

Acts 3 – The Lame Walk and the Repented receive Mercy and Grace

THEME: First miracle of the church; Peter's second sermon.

We are still in the first division of the Book of Acts which shows the Lord Jesus Christ at work by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in Jerusalem. We have seen the birthday of the church on the Day of Pentecost, a day which can never be repeated. There was a church because the Holy Spirit had become incarnate in believers. He was indwelling the believers, and He filled them with His love, power, and blessing for service.

Just as you and I cannot repeat Bethlehem, neither can we repeat Pentecost. But we do need the power of the Holy Spirit today. Thank God, He is in the world, convicting the world, restraining evil in the world. We don't have to seek Him; He is indwelling all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this third chapter we will find the healing of the lame man, verses Act_3:1-11. The appealing and revealing address of Peter is in verses Act_3:12-26. The result was five thousand men who believed! – McGee

The Lame Beggar Healed

Act 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

This apparently was the time of the evening sacrifice when a priest went in to offer incense with his prayers. We find in the first chapter of Luke that this was the service Zacharias was performing when he went to minister before the golden altar and the angel appeared to him. That golden altar, the altar of incense, speaks of prayer. This was the time of prayer. There would be a great company in the temple area praying at this time. – McGee

Act 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

This man had been born lame. He was brought every day and put there at the gate of the temple. What a contrast he was to the gate which is called Beautiful. Here was a beautiful gate, and here was a man who was carried. Man can make beautiful things, but man cannot improve himself. Of course, man can do some trimming on the outside. He can cut his hair, have his fingernails manicured, take a bath now and then, but man can never change that old nature which he has. This is the contrast we have here—a beautiful gate of the temple and a man lame from his mother's womb.

He was there to beg for alms. This was the way he lived, of course. - McGee

Act 3:3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

The lame man had obviously given up hope of ever being cured, so he contented himself to ask for a handout. - McGee

Act 3:4 And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

Instead of looking on this man as a helpless wretch, Peter saw him as one in whom the mighty power of God might be demonstrated! "If we are led by the Spirit, we will fix our eyes on those whom God intends to bless, instead of firing blank cartridges and beating the air" (Selected).

Peter's command, "Look at us," was not intended to attract publicity to John and himself, but merely to insure the undivided attention of the beggar. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:5-6 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Still expecting nothing more than financial help, the cripple gave them his attention. Then he heard an announcement that was both disappointing and thrilling to him. As far as a handout was concerned, Peter had nothing to give. But he

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had something better to give. By the authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he commanded the lame man to rise up and walk. A witty old preacher said, “The crippled beggar asked for alms and he got legs.”

It is said that Thomas Aquinas visited the pope at a time when large sums of money were being counted. The pope boasted, “We need no longer say with Peter, ‘Silver and gold I do not have!’” Aquinas replied, “Neither can you say with Peter, ‘Rise up and walk!’” – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Have the riches we have in the church and in our lives corrupt our faith and tarnished our righteousness?

Act 3:7-8 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So, he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.

As Peter helped the man to his feet, strength flowed into the hitherto useless feet and ankle bones. Here we are reminded again that in the spiritual life, there is a curious mingling of the divine and the human. Peter helps the man to his feet; then God performs the cure. We must do what we can do; then God will do what we cannot do.

The miracle of healing was immediate, not gradual. Notice how the Spirit of God multiplies words of action and movement: leaping up, stood ... walked and entered ... walking, leaping.

When we remember the slow, painful process an infant goes through in learning to walk, we realize how wonderful it was for this man to walk and leap right away, for the first time in his life.

This miracle, performed in the Name of Jesus, was a further testimony to the people of Israel that the One they had crucified was alive and was willing to be their Healer and Savior. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 3:9-10 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

The fact that the beggar had lain daily at the door of the temple made him a familiar sight. Now that he was healed, the miracle was necessarily generally known. The people could not deny that a mighty miracle had taken place, but what was the meaning of it all? – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico

Act 3:11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

Is this to be the beginning of the Kingdom? Great things had happened in Jerusalem during the past few weeks. They had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, His resurrection, His ascension, and the Day of Pentecost. They are amazed. What is really taking place? - McGee

Act 3:12 So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

He doesn't say, “Ye men of the United States.” He is talking to the men of Israel. This is the Jerusalem period, friend. This is the transition period. The church has not yet moved out to other areas. No one in Rome has heard yet. No one in America has heard. No one in England has heard. This is in Jerusalem.

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May I say something kindly? Folk reading the Bible should bring to it the same common sense they use in reading other books. This is God's Book. But it is not some “way out yonder” type of book. It deals with us right where we are, and it communicates so we can understand it.

Peter is very careful to tell them that this miracle was not done in his own power. He is going to direct this Jewish audience back to the Old Testament. He is going to tell them that if they will turn to God, these prophecies can be fulfilled.

Listen to some of the prophecies which these Jewish people knew. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zec_12:10). This would be fulfilled if they would turn to Him. It was not fulfilled because the nation did not accept the Lord Jesus at that time. They did not repent and turn to Him. Peter will invite them to turn to the Lord Jesus. They will refuse. The time is still to come when this will be fulfilled. Also Ezekiel spoke of the Kingdom: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Eze_36:27-28). Notice the twelfth chapter of Isaiah, a remarkable chapter—only six verses—that speaks of the worship during the time of the Kingdom: “And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation” (Isa_12:1-2). Also, as we have mentioned, Isa_35:6 told of the lame man leaping as an hart. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa_35:10). They should have seen that this lame man was a miniature, a picture of the whole nation. If they would but turn to God, all these promises would be fulfilled. - McGee

Act 3:13-16 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Quickly he brings them to the true Author of the miracle. It was Jesus, the One they had rejected, denied, and killed. God raised Him from the dead and glorified Him in heaven. Now, through faith in Him, this man had been cured of his helplessness.

Peter's holy boldness in accusing the men of Israel is remarkable. His charges against them are:

1. They delivered up Jesus (to the Gentiles for trial).
2. They denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to release Him.
3. They denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for the release of a murderer (Barabbas).
4. They killed the Prince (or Author) of life.

Notice, by contrast, God's treatment of Jesus:

1. He raised Him from the dead (v. 15).
2. He glorified His Servant Jesus—not His Son Jesus, as in the 1611 Version (v. 13).

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Notice finally the emphasis on faith in Christ as the explanation of the miracle of healing (v. 16). In this verse, as elsewhere, the name stands for the person. Thus, faith in His name means faith in Christ. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:17 *"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.*

There is a distinct change in Peter's tone in this verse. Having charged the men of Israel with the death of the Lord Jesus, he now addresses them as his Jewish brethren, graciously allowing that they did it in ignorance, and urging them to repent and be converted.

It almost seems contradictory to hear Peter say that the Jews crucified the Lord Jesus in ignorance. Did He not come with the full credentials of the Messiah? Did He not perform wondrous miracles in their midst? Did He not infuriate them by claiming to be equal with God? Yes, this is all true. And yet they were ignorant of the fact that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. They expected the Messiah to come, not in lowly grace, but rather as a mighty military deliverer. They looked upon Jesus as an impostor.

They did not know He was truly the Son of God. They probably thought they were doing God a service in killing Him. Thus the Savior Himself said at the time of the crucifixion, "They do not know what they do" (Luk_23:34), and Paul later wrote, "Had they [the princes of this age] known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1Co_2:8).

All this was designed to assure the men of Israel that their sin, however great, was still subject to the forgiving grace of God. - McGee

Act 3:18 *But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.*

Without excusing their sin, Peter shows that God overruled it to fulfill His own purposes. The prophets of the OT had predicted that the Messiah would suffer. The Jewish people were the ones who inflicted the suffering on Him. But now He offered Himself to them as Lord and Savior. Through Him they could receive forgiveness of their sins.

Act 3:19 *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,*

The people of Israel should repent and make an about-face. When they would do this, their sins would be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come.

It must be remembered that this message is addressed to the men of Israel (v. 12). It emphasizes that national repentance must precede national restoration and blessing. The times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord refer to the blessings of Christ's future kingdom on earth, as mentioned in the next verse.

Do you believe healing as a person and as a nation is dependent on repentance?

Act 3:20 *and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,*

Act 3:21 *whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

Following Israel's repentance, God will send the Messiah, Jesus. As mentioned previously, this refers to the Second Advent of Christ to set up His thousand-year reign on the earth.

The question inevitably arises at this point, "If Israel had repented when Peter was speaking, would the Lord Jesus have returned to earth?" Great and godly men have differed on this subject. Some insist He would have returned; otherwise,

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they say the promise was not a bona fide one. Others take the passage as being prophetic, as showing the order of events that would actually take place. The question is a purely hypothetical one. The facts are that Israel did not repent, and the Lord Jesus has not returned.

It is clear from verse 21 that God foresaw that the nation of Israel would reject Christ, and that the present age of grace would intervene before His Second Coming. Heaven must receive Christ until the times of restoration of all things. The times of restoration of all things point forward to the Millennium. They do not indicate universal salvation, as some have suggested; such a teaching is foreign to the Bible. Rather they point to the time when creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and Christ will reign in righteousness as King over all the earth.

These times of restoration had been foretold by the prophets of the OT period.

Verse 21 has been used in an effort to disprove the pretribulation Rapture. The argument is that if the heavens must receive Jesus until the beginning of the Millennium, then He cannot come before then to take the church home to heaven. The answer, of course, is that Peter is speaking here to the men of Israel (v. 12). He is discussing God's dealings with Israel nationally. As far as the nation of Israel is concerned, the Lord Jesus will remain in heaven until He comes to reign at the end of the Tribulation. But individual Jews who believe on Him during this Church Age will share with believing Gentiles in the Rapture of the church, which could take place at any moment. Also, in the Rapture, the Lord does not leave the heavens; we go to Him in the air. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 3:22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN. HIM YOU SHALL HEAR IN ALL THINGS, WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU.'

As an example of an OT prophecy looking forward to Christ's glorious reign, Peter quotes Deu_18:15, Deu_18:18-19. The passage pictures the Lord Jesus as God's Prophet in Israel's golden age, announcing God's will and law.

When Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me," he did not mean likeness as to character or ability, but likeness in the sense that both were raised up by God. "He will raise Him up as He raised me up." – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 3:23 AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERY SOUL WHO WILL NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE.'

The nation of Israel was on the verge of a great judgment. In A.D. 70 Titus, the Roman general, came with his army and destroyed the city. It is estimated that over a million people perished, and the rest were sold into slavery throughout the Roman Empire. Judgment did come upon these people. – McGee

During Christ's reign on earth, those who refuse to hear and obey Him will be utterly destroyed. Of course, those who reject Him today suffer eternal judgment also, but the primary thought of this passage is that Christ will yet rule with a rod of iron and that those who disobey Him and rebel against Him will be promptly executed. – Believers Bible Commentary

Act 3:24-26 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

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3:24 To further emphasize that the times of restoration were well predicted, Peter adds that all the prophets from Samuel and his successors spoke of these days.

3:25 Peter now reminds his Jewish hearers that the promise of these times of blessing was made to them as sons of the prophets and descendants of Abraham. After all, God had made a covenant with Abraham to bless all the families of the earth in his seed. All the promises of millennial blessing center in the Seed, i.e., in Christ. They should therefore accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah.

3:26 God had already raised up His Servant (3:13), and had sent Him first to the nation of Israel. This refers to the Incarnation and life of our Lord rather than to His resurrection. If they would receive Him, He would turn away every one of them from their iniquities.

In this sermon by Peter, delivered to the people of Israel, we notice that it is the kingdom that is in view rather than the church. Also the emphasis is national rather than individual. The Spirit of God is lingering over Israel in longsuffering mercy, pleading with God's ancient people to receive the glorified Lord Jesus as Messiah and thus hasten the advent of Christ's kingdom on earth.

But Israel would not hear. – Believers Bible Commentary

This is a transition period. They were given their final chance to accept the Messiah. Because they turned down their opportunity to accept the Messiah, later on Paul will come on the scene as the apostle to the Gentiles. What might have happened if they had turned to God is merely speculation. They did not turn to Him. God is never surprised by what man does, and He still works things out according to His plan and purpose. - McGee

GATE, THE BEAUTIFUL

This gate of Herod's temple is mentioned in the narrative of the healing of the lame man by Peter and John in Acts 3:2,10. Little dispute exists as to the identification of the Beautiful Gate with the splendid "gate of Nicanor" of the Mishna (Mid., i.4), and "Corinthian Gate" of Josephus (BJ, V, v, 3), but authorities are divided as to whether this gate was situated at the entrance to the women's court on the East, or was the gate reached by 15 steps, dividing that court from the court of the men. The balance of recent opinion inclines strongly to the former view (compare Kennedy, "Problems of Herod's Temple," The Expositor Times, XX, 170); others take the opposite view (Waterhouse, in Sacred Sites of the Gospels, 110), or leave the question open (thus G. A. Smith, Jerusalem, II, 212). See TEMPLE, HEROD'S.

The gate itself was of unusual size and splendor. It received the name "Nicanor" from its being the work, or having been constructed at the expense, of an Alexandrian Jew of this name. Lately an ossuary was discovered on Mt. Olivet bearing the Greek inscription:

"The bones of Nicanor the Alexandrian, who made the doors."

Its other name, "Corinthian," refers to the costly material of which it was constructed-- Corinthian bronze. Josephus gives many interesting particulars about this gate, which, he tells us, greatly excelled in workmanship and value all the others (BJ, V, v, 3). These were plated with gold and silver, but this still more richly and thickly. It was larger than the other gates; was 50 cubits in height (the others 40); its weight was so great that it took 20 men to move it (BJ, VI, vi, 3). Its massiveness and magnificence, therefore, well earned for it the name "Beautiful."

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