

# Ministry of Grace Church

## The Acts of The Apostles Chapter 3

### Preface:

In the previous chapter, we learned about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. After this outpouring and the ensuing miracle of the disciples speaking in languages which they had never learned, there were 3,000 people added to the church. Today, we will learn about another miracle, the healing of a man who had been crippled from birth. After the man was healed, Peter took the occasion to preach another sermon and as many as 2,000 more people were added to the church as a result.

Now, as we go through this chapter, we need to keep two things in mind. The first is that the book of Acts is a transitional book. It presents the transition from the religion of the Jews to the new-found Christian religion. The second thing we need to be aware of is the fact that as of this chapter there are only Jews in the church. (Slide 2) Samaritans will be added in chapter eight but Gentiles won't be added until chapter 10.

### The Lame Beggar Healed

#### **Acts 3:1-8**

**<sup>1</sup>Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. <sup>2</sup>And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. <sup>3</sup>Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. <sup>4</sup>And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." <sup>5</sup>And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup>But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" <sup>7</sup>And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. <sup>8</sup>And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.**

### Notes:

There were three scheduled times of prayer at the Temple in Jerusalem, 9:00 AM, 12:00 Noon, and 3:00 PM. At these times, people gathered to offer up prayers. The "evening sacrifice" was offered at 2:30 in the afternoon. Then, at 3:00, as the smoke was ascending into heaven, the people gathered to give praise to God and to pray. (Slide 3) Since all the members of the new church were Jews, they were all accustomed to going to the temple for the prayer times. It is significant that they did not go to the temple for the sacrifices. They knew that the animal sacrifices were no longer necessary. Instead of entering the Temple at the time of the sacrifice, they waited for the hour of prayer before entering the Temple. (Slide 4)

(Refer to Outer Temple Diagram)



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The image here shows the layout of the temple as viewed from the East (the Mount of Olives). Directly inside the outer walls is the area known as “The Court of the Gentiles.” Everyone was allowed in this area. The walled-off portion in the middle of the Court of the Gentiles was referred to as the inner temple. Within this inner temple were, the court of the Women (Jewish men and women allowed), the court of the Men of Israel (only Jewish men allowed), the court of the priests, where sacrifices were offered (only priests were allowed), and the temple building, housing the Sanctuary (the Holy Place), and the Holy of Holies. This entire temple area, from the outer wall to the inner most Holy of Holies, is referred to with the Greek word *hieron*. However, the building in the middle (housing the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) is referred to as the *naos*, meaning “the dwelling place.” To the Greeks, the *naos* was where the temple god actually dwelt.

Around the outer portion of the Court of the Gentiles was a colonnade, which provided shade from the heat of the sun. The portion of this colonnade on the East side of the court of the Gentiles was built on a part of the foundation wall from Solomon’s Temple. Therefore, it is referred to as Solomon’s Portico, or Solomon’s Porch. (Slide 5) Leading from the court of the Gentiles into the inner temple were a total of 9 gates. It is believed that the gate on the East side (facing the Mount of Olives, leading into the court of the women) is the one here referred to as the “Beautiful Gate.”

Since these prayer times occurred every day, it was logical for a beggar to wait beside The Beautiful Gate into the temple, where people were going to make offerings to God. (Slide 6) This was one of those prime locations for beggars, like the offramp from I-5 North at Chemawa Rd, where our present-day beggars ask for money from people stopped there at the traffic light, waiting to turn left.

Keep in mind that the church had already begun the selling of possessions in order to provide for the poor within the church. They were obviously willing to share God’s blessing with others. However, because they were helping each other financially, it’s likely that few of them had very much “disposable” income. That may be why Peter told the beggar, “I have no silver and gold.”

This is one of those times when my mind wanders off into peculiar territory and I ask myself, “Did Peter know that he was able to heal this crippled beggar? Did Jesus, perhaps, tell His apostles before He ascended into heaven, that they now had the power to perform miracles? We do know that when Jesus sent out the twelve as described in [Luke 9:1-6](#), they were given the authority (power) to perform miracles, but we don’t know if this was a permanent gift or just temporary. We do know from chapter 17 of Matthew’s gospel account, while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples who were left behind couldn’t heal a demon possessed boy.

I suspect in Peter’s case, here, with this crippled beggar, it was just the ‘prompting’ of the Holy Spirit that gave him the knowledge that he could heal him. But, then again, knowing Peter’s impetuous nature, he probably didn’t think about whether or not he could do it, he just did it.

Whether or not Peter knew he could heal the man is not really important, that’s probably why we aren’t told. What is important is that Peter didn’t hesitate. He just reached out to the man, took him by the hand, and helped him to his feet. And – did you notice what the former cripple did? He didn’t thank Peter. He didn’t tell everyone to look at him. We’re told he was, “[walking and leaping and praising God](#)” and “[all the people saw him walking and praising God.](#)” He didn’t hesitate to give God the glory. (Slide 7)

(Refer to Inner Temple Diagram)



Verse eight tells us that as soon as the beggar was healed, he entered the temple with Peter and John. This would be the “inner temple” where the Court of the Women was. Some commentators believe that the beggar accompanied Peter and John further, into the Court of the Men of Israel, where men were allowed to observe the sacrifices being burned on the altar. However, since Peter and John were aware that the animal sacrifices were no longer necessary, they had no reason to go into that portion of the inner temple.

## **Peter’s Sermon in Solomon’s Portico – Chastening**

### **Acts 3:9-16**

**<sup>9</sup>And all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup>and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. <sup>11</sup>While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. <sup>12</sup>And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? <sup>13</sup>The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup>But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup>and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup>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.**

### **Notes:**

Having entered the Court of the Women, the three of them apparently went through this area and exited through one of the side gates back into the Court of the Gentiles. From there the three apparently proceeded to the eastern side of the temple compound. While they were moving around, people saw the beggar who had just been healed, holding on to Peter and John. The people recognized the man and were utterly astounded that he was walking. As a result, the people rushed together around them in Solomon’s Porch.

The word translated “utterly astounded” is *ekthambos*, which is made up of *ek*, an intensifier, and *thambos*, meaning “astonishment” or “amazement.” So, we see that the people who saw the beggar and recognized that he had been healed were not just surprised, they were completely astonished, or as verse ten says, “they were filled with wonder and amazement”

Peter, never being one to let an opportunity go to waste, immediately went into preaching mode in which he took no credit for the miracle that had occurred. He started off his sermon by reminding the people that they had rejected God’s servant, Jesus. The word used here for “servant” is *pais*, which basically means “a child,” but frequently it is used as an expression for a servant boy. In other words, the lowest form of a household servant.

This is the first of three Messianic titles that Peter used to describe Jesus (see [Isaiah 42:1](#) and [Isaiah 53:11](#)). Peter reminded the people that Pilate had declared Jesus to be innocent, but they

insisted on having a murderer released. Here he used the second Messianic title, The Righteous One. This title is used more than 40 times in the Old Testament as a title for Yahweh. It is also a Messianic title as used in [Isaiah 53:11](#).

The third Messianic title that Peter used was “the Author of Life.” ([Slide 8](#)) This is the most honoring of all the titles that Peter used, and is the most condemning of the people. You may recall from our study of Matthew’s gospel that the personal name for God is Yahweh, or “I am.” In Exodus chapter three when Moses encountered God at the burning bush, God told him to go back to the children of Israel and lead them out of Egypt. Moses then said to God,

“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ([Exodus 3:13](#))

And God responded to him by saying:

“I AM WHO I AM.” ... “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ([Exodus 3:14](#))

God called Himself “I AM” because He is the self-existing one, the possessor of, and source of, all life. Peter declared to the people that they had killed the possessor of life. However, Peter actually referred to Jesus as the “Author of Life.” The word translated “author” is *archēgos*, which means “the chief leader,” “creator,” or “author.” In other words, the people killed the one who is the very source of life. And – because He possesses life within Himself, He didn’t stay dead.

Then, after revealing who Jesus really is, the Messiah, the Christ, the Author of Life, Peter declared that it is by faith in His name that the crippled beggar was made whole.

## **Peter’s Sermon in Solomon’s Portico - Consoling**

### **Acts 3:17-26**

**<sup>17</sup>“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup>But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup>Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup>that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, <sup>21</sup>whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. <sup>22</sup>Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. <sup>23</sup>And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ <sup>24</sup>And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. <sup>25</sup>You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ <sup>26</sup>God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”**

### **Notes:**

Having chastened the people for condemning and killing their Messiah, Peter next went into consolation mode. He declared that the people acted in ignorance. Keep in mind that ignorance does not excuse sin, but it does explain it. Peter said, in effect, “You are guilty, but God intended

the crucifixion of the Messiah as part of His plan for salvation, having proclaimed it by His prophets.”

Now comes the action plan of Peter’s message. Because of what the people had done, Peter told them to “repent and turn back.” These are two key verbs in his message. Repent is from the Greek word *metanoeō*, which means “to change one’s mind.” The words “turn back” are from *epistrephō*, meaning “to turn around, that is, to change the direction of one’s life.” Some Bibles have *epistrephō* translated as “be converted.” This implies passive action, action done to the subject. The problem with this translation is the fact that both of the verbs that Peter used (change your mind and turn back) are active verbs, not passive verbs. In other words, Peter declared that the people were to intentionally change their thinking about Jesus and about their sin and they were to not just think differently, but to intentionally act differently. (Slide 9)

These two verbs (in the imperative mood, implying commands) are addressed to all Jews both individually and collectively. We all know that salvation is an individual decision, but Peter’s comments indicate that it is a message for the entire house of Israel. He says:

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that *times of refreshing* may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until *the time for restoring all the things* about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (Acts 3:19-21)

The two phrases, “*times of refreshing*” and “*the time for restoring all the things*” are specific references to that time when the Messiah will return and rule the world in righteousness (that time we refer to as The Millennium). He also specifically equated Jesus with the Messiah when he said, “and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus ...”

So, in effect, Peter was telling the Jews that they needed to “get saved” individually, but also that if the nation would repent and believe in Jesus as their Messiah, he would return immediately and usher in the promised Messianic Kingdom.

Peter then finished his message by focusing on another characteristic of the promised Messiah and on the danger of rejecting Him. Moses had prophesied that another prophet would come after himself and that anyone who did not listen to Him would be destroyed. So – Peter was not just telling these Jews that they needed to repent and get saved, he was telling them that if they didn’t, they would suffer the consequences, both individually and nationally. Obviously, the nation did not accept Jesus as their Messiah and God judged them for it some 40 years later when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews throughout the known world.

Peter’s message was so empowered by the Spirit of God, that the church increased by another 2,000 that day (see Acts 4:4).

## **So What?**

There are two things we can learn from this chapter in Acts. (Slide 10A) The first thing is that despite the great diversity we have in the church, we have a sense of unity in Christ. Today, there is a lot of talk about “diversity,” although it usually is focused on exterior appearances like race and gender. However, from the beginning, the church has been built on diversity. Even though it started out as a Jewish church, it quickly became a faith for everyone. This chapter started off with, “**Now Peter and John were going up to the temple.**” Have you ever thought about how unlikely a pair

these two were? These two have been together since we first met them. They were both fishermen, and according to [Luke 5:10](#), they were partners. They were among the few who accompanied Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration ([Mark 9:2](#)) and they were the two who were told to prepare the Passover supper for Jesus ([Luke 22:8](#)). On Resurrection Sunday they were together when Mary Magdalene told them about the empty tomb and – they ran to the tomb together ([John 20:3,4](#)). Also, later in this book of Acts we will find them being important emissaries together as the apostles in Jerusalem sent them to minister to the new believers in Samaria ([Acts 8:14](#)).

However, it's important to note that Peter and John had vastly different personalities: Peter was the impulsive doer, while John was the dreamer. Peter often took action without thinking through the process or the consequences. But John wasn't an impulsive doer; he was a thinker. I can imagine that Peter was often irritated with John because John was such a dreamer. And it's possible that John was occasionally irritated with all of Peter's impetuous activity; they had contrasting personalities, and yet, they had one united purpose in Christ. That's often the way it happens in the church; Christ is the common meeting ground for all people. The church is the very image of unity through diversity. Though we may look different, come from different backgrounds, have differing personalities, and we each have differing gifts (given to us as the Spirit determines), still there is a beautiful unity in Christ. While Peter was busy doing, John was busy thinking – and writing. Where would we be without the gospel of John, since he gives us many facts that the other three gospel writers leave out. And – what about the book of Revelation? The Bible would not be complete without John's visions and his ability to write about them. In the church, all people come together on the same level, women and men, business executives and hourly workers, short people and tall people, small and large, young and old. It is this diversity, through the uniting power of the Holy Spirit, that makes the church unique in the world. And – we should never think of ourselves as better or less than other Christians. We're all sisters and brothers. We're different, but in Christ we're all one.

The second thing we can learn from this chapter is the value of giving of ourselves for the good of others. ([Slide 10B](#)) Even though we are a diverse body of Christ, the biggest problem in the church today is the very bane of human existence. I'm referring to our sin nature; this natural tendency to place our own good and our own satisfaction above that of everyone else. Unfortunately, the church is not the only place where this problem exists. People today need to learn to think more about the good of others than about themselves. We need to, as Jesus said, "Love our neighbor as ourselves." If we did that, we would be more forgiving of others, especially when we consider that all of us in the church are "sinners saved by grace." But, if we were to compare ourselves to those uninformed and uneducated first century Jews, we might be surprised how much more civilized and caring they were than we are.

Let's take, for example, the crippled beggar here in the third chapter of acts. Well, actually, it's not just him that I want to focus on right now, but also his friends. This man was a cripple from the day of his birth. He never had the opportunity to run and play as a child. He never had the opportunity to hold an ordinary job like everyone else. In fact, without his friends, he couldn't even beg for a living. For forty years he had been unable to walk; and yet, he was sitting at the "Beautiful Gate" of the temple every single day. How did he get there? His friends carried him there, every day! These friends gave of themselves for the good of the beggar. They loved this man more than themselves. And, what did they get out of it? Nothing! Just the knowledge that they

gave themselves to someone less fortunate than themselves. That is the very definition of “loving others more than yourselves.”

What else can we learn from this lowly, insignificant, crippled nobody? We’re never told whether or not he ever complained. I’m sure he did. Especially when he was younger. But apparently, he had accepted the life that God had given to him. And – when he was healed, what did he do? He jumped up and danced around. Wouldn’t you? I sure would! But he also entered the temple “leaping and praising God!”

How often do we blame God for our problems? How often do we complain to Him because he hasn’t given us the life we want to have? How often do we even get angry with Him because He isn’t answering our prayers the way we want? If you’re anything like me, you’ve lost count of the number of prayers that seem to have bounced right off the ceiling without ever getting through. Think about this – I wonder how many times the crippled beggar watched Jesus of Nazareth walk right past him, into the temple, without healing him? Did he yell at Jesus and complain because He didn’t heal him? I don’t think so! So, consider this – God’s timing is just as important as His grace. Let me repeat that. God’s timing is just as important as His grace.

And – even though we ask a lot from Him and complain about the troubles He allows in our lives; how often do we give God the glory for the blessings He bestows on us? How often do we thank Him for what he has allowed to come into our lives (good or bad)? Even the little, insignificant things! Have you ever thought about thanking God for giving you two good feet? I’m fairly certain that none of us has. And, your feet may not be perfect, but at least you can walk on them. Have you ever thanked Him for your job? It may not be the perfect job, but at least you’re not sitting on the corner of I-5 and Chemawa Road, begging.

## **Now What?**

Every person in this church has been truly blessed by God. If we were to put all of our prayers in which we ask God for something on one side of a scale and put all of our prayers of thanksgiving on the other, which would weigh more? Several years ago, Conie read a book entitled “1000 Gifts” by Ann Voskamp. It is a book that helped her become more of a thanker and less of a complainer. In this book, Ann challenges us to make a list of 1,000 things we are grateful for. And – it’s not her writing style that has impacted so many lives. It’s the mindset that we develop when we learn to focus on thanking God for His blessings instead of complaining.

Do you realize how many gifts God has given you, how many blessings that you don’t deserve? With God we have gotten in the habit of asking and we have lost the habit of thanking. Let’s change that, OK?

**Let’s pray.**

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