

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 4
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
CHAPTERS 3**

INTRODUCTION

Luke has intimated at the beginning of Acts that the Lord Jesus Christ continued “to do and to teach” although He had been taken up into heaven (1:1, 2). The Lord Jesus Christ would continue to do and to teach through His apostles. In this chapter, Luke recorded and described one miracle in detail. Our study will show that Luke’s purpose of narrating this miracle in detail is probably to complete the message, which Peter delivered at Pentecost. Peter’s message at Pentecost focuses on the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was both Lord and Christ, and this is evidenced by the irrefutable proof of His resurrection and the testimony of Scriptures. The promise Peter declared to all those who would repent, was that they would receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nothing was said about future physical blessings. Peter’s message in chapter 3 that was given after the healing of the crippled man, focuses on the implications of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It focuses on the restoration of all things.

There is a natural division of Chapter 3 into two sections. The first

section relates to the healing of the man who was a cripple at birth (3:1-11). The next section features Peter’s second sermon to the multitude that gathered at the temple (3:12-26). Peter’s message was directed primarily to his fellow Jewish countrymen. This was the blue print given to them by the LORD in Acts 1:8. He addressed them, “ye men of Israel” (v.12); he referred to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as “the God of our fathers” (v.13); he spoke of the “the times of refreshing” and “the times of restitution” which were peculiarly Jewish (vv.19, 21); his references to Moses, and to all the prophets from Samuel were familiar to the Jews (vv. 22-24); and he referred to his Jewish hearers as “the children of the prophets and of the covenant” (v.25). The message of salvation was still to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16).

We will learn of the power of God, which was demonstrated in the healing of the cripple. We will also learn of the truth of Peter’s words. In Christ there is real hope; this hope is offered to the whole world. If only the world would hear and obey God.

COMMENTARY

Peter and John

Peter and John had been close friends before they met the Lord Jesus Christ. They had remained together although they were different in some ways. Peter was a practical man, the doer of deeds whereas John was more of a poet, a dreamer of dreams. There was a day after Christ’s resurrection when Peter told his fishing friends that he wanted to “go a fishing” (John 21:2, 3). John and his brother with four other

disciples were with Peter at that time. When the Lord Jesus Christ restored Peter on the shores of Galilee that early morning, Peter asked the Lord concerning “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” (John 21:20, 21). These two disciples had become closer together after the Pentecost experience. They had found that they were not antagonistic but complementary to each other.

Now Peter and John “went up” to the temple. Note that they “went up” indicating that the temple was on higher ground. They went to the temple at the ninth hour of prayer. Their day was divided into third, sixth and ninth (3 p.m.). It was the hour after sacrifice. Peter and John were no more interested in the hour of sacrifice. Understandably, the atoning death of Christ is the Lamb of God who was the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world. Interestingly, it was the same hour when Christ cried on the cross “Eloi, Eloi, lama-sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). The ninth hour of prayer was the busiest of the prayer times.

Healing of the Cripple

There was at the temple a man who was crippled since birth. He could not walk and he was forty years old (Acts 4:22). Every day, his friends would carry him and place him at the gate of the temple, which was called “Beautiful”, to beg for alms from those who were entering the temple. The gate “Beautiful” is identified as the Double Gate, where “all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon’s” (v. 11) rather than the Nicanor Gate, which was much nearer to the entrance of the temple proper.

The people who went to the temple for the evening sacrifice and prayer were inclined to kindly give alms to the lame beggar. The giving of alms was considered as one of the ways of expressing devotion to God.

The lame man looked expectantly at Peter and John as they were making their way into the temple. The lame man asked them for alms. Peter told him to look at him and John. The reason for Peter to tell the lame man to look at them is not given. However, Peter then said to the lame man that he had no “silver or gold”. Indeed, if Peter and John had money, they would have given it to him. They had left all to follow the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 18:28). But Peter continued, saying to the lame man that he would give him what he had: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (v.6). Then Peter did not stand back and watch the man struggling to his feet. Peter must have bent down to take the lame man by the right hand to help him get up. Peter’s helping the man to get up was not a sign of unbelief but a gesture of faith and love in the authority and power of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter had seen the Lord Jesus Christ do the same thing when He took Jairus’ daughter by the hand (Luke 8:51, 54).

The man immediately felt strength returning to his feet and ankles. He was not only able to walk for the first time in his life and enter the temple with Peter and John, but he was also jumping and praising God! Happiness and joy filled the mind and the heart of this lame man! This was a fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ by Isaiah: “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart . . .” (Isaiah 35:6). Peter’s healing of the lame man in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals

that when God heals, it is instant and supernatural. It is also perfect – the man straightaway was walking, jumping and praising God. The lame man did not expect the healing of his congenital affliction and so God’s healing of him was not dependent on his faith but according to His will. God’s healing always results in His praise and glory.

The healing of the lame man was better than giving him money and the loving care by others. This latter kind of assistance could only bring temporary relief but could not solve the problem of the lame man. The solution of the man’s problem was the Lord Jesus Christ. Similarly, the answer to the world’s problem of pain and suffering lies not in alleviating its misery but in believing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to give strength and power to conquer its pain and the suffering. Some things are more precious than silver and gold. The inner strength and power to over-ride pain and suffering is far more valuable.

God’s healing of the man was also for a purpose. All the people saw the lame man walking and praising God and they recognized that he was the same man who had daily sat at the Beautiful Gate. The man was holding on to Peter and John. The people ran together to Solomon’s Porch to see them. At this juncture, Peter seized the opportunity to proclaim and authenticate the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was his second sermon.

Peter’s Sermon

Peter addressed his fellow Jewish countrymen. He began by correcting the possible wrong understanding that he and John, had by their “own power and holiness”, made the lame man walk (v.12). It is a natural

tendency for people to think like this. Hence, it was important for Peter to make it clear that the miracle which happened, did not come from his own power but that it came from the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name the lame man was healed. Peter distinguished between himself and the power, which worked through him. How many men in such a situation would rob God of His power and glory by claiming themselves to be “somebody or somebody great: like Theudas and Simon Magus (Acts 5:36; 8:9)?

Peter’s message was directed primarily at his Jewish hearers as he said in his opening words (v.12, 13): “*Ye men of Israel . . . the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers . . .*” (italics added). After correcting the possibility of any wrong notion that they might have regarded the healing of the lame man as from Peter’s own power, his message centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter assured his Jewish countrymen that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of the God of their forefathers. Once again, Peter uncompromisingly reminded his hearers that they were guilty of causing the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had delivered and denied the Lord Jesus before the governor Pilate who actually wanted to release Him. Instead, they chose a murderer to be set free in exchange for Jesus whom he called “the Holy One and the Just”. They were the ones who killed “the Prince of life”, but God raised Him from the dead. Peter explained that it was in His name through faith that the lame man was given “perfect soundness” of health and strength.

Peter continued by describing the gospel message. Jesus was turned over to Pilate, the Jews rejected Him for

a murderer, and finally they were responsible for killing Him, the Prince of Life. All the things that happened to Jesus were predicted by all of God's prophets. In other words, it was God's pre-determinate purpose that His Son Jesus Christ should suffer and die according to the prophets. They have rejected the Messiah! The only way for them to blot out their sins was to repent and be converted.

The necessary and appropriate response to Peter's message was to repent and turn to God (v.19). And if his hearers were to repent and turn to God, Peter gave a threefold promise. Firstly, their sins would be blotted out or completely forgiven. Secondly, they would experience the "times of refreshing" which should come from the presence of the Lord. There would be periods of spiritual enjoyment when they would receive the sweetness of God's grace in Christ Jesus. These refreshing times would come from God's abiding presence and even in times of fiery trials and tribulations for His name's sake. Thirdly, God would send the Lord Jesus Christ again to them and bring about the "restitution of all things" as foretold by all His holy prophets since the dawn of Creation (v.21)! This means the restoration of all things as Peter wrote in his second letter to all believers in Christ (2 Peter 3:13): "*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" This restoration of all things would include the restoration of the promised Davidic kingdom on earth for a thousand years through the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:4).

Peter affirmed that God had given this promise through Moses (v.22): "*For Moses truly said unto the*

fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you". The Prophet, whom God would raise up unto the Jews, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. They ought to hear and obey Him. Peter further warned that any one, who would not hear that Prophet, would be destroyed from among the people (v.23). Peter ended his message by reminding his Jewish hearers that they were "the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers" (v.25). Peter continued to say that it was to the Jews first when God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to them. Then through them, all the families or the other nations of the world would be blessed as God had declared this to Abraham (Genesis 12:3). God's ultimate plan of salvation for the whole world comes through the Jews. Peter repeated his appeal to his hearers to turn away from their sins, and every one of them, to God.

It would be interesting to make a comparison of Peter's two sermons – the first at Pentecost and the second at the temple. His Pentecost sermon emphasised the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. The Temple sermon recalled details of Jesus Christ's trial. In the Pentecost sermon, Peter referred briefly to Jesus' earthly ministry whereas the Temple sermon anticipated the return of Jesus Christ. The Pentecost sermon stressed God's promise to David but the Temple sermon pointed to God's promise to Abraham and to Moses. The Pentecost sermon cited the book of Joel whereas the Temple sermon cited the Pentateuch and all the prophets from Samuel. The Pentecost sermon used

the titles of “Messiah” and “Lord” in reference to Jesus, whereas the Temple sermon used such titles as “His Son Jesus”, “the Holy One and the Just”, and “the Prince of life”. Peter appealed to his hearers to repent and be converted to receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost sermon; but in the Temple sermon, to receive “times of refreshing” and the “restitution of all things”. It is clear that Peter’s two sermons are complementary rather than repetitive. In the common appeal to repent and to turn to God, Peter presented it differently but he meant the same thing.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The healing of the man, who was crippled from birth, is undoubtedly an irrefutable testimony of the power of God. Yet a poignant question is usually asked: If God is all-loving and all-powerful, why does any of His creation suffer congenital deformity in the first place? The Scriptural answer to this question is that the physical, mental and spiritual affliction of the human race is the result of the rebellion and disobedience of the human race against God, which are man’s sins.

One of the alternative explanations by those who reject the existence of God is that man’s affliction and suffering are to be expected from an impersonal, purposeless force acting on lifeless and blind matter which produces by chance, human beings. The human beings are eventually doomed to be mindlessly destroyed by the same blind impersonal forces (David Gooding, *True to the Faith*, 70). The Biblical explanation is reasonable and logical but most of all, it is true. It reveals man in his true state.

Now if we accept the Biblical explanation that pain, suffering and death is the result of man’s rebellion against God; did God not propose to do something about it other than asking man to show care and compassion? The response is that God did do something wonderful. All of us could act like a “do gooder” and spend our silver and gold and provide all the physical needs to help the whole world. But this does not solve the problem although it might relieve the symptoms. If Peter and John had silver or gold, his money could bring only temporary relief?

However, God has an answer. He has appointed a day in which he would restore all things – everything would be back to the time before the Fall. But that age is yet to be and will come when His Son the Lord Jesus Christ returns to Earth. But for the moment, man, who has rebelled against God, must repent and turn himself to God for the cleansing of his sins. This is the only way. When Jesus Christ walked on earth some two thousand years ago, He could have rid Jerusalem and Israel then or for that matter the whole world of every sick person. But He did not do so. He has a better plan and purpose. Peter in his sermon has given a powerful assurance from Scriptures that on God’s appointed day, there would come an age of love, joy and peace in the world. But until that day, God calls on every one to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. No repentance, no salvation, no paradise!

Having considered the above, the Christian should be concerned for the needy. But we must not make the mistake of portraying our Christian care as the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or make the mistake of allowing our good works to get out of proportion and subvert the

preaching of the Gospel. We have to be very careful and wise. The world does not want to be told it is suffering from a terrible disease, which has been diagnosed as sin. Neither does the world want to be called to repent and trust and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. The world expects real and true Christians to give up their Biblical doctrines, and their preaching, and replace it with helping the poor and sick. Someone once said: "The truth is that the world wants the church's charity; it does not want the church's Saviour." Like Peter who charged his hearers, the world prefers its sin and chooses the murderer instead of Jesus Christ, and rejects the need of salvation and the Saviour. This cannot be for there is a personal God who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that are therein. He has declared that the "wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). There is no other way.

Peter's sermon gives the assurance that all things would be restored when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will usher in the new heaven and the new earth. This should encourage us not to faint but to keep on persevering and doing the will of God. The world may mock us with its "pie in the sky". But the world itself has no hope to offer to the inhabitants of our planet. What is the use of the world's promise of a new social and political era in the future to a young mother of thirty-three suffering from terminal cancer? In Christ, there is real hope for her and for the whole world. God, who created man, has anticipated man's rebellion and has adequately provided the means to cancel that sin of rebellion in Christ

Jesus. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life! AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Acts 3:1-11; Psalm 146:1-10.

Tuesday: Acts 3:12-18; Exodus 3:13-17.

Wednesday: Acts 3:19-24; Isaiah 1:16-20.

Thursday: Acts 3:25-26; Romans 11:25-36.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:1-10; 2 Timothy 1:7-14.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the healing of the lame man illustrate the gospel way of salvation – mans' need, the way of salvation, and its results?

2. In what way does the healing of the lame man link with Luke 1:1?

3. In life, what is more precious than silver or gold? Have you received this precious gift?

4. In seeing the response of the people to healing of the lame man, what did Peter say that God had done to Jesus in his message?

5. In addressing his fellow Jews, what sins did Peter charge against them? What promises did he make to them and on what conditions? How far are his words applicable to us who are not Jews?

6. What are the titles that Peter used to describe Jesus? In what way does each of these speak of the uniqueness of Jesus?

7. In his appeal to the people in verse Acts 3:19, what assurance was Peter giving by emphasizing the fact of "perfect soundness" in the healing of the lame man in the name of God's Son Jesus?

8. What important key points did Peter make in his sermon at the temple?

9. By quoting the Old Testament prophets, what was Peter assuring his Jewish listeners of?

10. How does Peter's sermon affect your confidence, actions and attitude about God and life?
