



REBOOT: “Refreshed”

Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

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*We’ve been talking about four big promises for those who allow themselves to come honestly to God for help. In Christ, God helps us reboot our lives when we get off-track, sidelined or forget who and whose we were created to be. With God’s help we can be ***restored**, ***renewed**, ***refocused** and today - ***refreshed**.

We can be reminded of who we were created to be, **restored** to God’s original design – ***“made in the image of God.”** (Genesis 1:27)

We can be **renewed** by God’s grace, forgiven all that is past, and reminded that ***“Anyone in Christ is a new creation.”** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Wherever we are, God **refocuses** our lives to follow his way, and has promised to ***“be our God and we will be his people.”** (Revelation 21:3)

Whatever path we’ve taken in the past, God promises that in his grace, we can be redeemed and **refreshed**. And when we do so - ***“...a time of refreshing may come from his presence.”** (Acts 3:19)

I found today’s ***Biblical promise** from Acts 3:19 a few years ago, ***“Turn in the direction of God’s grace, so your sins may be forgiven, and a time of refreshing may come from his presence.”**¹

I didn’t even know that was in the Bible! I love that phrase, ***“a time of refreshing.”** Don’t you? And don’t we all need a little **refreshing**?

About twenty years ago, I learned this lesson. If I don’t refresh, I can burnout, lose focus and perspective. If I don’t refresh, I can easily get bored. I can be tempted easier, deceived more often. I can.

¹ Acts 3:19, paraphrased by the author.

I can make mole hills into mountains and monuments of the past. I can sulk about disappointments. Sad but true. I can say the wrong thing, act the wrong way, be less than I can be.

In short, I can settle for things that are less than God’s best, if I do not learn to refresh. That’s true in my work, marriage and my faith.

*Want a scary thought? I did the math - there are just *27 days till the start of Fall, 65 days to Halloween, 88 days to Thanksgiving, 117 days till Winter and – *are you kidding me?* – only 121 days till Christmas. I thought it was still summer! So much for that illusion!

***And** as a dad and grandpa, husband, and as a pastor, if I’m not careful I can get caught up in a cycle of busyness just like everyone else I know. Pressing demands at work, responsibilities at home, bottom-lines to manage. Health, relationship or financial worries that drain us. And sometimes that’s just the tip of the iceberg!

So don’t you sometimes wish there was a **“Refresh Button”* you could push to recuperate and recharge emotionally and spiritually?

Well, God has provided a spiritual *“Refresh Button”* and we need to know what it is and how to push it. When we do, we can learn to enjoy living life even with its complications, heartaches, ambitions, stresses and successes. That’s why I love Acts 3:19:

**“Turn in the direction of God’s grace, so your sins may be forgiven, and a time of refreshing may come from his presence.”²*

Of course, it would have been a lot more convenient if Peter had left out any mention of sin when he was promising that wonderful sounding time of refreshing that we need. **Sermons would be easier to deliver and listen to if they just stuck to more positive topics!*

² Acts 3:19, paraphrased by the author.

Our preferences remind me of the poem by Phyllis McGinley, about the popular minister in her fictional *Community Church*:

* “The Rev. Mr. Harcourt ... eloquently speaks on diverse matters with wit and clarity: art, education, God, the early Greeks, psychiatry, St. Paul, true Christian charity, building repairs that shortly must begin— all things but sin. He seldom mentions sin.”³

But we do, of course. Romans 3:23 reminds us, as if we needed the reminder: ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**⁴

In Matthew 5, Jesus said that we are **“the salt of the earth”* and *“the light of the world.”* Being salt and light is not optional. Jesus did not say you can be ... or have the potential to be ... He said we are.

We are. Of course, sometimes we mess that up, the Bible uses that unpopular word sin. We lose our flavor, like chewing gum on the bedpost overnight, we hide our light under a basket instead letting it light the way. **But we are the only salt and light Christ has.**

Or Paul, in *2 Corinthians 3, our text today, says we are the love letter Christ has sent to the world. 2 Corinthians 3:3 says:

***“You are a letter of Christ ... not written in ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on human hearts.”**⁵

That is more than a theological statement. So, what kind of letter are we? Are we a good letter, encouraging, lifting people up? Sometimes. But sometimes we fail, mess up, get grouchy, dash off a hot email or telephone call, or have a harsh word to a slow cashier. We are only human! The Bible says, here’s that word again, we sin. **But we are the only letter Christ sends.**

³ Times Three: Selected Verse from Three Decades by Phyllis McGinley, (foreword by W. H. Auden,) Copyright © 1961, Viking Press.

⁴ Romans 3:23. *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

⁵ Op. Cit. 2 Corinthians 3:3, *paraphrased by the author.*

*Back to our text, verses five and six:

**"Our confidence is in Christ - we make no claim of our own. Our competence is from God, who made us ministers of a new covenant."*⁶

Where the personal refreshing and renewal we need begins is not with my giving you a 15-minute pep talk about why you need to become more socially active, to volunteer more, or to do more. God might lead you to do that. But it doesn't begin or end there.

Years ago, one of the adult Sunday School teachers, a terrific well-read counselor by profession, came to me and said. *"Why do you make us read a Prayer of Confession when we go to Church?"*

**She had brought the current week's order circled in red, "Lord, forgive us for polluting the earth, not serving our neighbor, and ignoring Thy Holy Law..." *"Really, Mike, I didn't do all those things. I had two martinis one day at lunch but that was about it last week."*

I told her I was going to keep writing Prayers of Confession from time to time, but that she was free to not pray them if they made her feel bad. We laughed, but I've never forgotten the conversation.

**Whatever is wrong with us – a two-martini lunch or something far more serious - it all ends for Christians with the grace of God.*

You really don't need me or a Prayer of Confession to tell you how much you sin and fall short. I really don't need you to tell me how far short I come of perfection either. I already know. And so do you.

What we need is not a stern lecture or more strenuous effort, but to allow ourselves to be forgiven, made new, and refreshed by God.

As our text says at the very end of the passage, ***"The letter of the law will kill you, but the Spirit will give you life."***⁷ (2 Corinthians 3:6)

⁶ bid. 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, *paraphrased by the author.*

⁷ bid. 2 Corinthians 3:6b, *paraphrased by the author.*