more the world rejects God..., and the Bible people, there's no other way to go but down there's no other way to go but toward darkness. You get that? Don't marvel, don't sit around going, I don't know what's going on in this world today.

Let me tell you what's going on in this world today. People are walking away from God and when you walk away from God you walk toward wickedness. Because the heart of man is the only thing left to worship if you've rejected God. That's all you've got left. You're your own God and the heart of man is

deceitfully wicked, the Bible tells us, and beyond cure. (Jeremiah 17:9) Right? There's no other way to go. That's why the world is getting darker.

But there's something else that's going on. While one side gets darker, the other side is being drawn closer and closer to the light. Right? In other words, there's a gravitational pull on both sides. And on one side, the gravitational pull is wickedness, the heart of man, on the other side, the gravitational pull is Jesus. And those of us who have opened our heart to Him are being drawn to Him.

And yes, it's not a perfect trip. Many of us have stumbled and fumbled. And even given up a few times, but thank God He didn't give up on you. And we're continuing to walk, even though it may be baby steps, toward Him.

And it's something, frankly, that the writer of Hebrews mentioned, I love quoting this out of the NIV. It's from Hebrews up on the screen, chapter 10.

**Hebrews 10:14 (NIV84)**

*...by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

*...by one sacrifice (and that speaks to the sacrifice of Jesus) he (God) has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

Did you see the two tenses in that single verse? “*By one sacrifice he has made,*” past tense, perfect. “*...those who are being made (present tense) holy.*” God is doing a work in you to make you holy.

People, don't get messed up on the word, holy. It doesn't mean you're going to walk around with a halo and levitate off the ground. The word, holy means, set apart, set apart. Do you get that?

You see what God is doing in your life and in my life, He's drawing us out of the world that we might be set apart from it, that we might be different. And more than anything else, He wants you and me to be different. Different from the world.

They're being drawn to destruction and it's our job to share Christ with as many as will listen. And He's given us wonderful spiritual gifts to be able to accomplish that goal of sharing the grace of God.

But what's happening in our lives, it's a completely different gravitational pull, and we need to be open to it. We need to surrender to it. And even if you're



going through a hard time right now, going through a nasty time, you just come to the Lord and say, Lord, I give you this, and I ask you to use it in my life to bring about your purpose, which is to form Christ in me after that image of my Savior, amen.

Let's stand together. If you need prayer this morning, we'd love to have you come up and pray. And you know what? If you've never received Jesus as your Savior, come up and tell the prayer team or tell me and just say, hey, I'd like, I want to pray this morning to receive Jesus. Never done that. I'd love to pray with you. I would be honored to pray with you.

Father, we thank you so much for the power of your presence. We thank you so much for your Word. We thank you so much, Lord, for the gifts that you've given us as the body of Christ to accomplish your will and to share the good news with people that they don't have to work or try to be a good person to go to heaven, but Jesus did all the work for them when He died on the cross.

And Lord, I thank you too for that gravitational pull that is now in our lives toward holiness, being set apart different from the world. And I pray my Father God that we would learn to surrender. Sometimes we fight against it. Sometimes we literally fight against that pull from your Spirit to draw us closer to you.

Forgive us, Lord, when we do that. Forgive us when we go back into the darkness and think that we're going to find answers there. Forgive us, Lord, for our lapses of judgment and our stumblings, and help us, we pray, to open our eyes and keep them fixed on you.

And move toward you walk toward you steady on each day as we learn to live for you to surrender to you and to allow that work that only you can do in our hearts to change us into the image of our Savior.

It is in His name that we pray this prayer and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.