

Acts 3, The Healing of the Lame Man
November 20, 1991
H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

For many years I had the impression that having a witness for the Lord was a rare experience, shared only by a select subset of believers who devoted themselves explicitly to missionary or evangelistic work and spent all their energies looking for people to whom to preach.

There are such folk, and we praise God for them and seek to encourage them. But every one of us can have a testimony for the Lord, in the course of our daily lives. This was the message of the contrast between 2:42, 47, between the believers and the Lord. They exercised the basic life of the church, and the Lord saved folk. Chapter 3 shows us a specific example of this.

This week, we will observe:

1. The general flow of events: How do opportunities for witness arise?
2. Two lessons from the healing itself:
 - a) How is our ministry like the Lord's?
 - b) What can physical healing teach us about spiritual salvation?

In subsequent studies we will consider

1. Analysis of the sermon: What does one say to communicate the gospel?
2. The apostles' trial before the temple rulers: How do we bear witness to those who are antagonistic to the gospel?
3. The reunion with the other believers: How should the church respond to such trials?

A. The Pattern of the Day

The apostles often went on preaching trips. Cf. Paul's missionary journeys. Ch. 3 is different. To all appearances, Peter and John set out to the temple to worship, not to evangelize, but one thing led to another.

1. 3:1, Why were Peter and John going to the temple?
 - a) Lk 24:53 records that after the Lord's ascension the believers "were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."
 - b) Acts 2:46 shows that the temple was one of their meeting places. They were, after all, Jews.
 - c) The Jews prayed three times a day in the temple: at the morning and evening sacrifices, and also at noon. Cf. Psa.

55:17. This is 3PM, the evening time of prayer.

d) The simplest assumption is that they were going to pray! They were following the activities of 2:42; now the Lord will do his part to save unbelievers.

e) *Application*: We need to devote ourselves steadfastly, with deliberate dedication, to our life together as believers, if we would see the Lord work through us.

2. 3:2-8, Healing a lame man, after the Lord's example

a) v.2 "Was carried"--the verb tense indicates that his friends carried him to the gate just as Peter and John arrived. Five minutes earlier and they would have missed him.

b) We will analyze the healing more fully later. Under the Lord's leadership they had gone out to preach and heal (the mission of the 12, also of the 70). When they saw this beggar they were filled with compassion and gave him what they could.

c) *Application*: Are we sensitive to the Lord's leading daily in our interactions with other people? What if Peter and John had said, "Let's not bother with him just now; we're late for the sacrifice." Every person we meet, every conversation we have, may be an opportunity for the gospel.

3. 3:9-26, Exploiting the resulting excitement to proclaim the good news.

a) This man and his condition were well known to the regulars at the temple services. To see him walking and leaping aroused no small curiosity in them.

b) Peter capitalizes on their interest to direct their attention to the gospel.

c) *Application*: As believers, our lives will be different, and people will notice. If we are truly saved, these are a given. The big question is, will we exploit their interest? Years later, Peter wrote (1Pe 3:15), "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Can you explain the gospel simply in a minute or less, in your own words, at the drop of a hat? Practice with your family, so that you'll be ready.

4. 4:1-22, Good and bad reactions

a) The official religious leaders arrested the apostles overnight, and interrogated them the next day.

b) But the Spirit worked in the hearts of the hearers, and many were saved.

- 1) There had been about 3000 believers all together, 2:41.
 - 2) Now "the number of the males came to be about 5000," not even counting the women and children. Possibly as many were saved here as on the day of Pentecost!
 - c) *Application:* We will get both kinds of response, and should expect it. Like the sower, we will find some of our seed lost to the birds, the thorns, or the sun, but other will succeed. As long as we expect a mixed response, we won't be bowled over when it comes.
5. 4:23-31, the believers' response
- a) It wasn't pleasant to be interrogated and threatened by the Jewish leaders. Peter and John return to their brethren, and together they seek encouragement from the Lord, which he graciously grants.
 - b) They particularly pray for boldness to continue their witness in the face of opposition.
 - c) *Application:* The encouragement of one another and the Lord's encouragement through prayer are essential to our continued testimony.
6. Summary: If your gift is evangelism, you will plan special evangelistic activities and execute those plans. If it isn't, God still wants to use you as a witness, in the ebb and flow of daily life. Follow the pattern of this chapter:
- a) Be faithful in the activities of the local assembly.
 - b) Seek to imitate the Lord in kindness and compassion to those around you.
 - c) When others notice the difference Christ makes, take advantage of the opening to glorify him before them.
 - d) Expect a mixed response.
 - e) Share your experiences with your brothers and sisters, and seek renewed boldness from the Lord.

B. 3:2-8, Physical and Spiritual Healing

The healing itself has two spiritual lessons for us.

1. The first comes from an observation of the strong similarities between this healing and the Lord's healing of the lame man in John 5, showing that the Lord's power is available to his followers when they act in his name.
2. The second comes from Peter's point in his sermon that the one

who revitalized this man (v.16) can revive their failed spiritual condition (3:20, where "refreshing" is sometimes used in medical texts to describe healing). Thus he invites us to draw a comparison between the lame man's physical experience and what happens in spiritual salvation.

1. The healing in John 5 at the Pool of Bethesda is a very close parallel to Acts 3. This is hardly an accident, since John is with Peter at this first apostolic healing. Though the events in John precede those in Acts, John is probably *written* after Acts, and frequently draws out points from the life of Christ against the background of the life and teaching of the early church (cf. justification by faith; meaning of the Lord's Supper).

a) The similarities:

- 1) The ailment is the same (lameness).
- 2) The length of the ailment is mentioned in both cases, and is about the same (about 40 years).
- 3) The suppliant is at a gate of the temple, seeking some kind of help.
- 4) Only in Acts 3, John 5, and Luke 5:23 does the healer command the patient "rise up and walk."
- 5) In both Acts 3 and John 5, the healing leads to official opposition.
- 6) Patient ends up in the temple, presumably giving thanks (Jn. 5:14).

b) The implications of this similarity: John 14:12, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13 And whatsoever ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing *in my name*, I will do [it]."

- 1) Note Peter's emphasis on this healing "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," 3:6, cf. 3:16.
- 2) This first miracle in Acts thus becomes the proof of the promise of John 14:12, evidence that the Lord Jesus really is continuing his work through his church.

2. Consider now parallels between this healing spiritual salvation.

a) This man has been lame since birth (3:2), for more than forty years (4:22).

So the disease of sin clings to us from birth. We are born in sin (Psa. 51:5), and go astray from the womb (Psa. 58:3). No one is born a Christian. All must be converted. But no matter how long we have been rebels against Christ, it is never too late to receive life from him.

b) The suppliant is at a gate of the temple, seeking some kind of

help. Cf. Psa. 10:14. Throughout the OT God is the protector of the poor, the fatherless, the stranger, and the widow, and demands that his people watch out for them. By having his friends bring him to the temple, he is seeking, the best he can, the help that God offers him.

So those whom God saves first of all have an inclination toward him. God never saves us against our will. Deut. 4:29, "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find [him], if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Jer. 29:13, "And ye shall seek me, and find [me], when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

- c) The man is lame, yet the healer commands him to "rise up and walk" (only in Acts 3, John 5, and Luke 5:23), something patently impossible for him in his condition. In order for him to do it, he must have faith that in fact he has already been healed!

So faith is both the basis and the evidence of our salvation. The things that God asks of us--repentance and complete commitment to him--are impossible for those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The very fact that we can follow him proves that we have already been raised to newness of life.

- d) In both Acts 3 and John 5, the healing leads to official opposition.

Such will be our experience when we receive Christ spiritually. The world hates our Lord, and it will hate us too (John 15:18). Godliness is guaranteed to yield persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

- e) Patient ends up in the temple, giving thanks.

So those who have truly received Christ will associate with God's people and seek in all that they do to give praise to God for his wonderful gift of salvation.

Summary

1. Walk with the Lord day by day, and he will use you for his glory. Remember: *the believers* dedicated themselves to serving the Lord, and *he* added believers to them. The most important thing we can do to be effective in evangelism is to devote ourselves to our personal and corporate spiritual lives.
2. Count on his power as we seek to minister in his name.
3. Rejoice in the spiritual healing that he has provided us.

Hymn: 512, "Christ liveth in me"; **Psalm:** 32, "How blest is he whose trespass..."

Analysis

A. Setting

1. 1 Epi to auto de Pe/tros kai\)Iwa/nnhs a)ne/bainon ei)s to\
i(ero\n e)pi\ th\n w(/ran th^s proseuxh^s th\n e)na/thn. (Does
this carry over from v.42???)
2. comment p--compare the lame man in John 5!
 - a) text: 2 kai/ tis a)nh\r xwlo\s e)k koili/as mhtro\s au)tou^
u(pa/rxwn e)basta/zeto,
 - b) comment-1: o(\n e)ti/qoun kaq' h(me/ran pro\s th\n qu/ran tou^
i(erou^ th\n legome/nhn (Wrai/an tou^ ai)tei^n e)lehmosu/nhn
para\ tw^n ei)sporeuome/nwn ei)s to\ i(ero/n:
 - c) comment-2: 3 o(\s i)dw\n Pe/tron kai\)Iwa/nnhn me/llontas
ei)sie/nai ei)s to\ i(ero\n h)rw/ta e)lehmosu/nhn labeli^n.

B. Interchange

1. 4 a)teni/sas de\ Pe/tros ei)s au)to\n su\n tw^|)Iwa/nnh|
ei)^pen, Ble/yon ei)s h(ma^s.
2. 5 o(de\ e)pei^xen au)toi^s prosdokw^n ti par' au)tw^n labeli^n.
3.
 - a) quote p
 - 1) quote f: 6 ei)^pen de\ Pe/tros,
 - 2) quote:
 - a>)Argu/rion kai\ xrusi/on ou)x u(pa/rxei moi,
 - b> o(\ de\ e)/xw tou^to/ soi di/dwmi:
 - c> e)n tw^| o)no/mati)Ihsou^ Xristou^ tou^ Nazwrai/ou
[e]/geire kai\] peripa/tei.
 - b) 7 kai\ pia/sas au)to\n th^s decia^s xeiro\s h)/geiren
au)to/n:

C. Events

1. paraxrh^ma de\ e)sterew/qhsan ai(ba/seis au)tou^ kai\ ta\
sfudra/,
2. 8 kai\ e)callo/menos e)/sth
3. kai\ periepa/tei,
4. kai\ ei)sh^lqen su\n au)toi^s ei)s to\ i(ero\n peripatw^n kai\
a(llo/menos kai\ ai)nw^n to\n qeo/n.
5. 9 kai\ ei)^den pa^s o(lao\s au)to\n peripatou^nta kai\
ai)nou^nta to\n qeo/n,
6. lead-in
 - a) 10 e)pegi/nwskon te\ au)to\n o(/ti au)to\s h)^n o(pro\s th\n
e)lehmosu/nhn kaqh/menos e)pi\ th^| (Wrai/a| Pu/lh| tou^
i(erou^,
 - b) kai\ e)plh/sqhsan qa/mbous kai\ e)ksta/sews e)pi\ tw^|
sumbebhko/ti au)tw^|.

- D. 11 Kratou^ntos de\ au)tou^ to\n Pe/tron kai\ to\n)Iwa/nnhn
sune/dramen pa^s o(lao\s pro\s au)tou\s e)pi\ th^| stoa^| th^|
kaloume/nh| Solomw^ntos e)/kqamboi.

E. quote p: Peter's sermon

1. quote f: 12 i)dw\n de\ o(Pe/tros a)pekri/nato pro\s to\n lao/n,

2. quote:

- a) chiasm: their sin, in contrast with the rthness of Jesus
- 1) Healing of the lame man
 - a>)/Andres)Israhli[^]tai,
 - b> ti/ qauma/zete e)pi\ tou/tw|,
 - c> h)\ h(mi[^]n ti/ a)teni/zete w(s i)di/a| duna/mei h)\ eu)sebei/a| pepoihko/sin tou[^] peripatei[^]n au)to/n;
 - 2) God glorified Jesus
 - 13 o(qeo\s)Abraa\m kai\ [o(qeo\s])Isaa\k kai\ [o(qeo\s])Iakw/b, o(qeo\s tw[^]n pate/rwn h(mw[^]n, e)do/casen to\n pai[^]da au)tou[^])Ihsou[^]n,
 - 3) You betrayed Jesus
 - a> o(\n u(me[^]s me\n [in contrast with Pilate? or w.r.t. v.15?]
 - 1> paredw/kate
 - 2> kai\ h)rn\h/sasqe kata\ pro/swpon Pila/tou,
 - 4) Pilate wanted to release him
 - kri/nantos e)kei/nou a)polu/ein:
 - 5) You betrayed Jesus
 - 14 u(me[^]s de\ to\n a(/gion kai\ di/kaion h)rn\h/sasqe,
 - a> kai\ h)|th/sasqe a)/ndra fone/a xarisqh[^]nai u(mi[^]n,
 - b> 15 to\n de\ a)rxhgo\n th[^]s zwh[^]s a)pektei/nate,
 - 6) God glorified Jesus
 - a> o(\n o(qeo\s h)/geiren e)k nekrw[^]n,
 - b> ou([^] h(me[^]s ma/rture/s e)smen.
 - 7) Healing of the lame man
 - a> 16 kai\ e)pi\ th[^]| pi/stei tou[^] o)no/matos au)tou[^] tou[^]ton o(\n qewrei[^]te kai\ oi)/date e)stere/wsen to\ o)/noma au)tou[^],
 - b> kai\ h(pi/stis h(di' au)tou[^] e)/dwken au)tw[^]| th\n o(loklhri/an tau/thn a)pe/nanti pa/ntwn u(mw[^]n.
- b) ampl p: their duty, in view of the OT prophecy
- 1) summary: you ... prophecies
 - a> 17 kai\ nu[^]n, a)delfoi/, oi)[^]da o(/ti kata\ a)/gnoian e)pra/cate, w(/sper kai\ oi(a)/rxontes u(mw[^]n:
 - b> 18 o(de\ qeo\s a(\ prokath/ggeilen dia\ sto/matos pa/ntwn tw[^]n profhtw[^]n paqei[^]n to\n Xristo\n au)tou[^] e)plh/rwsen ou(/tws.
 - 2) amplification (chiastic: you ... prophets ... you ... prophets ... you)
 - a> command: motive p
 - 1> text:
 - a: 19 metanoh/sate ou)[^]n
 - b: kai\ e)pistre/yate
 - 2> motive-1: ei)s to\ e)caleifqh[^]nai u(mw[^]n ta\s a(marti/as,
 - 3> motive-2: o(/pws a)\n
 - a: e)/lqwsin kairoi\ a)nayu/cews a)po\ prosw/pou tou[^] kuri/ou
 - b: comment p
 - 1: text: 20 kai\ a)postei/lh| to\n prokexeirisme/non u(mi[^]n Xristo/n,)Ihsou[^]n,
 - 2: comment-1 <Xriston>: 21 o(\n dei[^] ou)rano\n me\n de/casqai a)/xri xro/nwn a)pokatasta/sews

- pa/ntwn
- 3: comment-2 <Xriston>: ampl p
- A. text: w(^n e)la/lhsen o(qeo\s dia\
sto/matos tw^n a(gi/wn a)p' ai)w^nos au)tou^
profhtw^n.
- B. ampl: men-de para.
1. quote p
- a) quote f: 22 Mwu+sh^s me\n ei)^pen
o(/ti
- b) quote:
- 1) Profh/thn u(mi^n a)nasth/sei
ku/rios o(qeo\s u(mw^n e)k tw^n
a)delfw^n u(mw^n w(s e)me/:
- 2) au)tou^ a)kou/sesqe kata\ pa/nta
o(/sa a)\n lalh/sh| pro\s u(ma^s.
- 3) 23 e)/stai de\ pa^sa yuxh\ h(/tis
e)a\n mh\ a)kou/sh| tou^ profh/tou
e)kei/nou e)coleqreuqh/setai e)k
tou^ laou^.
2. 24 kai\ pa/ntes de\ oi(profh^tai a)po\
Samouh\l kai\ tw^n kagech^s o(/soi
e)la/lhsan kai\ kath/ggeilan ta\s
h(me/ras tau/tas.
- b> 25 u(meis e)ste oi(ui(oi\ tw^n profhtw^n kai\ th^s
diagh/khs h(^s die/qeto o(qeo\s pro\s tou\s pate/ras
u(mw^n,
l> quote p
a: quote f: le/gwn pro\s)Abraa/m,
b: quote: Kai\ e)n tw^| spe/rmati/ sou
[e)nleuloghqh/sontai pa^sai ai(patriai\ th^s
gh^s.
- c> 26 u(mi^n prw^ton a)nasth/sas o(qeo\s to\n pai^da
au)tou^ a)pe/steilen au)to\n eu)logou^nta u(ma^s e)n
tw^| a)postre/fein e(/kaston a)po\ tw^n ponhriw^n
u(mw^n.

F. The twofold reaction (hinge paragraph btw. sermon and trial)

1. Official

- a) 4:1 Lalou/ntwn de\ au)tw^n pro\s to\n lao\n e)pe/sthsan
au)toi^s oi(i(erei^s kai\ o(strathgo\s tou^ i(erou^ kai\ oi(
Saddoukai^oi,
2 diaponou/menoi dia\ to\ dida/skein au)tou\s to\n lao\n kai\
katagge/llein e)n tw^|)Ihsou^ th\n a)na/stasin th\n e)k
nekrw^n,
b) 3 kai\ e)pe/balon au)toi^s ta\s xei^ras
c) reason p
1) text: kai\ e)/qento ei)s th/rhsin ei)s th\n au)/rion:
2) reason: h)^n ga\r e(spe/ra h)/dh.

2. Popular:

- a) 4 polloi\ de\ tw^n a)kousa/ntwn to\n lo/gon e)pi/steusan,
b) kai\ e)genh/qh [o(] a)riqmo\s tw^n a)ndrw^n [w(s] xilia/des
pe/nte.

G. The trial (next study)

