

## **ACTS 3**

### **“RISE UP AND WALK!”**

This morning we’re going to be in Acts Chapter 3. Just a quick review – In Chapter 1 Jesus ascended back to heaven. He told His disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. In Chapter 2 the Holy Spirit came. He rested on 120 followers of Jesus in the form of what were called “divided tongues as of fire.” They were filled. They were empowered and went out and started proclaiming the mighty works of God in all of these different languages. The Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem who had gathered for the Feast of Pentecost were amazed by this. How could this be? Some of the bystanders scoffed and accused these Jesus followers of being drunk, being “filled with new wine.” But they weren’t filled with wine. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. At this point Peter stood up and began to preach boldly about Jesus. The result was that three thousand people got saved. As we left off last time, the church in Jerusalem was growing in numbers and spiritually flourishing. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

As we get into Chapter 3, we see one of the very first of these wonders and signs...

READ Acts 3:1

It’s 3 o’clock in the afternoon and Peter and John are on their way to the Temple to worship and pray. The church is so new that they haven’t even started meeting in people’s homes yet. So, they continued, as was their practice, meeting in the Temple. Up to this point there has been no persecution of the church by the Jews, but that’s all about to change.

READ Acts 3:2-3

We are introduced to “a man.” All we know about this man is that he has been lame from birth. We don’t know his name and we don’t have any

idea how old he is. He can't walk. He can't work. There's no government welfare system. All he can do is beg and depend on the generosity of religious people going into the Temple. And when Peter and John approach, this man has only one desire and that is to receive money to help meet his material needs. That's his focus. That's all he cares about. A person in his situation has limited expectations.

READ Acts 3:4-6

This is a case of good news – bad news. The bad first. “We don't have any money to give you. But the good news is we have something better for you.” And Peter tells him, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”

READ Acts 3:7

Nelsons Bible Commentary describes what is going on here: “Instantly strength was given to the portions of the body that needed it. Blood supply was increased to the muscle. The brain sent signals to the nerve endings of the ankles and feet. The hardened fluid between the joints was softened, and the atrophied muscles and ligaments regained flexibility. The feet suddenly could bear the man's weight.”

This miracle happens instantly, just like all those healing miracles that Jesus had done. What occurs here made me think back to something Jesus had said to His disciples in the Upper Room the last night He was with them before He went to the cross. He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:21). And that's what we see happening here in Acts Chapter 3. The only explanation for this miracle is that Peter and John have the same power – the same Holy Spirit power – that Jesus had. That's how they were able to heal this man.

Well, the man, as you can understand, is very excited. This is far greater than anything he could have ever imagined!

READ Acts 3:8

The man leaps in the air. He walks around trying out his new legs. He's completely overcome with joy and he can't help but praise God. This is the BEST day of his life!

READ Acts 3:9-10

Everybody knows who this guy is. He's been a fixture at the gate of the Temple for years. We don't know how long, but a long time. The best word to describe the people's reaction at seeing this man walking and leaping and praising God is ASTONISHMENT. This is a sight they never expected to see.

I want to put this story on pause and reflect on a thought. People in the world, even those in the church, are often astonished whenever God completely changes a person. This here is a physical change. But a spiritual change is just as noticeable. When these miraculous transformations occur, we don't quite know what to think. You have this guy here, lame all those years and now he's leaping around. Amazing! Last time in Chapter 2 we had those 120 Jesus followers speaking in other languages at Pentecost. Later in Acts, we will see Saul of Tarsus persecuting the church and then becoming perhaps the greatest missionary the world has ever seen. Centuries later we'll see a man named John Newton whose dramatic conversion takes him from being a slave trader to pastoring a church. The man we know as St. Augustine will be transformed from a life of wild partying and loose living to that great bishop of the faith. More recently you've had the conversions to Christianity by such unlikely people as Gary Busey, Alice Cooper, Bob Dylan and Jane Fonda. Who would have "think it"? People are always astonished at the changes that Jesus makes in people's lives. Frankly, some are even a bit skeptical of the dramatic change and question whether it is real or not.

There is no doubt that what happened to this man leaping around the Temple complex is real. It's no surprise that the people there are "filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him."

Well, Peter, just like before at Pentecost, seizes this opportunity to stand up in front of the crowd who has gathered and he begins to speak.

READ Acts 3:11-12

"Don't look at us. We aren't the reason this man can walk. We didn't do it." Peter then goes on to explain who and what it was that HAD healed this man.

READ Acts 3:13-16

There's a lot in these verses, so let's unpack it. Peter uses several terms to describe Jesus...

"His servant Jesus," v 13, speaking of God's Servant; this Servant of God is mentioned in Isaiah 42:1, 49:6-7, 52:13, and 53:11. God, speaking thru the prophet Isaiah, calls Him "My Servant." It is a Messianic term.

"Holy One," v 14; this Holy One is referenced in Psalm 16:10, Isaiah 31:1 and Isaiah 49:7. It too is a Messianic term.

"Righteous One," v 14; see references in Isaiah 53:11 and Zechariah 9:9. It is also a Messianic term.

"Author of life," v 15; in other words, the Creator or the Source of life; see John 1:1-4 and Colossians 1:16 talk about Jesus as the Creator of all things. This is a characteristic of God Himself, which means that Jesus is God, God the Son. It is very clear how Peter views Jesus – He is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Creator of all things. He has a pretty high view of Jesus.

Peter points out, though, that the Jewish nation had rejected and killed their own Messiah. And they did that even after the Romans were set to release Him. Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man!" But even so, they killed Jesus. But God raised Him from the dead. The Jewish religious leaders had lied and said the disciples stole Jesus's body. But Peter adamantly refutes this. "God raised [Jesus] from the dead. To this we are witnesses." Read the Gospel accounts. After His resurrection, the disciples

saw and spoke to Jesus and touched Him until the day He ascended back to His Father.

Peter says in v 16. "It was in the name of Jesus that this man has been healed." This is quite interesting. The man's faith in Jesus healed him. The question I had was, "When had the man demonstrated faith?" Well, I went back and re-read the earlier encounter. Let's take a look at the instant replay...

Peter says to the man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (Acts 3:6).

And how did the man respond? "And [Peter] took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong" (Acts 3:7).

So, the man demonstrated his faith when he stood to his feet for the first time in his life. He didn't just sit there. And when he stood up, he realized that he could walk! He wouldn't have known he could walk unless he acted on faith.

This is quite a remarkable event. Well, Peter continues...

READ Acts 3:17-18

Peter tells his Jewish brothers that they acted in ignorance just like their religious leaders. Jesus once had a run-in with the Sadducees and He told them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). Jesus referred to the Jewish rabbis as "the blind leading the blind" (Matthew 15:14).

John Phillips puts it well in his commentary of Acts. He says, "There was some excuse for the ignorance of people like Pilate and the Gentiles... There was no excuse for the Jews. They were looking for a Messiah, but they wanted a militant Messiah, one who would smash the power of Rome and make Jerusalem the capital of a new world empire. They were not interested in a meek Messiah. What they were looking for was a ruler; God sent them a Redeemer. They wanted a sovereign; God sent them a

Savior... It was the ignorance and unbelief of the Jews that had help fulfill those old prophecies which God had foreseen and foretold." Mr. Phillips then draws our attention to all those Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah.

The Jewish nation should have known, but they weren't paying attention to their prophets, were they? Peter doesn't leave it there. He now brings them some words of hope.

READ Acts 3:19-21

The Jews were wrong about Jesus. What they need to do now is change their minds and repent. They have some work to do, some action. If they will do that, then God will forgive them. "Repent and your sins will be blotted out."

There's a lot of theological debate out there about what v 20-21 are talking about. Let me give my interpretation. Peter and the early Christians firmly believed that, if the nation of Israel had repented and followed Christ – this is what they were hoping would happen in their lifetime – IF that happened, then Jesus would return as described in Revelation 19. He would come back and set up His kingdom and rule from Jerusalem. He would restore all things just like we read about in Revelation 21 and 22.

But that didn't happen, did it? We know from history that this did not happen. We know that the nation did NOT repent. They did NOT believe in Jesus. While many individuals did, the nation as a whole did NOT. Most people – Jews and Gentiles alike – when the Gospel message was preached, rejected it. We will see this as we go through the book of Acts. And here we are 2000 years later, still living in a broken, fallen world and we are still waiting for our Lord's return.

In the rest of the chapter, Peter finishes his message.

READ Acts 3:22-26

This message about the Jewish promised Messiah was prophesied about by Moses and all the Old Testament prophets. Peter is basically

saying to these people, "You can go into your scriptures and read them for yourselves. And Jesus fulfilled them."

Well, how was Peter's message received? Well, just before Peter could finish his sermon, here comes trouble...

READ Acts 4:1-3

To be continued. We'll leave it right there and get into Chapter 4 next time. There has been no persecution until now. The Jewish leaders have had enough of this preaching about Jesus. They had 3000 people get saved at Pentecost. And now the apostles are in the Temple preaching in the name of Jesus. They are saying to themselves, "Enough!" We'll get into that next time.

So, what can we take away from Acts Chapter 3?

- Doing something "in the name of Jesus" is more than just saying His name, like some magical words you tack on at the end of a prayer. It's about the faith that accompanies it. Our faith in Jesus means that we trust in His person, in His character, and in His promises. That is what we are completely rely on when we do something in the name of Jesus.
- No matter how long or difficult our situation may seem, let us never underestimate the power of God to turn things around.
- Never take God's grace for granted. Whenever we receive it, we need to be sure to glorify and praise Him for His gift to us.
- Whatever mistakes we have made in the past, they can be forgiven. Praise God! His requirement is that we confess and repent and then surrender our life to Him. That is called grace and I am so thankful for it.
- Again, the Holy Spirit makes all the difference! Whatever we do as individual believers or as a church, we can only do it successfully in the power of the Holy Spirit.