

8. Christ Used Peter to Heal a Crippled Man

In our last topic, we saw how the early church began to grow and develop. That growth was the result of the Lord building His church as people saw how the Lord was changing and transforming the lives of others. We might say that the basic activities of the original church can be summarized by the word FLOCKS:

F – fellowship

L – leadership development

O – outreach

C – caring

K – knowledge

S - service

that were:

Praying and

Praising

In our topic today, we are going to see other ways that the Lord was building His church as the early disciples were obedient to Him.

We mentioned in our last topic that one of the key places where the early believers had the opportunity to share the good news about the death and resurrection of Christ was in the temple courtyard before and after the morning and evening sacrifice. That was true because many of the Jews in Jerusalem gathered in the temple courtyard for prayer during the time of the morning and evening sacrifices as well as at noon. We see such a gathering mentioned in Acts 3:12 where we read, “So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?’” Many people saw the man that was healed because they were in the temple courtyard at the hour of prayer.

Acts 3:1-5 says, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, ‘Look at us.’ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.” Here, we see that Peter and John were walking into the temple courtyard at the time of the evening hour of prayer which was about 3 o’clock in the afternoon.

One of the gates from the temple courtyard into the temple area was the gate called the Beautiful Gate. The gate had that particular name because it was a very large and beautiful gate. Luke 21:1 says, “And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.” The treasury in the temple was located near this gate so this was a common place for families to bring their crippled relatives to beg since people would often give to the poor to impress others with their generosity. The word translated “alms” meant a donation that a person would give to the poor.

We read that Peter and John fixed their eyes on this man. The word translated “fixed” meant to

really look at the man. This is the same word that was used earlier in Acts 1:10 where we read, “And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.” In that verse, the disciples were staring into the sky because Christ had just been taken up from them into heaven. Then, Peter told the man to look at them. The man immediately gave his full attention to Peter and John because he thought that they were going to give him a generous gift.

Instead, we see that Peter and John had something totally different in their minds. Acts 3:6-10 says, “Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” Peter told the man that they did not have any silver or gold. For just a moment, the man was probably very disappointed because he had been expecting a generous gift.

However, his disappointment quickly turned to joy as a result of what happened next. Peter went on to say that he did have something to give to the man. Then, he said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” Peter then took him by the right hand and lifted him up. Acts 4:22 says, “For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.” This verse shows us that this man had never stood before. He had been crippled his entire life. At that moment, the Lord healed the man and his feet and ankle bones received strength. Even the religious leaders recognized that they could not deny this miracle. Acts 4:15-16, “But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, ‘What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.’” Although they could not deny the miracle, neither were they willing to admit that a miracle had happened.

This man who had never stood before suddenly had his life changed. He immediately leaped up and stood and walked. Here, we see another miracle. He had perfect balance even though he had never stood before. He was able to both walk and leap. However, he also recognized the source of the miracles. He was giving all of the praise to God for what the Lord had just done in his life. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” He immediately wanted all glory to go to God so he began to express his praise to God.

This miracle also had an impact on many other people because many people had seen this man laying at the Beautiful Gate for years. They knew that he had never walked. They had seen him ask for alms for many years. As a result, the people in the temple were filled with wonder and amazement. The word translated “wonder” means to *be astonished or amazed*. Luke 4:36 says, “Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’” In this verse, Christ had just cast out demons. The word translated “amazement” means to *cause the mind to be thrown*

out of its regular way of thinking. The word is used in Mark 5:41-42, where we read, “Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.” In these verses, Christ had just raised a girl from the dead. The people in the temple had this same amazement and confusion.

Acts 3:11-12 goes on to say, “Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?’” The amazement of the crowd quickly caused a large group of people to gather together in the area known as Solomon’s Porch. The area of the temple courtyard known as Solomon’s Porch was in the Court of the Gentiles so that both Jews and Gentiles could be in that part of the courtyard. It was also facing the Beautiful Gate so this was the area where the man had been laying and asking for alms.

As Peter saw a large crowd of people gathering quickly, he asked them a question, “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this?” The word translated “marvel” means *to be filled with wonder or amazement*. The same word is used in the next chapter. In Acts 4:13, after Peter had spoken to the religious leaders that condemned Christ to death, we read, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Here, the very men that condemned Christ to death were forced to realize that Jesus had totally changed the lives of Peter and John. Here, we see that the whole crowd had this same wonder and amazement as they saw this man leaping and walking.

Then, Peter asked a second question. He asked, “Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” Here, we see that Peter wanted to make it very clear that he and John were not the cause of this great miracle. First, Peter reminded the people that this miracle did not happen because of their own power. In fact, Christ had told all of the disciples in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” In his sermon in Acts 2, Peter talked about the power of the Father that raised Christ from the dead.

Peter also made it clear that this miracle was not the result of the godliness of Peter and John. The word translated “godliness” means *reverence or respect toward God*. Peter was making it clear that they were not super saints. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand that what the Lord chooses to do through our lives is not based on either our own power or the fact that we are more godly than anyone else. God works through us because of His choice. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why Christ used Peter to heal the crippled man.