

***The Next Chapter***

**CLOSING THE GAP**

**Acts 3:1-4:31**

We are not the first people to struggle with the gap that exists between what we want to be as followers of Jesus and what we end up being under pressure. Jesus' very first disciples struggled with the same. After boldly declaring Jesus to be the Holy One of God, Peter ended up disowning him three times. Did the gap in Peter's life ever close? You bet it did.

Acts 3:1-4:31 highlights another effect that the Holy Spirit had on those who first received him. It was transformed characters. These chapters tell how Peter was transformed by the Spirit from a self-protective person who disowned Jesus three times to a person who boldly proclaimed Jesus three times, once before a hostile audience.

The same still happens today. When the Spirit comes into our lives, he sets out to transform us from self-protective people to people who proclaim Jesus without shame. The more we come under the Spirit's control, the more he closes the gap.

We can try to close the gap through grit and determination or through education and apologetics, but if those are the only things that drive our confession of Jesus we will do more damage than good before we *peter* out. Our confession needs to flow from the work of the Spirit in our lives if they are going to do any good (1 Cor. 12:3).

To have the Spirit work in our lives, we first have to receive him by acknowledging our sins and asking the Father to forgive us. When we do that, he gives us his Spirit.

*But that's not all.* We also have to allow the Spirit to fill us by surrendering every aspect of our lives – our entertainment, our eating, our education and our endeavors – to him. As the Spirit takes up more and more space in our lives, we become more and more like Jesus and experience more and more confidence of him.

Thanks to the Spirit filling his life, Peter became confident of three life-changing truths about the risen Christ.

- **The risen Christ has authority and power over the existence of individual human beings – Acts 3:6**
- **The risen Christ has authority and power over human history and all creation – Acts 3:19-21**
- **The risen Christ has authority and power over human destiny – Acts 4:12**

Do you have what it takes to confess Jesus like Peter did? To do that we need more than grit and determination. We need more than education and apologetics. We need the Holy Spirit, not just in our lives, but filling our lives.