

Gamma - Leaders

Acts 3

Study 4 Peter presents the gospel

1. What is striking about the healing of the crippled man? What does it tell us about how God works in our lives?

Luke wrote that many signs and wonders were done by the apostles (2:43), and now he provides an example. Some things to notice about the incident.

- A. It demonstrates the historicity of what happened. The comment “*At three in the afternoon*” (v.2) is a detail that is the mark of an eyewitness account. Legends do not contain such unnecessary details.
- B. It demonstrates the power of God. The physical ailment was not a passing injury, but was congenital, severe and permanent “*a man crippled from birth*”. (v.2)
- C. It demonstrates that the Messiah has come. This is a fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah said that when the Messiah came “*Then will the lame leap like a deer*” (Is.35:6), and that is what this man does — “*walking and jumping*” v.8. The “jumping” is a vivid, wonderful picture, and it is another mark of an eyewitness account detail.
- D. It demonstrates a first principle of God’s work — that divine power comes in the act of faith, not before. Peter takes the crippled man “*by the right hand*” and “*helped him up*” but it was not until he got up that his “*feet and ankles become strong*”. It is interesting to notice that he did not feel the power before he got up, but as he did. He had to agree to try to stand before God’s healing worked. Even so it is often the case that the sense of God’s strength comes to us as we obey, not before we obey.
- E. It demonstrates a second principle of God’s work — that usually

we begin by seeking far less than God wants to give us. All the man wanted was money (v.3), but he got physical healing (v.8) and probably salvation (4:14 indicates that the man now took up with the company of disciples). Even so, a person ordinarily goes to God just for help with a problem or strength in time of need or forgiveness for a particular sin — but when we come to the real God he ends up making far greater changes in our lives than we ever envisioned. “Imagine yourself a living house. [You ask God to make some repairs.] At first... he is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on... But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of... You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace.” – (C.S.Lewis, *Mere Christianity* Book IV, chap 9)

- F. Lastly, this demonstrates that God uses changed lives to draw others to hear the gospel. It was because of the clear change in the man’s life (v.10) that a crowd gathered and was open to hearing the gospel (v.11- 12).

2. Summarise what we can learn from Peter in his evangelism

There are many things that could be said here. Any group of students will probably find endless insights. Here are just a few.

a. Peter capitalizes on opportunities for witness whenever he smells “openness”. He see here that the people are amazed at the healing, so he uses their interest as a bridge into the gospel. In Acts 2 he did the same thing with the Pentacostal worship. Granted that these are very spectacular, but the principle is a universal. We too must look for times of openness, when a listerner’s interest in spiritual issues is piqued either by trouble in their own lives, or an inexplicable influence of God in someone they know, and so on.

b. Peter adapts to his audience. He identifies with the Jews, calling them “*brothers*” v.17, and using the Scriptures extensively, since the Bible was the recognized authority for them. In the same way, we must be careful to know the people we are trying to reach, to share life with them as much as possible, and to appeal to persons

and authorities that they respect in order to make our case for the gospel.

c. Peter shows a combination of respect/sympathy balanced with directness/force. Notice in v.17 he takes a soft tone — *"Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders..."* This is quite profound — he shows respect for their doubts! He shows that he knows how easy it was to be led astray, and how difficult it is to keep informed enough to make a right decision in matters of Christ. On the other hand, he does not say that, because they were ignorant, that therefore they are not guilty or responsible for their unbelief. He still calls them to repent (v.19) — so that means that they are not innocent. And he is extremely categorical when he says, *"anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people"* (v.23). So Peter shows both a gentleness and a directness.

3. Sharing your Testimony

The Story of **your spiritual journey**. Have you experienced salvation? If so, you have a message. **Read I Peter 3:15**. Let's consider what we need to know to be ready:

A. Write *one word* best describing **your life** during each of the three phases of your spiritual journey to knowing Christ. Then, share them, by category, without comment.

1)Before_____

2)How_____

3)After_____

B. Record *3 phrases or words* that describe different attitudes, circumstances or actions you had before you came to know Christ, then share them.

1)

2)

3)

C. How would you summarize your differences and what you had in common?

II. The story of **Jesus Christ's spiritual journey. Read Romans 10:14-17**

A. **How** did you hear the gospel (who, where, when)? Consider finding a way this week to thank that person for influencing you to give your life to Christ. It might encourage them!

B. **What** did you understand about the claims of Jesus Christ? *This is the part of your testimony that must be clear and about HIM, not you!*

1. What is an area where you have seen **change in your life** because of Jesus? A true testimony relates to personal experience.

2. How has God **comforted** you through relational conflict, deep loss, illness, financial or job pressures? You have a message!

B. This is how we can preach without 'preaching'! We can cultivate the habit of seeing ALL of life as an opportunity to express gratitude to God! No child of God is exempt from this type of 'preaching' ministry'.