

Brookland Baptist Church
Bible Study
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Lecture X

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The Book of Acts
Acts 3:1-26

Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar and Preaches in the Temple

Introduction: This is the church's first recorded miracle. God was now ready to reach another great harvest of souls. It was now time to attract the attention of the people, so He reached down and healed a single man, a man whom everyone knew, and filled the man so full of the Holy Spirit that he just went wild with excitement and joy. Such a miracle and behavior naturally attracted the attention of the public.

Acts 3:1 -

1 “Now Peter and John were going up together to the temple complex at the hour of prayer at three in the afternoon.”

The Jewish day began at 6 a.m. and ended at 6 p.m. For the devout Jew, there were three special hours of prayer — 9 a.m., 12 midday, and 3 p.m. They agreed that prayer was efficacious wherever it was offered, but they felt that it was doubly precious when offered in the Temple courts. Interestingly, the apostles kept up the customs in which they had been trained.

Acts 3:2–3 -

2 “And a man who was lame from birth was carried there and placed every day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so he could beg from those entering the temple complex.
3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple complex, he asked for help.”

In the East, it was the custom for beggars to sit at the entrance to a temple or a shrine. Such a place was considered the best of all stances because when people are on their way to worship God, they are more likely to be generous to their fellow men. Love of man and love of God must ever go hand in hand. Beggars would often wait in places where they would have the most traffic, such as along the roads near cities or, as here, at the entrance to the Temple.

The Beautiful Gate was one of the favored entrances into the Temple complex, and many people passed through it on their way to worship. This reminds us of where many of the homeless position themselves today in intersections, at traffic lights, and on on-ramps. As Peter and John entered the Temple, the lame man called out to them and asked them for some money.

Acts 3:4–6 –

4 “Peter, along with John, looked at him intently and said, “Look at us.” 5 So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them. 6 But Peter said, “I don’t have silver or gold, but what I have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”

Peter demanded the man’s attention, and the beggar gave it, obviously expecting a gift. What was offered, however, was not money, but rather something far more valuable. Peter commanded the beggar to get up and walk. The command was not by Peter’s authority but rather in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, calling on Christ’s power and authority. The apostles were doing this healing through the Holy Spirit’s power given to them by Christ, not their own (Luke 10:17).

Notice, if you will, he was not even looking up at Peter and John when he asked for alms. Years of having people look the other way had taught him that he was different and did not fit in. From the first, even as a small child, he had probably grown into a shy, withdrawn, embarrassed person, a person unable to look people in the eye. This man was a living picture of so many in the world. Suffering so much from the neglect of an unconcerned and selfish and hoarding world.

Acts 3:7–8 –

7 “Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. 8 So he jumped up, stood, and started to walk, and he entered the temple complex with them — walking, leaping, and praising God.”

To encourage the lame man to begin walking, Peter reached for him to help him up. The terms that follow here reflect Luke’s medical orientation — the man’s feet and ankle bones, which to this point had never been able to support the man, were healed and strengthened. Not only could he stand, but he also immediately tried out his new legs at full throttle, moving quickly from standing to beginning to walk and ultimately to leaping. Amid his excitement and this emotional moment, he praised God, who had given him a new lease on life.

Acts 3:9–10 –

9 “All the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple complex. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.”

This must have been some scene. The beggar, known for years for his crippled condition danced into the Temple area with words of praise to God. There could be no doubt about who he was or about what had happened. Nor could there be any doubt about whom the beggar thought should get the credit for the miracle. The people, quite appropriately, were astounded.

Acts 3:11 -

11 “While he was holding on to Peter and John, all the people, greatly amazed, ran toward them in what is called Solomon’s Colonnade.”

The scene broadened as the beggar, almost like a young child, was pictured clinging to Peter and John. Even more, people came running to Solomon’s Colonnade, a covered porch or entrance with columns that stood just east of the outer court of the Temple.

For the Jewish observers and readers, the sign here was too spectacular to overlook. Isaiah had written of such a time: “The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing!” (Isaiah 35:6).

Peter Preaches in the Temple

A good sermon introduction is supposed to capture attention, raise a need, and orient listeners to the subject at hand. Peter and John’s healing of the lame man in the Temple courts did all those powerfully. It drew a huge crowd of awed spectators. It prompted these onlookers to want to know how such a miracle was possible. It gave the apostles an open door to declare plainly that Jesus, crucified and resurrected, was the long-awaited Messiah who fulfilled all the predictions of the prophets.

Acts 3:12–13 -

12 “When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this? Or why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.”

Peter took advantage of a gathered, attentive crowd, and he addressed them by making it clear that this miracle was not the product of his personal power or godliness. Rather, this miracle had been performed by God himself, for a very explicit purpose. Peter wanted to make it clear to this Jewish crowd that this miracle was the handiwork of the very God they claimed to follow, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and the God of all our ancestors. The miracle also had a purpose: to bring glory to his servant Jesus. (Isaiah 42:1; 49:6–7)

Peter wanted Jesus to identify with the Servant-Messiah of the Old Testament. Then, as his audience was thinking about this connection, he pressed home the brutal truth. Peter told them point-blank that they were responsible for Jesus’ death.

The Roman leader, Pilate, had decided to release Jesus, but the Jews had rejected Pilate’s offer and had clamored to have Barabbas, a murderer, released instead. (Luke 23:13–25)

When Peter said, Jesus whom you handed over, he meant it literally. Jesus' trial and death had occurred right there in Jerusalem only weeks earlier. All Jews were there (and thus guilty) through their representative leadership.

Acts 3:14–15 -

14 “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you. 15 You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.”

The number of times in the balance of the sermon Peter used the words “you” or “your.” This was a pointed condemnation of those who stood before him: You handed over.... You rejected.... You killed. Peter called Jesus the holy and righteous one. This identified Jesus' equality with God. But the Jews had rejected him. The horrendous nature of their deed was made all the worse by the contrasting character of the murderer (Barabbas) whose release they had demanded. Not only had the Jews rejected him, but they had killed him. With a ring of irony, Peter stated that they had killed the author of life. (John 1:1–4 Colossians 1:16)

Acts 3:16 –

16 “By faith in His name, His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Him has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.”

Peter referred to the miracle that had gotten everyone's attention. As before, he took no credit for himself or his companions but, instead, credited the name of Jesus with the healing. As in his earlier use of the “name,” Peter was referring to the full identity of Jesus. Jesus was the Healer.

Acts 3:17-18 -

17 “And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.”

Peter makes a shift in the tone of his message and makes a plea to his audience to make a change. Having begun his message with strong words of condemnation, Peter, now instead of attacking them and treating them as enemies, now calls them friends (adelphoi — literally, “brothers.” He acknowledged that their actions were done in ignorance, as were the actions of their rulers. (Ephesians 4:18; 1 Peter 1:14)

Acts 3:19 –

19 “Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins.”

They had rejected, despised, and killed Jesus, but they could still turn from their sins, turn to God, and be cleansed. They could change their minds about Jesus. The words “turn from your sins” are the standard Greek term (metanoeo) for repentance. The verb means to turn away from

a former way of life and toward a new way of life.

The term “cleansed” (exaleipthenai) is often used in Greek as a figure of speech, meaning to erase, especially in writing. In this case, the “eraser” was God, and the “writing” was a list of their sins—not just their sins of killing the author of life, but all their sins. (Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 1:18)

Acts 3:20-21 –

20 “Then wonderful times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will send Jesus your Messiah to you again. 21 For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his prophets.”

In other words, the repentance of Peter's audience would have a part in bringing in the marvelous events of the End Times. The expressions “times of refreshment” and “the time for the final restoration of all things” are unique to the New Testament. The word for “restoration” (apokatastasis) means to return something to its original state. Peter explained that a national restoration could happen if the Jews would turn from their sin and to God by accepting Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah.

Acts 3:22-23 –

22 “For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’”

This quote from Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15 refers to Christ. The Messiah would come with deliverance, just as Moses had. Most Jews thought that Joshua was the prophet predicted by Moses. Peter explained that the prophet . . . from among your own people was Jesus Christ. Jesus had fulfilled this prophecy, for he was their long-awaited Messiah! Moses had warned the people that they should listen to everything he, the Messiah would tell them. Those who refused to listen would be completely cut off from the true people of God the believers.

Acts 3:24 –

24 “Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.”

The prophet Samuel lived during the transition between the judges and the kings of Israel, and he was the first in a succession of prophets. Samuel had anointed David as king and had spoken clearly of the establishment of David's kingdom. (2 Samuel 7:12)

Peter wanted his audience to come to grips with the fact that from the inception of the prophetic office down through the whole order of the prophets, all had spoken of these days, which had found their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:25

25 “You are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, ‘Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed.’”

The Jews to whom Peter was speaking were the children of those prophets. God had promised Abraham that He would bless the world through Abraham’s descendants, the Jewish race (Genesis 12:3), from which the Messiah would come. They were included in the covenant, for God intended the Jewish nation to be a separate and holy nation that would teach the world about God, introduce the Messiah, and then carry on his work in the world. Through them, because of the Messiah coming from them, all the families on earth would be blessed. Israel had been given the promise of one who would come from the line of Abraham and sit forever on David’s throne.

Acts 3:26 –

26 “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways.”

In Greek, the phrase “first to you” stands at the start of the sentence; it is placed there for emphasis. The message of salvation came first to the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and the prophets. They — of all people — should have known the prophecies and recognized him when he came. They were to have been the prime beneficiaries of the blessings of the covenant.