

4. Conversions upon the Healing of the Crippled Man—Acts 3

This study has established that the great commission included commands to go preach the gospel to the whole creation, teaching them to observe all things that the Lord had commanded. The hearers of this good news were to believe, repent, and be baptized. The Lord promised penitent, obedient, believers that he would save them, remit their sins, make them disciples, be with them to the very end of the age, and give them certain signs to accompany them. Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16: 15-18; and Luke 26:46-47. The conversion of the crippled beggar in Acts 3 illustrates how the apostles fulfilled this commission of the Lord.

All Nations Includes the Poor and the Crippled

When Peter and John went up to temple at the time of prayer, they met a crippled beggar: “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.” Acts 3:1-2. In verses 3-5, the beggar asked for money. The apostles’ effort with this man illustrates the all-inclusive nature of the phrase, *all nations*. The great commission is for all, no matter how rich or poor, healthy or ill. As this study continues through Acts of the Apostles, each new conversion will illustrate this all-inclusive nature of the gospel. We sing the song: *The Gospel Is for All*.

Peter and John Had More to Give Than Money

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money: “Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, ‘Look at us!’ 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.” The beggar was clearly looking for money. Instead of giving him money, which Peter said that he did not have, Peter command him to walk:

6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Acts 3:6-8.

In verses 9-10, the people recognized him, and they, as the crippled man, were amazed. Luke described them: “And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” And, “While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.” Verse 11.

The crippled beggar and the people, who were amazed, missed the point. The money, had they had any, was not important, nor was the fact that he could walk, though wonderful in its demonstration of God’s power. Peter uses their wonder and amazement to focus on the gospel and salvation. However, the miracle confirmed the apostles’ word as the actual word of the Lord. The Lord had promised signs to accompany them in Mark 16:17-18:

And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.

In Acts 2, the apostles had spoken so that every one heard in their own language (tongue). Now they demonstrate the power of the Lord that accompanied them in healing this crippled beggar. The purpose of all such signs was to confirm the word preached as the word of the Lord. In Heb 2:3-4, the Hebrew writer explained:

How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

The miracles were never to accommodate the recipients.

The Gospel Peter Preached Was the True Power

The true power was not silver and gold nor was it the restoration of the man’s crippled legs, no matter

how wondrous an event. The true power on this occasion was the power of the gospel. Peter was quick to give God the glory for the miraculous event in verse 12 beginning: "When Peter saw this, he said to them: 'Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.'" He then moved directly to preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He said, "You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead." Acts 3:13-15. Peter also added that they were witnesses of this – the final fact of the gospel.

Peter spoke of the faith, which made this healing possible, "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong." The faith of the healing was Peter's faith and not the crippled man's faith, who himself was passive in the healing act. Peter finished, "It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see." Acts 3:16. Peter's focus is off the healing and on the gospel as it fulfilled their very own prophets: "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer." Acts 3:17-18.

Peter Preached Repentance and the Wiping Out of Sins.

Peter said, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus." In the fulfillment of the great commission, Peter preached repentance and a turn to God; he preached that the result would be the wiping away of sins (*remission of sins* in Luke's account); he preached that times of refreshing may come from the Lord (*salvation* in Mark's account). Peter promises more in verses 21. The Lord will return:

He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 For Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people." 24 "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

In Acts 1:9-11, the apostles heard of the Lord's return, which now Peter confirms with his teaching:

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

The result was that many heard and believed, fulfilling Mark's account, "But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. " Acts 4:4.

Conclusion

Acts 3 teaches all the elements of the Great Commission from gospel accounts except baptism, which is not mentioned specifically. It is important to understand that penitent, believers who turn to Lord will obey his every command. Some examples in our study will omit elements of the great commission. That does not mean they are unimportant. True believers will strive to do all that the Lord taught.

Study Questions

1. What did Peter have to give the crippled man? _____
2. Why was the healing not the most important gift? _____
3. Whose faith was necessary for the miracle to happen? _____
4. What must one do to enjoy seasons of refreshing? _____