

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

Acts 3:1-4:37

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.’”

By the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Christian church was born. However, the church was nothing but a baby, which had to grow strong. In this passage we learn God's wisdom, that the church was designed to experience pains and trials in its infancy so that it might grow strong, strong enough to resist the power of Satan. Chapters 3-8 describe how the Christian church grew through many fiery testings. Today's passage chapters 3-4, tells how the apostles helped a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus, and how they overcame the threats of the Jewish leaders.

First, Peter heals a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus (3:1-10). 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." For the Jews, there were 3 special hours of prayer: 9 a.m., 12 noon and 3 p.m. To them, prayer was efficacious. The apostles kept up the custom of prayer in the temple. One afternoon, when Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray, a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful. In the East, it was customary for beggars to sit begging at the entrance to a temple or shrine, for they knew that worshipers were disposed to be generous toward their fellow man. As soon as this crippled man saw Peter and John about to enter, he instinctively seized the opportunity and asked them for money (3). Peter and John said, "Look at us!" We cannot tell exactly why they told him to look at them. But it is evident that Peter and John thought this cripple needed healing more than some money for himself and for his kids. To this crippled man, just a few dollars would have been very useful. But what he really needed was healing of his crippledness and of his deeply rooted beggar's mentality. However, this fellow did not understand the apostles' shepherd mind; he only expected to get something from them.

What did the apostles do with 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.'" Peter had no money. But he did not think that he could not help this man. He had something to give to

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

him. What was it? It was the name of Jesus.

Peter was ready to help this man. To Peter, the way to truly help this man was to heal him in the name of Jesus. So he said to him, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Peter was very clear that he should be healed in the name of Jesus. Peter was clear that he should be able to walk in the name of Jesus. Peter was clear that he should be healed of his deeply rooted beggar's mentality in the name of Jesus. Peter was clear that he needed the name of Jesus. What people really need is the name of Jesus. These days, many parents see that the world is dark and chaotic. They try to teach their children how to be tough. At the same time, they work hard to save some money for their children. They follow worldly common sense rather than the truth of God in helping their children. When their children follow this worldly common sense, they only become godless, selfish and extremely fearful. We must help our children in the name of Jesus. We must give our children the name of Jesus.

What happened when Peter commanded him to walk in the name of Jesus? Instantly, the man's ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. He went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. The name of Jesus restored both his body and his soul until he could praise God (8). This crippled man's fundamental problem was not his physical condition, but his beggar's mentality, which made him miserable always. When he was healed in the name of Jesus, he was truly happy.

Peter himself knew what it was to be healed by Jesus. Peter was a man of big mouth; but he had been very fearful. He had denied Jesus three times at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, even though he didn't mean to do it. But after he was healed by Jesus, he became a man of courageous faith. John was a man of anger. Once, when some Samaritans did not welcome the band of Jesus, he asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" (Lk.9:54) But after he was healed by Jesus, he became a man of love and a happy man. There was a son of a widowed mother. He tried to get human love during his college days. When he did so, he was miserable and his shepherd was miserable, too. But after he was healed by Jesus, he became a happy man. Now he is a father to 700 students in his chapter. Jesus came to this world to heal the sick and to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus healed the sick for the sake of healing their sinsick souls.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

After this man was healed, people who saw him recognized him, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him (10). When this man crippled from birth was healed, everyone was truly happy. In truth, there is no greater joy to all mankind than to see a crippled man made whole in the name of Jesus.

Second, Peter witnesses to the name of Jesus (3:11-26). All the people who had seen this miracle were astonished and came running to them. Peter and John became very popular. People did not see God behind them; they only saw Peter and John. It was a great temptation to Peter and John. But Peter and John were not at all swayed by the tempting situation. They began to witness to the name of Jesus. They emphasized two things.

In the first place, "It is Jesus' name" (12-16). Look at verse 12. "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?'" Peter told the people that it was not they who had healed the man. In that situation, Peter could have shared God's glory 50/50. But he did not steal God's glory. He gave all the credit to Jesus.

Promptly, Peter began to explain who Jesus is. He explained that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Look at verses 13,14. "The 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. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you." As a conclusion to this, Peter said in verse 15, "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this." The world crucified Jesus on the cross like a criminal. But God raised him from the dead. This Risen Jesus gave his apostles power and authority to heal the sick. Verse 16 says, "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." This verse explains that Jesus is the only one who can give complete healing to mankind. This crippled man was healed also because of the apostles' faith in the name of Jesus. May God heal many sinsick souls because of our faith in the name of Jesus.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

In the second place, repentance in the name of Jesus (17-23). Peter urges them to repent. Look at verse 17. "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders." Peter told them that in their ignorance they committed the greatest crime against God in human history. Still, they can repent in the name of Jesus. Then their sins can be wiped out, and their burden of sin and guilt can be removed. If they repent in the name of Jesus, they can enjoy times of refreshing from the Lord. Many people go to many places to refresh themselves. Usually they fail. Repentance is the best way to refresh our minds and souls. Most importantly, if we repent in the name of Jesus, Christ will come to us and remain in us until God restores paradise, the kingdom of God, as he promised long ago through his prophets (21). (In verses 24-26 Peter reminds them that they are a people chosen to be a blessing to all peoples on earth.)

Third, we obey God (4:1-22). How did the Jewish leaders respond to Peter's preaching? They should have rejoiced greatly because God had done a great work through his people. But they did not. While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the Pharisees and the Sadducees came up to them to stop their teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead (1,2). Among the Jewish rulers, there were two kinds: One was Pharisees and the other, Sadducees. When the apostles began to witness fearlessly to the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Pharisees were disturbed, since they had crucified Jesus on the cross. The Sadducees also were annoyed, because they didn't believe in resurrection, and more than this, they were afraid of any disturbance of the status quo. If the apostles were allowed to go on preaching, they felt, riots and civil disorder would occur and disturb their status quo. So these Jewish rulers conspired to nip this movement in the bud. They seized Peter and John and put them in jail until the next day (3). Even though the Jewish rulers persecuted the early Christians in order to obliterate them, the number of Christians was not reduced. Despite persecutions their number grew and grew. Verse 4 says that those who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

The next day, the Jewish rulers began to question them. "By what power or what name did you do this?" (7) Peter said, "We do these things in the name of Jesus." Look at verses 8-10. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: 'Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." At that time, Jesus was known as a carpenter from Nazareth. So Peter quoted Psalm 118:22 to explain who Jesus really was. Jesus is the stone rejected by the world (11). But he is the capstone--the head of human history. Peter also expounded that Jesus is the only salvation man can find. Verse 12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

The Jewish rulers tried to shut the apostles' mouths with their political power. But it did not work. Rather, they were greatly surprised to see the courage of Peter and John. They were even more surprised by the fact that the apostles had been with Jesus, whom they had crucified. Another surprise was to see the man who had been healed standing there as a witness to the miracle done by the apostles in the name of Jesus. The rulers of the Jews didn't know what to do. So they ordered the apostles to withdraw from the Sanhedrin. Then the Jewish rulers conferred together and decided to call the apostles back in and threaten them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (18).

How did the apostles respond to their threats? Their threats seemed to be an enforcement of martial law. Yet, the apostles were not threatened; they chose to obey God. Look at verses 19,20. "But Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'" Most people do not want to tamper with those who are in power, being afraid of their revenge. But Peter made a choice to obey God, even though it was costly. He made the right choice, because the choice to obey God is the best choice man can make. In the movie "Ben Hur," there are the following lines: (Massala) "Judah, either you help me or you oppose me. You have no other choice. Either you are for me or against me." (Judah Ben-Hur) "If that is the choice, then I am against you." In the midst of threats the apostles chose to obey God. The Jewish rulers' threat was a test of the apostles' loyalty. They passed the test of loyalty to Jesus. Like the apostles, we have to choose to obey either God or Satan. May God give us courageous faith to choose God.

Fourth, the believers' prayer (4:23-37). The early Christians were a

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

small group of people. Their leaders, Peter and John, were arrested and brought to the same place where Jesus had been condemned to death. They could have been fearful as they looked ahead to the troubles which seemed to be pouncing upon them. But they were not. When Peter and John came back from prison and reported that the Jewish rulers had threatened them not to speak anymore of Jesus, they were not scared at all by their threats. Instead they prayed with a loud voice. In their prayer we learn their basic faith.

Firstly, they believed that God is the Sovereign Ruler of history. Look at verse 24. "When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.'" They believed that God rules the world according to his sovereign will. So, they were not intimidated by the Jewish rulers. On the other hand, they believed that the Jewish leaders were nobodies who were kicking against a rock in vain. Look at verses 25,26. "You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.'" True Christians know that God is the Sovereign Ruler and have a sense of history in the Sovereign Ruler God.

Secondly, they asked God's strength to speak God's word. Look at verses 29,30. "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

The Jewish rulers' threats made them strong instead of making them weak. All the believers were one in heart and mind. They shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was with them all (32-35).

In today's passage we learned that when the early Christians had faith in the name of Jesus, they grew and grew through many pains and trials. May God enable us to have faith in the name of Jesus and to take pains and trials as necessary for the growth of our personal faith and of Christian churches in this generation. May God enable us to heal the sick in the name of Jesus.