



Sunday School Lesson for September 18, 2005.
Released on September 14, 2005.

"A Lame Man Healed"

LESSON: Acts 3:1-16

TIME: A.D. 30

PLACE: Jerusalem

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

INTRODUCTION

As difficult as it may be to accept-especially for someone suffering from an illness, it is not always God's will for a person to be healed immediately or healed at all. Paul prayed for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7-10), but he was not healed. Sometimes God chooses to glorify Himself through that person's condition as she learns to trust Him with her life; or through death He may remove the person from this life to instead be in His presence-consequently also taking her from a life of suffering, which can be looked upon as an alternate form of healing.

If it is God's will not to deliver us from a physical ailment or other life situation, we must remember that being God-He is sovereign and able to do with His creation as He wishes. As great a charge it is to try to understand this, our trust and faith must remain in God and not in our own limitedness. No matter what we are going through, we must always remember that we are His and He is in control.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Throughout the Bible there are incidents of divine healing. Notable Old Testament examples are the healings of Miriam-sister of Moses and Aaron who was healed from leprosy by Moses' intercessory prayer and a seven-day quarantine (Num. 12:1-15), Naaman the leper-the Syrian general cured of leprosy under the direction of the Prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-14), and King Hezekiah-became ill, was told by Isaiah to prepare for death, but instead prayed to God for intervention and was granted 15 more years to live (2 Kings 20:1-7).

Once we get to the New Testament, though, we are immediately confronted with the healing ministry of Christ. We find Him "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23). These miracles were, in fact, His messianic credentials (11:2-5). As His chosen emissaries, the apostles were endowed with similar powers (10:5-8). Besides the Twelve, others also had the gift of healing (1 Cor. 12:9, 29-30).

The lame man in today's lesson benefited doubly from his encounter with Peter and John. He was healed physically and spiritually through the name of Jesus Christ. Note that today's events followed Jesus' ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11), and were made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.

LESSON OUTLINE

Help Anticipated (**Acts 3:1-5**)
Healing Accomplished (**Acts 3:6-11**)
Holiness Affirmed (**Acts 3:12-16**)

LESSON AIMS

FACTS: to examine Luke's account of Peter and John's healing of a crippled man in Jerusalem.

PRINCIPLE: to teach that God gives opportunities to serve and supplies the power to take advantage of them.

APPLICATION: to remind students of God's power and to encourage them to seize opportunities to witness for Christ.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 3:1-16

1One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer-at three in the afternoon.

2Now 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.

3When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

4Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"

5So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

6Then 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."

7Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

8He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

9When all the people saw him walking and praising God,

10they 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.

11While 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.

12When 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?"

13The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14You disowned the Holy and Righteous

One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

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.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1-How many of the original twelve apostles are mentioned after Acts 1? Who were they?

After Acts 1, only three of the original Twelve apostles are mentioned again in Acts. They are Peter and John (3:1), and James (12:1-2). The first half of Acts focuses on Peter. The latter half focuses on Paul (Saul), who was not yet converted (see 7:58-8:3).

QUESTION 2-What was the "hour of prayer" (3:1)? What does this tell us about early Christian worship?

There were two special times of prayer each day, corresponding to the morning and evening sacrifices. The latter sacrifice was offered at the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon. While Peter and John could have prayed anywhere and been heard by God, they evidently believed that corporate worship was important. Indeed, the events that were about to unfold would open the door to evangelize many of their fellow worshipers in the temple.

Today, prayer and group worship is just as important. If not done at a specific time each day or throughout the day, we should make it a habit to communicate with God regularly. Likewise, we are encouraged to meet and worship together on a regular basis. Hebrew 10:25 says, "Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near" (NLT). The hour is getting close for Jesus' return. We must continue to pray for other saints as well as those who don't know Jesus as their Saviour. We must remain faithful to our profession and to our prayer and worship practices.

QUESTION 3-Where was the lame man laid each day? Why was he placed there? (Acts 3:2-5)

The lame man-whose name we aren't given-was carried and laid each day to the temple gate for the purpose of begging. Since the kind of social programs we take for granted did not exist in ancient times, the only recourse a disabled person had was to rely on the mercy of passersby.

The Beautiful Gate of the temple-as it was called-was on the east side of Jerusalem. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, it was so named because of its beautifully decorated bronze doors. Coming from the Court of the Gentiles, it gave access to the Court of Women. It served as the front door to the temple proper, and was an ideal place for the lame man to position himself for begging. Those who

ignored the man's pleas may have found it difficult to worship due to the guilt they felt for refusing to help such a powerless person. Moreover, as people left the temple they would be more apt to give to someone who was waiting there for help.

QUESTION 4-What did the crippled man expect to receive from the apostles? (Acts 3:3)

As Peter and John were about to enter the temple, the man called out to them as he did to anyone passing him by; he asked for alms. Alms are gifts given to the poor; donated in the form of money or charitable acts of kindness in general. The lame man was expecting Peter or John to simply toss a coin or two his way and continue into the temple. He was, however, about to get a miracle that would consist of both earthly and eternal blessings-something far more valuable than any amount of money he might be given.

QUESTION 5-How did Peter respond to the man's request? Does this mean church workers should be poor? (Acts 3:4-6)

Peter and John stopped, and Peter told the man to look at them. The lame man eagerly gave them his attention... expecting to receive some money. Peter told the man that he didn't have any silver or gold to give him, but what he did have for him would do far more for the man than a few coins could ever do. Peter finally told the lame man-in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth-to get up and walk; which he did do.

The fact that Peter said he had no silver or gold does not mean that church workers should or will always be poor. It is very possible that Peter and John both had at least some money between them at the time, but they were not directed by the Holy Spirit to give the lame man any money. Peter was operating under the power of the Holy Spirit in this healing. Besides, those who labor for the Lord should willingly do so because it is their calling and it gives glory and honor to God, not because they stand to gain financially or materially from their services. A mature servant of Christ will eventually learn to be content with what the Lord has blessed him with, rather than seeking to gain stuff. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." All these things include: clothes, home, car, food and drink, job, health, education, savings, etc. Don't worry about them because God will provide for His own.

QUESTION 6-What was the source of the man's healing? What did faith have to do with the miracle? (Acts 3:6-8)

The source of the man's healing was not in Peter or John. It was not in the man's determination, will, or might. As an apostle of Jesus, with the power of God to perform signs and wonders, Peter simply told the lame man to "rise up and walk" (v. 6).

The phrase "in the name of Jesus" is not a magical formula used to give some affirmation or guarantee to a prayer. A person's name represented that person's authority and influence. The power in the name of Jesus-in Peter's case-came from what the Holy Spirit did for the lame man because of Jesus' name. We know this because neither Peter nor John laid hands on the man, nor did they pray for God to heal him. Again, being an apostle of Jesus, Peter simply spoke.

Like the gift of salvation, healing from the Lord is also a gift. This gift was offered "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Acts 3:6). Although Peter's apostolic powers would be evident in what would happen, he took no credit for the miracle that occurred. It was through the power of Christ-not Peter's-that healing came to the lame man. Therefore faith was evident on Peter's part, but not on the lame man's part. Peter possessed the gift of healing.

QUESTION 7-Why did Peter and John have to help the man up? (Acts 3:7-8)

Contrary to Question 6's explanation of faith, and more importantly, who was displaying it, faith cannot be attributed to the lame man. Why? Since the man had not expected nor asked to be healed--but simply expected to get some money to help maintain his misery-filled life, he apparently made no move to obey Peter's command to "rise up and walk" (v. 6). The man was not expecting to receive salvation that day, either, but he did.

Notice that Peter had to help the man get up; the man doesn't initially stand on his own. This perhaps helps the man overcome a moment of uncertainty since he has never once in his life taken a step; he had no experience in walking. A toddler has to learn to keep balance, falling many times while taking those first steps. But this man immediately walks-and more.

QUESTION 8-What was Solomon's porch? (Acts 3:8-11)

Solomon's porch or portico was the raised outermost part of Herod's temple with columns that went all the way around the outer court. In Jesus' day, this part of the temple had been built by King Herod's laborers. It is also known as the "portico of Solomon," and "Solomon's Colonnade." It was at this entrance that today's events took place.

It was also a meeting place of the early church (Acts 5:12). Perhaps Peter and John had planned to preach here anyway after the time of prayer in the temple. Now, however, a much larger crowd than they had anticipated gathered. Not only would people hear the message of the gospel, but they would also believe it and so increase the numbers in the newly formed Jerusalem church.

QUESTION 9-How was Christ described by Peter to the multitude? (Acts 3:13)

Peter's reference to "His Servant" comes from Isaiah 52:13-a messianic psalm. Jesus can be considered the "Servant of God" because He gave His life as a guilt offering for the sins of all humanity. Peter also made it clear that Jesus was the Son of the God of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While many of the Jewish leaders wanted to disavow or deny any relationship between Jesus and the patriarchs, Christ said that they longed for His arrival (John 8:56).

Although many of the people listening to Peter's sermon had nothing personally to do with the death of Christ, their leaders had plotted against the Lord and refused to allow Pilate to release Him (John 18:28-40; 19:5-16).

QUESTION 10-Who was the murderer Peter alluded to in verse 14?

The reference to the "murderer" in Acts 3:14 alludes to Barabbas, who is described as an insurrectionist (Mark 15:7), a murderer (Luke 23:19), and a robber (John 18:40). To foist or pass off upon society such a criminal as Barabbas and crucify the sinless One was both the height of arrogance and the depth of depravity.

Barabbas-to review-was being held in Roman custody at the time of the trial of Jesus (Mark 15:15). All four Gospels record that when Pilate offered to release Jesus or Barabbas, the crowd demanded the release of Barabbas. Pilate gave in to the demand, ordered Jesus crucified, and set Barabbas free. Nothing is known of Barabbas' subsequent history.

CONCLUSION

God had a plan for the lame man from the very beginning (See Jer. 29:11). He experienced grief for over forty years, but in the end there was healing and a productive life (Acts 4:22).

We too experience hardships, reverses, and tragic moments. All of these have a divine purpose. We may not fully understand why, and we may not experience a miraculous solution, but we can have confidence in a God who does all things well.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, may we never hinder Jesus, the prince of life, from bringing new life to our souls. May we know that His great power can heal, give eternal life, and bless abundantly. In Jesus' name, amen!

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

The living Jesus still heals!

PRACTICAL POINTS

It is often in our normal routines that God gives us our greatest opportunities (Acts 3:1).

God knows what you need better than even you do (vss. 2-3).

A Christian's words may not bring miraculous healing, but God can use them to impact people for eternity (vss. 4-7).

The working of God in people's lives should always result in God-honoring praise (vss. 8-10).

People are only God's instruments; they should be careful not to take credit for His work (vss. 11-12).

Biblical proclamation requires that the truth be shared without compromise (vss. 13-16).

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

DATE: September 25, 2005

TITLE: **"The Time for Boldness"**

LESSON: **Acts 4:1-4, 23-31** (Golden Text v.29)

TIME: A.D. 30

PLACE: Jerusalem

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