

Acts 3 – 4:31

A continuation from the end of chap 2.

This miracle is the second occasion in Acts for the gathering of a large crowd, and this is the occasion for the second sermon Peter is said to have preached to the people of Jerusalem. Peter and John are then arrested and put them in jail, to be questioned by the religious leaders the next day. Opposition to the gospel has now begun.

Outline

Chap 3 and 4:31

- (1) the miracle of the healing of the lame man, verses 1-10
- (2) the preaching of Peter in response to the crowds who had gathered, verses 11-26.
- (3) the results of the miracle and Peter's preaching, verses 1-4
- (4) the trial and threatening of Peter and John, verses 5-22
- (5) the response of the church to persecution, verses 23-31.

A. The healing of the paralytic at the Gate Beautiful.

1. (1-3) The request of the paralyzed beggar.

Peter and John went to the temple at the 9th hour (3Pm) as per Jewish custom after the hour of sacrifice to pray. The believers have continued in the prayers of the temple. Significance of the 9th hour – hour of Jesus's death.

2. (4-6) What Peter said to the lame man.

The lame man expected alms. But received much more than alms.

Silver and gold I do not have: Peter didn't have any money, but he did have authority from Jesus to heal the sick (what I do have I give to you). Peter knew what it was like to have God use him to heal others, because Jesus had trained him in this (Luke 9:1-6).

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: "Jesus was from Nazareth – he was a Nazarene, and this had been used to insult Christ during his life on earth. But now Peter waved it like a banner."

3. (7-10) The healing of the lame man.

a. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up: It was one thing to say, "rise up and walk," but it was a much greater thing to so boldly take the man's hand and lift him to his feet. At this moment, Peter received the gift of faith described in 1 Corinthians 12:9 – a supernatural ability to trust God in a particular situation.

b. Immediately his feet and bones received strength

c. Entered the temple... walking, leaping, and praising God: As soon as he was healed, the formerly lame man did three good things. First, he attached himself to the apostles (entered the temple with them). Secondly, he immediately started to use what God had given him (walking, leaping). Finally, he began to praise and worship God (praising God).

B. Peter preaches to the gathered crowd.

1. (11-12) Introduction: Why do you think we have done something great?

Peter's point was simple: Jesus healed all sorts of people when He walked this earth, so why should it seem strange that He continues to heal from heaven?

2. (13-15) Peter preaches Jesus.

The guilt of the people of Jerusalem is described by means of a series of contrasts. Let me point out a few of them.

First, Peter contrasted the glorification of God's servant in His resurrection and ascension with his audience's disowning of Him as their Messiah:

"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned ... (Acts 3:13a).

Second, Peter contrasted Pilate's desire to release Jesus because he felt he was innocent, with their insistence that He be put to death, convinced He was guilty, and thus worthy of death:

"... you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him" (Acts 3:13b).

In chapter 2, Peter had spoken of the death of Jesus as a joint-conspiracy of the Jews and the Gentiles (2:23), but here Pilate is represented as wanting to release Jesus but being pressured into putting Him to death, making the guilt of the Jews greater in the sense of their accusation of His guilt and being worthy of death.

Third, Peter contrasted the One whom they wished to crucify with the one they wished to release:

"But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, ..." (Acts 3:14-15a).

Fourth, they dealt with Jesus, who was the promised "prophet like Moses," as though He were a false prophet. Peter reminded his listeners of these words, found in the Book of Deuteronomy 18:15 "MOSES said, 'THE LORD GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED in everything He says to you. "And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

3. (16) How the man was healed.

4. (17-18) Explaining the sufferings of Jesus

5. (19-21) Peter calls them to repentance

6. (22-26) Peter warns of the danger of rejecting Jesus

Emphases

1. The work of the Spirit carries on where Jesus left off. The teaching, preaching and healing ministry of Jesus is extended into the life of church. The healing of the crippled beggar by Peter and John parallels the healing of the paralyzed man by Jesus in the Gospel (Luke 5:17-26). Both accounts raise the issue of “what authority” is at work in the healing. In both accounts the authority is Jesus. Peter and John heal as if Jesus is still with them.
2. The apostles use every teachable moment. The healing of the crippled is not a moment of self-glory. It is also not to end by causing wonder or amazement. It is to teach about Jesus as the messiah. Beyond the healing miracle is a deeper reality, which makes it different from a magic trick. The authority and presence of God, the transformation of the healed and the community. Reconciliation.
3. Many evangelists or preachers today who would never claim to heal in their own power still give the impression that healing happens because they are so spiritual, so close to God, or so godly. Peter knew that it was all of Jesus and nothing was of him. Prosperity gospel – Health and wealth gospel. Materialism is a threat to Christianity.

Question - What is the difference between a miracle done by Jesus and the apostles and a magic trick?

ACTS 4 – PETER AND JOHN FACE THE SANHEDRIN

A. Peter preaches to the Jewish leaders.

1. (1-4) The arrest of Peter and John.

- a. The **captain**, together with the **priests** and the **Sadducees**, all came together to arrest Peter and John.
- b. **Being greatly disturbed**: The Sadducees *would* be greatly disturbed that Peter and John taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead; they did not believe in the afterlife or the resurrection at all.
- c. **Put them into custody until the next day**:
- d. **The number of the men came to be about five thousand**

2. (5-7) Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin.

No less than 11 different groups or individuals opposing these followers of Jesus.

- *Groups*: Priests and the Sadducees (Acts 4:1); Rulers, elders, scribes (Acts 4:5); and others from the family of the high priest (Acts 4:6).
- *Individuals*: The captain of the temple (Acts 4:1); Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander (Acts 4:6).

- a. This was a scene of power and intimidation. This same group of leaders had recently condemned Jesus to death, and they wanted them to know that they had the power to do the same thing to Peter and John.
- b. By what power or by what name have you done this? The ideas behind by what power and by what name are virtually the same. In their thinking, the power resided in the name, because the name represented the character of the person.

3. (8-12) Peter boldly preaches to the Jewish leaders.

- a. "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man" – Peter not intimidated – why are we on trial for a good deed?
- b. By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: Peter preached Jesus, the Jesus they crucified, the Jesus God raised from the dead, the Jesus who healed this man.
- c. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders': The quotation from Psalm 118:22 was appropriate. Jesus was rejected by men – by those leaders – but was exalted by His Father.
 - d. Nor is there salvation in any other: Peter didn't merely proclaim Jesus as a way of salvation, but as the only way of salvation.

B. The Jewish rulers react to Peter's sermon.

1. (13) What they saw in Peter and John's character

- a. **They were uneducated and untrained men** - Yet they were educated in two more important ways: they knew the Scriptures, and they had been with Jesus
- b. **They saw the boldness of Peter and John**
- c. **They realized that they had been with Jesus**

2. (14) What they saw in the man who was healed.

3. (15-18) Taking counsel, the Jewish leaders command Peter and John to stop preaching Jesus.

- a. **They conferred among themselves:** Luke probably found out what the Sanhedrin discussed among themselves because a member of that Sanhedrin later became a Christian: Saul of Tarsus. Acts 26:10 gives us reason to believe Paul (Saul) was a member of the Sanhedrin to *cast his vote* against the early Christians. If this is true, we can say that Peter and John had no idea they were preaching to a future apostle and the greatest missionary the church would ever see. It is an example of the truth that we have no idea how greatly God can use us.
- b. **We cannot deny it**
- c. **So that it spreads no further among the people**

4. (19-20) Peter and John respond to the command to stop preaching Jesus.

But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

5. (21-22) Peter and John are released with threats of future punishment.

a. **Finding no way of punishing them, because of the people:** The Jewish leaders were completely unmoved by an obvious miracle from God, yet they responded to public opinion. This proves they cared far more about man’s opinion than God’s opinion.

C. The early church prays for boldness.

1. (23-24) They reported to their own and they prayed together

2. (25-28) They pray in light of the Scriptures – Psalms 2

3. (29-30) They ask for more boldness, more power, and for more trouble.

“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

4. (31) Their prayer is answered

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Emphases

1. Christian faith and the early church would not have taken off in the first century if it were just a fallacy invented by humans. Jesus was crucified. After resurrection, he was no longer physically visible. By all outward measures, Christianity – the movement of the followers of Jesus – was very weak at this early point.

- They were few in numbers.
- They were inexperienced in leadership.
- They were commanded to not fight back; they were not militant.
- They were opposed by institutions that had existed for hundreds of years.

But at each critical point where it seemed that there was no going forward, God led them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. It is interesting to note what the Jewish leaders did *not* do: they did not make any attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. Had they succeeded, how quickly and completely the new movement would have collapsed! If it were possible to do, *this* was the time to do it; yet they simply could not.

3. The church prays for boldness for ministry, not escape from ministry.

Question – What do we pray for in our moments of crisis? Do we seek escapes to comforts from difficulties or strength to do God’s will in difficulties?