

In the Name of Jesus

Text:

Acts 3: 1—26

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. 2 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 of them that entered into the temple; 3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers. 18

But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 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. 23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Introduction:

The events of chapters three, four, and five form a single unit in the book of Acts. Their purpose is to illustrate the summary passage at the end of chapter two. The event we have read in chapter three illustrates the fact that “many signs and wonders were being done by the Apostles, and the Lord was adding daily to their number such as should be saved” (Acts 2:43, 47b). This was not, however without opposition as chapter four and the second half of chapter five will demonstrate. If, on the one hand many were believing, on the other hand the Temple officials, who had been responsible for the death of Jesus, were becoming more hardened in their attitude toward the Apostles.

In this sense the events of these three chapters will be a vivid example of the pattern that we presented earlier in explaining how the gospel advanced from Jerusalem to Rome. Remember the five steps were: (1) By powerful acts of God –

here the act is the healing of the lame man, (2) Witness are given opportunity to bear witness to Christ, as Peter does in the second half of chapter 3, (3) in the power of the Holy Spirit, and (4) in response to prayer which is clearly demonstrated in 4:23-31. (5) The response to this witness is belief on the part of some, but opposition on the part of others as we will see demonstrated in the arrest and questioning of the Apostles in chapters four and five.

What I especially want us to see from this entire account (chapters 3-5) today is that what the Apostles and Church do is done in the name of Jesus. Jesus' last words to the Apostles before ascending into heaven as they are recorded in Luke twenty four are:

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24: 46-49).

In giving these orders to his disciples Jesus makes two things clear. First, they are to act in the power of the Holy Spirit, and secondly, they are to act do what they do in his name. To act in his name is to act by his authority. In the Bible the “name” stands for the revealed nature, character, office and authority of the person named. When Peter says to the lame man: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” what he is saying is “because of who Jesus Christ is, and by virtue of his character, authority, and power, rise up and walk”. If chapters one and two have made us aware that the Church acts in the power (*dunamis*) of the Holy Spirit, chapters 3-5 make it clear that the Church acts by the authority (*exousia*) of Jesus Christ.

I. The Name of Jesus as the Theme of the Entire Passage

This will be vividly illustrated as we note all the passages in the account where the name of Jesus is mentioned. First, as we have read, Peter says to the lame man in 3:6 “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. Next, in explaining to the crowd what has happened in 3:16 he says: “And his name--by faith in his name--has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.” Then in chapter four we see that the chief priest and Sanhedrin, troubled by what is happening, arrest Peter and John leaving them in jail over night. The next morning they question them, asking them in 4:7: “By what power or by what name did you do this?” Peter who is now standing in the same house where he had three times denied knowing Jesus the last time he was there acts as spokesman. A part of his answer is found in 4:10: “let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by him this man is standing before you well. He then concludes by saying in 4:11-12: “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” The Sanhedrin is now in a quandary as they face the boldness of Peter and John and the reality that a notable and undeniable miracle had taken place. Their conclusion is found in 4:17: “But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” Having thus decided, in 4:18 we read: “they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus”. Peter and John react to this by returning to the other Apostles and having a prayer meeting. What they ask for in their prayer is recorded in 4: 29 – 30: “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

There is then an interval in the story at the beginning of chapter five which illustrates another part of the summary passage at the end of chapter 2, the fact that they had all things in common. It is the account of Ananias and Sapphira .

The story of the witness of the disciples through mighty works of God then resumes. Again the Jewish leaders are agitated by the actions of the Apostles. This time they arrest them all and put them in prison, but during the night an angel of the Lord came and released them so that the next morning when it was time for their hearing they were found, not in prison, but in the Temple preaching Christ. The authorities again arrest them and bring them before the Sanhedrin where the high priest says to them in 5:28: "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Again Peter answers for all in 5:29—32: "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

This answer enrages many of the members of the Sanhedrin and some want to put them to death. They are saved by the reasonableness of the great Rabbi, Gamaliel, who reminds them that if this is of God they cannot stop it, and if it is not it will come to naught of its own. So we read in 5:40: "and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go." The account concludes in verse 41 and 42 with these words: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ".

II. Lessons to be Learned

The account we have just summarized has instructed and inspired Christians throughout the ages to act in the name of Jesus, and to continue to do so even under opposition and persecution. There are important lessons we need to take away from this study. First, all that we do must be done in the name of Jesus. There is neither power nor authority in what we do in our own name. Our

authority comes from Christ and our power from the Holy Spirit. This is illustrated in a story Cornelius à Lapide tells of how Thomas Aquinas one day called upon Pope Innocent II when he was counting a large sum of money. “You see, Thomas, said the Pope, “the Church can no longer say, ‘Silver and gold I have none’”. “True, Holy Father”, said Thomas, “and neither can she now say, ‘Arise and walk’.” (cited in F. F. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84). We must always be like Peter when he says: “Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” The moment we begin to think that it is by our own power or by our own authority, by our own wealth or by our own genius that the work is accomplished, we can be sure that nothing of eternal significance will be accomplished.

Secondly, we observe in this story that the authority of Jesus pre-empts all other authorities. When forbidden to teach and preach in the name of Jesus, Peter responds simply: “we must obey God rather than men.” Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 28:19: “All authority is given to me in heaven and earth”. There is no higher authority. Human authority is to be respected and obeyed, but not when it forbids us to obey Christ. Jesus said to the Apostles: “Preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in my name.” The Sanhedrin said to the Apostles “Don’t preach in the name of Jesus.” Having been so instructed by the Sanhedrin Luke says: “Daily in the Temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

