

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.’”

In the last passage we studied Peter’s message to the people of Jerusalem at Pentecost. He spoke about Jesus Christ. Most of all, he proclaimed Christ’s resurrection and Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God according to the prophecies of David. The same Jesus who walked on earth, healed the sick, and made friends with twelve ordinary men to raise them as leaders, is now seated at the right hand of God. God made Jesus both Lord and Christ. God Almighty will give him complete victory over all his enemies and establish his kingdom forever. Sometimes, living a pure and poor life in this world, we lose sight of who Jesus really is. Our Jesus is Lord and Christ. But if we are deceived by the devil we can feel inferior to worldly people or even have a sense of defeat in our hearts. We must look up at Jesus who is seated at the right hand of God as Lord and Christ. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we can share his victory. Jesus’ people are the true victors in this world.

In today’s passage Peter and John heal a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. When God changes one person, it changes history. This event became a catalyst for rapid church growth, as well as fiery persecution. There is mighty power in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. May God help us to have faith in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth through this study.

First, Peter heals a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus (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.” An amazing transformation has taken place in Peter and John. They have become men of prayer. They loved prayer. They loved to spend time with the Risen Christ in personal fellowship. The more they prayed, the more they wanted to pray. They found strength in prayer. They found wisdom in prayer. They became more faithful in prayer than in eating. Moreover, Peter and John were no longer men of fear. In the past, they would avoid the temple, where the Jewish religious leaders were. Now they boldly enter the temple. Peter and John have become men of courageous faith.

In addition, Peter and John were now beginning to cowork with each other. In the past, they tried to be nice to each other, but there was always an underlying tension due to their penchant for self-exaltation. It seemed impossible for them to humble themselves and work together from their hearts. But the gospel changed them. The coming of the Holy Spirit changed them. They began to see the kingdom of God. They were freed from pride and selfishness and worldly ambition. They began to love one another. They could work together in mind and heart.

Sometimes we feel that Jesus’ disciples remained as unspiritual men who only ate and slept and argued about who was the greatest. But the gospel and the coming of the Holy Spirit changed them. The training they received from Jesus was not in vain. It bore tremendous fruit. They became good shepherds in the image of Jesus. Raising disciples requires patience. Sometimes our sheep never seem to change. But when they accept the gospel and receive the Holy Spirit, they will become men of God who can change history. The Risen Christ changes ordinary men into spiritual leaders.

Look at verse 2. "Now a man crippled 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 baseball with others. So he was isolated and despised. Now, as a man, he could not get a proper job. Instead, he begged for charity from others. Fortunately, he was given a special privilege to beg at the temple gate. It was the best begging spot in Jerusalem. People were most open-hearted toward the needy when they went in and out of the temple. Probably, he could recognize the best candidates at a glance. Peter and John looked like somebody. Their outer appearance was plain, but they had fire in their eyes. So he asked them for money, "Excuse me, sirs, alms for the crippled? Alms for the crippled?"

Usually, people want to avoid direct eye contact with a beggar. A clear image of their pitiful condition may move a person to give what he does not want to give, like his children's lunch money. But Peter and John looked straight at him. They were not bound by selfishness. They were shepherds in the image of Jesus, ready to give to those in need. It must have surprised the beggar. He could not look at them directly. So Peter said, "Look at us!" Then the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

How did Peter help him? Look at verse 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.'" We learn two things from Peter here. In the first place, Peter had a shepherd's heart for the man. Peter embraced his whole person and gave his full attention to the man. Peter was ready to sacrifice for this man. In brief, Peter had learned Jesus' shepherd's heart for one man. Moreover, Peter knew how to go ahead of the sheep. He did not help the beggar according to the man's expectation. 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 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 heart of Christ.

In the second place, Peter gave this man the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Peter did not have silver or gold, but he had something to give the beggar. He could help the man walk. He could solve the man's life problem. Of course, it was not Peter, it was Jesus working through him who did this. Peter could help a crippled beggar to walk by faith in the name of Jesus. Some think that having faith in the name of Jesus is like invoking an incantation (Ac 19:13). This is nonsense. When Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk," he was acting in Jesus' name as his servant. Peter had been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the name of Christ. He was not his own man, but Jesus' servant. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, Jesus was working through Peter. It was Jesus who could heal the man.

Peter has become a man of faith. He could say to a crippled beggar, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." This is the fruit of Jesus' discipleship training. Peter did not write one of the gospel books. But he was the guiding influence upon Mark, who wrote Mark's gospel. This gospel more than any other reveals Jesus' training of the twelve disciples, especially Peter. One of the main points of Jesus' training was for them to have faith in God. Once, they were in a storm at sea. Their boat was nearly swamped. Jesus was sleeping soundly in the stern. After doing all their best, and with a sense of clear and present danger, the disciples woke Jesus asking, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the waves. The wind died down and it was completely calm. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mk 4:35-41) It was probably not easy to digest this rebuke after struggling to the point of exhaustion with the storm. But the disciples including Peter did so. And they were amazed by Jesus' power and authority. Another time, during the passion week, Jesus saw a fig tree that had many leaves but no fruit. Jesus rebuked the tree

and the next day it withered from the roots. When Peter saw it, he was amazed and very excited. But Jesus did not say to him, "That was really cool, wasn't it." Jesus said, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him'" (Mk 11:22-23). Jesus wanted Peter to have the power of faith, power that could move mountains and do the great work of God. During the time of discipleship training, Peter was rebuked so much by Jesus to have faith in God. But Peter seemed to remain in powerless unbelief. Now, however, Peter has become a man of faith who could say to a crippled beggar with full conviction, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Upon hearing Peter's words, the crippled beggar must have been shocked. Perhaps his mouth dropped open. He might even have dropped the beggar's cup he was using. At first, he didn't move. But Peter did not rebuke him to get up. Rather, 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). Those who have been healed after being immobile need physical therapy before they can be active. But when the Holy Spirit worked in this man, his feet and ankles became strong in an instant. Though he had never walked, he could jump to his feet and walk. Perhaps he jumped like a teenage boy practicing a slam dunk. His lifelong handicap was healed in a moment by the name of Jesus. He was also healed spiritually. He went into the temple courts praising God (8). Before, he was always trying to get something at the temple gate. He had a beggar's mentality. Now he was in the temple giving praise to God. Praising God and giving something to God is the act of a spiritually healthy person. In addition, he became an object of God's glory. "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" (9-10). There is power in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth a crippled man was healed physically and spiritually.

When God's people depend on the name of Jesus, great work of God is done through them. Korean missionaries came to America with only the name of Jesus. Many of them arrived in the U.S. with less than \$100 in their pockets. They had English problems. They were regarded as third-world country people. Sometimes, American young people abused their sincere love and cultural problem. But these missionaries had the name of Jesus. There was power in their one-to-one Bible teaching that changed people's lives. Joseph Schafer was once an honor student by day and a rock and roll band leader by night. Then he began Bible study with a Korean missionary. The missionary spoke in broken English and sometimes emitted saliva as he taught the Bible enthusiastically. Yet, somehow, Joseph Schafer was drawn to Bible study again and again. Finally, he committed his life to Jesus as a UBF campus shepherd. Now he is a professor shepherd at Penn State University. Shortly, he will leave for Australia to spend his one year sabbatical as a missionary. Dr. Maria Albright testified this week that she was once a sorrowful girl because of her family problem. She seemed destined to live a powerless and unhappy life. But through one-to-one Bible study with Missionary Rebecca Choi the name of Jesus healed her and made her strong. Now she is joyfully sacrificing her life for Jesus and the gospel. So many young Americans have been healed spiritually and raised as Ph.D.s and M.D.s and responsible shepherds for this land. It is the fruit of Korean missionaries' faith in the name of Jesus. When the people of God depend on Jesus' name, great work of God happens.

What America needs most is the name of Jesus. There are so many spiritually crippled young people. They have been crippled by selfishness, pleasure-seeking mentality, lustful desires, pride. Spiritually sick people do not know what their real problem is. In their misery of sin, they easily become beggar's for love or recognition. One young woman is pretty and intelligent. She can do great things for God. But she

has been crippled by the desire for a young man's love. This young man cannot satisfy her soul. Only Jesus can truly satisfy her soul. Only Jesus can heal her and make her a mother of prayer for America. Only Jesus can raise young Americans as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. May God help us to learn Peter's faith in the name of Jesus.

Second, the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus (11-16).

While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. It was a moment when time stood still as many onlookers gaped at the newly healed man, and Peter and John. Their eyes went from the jumping man, to Peter and John, and back to the jumping man, and back to Peter and John. "When Peter saw this, he said to them: 'Men of Israel, 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?'" (12) Peter did not take credit for the man's healing. He turned people to God and Jesus. He said, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus" (13). Peter's faith in the name of Jesus is rooted in the God of Israel, the God of history.

In the Bible, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob several times. The first time is in Exodus 3:6 when God appears to Moses in the burning bush. This God created the heavens and the earth by his almighty power. This God had established the nation Israel by his own mighty hand. He is the foundation of all creation and of the nation Israel. Jesus himself called God, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Mt 22:32; Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37). According to Jesus' explanation, it means God is living and in him God's servants are living, because he is God who raises the dead.

Peter says that God glorified his "servant" Jesus. The latter half of Isaiah describes the Lord's servant, who suffers and dies for the sin of the world and rises again. Isaiah 52:13-15 says, "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand." Isaiah foretold the suffering and exaltation of God's servant. No religious leader understood this. But Peter did. And Peter proclaims that God has glorified his servant Jesus.

Peter was fearless before the crowd that had gathered. There may have been many in this crowd who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter exposes their evil deed plainly. He said, "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). Peter exposed their sin with a broken shepherd's heart. They were the perpetrators of the greatest crime in human history. But Peter did not condemn them. He understood them because he was the same kind of sinner. He, too, had disowned Jesus. But the Risen Christ visited him and forgave him. It was the marvelous grace of Jesus to Peter. Peter believed this grace was available to 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. God Almighty is greater than the power of sin and death. God is greater than man's evilness. God's good purpose will be realized through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. God's victory is guaranteed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

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 given this complete healing to him, as you can all see." The healing of the crippled man was proof that Jesus is alive. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead gave an immediate and complete healing to a crippled beggar. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead can change North America into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation one person at a time.

Third, repent and turn to God (17-26).

Peter explained clearly that Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection were the main point of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of all the prophecies (17-18; 21-24). Peter compared Jesus to Moses. Moses brought in the Old Covenant based on the absolute word of God. Jesus brought in the New Covenant based on the absolute word of God. Moreover, Jesus fulfills God's covenant promise to Abraham by blessing all people who repent with a new life (25-26). 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..." When we repent and turn to God he wipes out our sins; he cleanses us and purifies us. And he sends his Holy Spirit to refresh our souls with his indwelling presence.

In this passage we learned the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Through Peter's faith in the name of Jesus a crippled beggar was completely healed. Through our faith in the name of Jesus, spiritually sick young Americans can be healed and become servants of God. Through our faith in the name of Jesus America can be changed into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. May God help us to have faith in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.