

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

Acts 3:1-26

Key Verse: 3:6

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

In today's passage, a crippled beggar is healed in the name of Jesus Christ. His life was changed. When God changes one person, history is changed. This event became a catalyst for the growth of the church as well as fiery persecution. We learn that there is power in the name of Jesus Christ. May God help us to have absolute faith in the name of Jesus Christ!

I. SILVER OR GOLD I DO NOT HAVE, BUT ... (1-10)

Look at verse 1. *"One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon."* This verse tells us that amazing transformation took place in Peter and John. They had become men of prayer. They went up to the temple regularly to pray. They had a sweet time of prayer with the Lord. They listened to God and talked with him. They found strength in prayer. They went to the temple to meet with God. The temple was where the Jewish leaders were. They had handed Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified. But Peter and John were no longer afraid of the religious leaders. They went up to the temple everyday to pray. The Holy Spirit had changed them. They were not the same men who abandoned and denied Jesus on the night of his arrest.

What is even more surprising is that Peter and John became prayer partners. In the past, they regarded each other competitors. There was always tension between them. John did not like to be Number 2. He hated Peter's guts every time Peter caught Jesus' attention by saying or doing something bold. And the feeling was mutual for Peter. He didn't like it when John said he was the disciple whom Jesus loved most. It seemed impossible for them to humble themselves and work together. But the coming of the Holy Spirit changed them from within. They were set free from their pride and selfish ambition. They began to love one another. They could pray together.

From the gospels, we get the impression that Jesus' disciples were unspiritual men who only ate a lot and always argued about who was the greatest. But Jesus' discipleship training prepared them, and the coming of the Holy Spirit changed them. The training they received from Jesus was not in vain. They grew to become good shepherds in the image of Jesus. This teaches us that discipleship requires patience. Sometimes it is hard for us to see a change in our Bible students. But we must believe that God will change them to be men and women of great faith. The Holy Spirit can transform them to be servants of God. Only God can change ordinary people into spiritual leaders.

Look at verse 2. *“Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.”* This man was crippled from birth. He had never been able to walk. As a boy, he could not play soccer or basketball. He was handicapped. He was marginalized by his friends. No one picked him to be his team at the playground. He always had to stay on the sideline. He could not get a job to support himself. Not even McDonalds hired him. The only thing he could do was to beg. Some people, perhaps his relatives, saw a profit opportunity in him. Every day, they carried him to a prime spot for panhandling. The temple gate was an ideal place in Jerusalem for obvious reasons.

But on that fateful afternoon, this man met two servants of God. What did he do when he saw Peter and John? He asked them for money: “Excuse me, can you spare some change?” What was the apostles’ response? Usually, people avoid direct eye contact with a beggar. But Peter and John looked straight at him. They were not indifferent to the pathetic man. They had a concern for the man. They were shepherds in the image of Jesus, ready to help a man. However, the man was only staring at their pockets. So Peter said, “Look at us!” Peter wanted to have a personal relationship with the man in order to help him. The man gave them his attention, still expecting to get some money from them.

How did Peter help him? Let’s read verse 6 together. *Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* We learn two things from Peter here.

First, Peter had a shepherd’s heart for the man. Peter looked straight at the man, giving his full attention to him. Peter was different from other people who would quickly pass by the man or drop some coins in his cup. Peter had learned the shepherd’s heart of Jesus for one person. Peter also knew how to help a person with more than human sympathy. He did not help the beggar according to the man’s expectation or his human need only. He helped him with the mind of Christ. He helped him with what he needed most. Silver or gold would not solve this man’s problem. He needed to walk. He needed spiritual healing from his beggar’s mentality. Peter wanted to solve this man’s problem from the root. Only Jesus can do this. We learn from Peter the shepherd’s heart of Christ.

Second, Peter had faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter did not have silver or gold, but he had something more precious to give. He had faith in the name of Jesus Christ. He said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” What does it mean to have faith in the name of Jesus Christ? Is it like waving a magic wand, saying “abracadabra”, hoping something will happen? No. Every time we pray, we end it with “in Jesus’ name.” Why? Is it some kind of magic formula? No. To pray in Jesus’ name is to totally depend his power and authority, denying our pride and self-sufficiency. It means we submit to his will, denying our own. It means to say, “I am helpless, but I submit to the Lord Jesus who has the power and authority.” When Peter invoked the name of Jesus Christ, he was acting as Christ’s ambassador. He was representing Jesus

Christ to dispense the power and authority over the sickness that imprisoned the man all his life.

Peter remembered what Jesus had told him before he was crucified. Jesus said in John 14:12-14. "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." While on earth, Jesus healed many sick people. This time the healing was done through his disciple. This teaches us that such miracle can happen today through his servant. Jesus said we will do even greater things.

Now, you may say, "That's cool. Can I try this to heal someone?" Absolutely, if God granted you the gift of healing. In fact, God has used his servants to make many miracles happen throughout history. But you must be aware that invoking his name without faith in him is dangerous. In Ephesus, God did extraordinary miracles through St. Paul as he preached the gospel and drove out demons in the name of Jesus. After seeing this, some Jews tried to drive out evil spirits by imitating him, saying, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of a Jewish priest were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (Ac 19:15-16). God does not use fake believers in his work. We must have real faith in the name of Jesus our Lord.

What was the lame beggar's reaction to Peter who told him to walk? He must have been shocked or puzzled, or both. Perhaps his mouth dropped open. He dropped the beggar's cup he was holding. He didn't know what to do. But Peter took him by the right hand and helped him up. Then, instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk (7). He did not need physical therapy, not even for a couple of weeks. He had never walked before in all of his 40-year life. But now he jumped to his feet and walked. His lifelong handicap was gone in a moment.

Verse 8 says that he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. This tells us that he was healed not only physically but spiritually as well. He went into the temple courts praising God. In the past, he spent most of his time at the gate of the temple. He earned his money at the gate. The temple didn't mean much to him. But now he was inside the temple giving praise to God. The temple had a different meaning to him. It was now the house of God to him. What did he do in the house of God? He praised God for his mercy. Praising God is the act of a spiritually healthy person.

Look at verses 9-10. *When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.* When the man was a crippled beggar, he was an object of sympathy. Now his life

was turned around dramatically. He became an object of God's glory. Notice that he was healed not because of his faith. In fact, he didn't even ask for the healing. But God healed him because of Peter's faith. God can heal our friends even when they don't have faith in God. In his sovereignty, God can heal a person by his mercy. And we can be his instrument for such work if we have faith and shepherd's heart.

There was a young man who was crippled in his mind because of what happened to him in his childhood. He graduated from college, but had no direction in life. He had no meaning in life. His life was like that of a dead fish flowing down the stream. But a man of God had a shepherd's heart for him and invited him to a summer Bible conference. The young man declined first, but when he was told that the conference would be held at a beach, he decided to attend. God had mercy on him and opened his heart at the conference. He began to study the Bible, and God healed him from his sin-sickness. God even blessed him to become a missionary for young people in America. I know this man very well. It was a miracle that happened in my life because a servant of God had a shepherd's heart for me.

Many young people in our society go through difficult moments in life, such as family, money, relationship, lack of direction, and so on. Some of them are lonely. Some of them do not feel loved. Some are spiritually-crippled because of sin. How can we help them? We can help them in the name of Jesus Christ by sharing the word of God with them. We pray for our Bible students. We love them. We have hope for their future, because God can change them into great men and women of faith.

II. REPENT AND TURN TO GOD (11-26)

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in Solomon's Colonnade in the temple. They could not believe their eyes. The crippled beggar who used to sit at the gate everyday was now jumping for joy right before their eyes. How could such thing happen to the pathetic man? Then they turned their attention to Peter and John. They looked at them as if two superheroes descended on them. How did the apostles respond? Look at verse 12. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "*Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?*" Peter could have enjoyed the attention. There would be a front-page article about him on the Jerusalem Times the next day. The Hebrew News Network would have invited him to appear on their prime time talk show. But Peter did not take credit for the healing. He turned their attention to Jesus. He used the opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. What can we learn from his message?

First, God has glorified his servant Jesus. Peter said, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus" (13). In the Bible, God is often called the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." This teaches us that our God has a good track record. He made many promises to his people and he kept them all. He made a covenant with Abraham that all peoples of the world would be blessed through him. He made the same promise to Isaac and Jacob. And he kept the promise. He sent

Jesus to die for our sins on the cross. Then he glorified Jesus by raising him from the dead. We know Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus' suffering and death from Isaiah 53. But did you know that Isaiah also prophesied that God would glorify Jesus? Isaiah 52:13 says, "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." Isaiah foretold both the suffering and exaltation of Jesus Christ. The Jewish leaders who knew the scripture well did not accept it. Now Peter who used to be a fisherman taught them that God indeed glorified his servant Jesus.

Peter was talking to a large crowd that had gathered in the temple. Many of them had participated in the crucifixion of Jesus. He spoke to them directly, saying, "*You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this*" (13b-15). Wow. Peter was not politically correct. He didn't beat around the bush. He exposed their sin. They had committed the greatest crime in human history. But Peter did not condemn them. He understood them because he himself was also guilty of crucifying Jesus. He had disowned Jesus. But the Risen Christ forgave him. It was the marvelous grace of Jesus. Peter believed this grace was available to everyone including the religious leaders. So he said boldly, "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead."

Peter's main point is that God raised Jesus from the dead. Our God is greater than the power of sin and death. His grace is greater than all our sins. God showed his love and mercy for sinners like us when he raised Jesus from the dead, because his resurrection opened the door to heaven for us. Eternal life is guaranteed for us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Second, it is the name of Jesus that healed the man. Look at verse 16. "*By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.*" The healing of the crippled man was a proof that Jesus is alive. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead also healed the crippled man, instantly and completely. The power of God can change each of us as well, from a sinner to a wonderful servant of God.

In his sermon, Peter proclaimed that Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection were the main point of the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies (17-18; 21-24). In the Old Testament, Moses told his people that God would raise up Jesus to be their Messiah. He told them to listen to him (Dt 18:15). Jesus came to fulfill God's covenant to Abraham, that is, to bless all peoples with the grace of forgiveness (25-26). All the prophets from Samuel on have prophesied about Jesus. Indeed, the cross and resurrection of Jesus is the key point of the Old Testament.

What was Peter's conclusion? Look at verse 19. "*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord....*" Peter told them to repent their sins and turn to God. People don't like the word

“repent.” But we should love this word. Because without it, we remain in our sins, drowning in the sea of dark, dirty sins. But when we repent and turn to God, all our sins are wiped out by the grace of Jesus. Times of refreshing come from the Lord. What a wonderful promise of God!

In this passage, God healed a crippled beggar through Peter’s faith in the name of Jesus Christ. May God help us to have faith in the name of Jesus Christ so that through our faith many young people may be healed from their sin-sickness that cripples their spirit!