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ACTS 3:1-4:31

The past three weeks have really set the stage for the rest of the **Book of Acts**...in fact for the rest of the Bible. We have seen the risen Christ, His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit indwelling believers, there could be no power and without power from God, there could be no conviction, no conversion and no spreading of the Gospel...no churches planted, and no Scripture written.

Today, we're going to see the Holy Spirit's directing the disciples. We're going to see the obedience of the disciples and we're going to see the results of this obedience.

Let me just summarize for you a little bit what takes place in the first part of our lesson.

Chapter 3 tells us that as Peter and John were going to the temple to pray, a lame man began to beg from them. This man had spent his entire life as a cripple. He couldn't stand and he couldn't walk. He had been crippled since birth... and when he saw Peter and John, he asked them to give him some money. No doubt this was the way this man survived.

Peter told the man he couldn't give him what he did not have, but he could give him what he had...he could give him something so much better than money! Peter said, **"In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!"**

Verse 7 tells us that Peter took the man's right hand and raised him up and immediately the man began to stand and to walk and to leap and to praise God!

Now, when all the folks who were there saw this they gathered around Peter and John and **verse 11** says they were **full of amazement**.

Verse 11 also tells us that after this man was healed, he "clung to Peter and John"...I guess I would too if I had been crippled since birth and now I could walk and leap.

However, this passage of Scripture tells us twice that this man also praised God and I believe this is telling us that he indeed knew where the healing power came from and most commentators I read this week agree that this man was saved as a result of this healing.

As I studied this passage of Scripture this week I was struck by the response of Peter and John. I was struck by how very, very differently they handled this healing of the lame man than how so many "televangelists" today would handle the same thing.

Can you imagine how it would be? They would print up posters and billboards and flyers. They would go on TV and talk shows. They would set up huge auditoriums in which to hold their "healing meetings." They would have folks lined up for miles and miles, even from other countries...folks who are lame or diseased or deformed, or injured. And their entire "ministry" would be built around their ability to heal.

The sad thing is that there are men who are doing this today and their meeting halls are full!

Peter and John didn't call attention to themselves through this, did they? What Peter did do was to preach his second sermon...

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In **verse 12**, Peter begins to preach and he tells the people who have gathered that he and John were not responsible for healing this man! Peter denied that he and John were anything out of the ordinary. He denied that their power or their goodness had anything to do with the healing of the lame man! Peter directed everyone's attention toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter wasn't about to elevate himself!

And again here in his second sermon, we see Peter telling these folks that it was they who had crucified Jesus. Five times in **verses 13-15** Peter informs these Jews that they were the ones who had put Jesus to death.

Verse 16...

Peter tells them again that by the name of the One whom they had crucified was this man not only healed but also saved... ***“the faith which comes through Him (Jesus) has given him the perfect health...”***

Jesus healed the lame and gave sight to the blind and gave hearing to the deaf while He was on earth, and now the apostles were given this same power to do this in His name. As we go along in our study of the book of Acts, we're going to several other incidents of healing.

WHY? Well, Paul tells us way over in **1 Corinthians** that the Jews require a sign. Paul says in that same verse that the Gentiles require wisdom. Well, the gift of healing was a “sign gift”. We don't see folks today with the gift of healing. I'm not saying God never heals today, but tell me...do you know anyone who can just touch someone and they're healed? If we knew such a person, we'd take them over to St. Jude's or to Methodist or to Baptist or to St. Francis, wouldn't we? If we knew such a person, we would bring them to church and let them touch all those precious folks who sit in our church and “hear” the sermon though sign language, wouldn't we? If we knew such a person, we would get them to heal all our loved ones who are suffering from cancer and heart disease and diabetes and Parkinson's and anything else we can think of.

Paul said the Jews asked for a sign and the Gentiles searched for wisdom and Paul went on to say ***“but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.”*** See, there came a time, even in the early church, when this gift was given over to the plain and simple, yet powerful and life-changing Gospel...that Jesus was crucified, that He was buried and that He rose again...

What I'm trying to say is this...God doesn't call men to Himself because their bodies are crippled or diseased. God doesn't even call men to Himself because men are seeking wisdom...

God calls men to Himself because men are sinners and they need a Savior. Sometimes He chooses to heal men. Sometimes He chooses to allow men to become wise. But, what pleases God is not a healthy, wealthy intellectual... but a sinner who confesses and repents of his sin, and we'll see that in just a moment...

First, let's look at

Verses 17-18...

Do you see what Peter is doing? Peter is saying, “Yes, you murdered Jesus. You murdered the very Messiah you have been longing for for centuries...but you did it in ignorance.

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Of all people, these folks should not have been ignorant. God had entrusted His Scripture to these folks...and I believe Peter is saying, "You didn't know better, but you surely should have!"

Look at how Peter indicts these Jews...

Verses 22-26...

I believe Peter is saying, "Here's what the Scriptures taught...they were given to you...and if you didn't know them, it's your own fault. Moses promised Jesus would come. All the prophets promised Jesus would come, and YOU are the sons of the prophets...and the Messiah came to YOU first." And I believe Peter is repeating what the Lord Jesus said, "To whom much is given, much is required."

Peter isn't pulling any punches, is he? He's presented them with their guilt, but he's already presented them with their remedy for that guilt, back up in

Verses 19-20...

We said last week that repentance means turning away **from** something and turning **to** something else.

In the case of the Jews, I believe repentance meant turning **from** seeking for signs and seeking for a ruler, and seeking for a sovereign and trusting in tradition and it meant turning **to** the Savior because they recognized they had sinned against God and they needed a Savior!

**And may I say this to you, Beloved,
No matter what you've been walking toward...whether it's open sin...sin that folks can see and are aware of, or whether it's hidden sin...sin of the heart and mind and folks don't really know about it...there's only one way to be right before God, and that is to repent and return...that your sins may be wiped away...**

And what does verse 19 say next? "in order that times of refreshing may come from the Lord..."

Listen, the only way we'll have revival in a couple of weeks is not if the **evangelist preaches his heart out**...although he probably will...

We won't have revival if the **singers stir our hearts with great singing**, although they probably will...

No, the only way we will be refreshed and renewed and restored and revived is if we repent and return...

and I'm going to ask you this week to get alone with God...just you and Him, and pour your heart out to Him and ask Him what you need to do to bring times of refreshing to your own soul!!

Well, with all that in mind, let's look and see what happened as a result of Peter's second sermon...

Acts 4:1-7...

What a wonderful passage of Scripture! As I was studying this this week, I had to just stop and lift a prayer to the Lord and thank Him for the way these men responded to His call! How grateful I am that they didn't put down the torch Jesus had given them to carry!

When we watch the Olympics, at the beginning we see the torch passed from one to another and we knew how important this was and how proud each torch bearer must be to have been chosen and how careful each one was not to drop the torch entrusted to them,

But, Beloved, that torch is nothing compared to what had been entrusted to these apostles...

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These apostles held this Gospel in such high esteem that they were willing to be jailed rather than drop the torch, and as we go through the **Book of Acts**, we'll see more and more of what they endured...

But, here we see **two results** of Peter's message...**conversion and coercion**. They saw thousands of new converts and they also saw opposition from the religious authorities.

Verse 5 and 6... "and, and, and," The use of the word "and" in verses are for emphasis. This is called polysyndeton and it is used in Scripture to make special note of something and Luke doesn't want us to miss all the different religious leaders in these two verses...

Verse 7... "by what power, or what name, have you done this?"

Verse 8-10...

What boldness!

"What have we done wrong? Is it wrong to do something good? Is it wrong to make a lame man whole? Are we being arrested and put on trial for doing a good deed? Who made this man whole again? JESUS DID!! You want to know where the power came from to make a lame man leap? It came from Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom YOU crucified!"

Remember who's speaking! This is the same man who denied the Lord Jesus Christ three times in one evening not so long before this. Where did he get this boldness?

Verse 8 again... "filled with the Holy Spirit..." Peter was such an impulsive person...speaking first and then thinking. About the only time he spoke from authority was when he told Jesus He was the Christ, the Son of the living God...but Pentecost has come and now Peter is speaking with the authority of the Holy Spirit.

And it gets better...**Verses 11-12...**

Oh, how the world hates such statements! If you want to be laughed at, scorned, hated, even persecuted, testify to this! The world doesn't even like to hear the name of Jesus but say that Jesus is the only Savior, that only by believing in Him can one go to heaven and escape hell, and you'll really get pounced on!!

WHY? Because nothing is so offensive to the natural man as teaching that he cannot save himself, that he cannot choose his own way of salvation.

EXAMPLE: Kim at work...

Well, tell me...why did Peter do this? I mean, Peter was an intelligent man. Peter knew he was saying things at the risk of his own life. Why would Peter take such a chance?

Very simply, Peter said it because it was true!!

Peter said it because there is nobody else like Jesus Christ!!

Peter said it because there is no one else who could die for the sins of others!

Now this is what folks will say to you...

"But that sounds so **narrow!**" Yes, it is narrow.

Folks will say to you... "But that sounds so **exclusive.**" Yes, it is exclusive.

Folks will say to you... "But that sounds so **intolerant.**" Yes, it is intolerant.

But it is also true!! And any man or woman who turns his or her back on what is true is foolish!

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Think about this...any man who “worships” the God of the Bible, but doesn’t come to God through Jesus is an idolator. You cannot truly worship someone you cannot know and you cannot know God except through the Lord Jesus Christ... Peter said it! “...there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved...”

But not only did Peter say it, Jesus said it!!

“...no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” **Matthew 11:27**

Folks will say, “I worship God. I believe in God.” And you say to them, “What about Jesus?” And they’ll say to you, “Oh, I don’t know Him....I don’t believe you have to know Jesus to believe in God!” But Jesus said, “You cannot know God apart from Me.”

See, when the authorities began to question Peter and John, they said, “By what power or what name did you do this?” and Peter and John answered, “Jesus”...that was correct, but when Peter got to the end and summed it all up, he threw their question right back at them and said, in effect,

“It’s not only the lame man who was healed
by the name of Jesus. How shall YOU be healed? That
name is the only name by which YOU must be healed as well. Your soul is
sick. Your sin sick soul can be healed only by Jesus!”

By the way, if you think about...nothing happens by chance. It wasn’t just by chance that the crippled man was there when Peter and John came to the temple to pray, was it? It wasn’t just by chance that Peter and John miraculously healed this poor man. I mean, if the Jews wanted a “sign”, God was going to make sure they got one!

Well, this really put these religious leaders in a quandary. They couldn’t hold Peter and John, so they called them in and can’t you just see it...

They were probably all dressed up in their clerical robes, looking very “religious” and stern...

Verse 18...

Look at Peter and John’s response in **verses 19-20...**

Kenneth Wuest in his Greek translation of the New Testament translates verse 20... “we are not able not to be speaking the things which we saw and heard...”

The tense of this verb is continuous... “we **must keep on** speaking...”

The world will say to us, “What right do you have to tell anyone that Jesus is the only way?” And we can say to the world...because our God has commanded us. **We have a command from above and we have a compulsion from within!**

And I want to ask you, do you have the same attitude? You certainly have that command from above! Do you have that compulsion from within?

After this, they went and shared all that had happened with the other disciples and you know what they did then? **THEY PRAYED!!**

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Verses 24-31...

First, they acknowledged God as the **Creator**... “Lord, You created all things.”

Then, they acknowledged God as the **Sovereign**... “Lord, You used ungodly men in order to accomplish Your purpose...”

Then, they acknowledged Him as their **Jehovah-jireh**... “Lord, You can provide that we speak Your word in confidence and boldness. Lord, You can enable our hands to heal and to do signs and wonders in Jesus’ name.”

Verse 31...

They didn’t swing from the chandeliers..they didn’t bark like dogs...they weren’t slain in the Spirit...they didn’t even speak in tongues...

They began to speak the Word of God with boldness!!

I just want to say this to you in closing. You and I aren’t called to be “Johns” and “Peters” and “Pauls” and “Stephens” and all the others. We are simply called by God in this time to be vessels of honor to be used as He sees fit.

But, we can be just as effective in our service to the Lord as these men were if we will learn the “secret” of their effectiveness.

These men were committed and willing to be all that God had called them to be. These men were committed and willing to do His will...to lay aside all their fears, all their desires, all their pride, everything for the sake of doing the will of God!

And I want to ask you...ARE YOU? IS THE PRIMARY GOAL IN YOUR LIFE TO DO THE WILL OF GOD?

There are basically three ways we can view God’s will...

1) with indifference - “I don’t really care what God’s will is.
I’m really not that interested in finding out because
If I know it, I might have to do it.”

2) with deference – just deferring to God’s will. “Now, Lord,
I did Your will last week, I’m going to my will this
week.”

We see this “fleshed out” a lot on Sunday mornings. “I came to Sunday school and church last week, so God, this week I have other things to do.”

3) with preference - This is what we see in Peter and John’s life. They preferred above all else even at the risk of their own lives, to do the will of the Father.

Do you prefer God’s will
when it goes against the flesh?
when it interferes with your plans?
when it commands you to do something you don’t
feel equipped to do?
when it doesn’t make sense, or you don’t understand it?
when the enemy comes against you and tempts to
murmur and complain and criticize?

Can you truthfully say this morning... “Lord, I prefer above all else to do Your will?”

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May God help all of us to prefer His will!!!

Don't forget what I've asked you to do this week. Get alone with God. Ask Him to show you if there's anything that would keep "times of refreshing" to come upon you...If there is, get it all straightened out and pray for a heart that will prefer to do God's will above all else!

I believe God will honor you if you'll do this!!