

church , results in outreach to the world - done in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit's work in mission, on this occasion, is to care for those in need, a deed of mercy to the long term broken outside the place of worship.

The crowd gathers. They want to know the what, the how, the where, the why! We focus upon *"repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he might send the Christ."* (vv19-20).

Repent then and turn to God.

It is a call to conversion. A call to be issued to all nations in the name of Christ - as our gospel reminds us, (Luke 24:46-47). The word repentance is about a change in attitude, to change ones mind, in Hebrew it also includes changing direction. Someone said, it is easier to change ones mind than to change ones life. Repentance - turn away from the old ways, make a new start.

And Peter declares three blessings that come.

"That your sins may be wiped out."

Of course, it means the forgiveness of your sins, as Jesus said in our gospel, (24:47). But the phrase has extra riches for us. The word for 'wiped out' is the same one used in Revelation 21, when it says v4 'he will wipe every tear from their eyes'. So shall our sins be wiped out.

When ancient writing was on papyrus, that ink had no acid in it. Therefore the ink did not bite into the papyrus like modern ink. It simply lay on top of it. To erase the writing, it was simply wiped away with a wet sponge. God wipes away the sin of those who are forgiven. Gone. As someone said. God came not to rub things in, but to rub things out. This is an incredible promise.

We can feel - that may apply to others. Not me. Or I have repeated that sin too many times. There will be a stain on my ledger, there will always be a mark. That is very easy to believe. But let us be encouraged. Peter gives the listeners a chance to repent. He has been blunt, as we heard, with a long list of You - you handed him over to be killed, you disowned him before Pilate, you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, you killed the author of life, (vv13-15). Free pardon is offered to all who took part in the death of Jesus. If they will acknowledge their error, confess their sin, turn to God in repentance. Nothing is too great for God to forgive. Nothing is too much to be wiped out. As a theologian put it - "here is the heart of the gospel of grace." (FF Bruce). If he can forgive the sins of those who were guilty of agreeing to the death of Jesus, then he can forgive your sins. You cannot have too much blood on your ledger. Their sins will be blotted out, wiped out, even 'the sin of sins' of consenting to the execution of the Holy and Righteous One, the Author of Life.

"So that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

Some writers, say Peter has in mind only that these times come when the Lord returns, so they connect the times of refreshment with the return of the Lord. Those are tremendous days to look forward to, when he returns. But I suggest Peter means this is something we can experience as believers now. I say this, firstly because of the order. He says the times of refreshment may come and then he says that the Lord come. Also on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter tells people to repent, he says that if they do, the gift of the Holy Spirit will be given to them. Now here, he speaks of refreshment. Is that what he suggests, that the Spirit ministers to us. The word is used only once in NT but it can have a meaning of - release from burdensome distressful circumstance; relief breathing space. The word has links to a recovery of breath, of figuratively revival. Does the Spirit bring release from burdens, peace in distress, an ability to breathe again, to revive?

So as we repent, turn to God, is this the promise of what the Lord begins to work out in us. I think of the experiences of many who turn to the Lord and their testimonies. Charles Wesley in one of my favourite hymns wrote-

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night: thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke the dungeon flamed with light: my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee."

Peter says this refreshment comes from the Lord. But what else, just minutes before he has spoken about something else coming

from the Lord - the healing of the crippled man. Is that man, an example of what times of refreshment can mean for us - at different levels? So I suggest there may be the times of refreshment we have enjoyed as Christians, but this suggests there can be more, that the Lord seeks to work out within us.

Finally. *"That he might send the Christ."*

Jesus suffered as Messiah, he is now exalted as Messiah and he must come as Messiah to bring the eschatological consummation. He is to come and restore the new messianic creation. In the 40 days after Easter, Peter and others had asked if now Jesus was going to restore the kingdom to Israel. Peter was told, he wasn't to know the times, the Father has set. Then Jesus went to say - but you will receive power and you will be my witnesses. They had been clothed with power, as Jesus promised.

What he does we must note. He takes the opportunities and seeks opportunities to witness. Peter shows us, as a Spirit filled man, you can be 100% looking forward to the return of Christ in our life time, as Peter and others had that hope - as you read in NT you see this hope shine out. They looked to his return, longed for it. But you can be 100% missionary minded as well. Peter looked up to the return and looked out to the broken world.

“and that he might send the Christ.”

Peter shows us, as a Spirit filled man, you can be 100% looking forward to the return of Christ in our life time. But you can be 100% missionary minded as well. Peter looked up to the return and looked out to the broken world.



"Repent, then, and turn to God."

AND THREE BLESSINGS:

"so that your sins may be wiped out,

so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

and that he might send the Christ."

Closing Prayer.

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your refreshment and peace, as we turn to you,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.