

3. May 2025

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

“Peter preaches with boldness”

Acts 3:18-26

But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

This is the powerful message that Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, has to convey to the Israelites. A speech that is unfortunately heard too seldom today, and yet it is so important if we do not want to lose our orientation, that is, our focus on God.

The Scriptures had foretold it and it had all been fulfilled in the eyes of the Jews. Now the apostles interpret all the events surrounding Jesus Christ in the light of the Holy Spirit. And their testimony is confirmed by signs and wonders. The Messiah came into the world and suffered to redeem humanity and free it from the chains of the devil; the time has come for sincere conversion and penance so that sins may be blotted out. To this step Peter exhorts the Jews, and this call extends to all people down through the centuries.

Peter uses a wonderful expression when he assures them that if they are converted, "times of refreshing" will come. Just as we need to breathe freely in order to live, so through the Holy Spirit we will inhale the new heavenly life of Christ. Then the soul will experience consolation, for the supernatural life revives her, freeing her from prison. As the Psalmist says: *"We have escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped!"* (Ps 124:7).

Peter speaks to the conscience of the Jews, for they knew the way of God like no other people. He had sent them prophets and even Moses had foretold the coming of the Lord: *"The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people"*.

These are strong words from the mouth of the Apostle, for it is not that it is irrelevant whether we listen to the prophets or not. This applies across the board and even more so when it comes to Jesus, the Son of God. The freedom with which God has endowed his rational creatures cannot consist in living contrary to the purpose for which they were created. If we see this even in the irrational creation, which abides by the laws of nature, how much more does it apply to the rational creation!

Whoever does not listen to the prophets sent by the Lord excludes himself from the truth. Sadly, this is what happened to the Jewish people. The blindness and stubbornness of their religious leaders certainly contributed decisively to the fact that a large part of the people did not convert to Christ, although in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles we find a great openness on the part of the Jews.

This wound, that so few of the people of Israel recognised their Messiah, and not infrequently even rejected him, still hurts today. Certainly, for believing Jews, God's promise to Abraham that 'in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed' is a comfort. So it happened, and the "hour of grace" for mankind has not yet passed. However, Israel has not yet received the blessing that would come to them if they would turn to Jesus Christ. Therefore, Peter's words have not been fulfilled for them: *"God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness"*.

Not long after the apostles had begun to proclaim the Resurrection of the Lord and to confirm their divine mission by signs and wonders, the enemies of Jesus began to persecute them. They were unwilling to give up the stubbornness of their hearts and face the truth. But now they no longer had fearful disciples before them, but apostles empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/feast-of-saints-philip-and-james-apostles/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/jesus-the-way-the-truth-and-the-life-2/>