

Near the end of chapter two we learned that everyone was in awe, and that the disciples performed many wonders and miraculous signs in the days and weeks, after the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in the early church. In our passage last time, Luke gave an example of the kinds of things God did through the disciples.

Peter and John were on their way to the temple for the afternoon prayer time, when they came upon a man begging at the Temple gate. This beggar had been crippled from birth, and had no opportunity to support himself or his family, other than depending upon the generosity of others, and taking advantage of the law, and culture, of the Jews in Jerusalem.

The man hoped for money, but God supplied the greater need of his life, and in Jesus' name, Peter pronounced the man's healing. A man, who had never been able to walk in his life, was miraculously healed and began walking, jumping, and praising God.

We must not lose sight of the role of the Holy Spirit in this event. Context demands that we recognize these things happened as a result of the Holy Spirit coming upon the believers. It was the Holy Spirit that prompted Peter to speak the words of healing in Jesus' name, and the power of the Holy Spirit is what effected the change. The practical application for us is that the power of God in our lives and circumstances also comes through the Holy Spirit today. Miracles still happen, and they come through the Holy Spirit when we pray in the Spirit and in Jesus' name.

In our passage this evening we will observe how Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, used this miraculous event as a springboard to present the gospel to the Jews who witnessed the miracle. This is Peter's second recorded sermon in the book of Acts. We are going to see some similarities between this passage, and the first sermon recorded, with all of the elements of the gospel presented, so that people would have the opportunity to respond in faith. Because of the volume of information presented, we will break up Peter's sermon into two separate sections, beginning tonight with verse 11. Please read along with me.

We see the gratitude of the man healed by the fact that he held on to Peter and John. Can you blame him? It is not clear in the text whether or not at this moment the man understood the significance that he was healed in Jesus' name, but it seems likely that as Peter explained what had happened, and the disciples ministered to this man he so that he became a believer, and surrendered his life in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw in the passage last time that he was praising God for his miracle; soon he would come to understand that all of the blessings of God come through Jesus.

This is another reminder that when God answers our prayers, and brings a miracle into our lives and circumstances, we owe him a debt of gratitude. We are to recognize that the blessings come to us in Jesus' name. We do this because He is worthy, we are thankful, and because it helps to strengthen our faith.

Solomon's Colonnade was like a covered porch area along side the temple courts. Generally the courts were places of worship and sacrifice, but Solomon's Colonnade was a gathering place where the people met to discuss their beliefs. In John we read that Jesus taught the Jews in Solomon's Colonnade, and in Acts 5 that it was a regular gathering place for the people of the early church. In the book of Acts we get a picture of house churches, where people met together for fellowship and worship, but here we see that they also gathered in the temple to worship the Lord corporately.

In verse 12, Peter begins by giving credit where credit is due. It was not by his' and John's power or godliness that this man was healed. This statement was counter-intuitive to Jewish thought. The Jews believed that godliness was determined by a person's ability to obey the letter of the Law. They believed that the power and blessings of God came upon a person as a result of their perceived righteousness. The problem with their logic was that the law they practiced had grown into something that God never intended, and they focused on the letter of man-made laws instead of the spirit of God's law. A huge part of the New Testament focuses on people's inability to save themselves through works, or their own perceived goodness. If we could save ourselves, we wouldn't need Jesus. But the gospel message is that we are hopelessly lost in our sins, and must come to faith in Jesus Christ, if we are to be saved.

In verse 13 Peter places a great emphasis on God who intervened miraculously to make the Jews His chosen people. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of the Jews has glorified His servant Jesus. This is a reference to Jesus' deity as Peter here attributes the miracle to Him. Jesus, the servant of God, is a Messianic term, and the Jews understood the idea of the deity of their Messiah. At least four times in Isaiah, the coming Messiah is equated with the God of Israel.

Other Messianic terms in this passage include that Jesus was the Holy and Righteous One. He is the author of life. He was raised from the dead, and it is in His name that the miracles of God come to His people.

Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of God. He is Immanuel, which means God with us. All power and authority have been given to Him. All governments, and all people fall under His authority, and at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Peter's message hinges on the fact that their Messiah had come to them, and the Jews had rejected Him. In fact, they demanded Jesus' death, even when Pilate wanted to set Jesus free. In the second half of verse 13, through verse 15, we find words of conviction to the Jews. The most pious among them had committed the most grievous of all sin. They thought of themselves, as doing a favor to God by killing Jesus, whom they considered to be a blasphemer. But if Jesus really was their Messiah, they would have to repent, ask God for forgiveness, and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

It is really no different for people today. None of us were there when Jesus was put to death, but if it were not for our sin, Jesus would not have had to go to the cross. The reality, however, is that we are all guilty of sin before Holy God. It is my sin, and yours, that drove Jesus to the cross. We are guilty of His death, and when we become aware of this truth, we must turn to Him in repentance and faith.

There is an emphasis in these verses on the fact that the Jewish people disowned Jesus. They disowned Him before Pilate, and they disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be released instead. The power of Peter's statement lies, in part, in the fact that no one could deny what the Jews had done to Jesus. Crucifixion was a very public form of execution. It was bloody and it was cruel. Those being crucified hung for hours and sometimes days in the most torturous death devised by man. Witnessing crucifixion was a powerful deterrent, because no one wanted to endure something so horrible, and the Jewish belief was that God cursed the person who was crucified.

There is also power in Peter's words by the contrasts he makes. The Jewish people disowned the Holy and Righteous One, but desired instead that a murderer be released to them. They chose evil over good. While Jesus was alive, He taught the truth of God, which brought

great conviction, especially to the Jewish leaders. Rather than responding to the message in repentance, they choose to kill the messenger.

This demonstrates the spiritual dynamics faced by every person who is confronted with the gospel today. The gospel, by its nature, brings conviction over sin. People who say that they are not sinners are lying to themselves. We are all guilty of sin against Holy God, and we do not have to look far into our past, or we might look honestly at our lives right now, to see that we are utterly sinful in God's sight. Whenever the gospel is preached, people are called to a decision. Will you receive the Holy and Righteous One, who is Jesus Christ, or will you deny Him and choose instead the murderer, who represents Satan? Will you reject God's mercy and grace for the sake of your on-going sin, or will you humble yourself before God through confession and repentance so that you may begin a new life of faith?

Another contrast may be seen in verse fifteen. They killed the author of life. Jesus as the author of life again speaks of His deity. They existed, and we exist, because we are created by God in His image. God created us with the capacity to know Him and to fellowship with Him. Our ability to know God, and to fellowship with Him is choked off by our sin. In order to break down the wall that separates us from God, we have to deal with Him honestly about the problem.

We begin through confession and repentance, which is turning away from sin, and toward God. God tears down the wall or separation by our faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sin. He assumed the cost of the penalty for our sin in His flesh, so that we might be forgiven and have eternal life. He is the perfect Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, who takes away the sins of the world.

The contrast continues: You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection is the proof of the gospel message, and the hope that it holds out for all who will believe. There is no gospel message apart from the inclusion of the resurrection. If Christ was not raised, we will not be raised with Him. If Christ did not win victory over sin and death for us, we are without hope. But the good news, the gospel message, is that God did raise Jesus from the dead, and we are all called to choose whether or not to believe it.

This is a call for faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God, because before you can know God, you have to believe that He exists. That faith need not be a blind faith, because God has revealed Himself in His creation, in His word, and most intimately in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. The resurrection is the critical proof that Jesus is God in the flesh and salvation in His name is real.

Peter here in effect says that I understand you may have trouble believing that Jesus really was raised from the dead, but we saw Him with our own eyes. We are eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ, and the power of our testimony may be seen in this miracle of a man who has been resurrected to new life in Jesus' name.

Vs 16. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

The reference to the man's complete healing suggests more than just his physical healing. The power of Christ was transforming every area of his life. As he realized that it was Jesus who healed him and restored him, I think we can assume that he was willing to place his faith in Jesus, and thus received all that the gospel promises.

Peter used the observable answer to prayer to show the authority of God in the gospel message. He used his own eyewitness testimony of the resurrected Christ to dispel any naysayers that might be in the crowd. For believers today we have the authority of scripture, which contain

the eyewitness testimonies of the resurrection of Christ, along with our own personal testimonies of the difference faith in Christ has made in our lives, and the witness to answered prayer, in order to give the evidence needed for people receive Jesus and His gospel in faith.

If I tell someone that he or she is a sinner in need of God's forgiveness, it is only because I realized my sin and my need first. If I say that you must trust Jesus and His sacrifice in order to be saved, it is because I have been saved, and I want to share the experience, and give them the opportunity to be saved also. If I tell them that Jesus died for our sins, that He rose from the grave, that He ascended into heaven and that He is coming again, if I say that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved, if I say that if you trust Jesus, and receive Him as Savior and Lord. He will seal you with His Holy Spirit, and give you eternal life; it is because the miracle of God has happened to me. I am His witness. The miracle has happened to me, and it has happened, or can happen to you as well.