

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-7-16 AM NOTES
"A MIRACLE AND A MESSAGE"
ACTS 3:1-19
#5 in Series, "Acts: the Spirit, the Church, and the World"

Acts 1:8b (NASB) "... you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Malachi 3:6a (NASB) "For I, the Lord, do not change..."

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB) "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

I. The Miracle (vv. 1-10)

A. The Man (vv. 1-8)

"The church is not here to talk politics, to play music, to give philosophical discourses, to produce art, or to provide social amelioration or psychological treatment...No; the business of the church is to deal with the real problem of men and women—not to give alms, but to offer a cure for paralysis. This is the unique message of the church, and this is what differentiates it from every other institution under the sun. The church...is not a cultural center or a psychological clinic or a social agency. No; her calling, her commission, is to deal with the souls of men and women. This is what causes their paralysis."
—Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Mark 13:22 (NASB) "for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect."

1) When God heals, it is immediate. 2) When God heals, it is supernatural. 3) When God heals, it is perfect. 4) When God heals, it is according to His will. 5) When God heals, it is not ultimately dependent on man's faith. 6) When God heals, it always brings glory to Christ. 7) When God heals, it is for a purpose.
—Charles Swindoll

B. The Multitude (vv. 9-10)

II. The Message (vv. 11-19)

Acts 5:40b (NASB) "...after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus..."

A. The Rejection of Christ (vv. 11-15)

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, in a believer's ear,
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear.
Jesus, my shepherd, brother, friend, my prophet, priest, and King,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end, accept the praise I bring.*

—John Newton

John 14:6 (NASB) "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"

B. The Resurrection of Christ (vv. 15b-18)

C. The Repentance Toward Christ (v. 19)

Acts 26:20b (NIV) "...they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."

First Baptist Church Powell 02 07 2016 AM
Sermon 5: A Miracle and A Message
Series: The Spirit, the Church, and the World
Acts 3:1-19

From a purely human viewpoint, the early church, that we read about in Acts, had some seemingly insurmountable problems. Had there been church growth consultants in that day, they would have laughed at this church's mission statement. Their mission statement was Acts 1:8b (NASB): "...you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Any church growth consultant would tell them that their vision was too big, too broad, and unrealistic. Let's look at why (from a human viewpoint) this was an unrealistic mission they had accepted. The members of this first church had no status in Jerusalem. They were not among the highly educated, the esteemed Rabbis. The Jewish people elevated the educated rabbis – not common people who had no recognized credentials. Outside Jerusalem and Judea, they would not just be looked down on; as Jews they would be hated in Samaria and have no status in other countries all the way to the "remotest part of the earth." Not only did they have no status, they had an unpopular message that people would never accept.

Here is their message: A Jew claimed to be God in human flesh. This Jew died the most shameful death any human being could die – He was crucified (a form of capital punishment that was reserved for only the worst of the worst criminals). Not only that, He claimed to have no sin (ever), but took on Himself the sin of all who would repent and believe on Him. Those who would repent and believe on Him, their sins would be washed away and the righteousness of Jesus would be put on their account enabling them to have intimate fellowship with God Himself.

But there was more. His followers claim that on the third day after, He was taken from the cross and buried in a borrowed tomb, He was raised from the dead. After several weeks, He ascended back to heaven and promised to come again. The consultants would have given the leaders of this early church a condescending smile and a pat on the back and would have commended them for their big vision, but it just wasn't realistic. No one would believe them; the prideful people of the Roman Empire would never humble themselves, repent, and believe on a crucified Jew for their only hope of forgiveness and eternal life.

Now, let's look at actual history. This early church set out to obey the Lord's mission for them and they succeeded! In one generation, the Gospel went all the way to Rome and beyond. There is evidence that the apostle Thomas was martyred sharing the Gospel in India. There is evidence that the Gospel went into central China in the first few centuries after Christ's death and resurrection. Truly, they were witnesses to the remotest part of the earth.

What was the secret of their success? It was the indwelling Holy Spirit, also called "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9) who empowered the witnesses, convicted the hearers of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come, who opened spiritual eyes that were blinded, enabled deaf ears to hear and transformed life after life. The unconverted Jews couldn't stop them; the idol worshipping pagans couldn't stop them; the Roman government and its persecution couldn't stop them; the Devil himself couldn't stop them! We have the same mission that first church had. Today, we face a culture that in many ways is just as hostile to the Gospel as was the culture of that first century. I have good news for the people of this church. The very same Holy Spirit that indwelt each believer in that first church indwells us. We have no excuse.

We are going to see an amazing miracle that takes place. It is a miracle of healing. If we have the same Holy Spirit dwelling in us that these first century believers had dwelling in them, why don't we see more amazing healings like this one? While God is certainly capable of miraculous healing today (Malachi 3:6a (NASB): "For I, the Lord, do not change..."), healings like the one we are about to read in the scripture are rare.

Here is the difference. God used signs and wonders performed primarily through the apostles to authenticate their message, to demonstrate their authority. Today, we have something much better than miracles to establish our message as authoritative. We have the Holy Spirit inspired written Word of God

as our authority. We have the completed canon of Scripture – the Old Testament and the New Testament – the Scriptures are our authority. The scriptures that we have are described in Hebrews 4:12 (NASB): “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Each believer having the authoritative Word is better than not having the Word and having signs and wonders to demonstrate authority.

When we come to chapter three of Acts, we are not sure of the timing. It is likely still just a few days after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In this chapter, we see an amazing miracle followed by a powerful message by Peter.

I. The Miracle (v 1-10)

This amazing miracle is beyond question. No one could refute that it happened.

A. The Man (v 1-8)

The beggar’s handicap was not a minor limp. It was not some psycho-somatic “illness”; His legs had never worked since birth. They would have been just bones covered by skin. The muscles and ligaments would have atrophied and would have been useless to him. He had to be carried everywhere he went. This beggar was positioned at the busiest gate to the temple grounds. This gate was also called the “Eastern Gate.” Passing by this beggar everyday were the most learned theologians of that time. The first century historian, Josephus described the temple itself as breathtaking, made of white marble. The front of the temple was covered with gold that shined so brilliantly in the sunlight that one could not look directly at it. Yet all of the beauty of his surroundings and the knowledge of those passing by him could do nothing to really help this beggar.

What a picture of lost humanity. We were crippled by the fall into sin that is recorded in Genesis 3. Like this beggar, we were all spiritually crippled from birth. All of the learning and worldly beauty can do nothing to reverse the curse of sin. Every person, apart from Christ, is a crippled beggar from birth who can do nothing about their condition.

Think of the hopelessness of this man. His daily routine was to wait for someone to carry him to the beautiful gate to beg so he could get enough food to exist another day to beg again. What a poignant picture of humanity apart from Christ. This world is filled with people who are crippled by the fall going through life just existing, physically surviving with no real meaning, no joy, and no sense of purpose, and for the beggar and for lost mankind today, there was and is no hope of their condition ever changing. As a church, we can never forget that the whole world without Christ is spiritually just like this beggar was physically. We cannot get caught up in doing *only* good physical things to help the world’s hurting people and keep from them the only remedy for their bankrupt condition. I was touched by a quote from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones concerning this passage:

The church is not here to talk politics, to play music, to give philosophical discourses, to produce art, or to provide social amelioration or psychological treatment... No; the business of the church is to deal with the real problem of men and women – not to give alms, but to offer a cure for paralysis. This is the unique message of the church, and this is what differentiates it from every other institution under the sun. The church... is not a cultural center or a psychological clinic or a social agency. No; her calling, her commission, is to deal with the souls of men and women. This is what causes their paralysis.

[Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authentic Christianity*, page 219]

In verses 4-8 we see the transformation that God brings about in this beggar’s life. Oh, what a change it was. In verse 2, he is carried; in verse 8, he is walking. In verse 2, he is begging; in verse 8, he is praising God. In verse 2, he was sitting; in verse 8, he is leaping. Oh I would like to have witnessed this live! There are some who would say that healings like this are regularly happening today. I do not think that they are. Much of the public “healing meetings” today are, unfortunately, fraudulent. Many of the so

called “healings” are psychological ploys, outright fakes, or even demonic in nature. Jesus warned in Mark 13:22 (NASB): “for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.”

You would be hard pressed to find in a “healing meeting” today documented healings like this one in Acts 3. This healing was immediate and thereby amazing. Think about it. As Peter reaches out to take his hand to lift him to his feet, there was no gradual forming of ligaments and muscles in the atrophied legs. There was no physical therapy or treatments. He was immediately physically whole. He began both walking and leaping. This was a miracle so unlike those in the healing meetings today. This was no vague back pain. This beggar had legs that were without muscle that before the very eyes of those witnessing it became healthy muscular legs. In the time it takes to stand up, the man’s tendons attach, his muscles grow, his sockets realign. There is now life in his formerly dead legs. Even the fact that he had the coordination to walk and leap was a miracle. This healing was a sign to all who saw it that the apostles had the authority of Christ Himself. That authority is also found in the phrase in Acts 3:6 (NASB): “...In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” In the Bible, “in the name of” speaks of “in the authority of” or “in the power of.” While God can sovereignly heal today as He did then, our authority is in proclaiming His very words as we proclaim the Scriptures.

Chuck Swindoll uses this healing in Acts 3 as a way to evaluate the healing meetings today. 1) When God heals, it is immediate. 2) When God heals, it is supernatural. 3) When God heals, it is perfect. 4) When God heals, it is according to His will. He chose to heal this man among all of the disabled in Jerusalem. 5) When God heals, it is not ultimately dependent on man’s faith. This lame man wasn’t even expecting a healing. He was hoping only for money. 6) When God heals, it always brings glory to Christ. Peter in no way ever took credit for this healing. 7) When God heals, it is for a purpose. This healing set the stage for Peter’s message. By that criteria, I fear that much, I would even say most, all publicized “healings” today are not genuine healings.

Investigative reporters who go back some time after the “healings” to talk to the “healed ones” find that their condition, their cancer, etc. had returned. This healing in Acts 3 was beyond question genuine and complete. Have you ever wondered why people who had visible effects like the man in Acts 3 aren’t shown on television miraculously being restored? Today, all too often, it is the “healer” who gets the spotlight. One of the most famous of the healers used to make his entrance to the platform while the crowds sang “How Great Thou Art.” Today, the “healings” are always dependent on the faith of the one being healed. Don’t be taken in by showmen who travel to their meetings in their private jets!

B. The Multitude (v 9-10)

Can you imagine the shockwave that went through that place? They all knew who he was. There could be no faking here. They had seen him begging day after day, week after week, and year after year. They were filled with wonder and amazement. The people all noticed and were deeply impacted by this transformed life. Even so today, as we see lives transformed through the Gospel, it will get people’s attention.

II. The Message (v 11-19)

In just chapters 2 and 3, we are beginning to discern a pattern with Peter. When he saw a crowd gather, he began declaring the Gospel to them. As we saw in Peter’s first sermon a couple of weeks ago, even so this sermon is completely Jesus centered. In fact, that “Christ centeredness” characterizes every sermon recorded in Acts. Even the church’s enemies recognized how central the name and person of Jesus was to these first century Christians. Acts 5:40b (NASB): “... after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus...” Peter wants to make sure that all those gathered knew that it was all about Jesus, not about Peter.

A. The Rejection of Christ (v 11-15a)

I love the description in verse 11 of the man who had been healed. He wouldn’t let go of Peter and John. At this regular appointed time for afternoon prayers – the 9th hour (3:00 PM), there would have been a large crowd gathered on the temple grounds. News of the healings spread quickly. In verse 12, Peter is

concerned that none of the glory is stolen from Jesus. He says in Acts 3:12 that the crowds should stop looking at him and John. They didn't have the power or the piety to do any of this.

In verse 13, Peter tells the crowds that he is in accord with the Old Testament. He is glorifying the same promised One, the Messiah that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob glorified. Then in the last part of verse 13, Peter "lowers the boom" on this crowd. The early church presented the cross as the greatest crime ever perpetrated. Peter lays the blame not just on the religious leaders, but on the people. Peter tells them that Jesus was their promised Messiah and when He came, they cried out "crucify Him," and when the pagan Roman Governor Pilate wanted to release Jesus the Messiah, it was the crowds – some of these same people who said, "Give us Barabbas," who was a murderer.

It is interesting to see the names Peter uses for Jesus. He calls Him "Jesus" in verse 13. That name means, "The Lord is my salvation." John Newton, the slave trader who came to Christ and was a pastor in the 18th century, is best known for writing the hymn *Amazing Grace*, but he also wrote other songs. One, *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds*, says:

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, in a believer's ear,
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear.
Jesus, my shepherd, brother, friend, my prophet, priest, and King,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end, accept the praise I bring.*

In verse 14, Peter also uses the name "the Holy and Righteous One." "Holy" means the set apart One, the unique One, the One like no other. The "Righteous One" carries the meaning of one who is in right standing with God because of being guilty of no wrong. In verse 15, Peter calls Jesus "the Prince of life." That term speaks of the One who is the beginner of something.

In Hebrews 12:2 Jesus is described as the author or the beginner of our faith. Primarily, He is the source of true life. He said in John 14:6 (NASB): "I am the way, and the truth, and the life..." His life is eternal life. He is Jesus, our salvation; He is the Holy One; He is the righteous One; He is the Prince of Life. Only He has eternal life. They had cried out for the death of the One who was the Prince of life.

In verses 13-15, Peter gives a series of paradoxes. Although Jesus was the one Isaiah called "the suffering servant," He was glorified and exalted by the Father. Jesus was their deliverer, and yet they delivered Him to Pilate to be crucified. They rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked instead for Barabbas, a murder. But in verse 15 is the most astounding paradox of all. They "put to *death* the Prince of *life*." That is the depth to which they had rejected their Messiah.

B. The Resurrection of Christ (v 15b-18)

I am thankful that Peter's message doesn't end with the death of Christ. As with most of the messages in Acts, there is the victorious proclamation of the resurrection. A Savior that remained in the grave was no Savior at all. In verse 16, Peter comes back to the miracle experienced by the man crippled from birth. He says that the miracle was on the basis of faith. It wasn't the faith of the crippled man. It was the faith of Peter and John! It was their faith in Jesus' name – His authority, His power.

In verses 17-18, Peter softens his approach somewhat. He recognizes that even those who crucified the Savior, while responsible for their wrong actions were acting out of ignorance and actually were bringing about what God had planned from before the foundation of the world. Learn this; our actions cannot thwart the sovereign, determined plans of God.

C. The Repentance toward Christ (v 19)

The words "repent" and "repentance" are used eleven times in the book of Acts. We dealt with repentance at length in the message on Acts 2:38. To repent is to have a change of mind toward our sin that results in a change of behavior. We see repentance described in Acts 26:20b (NIV): "...they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." As we saw earlier, repentance assumes faith, and saving faith assumes repentance.

Verse 19 tells us the glorious result of true repentance. Genuine repentance results in having "your sins wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Conclusion

Are you like this lame man? Are you crippled emotionally or feel that you are unable to overcome sin that has taken you captive? Maybe you have been lying by the gate looking for help, and yet not expecting a true “cure” for your inability. I proclaim to you Jesus Christ, the Messiah – God who came in human flesh, took the sins of all who would believe on Him and desires that you be made whole this day. I call you to repent that your sins may be wiped away and that refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.