

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

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.”

Peter and John had changed a lot. Once they had competed with each other. Now they worked together; once they had not taken time to pray; now they were going to the temple at the hour of prayer. Shortly before, they had been hiding behind locked doors in Jerusalem. Then they left Jerusalem and went to Galilee. Now, they were back in Jerusalem and they were living boldly, testifying to the power of God in Jesus' resurrection. Furthermore, the scattered disciples had been changed. Now, they were not scattered. They met together to eat and pray and study the Bible. What had happened? The Holy Spirit had been poured out on the church. The church was born. The disciples were born again. Jesus had come to dwell in their hearts.

First, an encounter with a crippled beggar (1-10)

At three in the afternoon, the time of prayer, Peter and John were going up to the temple. A crippled beggar was being carried to the Beautiful Gate. What a contrast! The beautiful gate and the ugly beggar. He was put there every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. Those going to worship were likely to be more generous in giving. This spot by the temple gate was very good territory. We don't know who carried him and put him there: Perhaps friends or family or some unscrupulous beggar-manager who expected his cut every day. He was a very familiar site, sitting there on the temple steps. On this day something different happened. He saw Peter and John about to enter the temple and he asked them for money. Most of the time, people had no intention of giving him anything so they avoided his eyes and simply went in, pretending not to see him. Even if they intended to give him a coin, people did not like to connect with him on a personal basis. He was a skillful beggar and he knew that if he could make eye-contact, he would most likely get something. So when Peter and John looked straight at him he was surprised. Peter said, “Look at us.” The beggar stopped begging and gave Peter his attention. He expected to get some money. 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.” Peter took him by the right hand and pulled him to his feet. Instantly, the man's feet and ankles became strong and he began to walk. He walked and danced and jumped. He was well. His life changed. He no longer had to depend on someone to carry him. He could get a job, get married, support his family. He was no longer a miserable looking burden sitting by the Beautiful Gate. He was healed by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Peter said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Jesus'

name represents Jesus himself. He was present in Peter, for he dwelt in Peter's heart. Peter had a vine and branch relationship with Jesus. It was not Peter who healed this man; it was Jesus. Money could solve his bread problem temporarily. But money could not make him walk or solve his real life problem. Money could not change his beggar mentality.

Once Korea was like this crippled beggar. It was a land devastated by war. It was a land that extended a beggars' hand to the world. But Jesus came into the hearts of the students and they could stand up and dance and jump. Instead of extending a beggars' hand to others, they could extend a helping hand. They gave their lunch money, their bus fare, their book money. They gave sacrificially their 5 loaves and two fish and Korea became a giving country. They gave to the devastated people of Bangladesh. They gave to support an evangelist to another campus. They gave and sent missionaries to all the world. This was not made possible by money. It was made possible by Jesus. They studied the Bible and heard, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Second, Peter proclaims Jesus. (11-16)

The former crippled beggar made a big commotion. He ran to Peter and John and held on to them, and an astonished crowd gathered in Solomon's Colonnade. Peter told them plainly that he had not made this crippled beggar walk. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who raised Jesus from the dead was the one who raised up this man. Then he told them that they had sinned greatly against God. They were the ones responsible for the death of the Righteous One. They had negotiated with Pilate to release a murderer and have the Author of Life crucified. He was mercilessly killed, but God raised him from the dead. Furthermore, Peter and the apostles were witnesses to this. It was by faith in the name of Jesus that this beggar had been made strong and well. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that gave this man complete healing. Praise Jesus who died for the sins of the world and was raised to life by the almighty power of God.

Third, "Repent... that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

Peter understood these Jews who had been the perpetrators of Jesus' death. He said, "I know that you acted in ignorance, but God knew what he was doing. He is in control. Joseph had made this same discovery nearly 2000 years before. His evil brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. But he could say, "It was not you who sent me here. God sent me here to save many lives." (Ge 45) Once again, Peter affirmed the sovereign rule of God in history. God had spoken through the prophets. They foretold that the Christ would come and suffer. Based on what God had done, Peter gave an invitation: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that refreshing may come to you from the Lord." (19) Peter did not excuse or make light of sin. He gave them God's invitation and promise. He said, "Repent. Turn to God. Your sins will be wiped out and you will be refreshed." Repentance is hard, but it is the way of life. Through repentance, we find forgiveness.

The love of God is poured into our hearts when we accept the blood which his Son Jesus shed for us on the cross. Times of refreshing come when the promised Holy Spirit comes to fill our hearts and lives. He is the pledge that Jesus will come in glory to restore everything. Jesus is the Prophet Moses was talking about when he said in Deuteronomy 17, "God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among the people." God sent his servant, his promised Messiah. Anyone who rejects him rejects life. Anyone who does not listen to him is cut off from among God's people. The Messiah is the one of whom the prophets spoke. Samuel spoke of him when he wrote about King David, the man after God's own heart whose descendant would rule an eternal kingdom. Prophets like Isaiah spoke of the Christ, the Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, Mighty God who would rule on David's throne forever (Isa 9:6,7) Jeremiah spoke of him when he promised a new covenant that would be written on men's hearts (Jer 31:31). When God promised Abraham that all peoples on earth would be blessed through his offspring, he was talking about Jesus who would come to bless all people by turning them from sin and death. God raised his servant Jesus and sent him first to the very people who had rejected and crucified him. Through the name of Jesus and by the power of the resurrection God changed a crippled beggar. God changed Peter and the apostles. God changed and is changing me and you. May God change America into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.