

Acts 2:40-3:26 – Reformation in a Perverse Generation – Sermon Outline

Intro: The men of Israel are pierced to the heart at Peter's preaching, repent and are baptized, and we now see the beginnings of the new covenant community and their life and fellowship in doctrine and deed.

Need: We should reflect the early church today, taking into account the differences between their situation and ours, in location, growth of the kingdom, and modern challenges and difficulties in our own nation.

Theme: Reformation out of perverse generations comes through redemptive living in Christ.

1. Reformation from perversion requires learning and living with the redeemed. (2:40-47)
2. The redeemed must call the perverse to Christ and His fellowship and worship. (3:1-16)
3. Reformation and redemption come only through the word and power of the risen Christ. (3:17-26)

I. Reformation from perversion requires learning and living with the redeemed. (40-47)

A. Peter calls the Jews of that generation "perverse" because they crucified Christ.

1. Jesus Himself called them faithless and perverse in Luke 9:41, but Stephen later in Acts will declare that they always persecuted the prophets and resisted the Spirit throughout their history, Acts 7:50ff.
2. This will lead to their destruction, both the city of Jerusalem and its temple, as Christ had prophesied.
3. Yet in 2:40, in the powerful outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, we see some 3,000 souls added to the church, having been convicted of sin, repenting, and being baptized into the Church.
4. This redeemed community, the remnant of the faithful/elect Jews from the old covenant era, forms the nucleus or core and foundation of the new covenant era of the last days, in Christ's blood, under His rule at the Father's right hand, building up His Church and Kingdom by the power of His Spirit.

B. Those perverse Jews who crucified Christ, yet repented, now are being reformed, since they are redeemed from their sins through Christ, and filled with His Spirit to serve Him in righteousness.

1. Acts 2:41-47 shows they lived together, according to what they were learning from the Apostles.
2. They continued steadfastly, being together for many weeks ahead, even longer, and what bound them together was Christ and His Word, as delivered to them through the Apostle's preaching.
3. "doctrine and fellowship" is their learning and living together as a redeemed, reforming people.
4. "breaking of bread and prayers" is likely both sharing meals together, and the Lord's Supper, along with praying together, with and for one another. We have, then, **Word, prayer, and sacrament**.
5. **WSC Q. 88:** "*What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?*" **ANSWER:** "*The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are, his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.*"
6. Notice the communal nature of the Christian faith. While we must read the Scriptures privately, we must also hear the Scriptures preached publicly, together as a Church body.
7. The LS is called communion because it is a communion meal of the body of Christ, with Christ our Head serving us at His Table. Prayer, of course, is to be done privately but also together/publicly.
8. What often crowds out God's Word, the LS, table fellowship, and sincere prayer, is a lack of love for these things, and therefore a desire to be distracted by smells and bells, candles and incense, of certain strands of churches, or the contemporary version of that with fog machines and strobe lights.
9. Both have in common shallow preaching and prayers in favor of catchphrases and catchy tunes.
10. Yet Word, prayer, and sacrament, and daily fellowship over meals and meeting one another's needs, is what the baptism of the Spirit produced in those who received the word with gladness, repented, and were baptized. The marks of the Spirit in one converted lead us to love the simplicity of worship.

11. They were steadfast, continual, in these things. They hungered for God's Word, and God's people, and to enjoy life together, not learning primarily from a book or podcast, as helpful as they can be.
 12. Do you have a love for your spouse and children, to be with them, to pray and study God's Word, to do life together? Do you have such a love for the other families of this church, and other Christians?
 13. Cultivate that love, for it is true Christian love, and Christ uses His body to grow together in Him.
- C. 43-47, God blessed this true fellowship, this reformed life they were now living, reformed around God's Word and God's people, for God's glory, by causing fear to come upon all there as the Apostles were gifted to do many wonders and signs.
1. The result was further fellowship, the Christians having all things in common, that is, they sold their lands and goods if and when there was a true need within the body of Christ.
 2. They did this all with a gladness and simplicity of heart, "simplicity" a Greek word used only here that literally would mean without stony ground. They were smooth-hearted, truly converted to the Lord.
 3. Think of Mark 4 and the parable of the 4 soils, the stony ground hearers initially received the word with joy and gladness, but had no root in them, so then fell away in times of persecution/affliction.
 4. Yet here the converts who had plenty were moved to give to the converts who had great need.
 5. This is not setting up a monastic ideal, where Christians live away from all unbelievers, do not own personal property, and strive to have no one richer or poorer than the rest.
 6. But at this time, while they were filled with the Spirit at Jerusalem, and there was a sudden influx of thousands of converts, along with more wives and children, this was what was fitting for the moment.
 7. This example of love and generosity among the redeemed, reforming their lives, letting go of greed and envy, letting go of pride when needing help, either financially or health wise, etc., set an example to the unconverted around them, so that as they praised God, even outsiders spoke well of them.
 8. This was used by God as a witness, leading to our next point, that the redeemed, by their reformed lives structured around reformed/biblical doctrine, must call the perverse to Christ and His fellowship and worship, which the redeemed in Christ share with one another and exhibit to the wicked world.
 9. From this, we today can learn that fellowship for Christians, not forsaking the assembling of the brethren, begins with Sunday worship on the Lord's Day, but goes beyond that to weekly gatherings.
 10. Not only is this formal meetings, like we have on Tuesdays, but as they went from house to house, as undoubtedly there was no individual house large enough to host all 3,000 plus converts at once, so too it is good for families to invite other families over for meals and fellowship together.
 11. Imagine being in a dating relationship, or even married, but never spending time together, never scheduling dates or simply time to talk. That is what a church that doesn't get together is like.

II. The redeemed must call the perverse to Christ and His fellowship and worship. (3:1-16)

- A. Charity and generosity begins with the Church, fellow Christians, not unbelievers.
1. So we see, while the Christian converts had everything in common, their allegiance to each other took precedence over their kinsman according to the flesh who were outside of Christ, the Jews begging for alms. Peter doesn't give silver or gold, but does call the man to faith and heals him.
 2. He has the lame man look at him, and declares to him the name of Christ, by whose power, at the Father's right hand, this lame man was healed, as the lame man looked to Peter in true faith.
 3. Notice this was at the hour of prayer for the Temple. We see Peter and the others continuing faithfully in prayer and gathering with the people, also undoubtedly preaching to others.
 4. So think of going to Church faithfully, and a lame man is carried to the doorsteps of the Church, hoping to appeal to Christian charity and compassion. What do you do?

5. We aren't able to perform a miracle, but the message should be the same – what this man needs, above all, is Christ as Lord and Savior, and in Christ, forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit will be given, and one day, at Christ's return, that broken body will be raised up to wholeness as well.
 6. Our funds and money and generosity should begin with our own household and then the household of faith, fellow believers, but may extend to unbelievers, but really only if they are coming to faith.
 7. **Acts 3:7ff.**, the lame man is healed, and seen walking, but where does he walk? To the bar, to the strip club, to get more drugs with the money you just gave him? No, into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God, and this is what the people saw, both his walking (miracle) and praising (miracle!).
 8. Christ who had recently been crucified, dead and buried, is now being praised by a former crippled man, whom everyone knew was lame from birth and daily begged for alms at the Temple. The true Temple, Jesus Christ, had given him body and soul wholeness!
 9. This lame man clings to Peter and John, showing his allegiance to Christ through His chosen apostles, in humble thankfulness, and also evidencing to the people something great has happened.
 10. Solomon's porch was likely around the court of the Gentiles, which surrounded the Temple proper. This is a large area, and a prime place to perform a miracle and proclaim Christ to many people.
- B. 12ff., As Christ performed miracles to validate & demonstrate his message of salvation & redemption, body and soul, so the Apostle's continue that, now in Christ's name, showing His risen power:
1. Peter gives the glory and credit all to the holiness and power of God, who has glorified His Son Jesus, to perform this, and Peter reminds them again this is the Jesus they delivered up and denied as their own in Pilate's presence, so that Christ was crucified when Pilate wanted to free him!
 2. The Prince of Life, slain to death by His own people, was given over to free a murderer, Barabbas.
 3. Yet Peter declares He and the Apostles, and other converts with them, were witnesses the Christ's resurrection, by the power of God, such that now at the name of Christ, through faith in Him, who He is as God the Son in human flesh, and where He now is, enthroned in power at the Father's right hand in heaven, through faith in that risen, exalted, Christ who bore our sins, this crippled man has been made well, bodily, but more importantly, in his soul, walking, leaping, praising God.
- C. Today, the Church has almost fundamentally inverted God's good order, prioritizing helping unbelievers often to the neglect of believers, even those in our own congregations.
1. The idea of ending world hunger is actually anti-biblical, for Christ has told us we will always have the poor with us, and Paul notes that the one who does not work shall not eat.
 2. Even church widows, in 1 Tim. 5, have to meet very strict criteria to be added to the distribution.
 3. First, if she has children or grandchildren, they must provide for her, and if they do not, they are worse than unbelievers and have denied the faith.
 4. Second, widows must be at least 60 years old to be helped by the Church, and must truly be widows, without children or grandchildren to provide for her.
 5. Even then, she must have been the faithful wife of one man, full of good works, having brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, followed every good work.
 6. The younger widows, Paul commands, are not to be received, but remarry, so that they do not become busybodies from house to house, and gossips.
 7. They are to instead manage the home, bearing children, so that they do not turn aside after Satan.
 8. Family is supposed to first take care of their widows before the Church steps in. So we see, again, the fellowship and unity of the redeemed in Christ, in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship.
- D. We have toxic charity today, just like we have toxic patriarchy or toxic tenderness.

1. We are gentle to those who need firm rebuke, and we often give firm rebuke or are angry with those who try to administer the necessary "tough love".
 2. Our culture, in apostatizing and distorting Christianity, has taken the principle to love like Jesus to do things completely backward, like not rebuking drag queens or petitioning politicians to pass laws against such lewd and perverse deeds of this perverse generation we are living in today.
 3. But many churches and pastors today will then drop tons of money, tithe and offering money, to help the homeless or poor and needy, who are living as a lifestyle of laziness, addiction, etc., all with a sense of entitlement that the church itself has helped give them.
 4. This is toxic charity, misplaced sympathy. It is sin, and it must be repented of.
 5. There is a time when we must be willing to let outsiders starve, quite literally, for their unrepentance, rather than feed them and continue their sinful lifestyles. This is true of everything from drug and drink abusers to sex abusers, to those in poverty to those living lavishly in their sin.
 6. We must have tough love when those within the body of Christ behave this way as well.
- E. In this we learn also that there should be commerce and economy among Christians, of like faith.
1. Paul does say it is fine to purchase meat sold in the marketplace, and to eat it, and even to eat with unbelievers, even if they had offered the meat they are feeding you to idols, I Cor. 8.
 2. But the warning is that if other believers find this wrong, be cautious, do not become a stumbling block to them, for the body of Christ takes priority over your boundless liberties in the Lord.
 3. Further, it is sound wisdom to buy, sell, and trade, when possible, to support and promote fellow believers, rather than unbelievers, and especially to help out our local church & Christian community.
 4. Nobody is saying you cannot buy something from Amazon or Wal-Mart, or that you must boycott this or that liberal store or company.
 5. At the same time, we should realize that we can show our love for neighbor, and fellow Christians, by promoting them and their businesses, giving them work, giving them preference, and expecting and hoping for the same in return.
 6. We should want Christians to be successful and wealthy and generous to fellow believers with that wealth, and we should want the wicked in high places to be cut down, and to starve them from continuing to use our money that we pay them to destroy the faith and faithful Christians.
 7. Gathering at Christian conventions and meetings, not just for study and worship, but for commerce, homesteader meetings and Christian business conventions, and the like, are also really a means to grow the kingdom of God, to fellowship and network with fellow believers, and so on.
 8. Paul for a time worked at his trade with Aquila, who along with his wife were converts to the faith.
 9. **Acts 18:3**, "So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers."
 10. Paul set the example by working with his hands, and naturally went to work with a fellow believer, because Christian fellowship also makes life much easier to work and labor together.
 11. In fact, we may find situations, working with pagans, that we truly are unequally yoked, that it cannot work, because of the environment, because they are asking us to do illegal or compromising things, because they disregard our need to rest on the Lord's Day and worship, honoring the Sabbath, etc.
 12. And when local churches work together, as ours does, it is actually a wonderful thing, builds fellowship among the body, and creates strong and lasting bonds in the Lord.
 13. All this is a basic model for being redeemed and reformed out of our wicked and perverse generation!

III. Reformation and redemption come only through the word and power of the risen Christ. (17-26)

- A. 17-18, This further confirms the guilt of the Jews in crucifying Christ, but Peter also gives comfort, saying they did this all in ignorance, and all this was according to God's plan foretold by the prophets.
1. Even their rulers had some ignorance. It was a culpable ignorance, they were still guilty and must repented and be converted, but their ignorance meant their were not irredeemable. Remember, this is the Jews, the covenant people of God, who had little excuse/ignorance compared to the Gentiles.
 2. They had long had the covenant and words/oracles of God, yet rejected and crucified Christ, and yet with most of them, even the rulers, God in Christ was still merciful, calling them to repent/have faith.
 3. But for the few like Judas, they had no ignorance, no excuse, & had apostatized to the damnation of their souls, without hope. But for the rest, upon repentance, refreshing in the Lord could still come!
 4. This refreshing is described as a time. The time begins when one is converted, drawn by Christ with a new heart to faith and repentance, being baptized into the church/body of Christ, having the refreshing and reforming joy of Word, prayer, and sacrament, among the redeemed people of God.
 5. It is the Lord's presence, now in His Spirit and Word, some day when He returns, face to face and bodily, that gives this refreshing and joy.
- B. 20ff., Remember, God's glory in the Temple had long departed, but now these who come to Christ and are converted, become part of God's true Temple, as the Spirit indwells them directly and fully.
1. The full and final restoration of all things will only occur when Christ returns, that full restoration not yet being present, though the Church is growing every day still.
 2. But the state of glory and resurrection of the body, including the body of this whole creation, will not happen until Christ returns, coming again out from heaven, in a yet future time.
 3. Yet those times, too, are prophesied by the holy prophets, and while they did not come at the outpouring of Pentecost in its full realization (for if it had Peter wouldn't speak of it as future), it did begin for those who are born of the Spirit, the same Spirit by which they will be raised bodily.
- C. 22-23, Christ is presently ruling and reigning from heaven, speaking to His people, first through Apostles and prophets, now through Pastors and Elders, parents and the whole body in general.
1. Yet Peter's point here is that Christ is still the Prophet speaking to them, through His mouthpiece of His Apostles, to the Jews, but all who do not hear Him, they will be "**utterly destroyed**".
 2. So, within that perverse generation, Jerusalem, its city, temple, and Jewish people who rejected Christ, the Prince of Life, it must all be destroyed, and only the faithful Jewish remnant is saved.
 3. Though it is but a remnant of Jews saved, they still are privileged by God, to be what God had promised to Abraham, the Father of many nations, and that in Abraham's seed, the nations of the world would be blessed.
 4. The Jewish Christ through His Jewish Apostles have the first converts, Jews, in Jerusalem, and from there they will be scattered under persecution and take the Gospel to the ends of the Earth.
- D. 24, These last days began with Christ speaking, from His present reign in heaven through His Apostles, which Samuel and the others all prophesied of long ago, has begun, and still continues.
1. Christ is still speaking to us through His Apostles, recorded for us in His Word, the Scriptures.
 2. The days they entered into, we are still in, and they will be complete at Christ's final coming.
 3. Until then, Christ is still speaking from the Father's right hand in heaven, as **Heb. 12:18ff.** tells us,
 4. *"For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or*

shot with an arrow.” And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, **to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.** See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, **much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,** whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.”

- E. **25-26, Peter addresses his Jewish brethren regarding the covenant with Abraham, which is the Gospel!**
1. In Abraham’s seed, ultimately Christ and then His chosen Apostles, **all the families of the earth shall be blessed.** Luke 2:4, the Greek “family” is translated “lineage”. Lineages are redeemed!
 2. This was the covenant, and it is also the Gospel, for we read in **Gal. 3:8**, “*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”***”
 3. The new covenant is not the discarding of the old covenant, but the fulfillment of it. It is not contrary to the Abrahamic covenant, but is that covenant, renewed now in power through Christ’s Word, blood, and Spirit, so that the Gospel promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the nations coming to Christ.
 4. As the children of the covenant, ethnically, the Gospel, or the covenant with Abraham renewed and fulfilled now in the blood of the risen Christ & power of His Spirit, comes to them first in this capacity.
 5. Why? “**to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.**” “**Turn away**” is used about 9 times in the NT, usually referring to turning either away from or toward truth and righteousness.
 6. Including **Heb. 12:25**, which we read, in “turning away from Him/Christ who speaks from heaven.”
- F. **The will of God: He calls all to repentance, but few are chosen for salvation.**
1. Christ is preached for the purpose of the old covenant people of God, every one of them, to turn from their iniquity/sin. Our goal in preaching should always be to plead with sinners to repent/believe.
 2. That is a genuine call, command, and desire, yet Paul & Barnabas say in **Acts 13:46**, “*It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.*”
 3. We should not pre-judge and withhold the Gospel from any, but we absolutely must judge responses to the Gospel once we have given it, and in some cases, stop casting pearls before swine, move on.
- G. **We will see in Acts 4:1-4, that the Sadducees will come and arrest Peter and the others, but also that many who heard the word believed, such that the “number of the men came to be about five thousand.”**
1. We had 3,000 earlier, now we are up to 5,000 men, not including their households.
 2. May the Lord likewise revive our town/churches by His pure Word. May the Lord pour out His Spirit powerfully, to turn every one of us from our iniquities, and to Him, in true righteousness and holiness.
 3. May we continue in the Apostolic doctrine and fellowship, breaking bread, making prayers, with gladness and simplicity of heart, and love toward one another.
 4. For we too, are like the lame man made to walk, in order to leap and praise God, as **Ps. 103:2-4** says, “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*” Be redeemed/reformed from this perverse generation today. **Let us pray.**