

Acts 3:17-26: Can Jesus Really Give Us A Better Life?

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA July 17, 2016

I. Introduction

When you go to church, whose voice do you hear, the preacher's or Jesus'? Do you hear a voice at all? Or is going to church the same old routine: every Sunday you get dressed up, go to the sanctuary, sit and listen to the announcer, stand up to sing, perhaps you sit and get up a few more times, then finally you sit down and listen to the preacher give his sermon? Is this your church experience? It's the same every week and it makes absolutely no difference in your life? God is saying something to you every Sunday (and every other day of the week)...do you hear Him?

II. Acts 3:17-26: How Do We Walk With Jesus So That We Have Access to His Salvation Now?

3:17-18, having just accused the crowd of killing God's Servant, the Prince of Life, Peter wants them to know that they and the rulers that perpetrated this heinous act did it in ignorance. In fact, everything that happened to Jesus Christ happened exactly as God said it would. In fact, not only did God say it would happen He ensured it would happen.

Whose voice do we hear in the Bible man's or God's? Do we hear Moses, Isaiah, Malachi, Matthew, Luke, Paul, Peter, or God? Acts 3:18 says "God foretold." The words in the Bible are God's not the individual authors. This is crucial. In other words, what we have in Scripture are not words about God, but the very words of God. And there's a colossal difference: if all you see in the Bible are words about God, about Jesus and His salvation. If you've come to church to hear about Jesus, you're missing the very point of why you're there.

If Jesus greeted you at the door Sunday morning, escorted you to your seat and said, "I've got something very important to say to you." How attentive would you be? Even though you didn't get much sleep last night, would you doze off in the middle of His sermon? Would you be on the edge of your seat or wondering, "When's this guy gonna shut up so I can go home."?

Well, who do you think is speaking to you Sunday morning? The preacher? The preacher's there every Sunday because God put him there. Who's speaking to this crowd, Peter, John? No, Jesus, 1:1, 4-5, 8. If it was up to Peter, he'd still be back with his fishing boat catching fish. But Jesus told him, "That's not your job anymore, from now on, you're gonna catch men." So, who's speaking here? Jesus! 3:22-23. Who's going to bless this crowd and turn them away from every iniquity? Peter? No! Jesus! 3:26.

3:19-21, just because they did this in ignorance doesn't mean they're not guilty. They are and in order to be forgiven, they must repent and return to God. They must realize that Jesus was not a blasphemer who was justly crucified. He is, instead, the Savior of the world, the One God foretold by the mouth of all His holy prophets. He's now sitting in heaven waiting until God restores all things through Him.....but what about all our problems today, can Jesus help us now?

Salvation is not just for the future: it's here and now, God promised that His Son would restore all things. One day His Son will turn back the death and destruction that has plagued mankind from the days of Adam and Eve. The entire Bible speaks of this, from Genesis to Revelation (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 22:1-5). But Jesus' salvation is not just for the future, it's for the here and now. We can have "times of refreshing" right now, 3:19. You can live in the Kingdom now! What's life in the Kingdom like? Look at the apostles—in the Kingdom, fishermen become fishers of men who can speak foreign languages. Look at the crowd in Acts 2—in the Kingdom strangers behave like family and support each other like family.

We lost paradise in the Garden, but as soon as it happened God promised to give it back to us, even though it would cost Him a Son (Genesis 3:14-15). Well that's what's happening as Peter talks to this crowd. That plan foretold by the prophets is coming to fruition, which is why Jesus says at the beginning of His ministry, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). The next thing we see is Jesus bringing God's Kingdom to earth—healing people left and right, bringing people back to life—why do you think He does that? Death is our problem, but it's not just physical. Death affects every corner of our lives. Our jobs die. Our marriages die. Our friendships die. Think of every aspect of your life and you'll find death. Well, Jesus is the Prince of what? Life! 3:15. Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the Life!" (John 14:6).

And one day, Jesus is going to restore everything permanently as the Scriptures say, Romans 8:21; 1 Corinthians 15:28 Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1—but it's not just future, it's now. What's the Lord's Prayer say, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We can have "times of refreshing" now, here on earth, 3:19.

3:22-26, God said the same thing through all of His prophets, from Samuel and all who followed. And Peter quotes perhaps the greatest prophet, Moses. He told Israel that God would raise up a Prophet like him (someone who spoke with God face to face as Moses did, Numbers 12:1-8). That Prophet was Jesus and God sent Him to this crowd. They are sons of the Abrahamic Covenant, a Covenant which said that all humanity would be blessed by Jesus Christ, God's Anointed/Messiah.

Why did God send Jesus? To bless you, to turn you away from everything that's killing you. If you're addicted, a penny-pincher, bitter, holding a grudge against a friend, colleague, or family member, anxious all the time, fearful, lack purpose, whatever the problem Jesus has the solution.

How do we walk with Jesus so that He saves us now: *Jesus saves a woman struggling with a 47-year addiction*, It involves three questions: What did God say? What are you going to do about it? and if it's for someone else, How can I help you? Here's what it looks like: when I met her, she'd been a Christian for 30yrs and in ministry 18yrs. But every night she'd drink a bottle of wine. She's been drinking the whole 30yrs as a Christian. This is not supposed to happen. Jesus came to free us from this (Luke 4:18). So why is this faithful Christian woman struggling?

We don't know how to show people how to walk with Jesus, think of what Jesus came to bring her, recall 2:41-47? Jesus came to place her in a family that's supposed to help her. But if you don't know how to walk with Jesus through thick and thin, how can you help someone else? In fact, often Christians think someone like her needs to see the pastor or professional help. But all too often pastors don't know how to help, the same goes for professionals. Meanwhile, Jesus said that every one of us is supposed to be able to show this woman how to walk with Him, how to be His disciple (Matthew 28:20). Every Christian has the power of the Lord's Spirit at their fingertips (John 14:12-18; 16:12-15). For those of us who go to church every Sunday with absolutely no difference in our lives, the problem is that we've never been shown how to walk in the Lord's Spirit (Galatians 2:20; 4:6; 5:16-26).

The Lord looks at her history and opens her eyes to the truth, i.e., What did God say? The Lord prompted me to ask **why** she drank every night. I discovered that as a little girl, her father taught her that she would never be able to please him. She grew up desperately seeking his approval, but never getting it. She carried this into adulthood. In her mind, she walked around with a set of scales, but she was never able to get the good scale to outweigh the bad. She couldn't live with that pain (no one can), so she took something every night to take it away: a bottle of wine. God wanted to say something to her; He wanted her to ask *Him* what He thought of her, not her dad, not her circumstances, not her childhood, but her Heavenly Father. So she prayed and asked Him. He answered, "You are My righteous one."

The 2nd and 3rd questions: What are you going to do about what God said? and How can I help you? Over the next four months I helped her walk with Christ and go directly to Him about her addiction. At times it looked like she wasn't getting it, but the Lord was patient. He took her by the hand and slowly opened her eyes to the truth of life in His Kingdom vs. life in Satan's, which is where she'd been living every night. He showed her her true identity, that she was a righteous daughter who could please her Father. Thus, He got rid of the "Why?" behind her addiction and her addiction went away. If you let God deal with the "Why?" behind your addiction, desire to divorce, self-harm, over-eating, short temper, jealousy, racism, whatever your issue, if you let God deal with the **why** behind it, He'll free you from it.

In her words, this is how God finally freed her: *I'll never forget when the light started to go on about how I would live in God's Kingdom while working during the day in ministry, but after work I would run home to Satan's Kingdom. The day I realized I needed to stop going "next door" is the day God began to change me. Then remember I had that dream where I went home and the house was completely empty? I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. And then I was so, so happy. Satan was gone. I was living in the Kingdom of God now. I woke up, remembered the dream perfectly, and never drank again. God is good!!!! Not only for leading me to you to lead me to understanding, but to show me so vividly in a dream that it will be something I will never forget.*

It is God's truth that sets us free. This is what got Jesus through every heartache, every disappointment, every anxiety, every betrayal; it was God's voice, His truth. When Satan came to tempt Him, Jesus kept saying, "It is written, ..." (Matthew 4:1-11). During the most painful experience of His life, Jesus turns to God's voice once again: As He's dying on the Cross He says, "MY God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It sounds like He's desperate, like all is lost. That is, until you realize that He's quoting Scripture. He quotes Psalm 22 which ends with Jesus resurrected and ruling the world!.....we need to turn to God's voice.

We need to ask ourselves, "What did God say?" and "What are we going to do about it?" And if you don't know how, you need to find someone who can show you how to walk with Jesus and His truth.

III. Conclusion

"Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."