

CHAPTER 3

THE POWER OF HIS NAME

Acts 3:1–4:4

The emphasis in Acts 3 and 4 is on the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:6,16;4:7,10,12,17–18, 30). A name, of course, implies much more than identification; it carries with it:

1. Authority
2. Reputation
3. Power

When somebody says, “You can use my name!” you sincerely hope the name is worth using. If an order is given in the name of the President of the United States those who receive the order know that they are obligated to obey. If I were to issue orders at the White House (even if I could get in), nobody would pay much attention because my name has no official authority behind it.

The name of the **Lord Jesus** has *all authority* behind it!

- He is the Son of God (Matt. 28:18)
- His name is “above every name” (Phil. 2:9–11)

He deserves our worship and obedience. The great concern of the first Christians was that the name of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, be glorified.

In this section, we should note.

1. The Jewish emphasis is very pronounced.
 - Peter addressed Jewish men (Acts 3:12)
 - Peter called them “children of the prophets and of the covenant” (Acts 3:25)
 - He referred to the Jewish fathers (Acts 3:13) as well as to the prophets (Acts 3:18, 21–25)
 - The phrase “times of restitution” (Acts 3:21) refers to the messianic kingdom promised in the prophets

1. Amazement: Jesus the Healer (Acts 3:1–10)

The believers were still attached to the temple and to the traditional hours of prayer (Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10; Acts 10:30).

Keep in mind that Acts 1–10 describes a gradual transition from Israel to the Gentiles and from “Jewish Christianity” (note Acts 21:20) to the “one body” made up of both Jews and Gentiles. It took several years before many of the Jewish believers really understood the place of the Gentiles in God’s program, and this understanding did not come without its conflicts.

The contrast between Acts 2 and 3 is interesting:

- Peter the preacher **vs.** Peter the personal worker
- multitudes **vs.** one poor man
- ministry resulting in blessing **vs.** ministry resulting in arrest and persecution

The events in Acts 3 are an illustration of the last phrase in Acts 2:47,

*All the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.
And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.*

Showing us how the Lord added to His church daily. While the Holy Spirit is not named in this chapter, He was certainly at work in and through the Apostles, performing His ministry of glorifying Jesus Christ.

He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. John 16:14

Peter and John are often found together in Scripture.

- They were partners in the fishing business (Luke 5:10)
- They prepared the last Passover for Jesus (Luke 22:8)
- They ran to the tomb on the first Easter Sunday morning (John 20:3–4)
- They ministered to the Samaritans who believed on Jesus Christ (Acts 8:14)

Now that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were no longer competing for greatness, but were at last working faithfully together to build the church (Ps. 133).

Peter noticed the lame beggar is another evidence of the Spirit's ministry.

- Thousands of people were near the temple (Acts 4:4)
- Lots of beggars
- The Lord told Peter to heal a lame man lying at the Beautiful Gate

NOTE: There were nine gates that led from the court of the Gentiles into the temple itself.

Scholars are not agreed, but the Beautiful Gate was probably the "Eastern Gate" that led into the court of the women. Made of Corinthian bronze, the gate looked like gold; and it certainly was a choice place for a lame man to beg.

NOTE: The giving of alms was an important part of the Jewish faith, so beggars found it profitable to be near the temple.

Since the believers had pooled their resources (Acts 2:44–45), the two Apostles had no money to give; but money was not what the man needed most.

The lame beggar needed:

1. Salvation for his soul
2. Healing for his body
3. Money could provide neither

Through the power of the name of Jesus, the beggar was completely healed; and he was so happy and excited that he acted like a child, leaping and praising God.

It is easy to see in this man an illustration of what salvation is like:

1. **He was born lame**, and all of us are born unable to walk so as to please God. Our father Adam had a fall and passed his lameness on to all of his descendants (Rom. 5:12–21).
2. **The man was also poor**, and we as sinners are bankrupt before God, unable to pay the tremendous debt that we owe Him (Luke 7:36–50).

3. He was “**outside the temple,**” and all sinners are separated from God, no matter how near to the door they might be. The man was healed wholly by the grace of God, and the healing was immediate (Eph. 2:8–9).
3. He gave evidence of what God had done by “walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:8)
4. Publicly identifying himself with the Apostles, both in the temple (Acts 3:11) and in their arrest (Acts 4:14).

Now that he could stand, there was no question *where* this man stood!

2. Indictment: Jesus, the Son of God (Acts 3:11–16)

The healing of the lame beggar drew a crowd around the three men. Solomon’s Porch, on the east side of the temple, was a corridor where Jesus had ministered (John 10:23) and where the church worshiped (Acts 5:12).

1st sermon (Pentecost) – Peter had to refute the accusation that they were drunk.

2nd sermon, he had to refute the notion that he and John had healed the man by their own power.

Paul and Barnabas would face a similar situation after healing a lame man. See Acts 14:8–18.

- Peter immediately identified the source of the miracle—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- Peter said that this was the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Spirit certainly gave Peter boldness as he reminded the Jews of the way they had treated Jesus. They had denied Him and delivered Him up to be crucified. Even worse, they had asked for a guilty man, Barabbas, to be set free so that an innocent prisoner might be crucified!

In order to convince them of their crimes, Peter used several different names and titles for our Lord.

1. God’s Son
2. Jesus
3. The Holy One
4. The Just One
5. The Prince (Pioneer) of life

Calvary may have been man's last word, but the empty tomb was God's last word.

He glorified His Son by raising Him from the dead and taking Him back to heaven. The enthroned Christ had **sent His Holy Spirit** and was working **through His church**. The healed beggar was proof that Jesus was alive. If ever a people were guilty, it was the people Peter addressed in the temple. They were guilty of killing their own Messiah!

This is probably not the kind of message we would give at an evangelistic meeting today, because it was designed especially for Peter's Jewish audience. As at Pentecost, Peter was addressing people who knew the Scriptures and were acquainted with the recent events in Jerusalem (Luke 24:18).

There must be conviction before a sinner can experience conversion.

Unless a patient is convinced that he is sick, he will never accept the diagnosis or take the treatment. Peter turned the temple into a courtroom and laid all the evidence out for everybody to see. How could two ordinary fishermen perform such a great miracle unless God was with them? Nobody would dare deny the miracle because the beggar stood there before them all in "perfect soundness" (Acts 3:16; 4:14). **To accept the miracle would have been to admit that Jesus Christ is indeed the living Son of God and that His name has power.**

3. Encouragement: Jesus, the Savior (Acts 3:17–4:4)

But Peter did not leave the people without hope.

- Peter almost seemed to defend them by pointing out that they had acted in ignorance,

Some of the disciples asked each other, "What does he mean when he says, 'In a little while you won't see me, but then you will see me,' and 'I am going to the Father'?" - Acts 3:17

while at the same time they had fulfilled the Word of God,

And what does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand." - Acts 3:18

In the Old Testament Law, there is a difference between deliberate sins and sins of ignorance (Lev. 4–5; Num. 15:22–31).

The person who sinned presumptuously was a rebel against God and was guilty of great sin. He was to be "cut off" from his people (Num. 15:30–31), which could mean excommunication and

even death. The person who sinned unwittingly and without deliberate intent was given opportunity to repent and seek God's forgiveness. Ignorance does not remove the sinner's guilt, but it does mitigate the circumstances.

Jesus had prayed, ***"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"*** (Luke 23:34)

- God had answered that prayer. Instead of sending judgment, He sent the Holy Spirit to empower His church and to convict lost sinners.
- Israel's situation was something like that of the "manslayer" who killed his neighbor without prior malicious intent, and fled to the nearest city of refuge (Num. 35:9–34). So long as he remained in the city, he was safe, for then the avengers could not reach him and kill him. He was free to go home only after the death of the high priest.
- Peter invited these "murderers" to flee by faith to Jesus Christ and find refuge in Him (Heb. 6:18).

In his 1st sermon, Peter had explained that the Cross was the meeting place of divine sovereignty and human responsibility (Acts 2:23); and he repeated this truth in this 2nd sermon (Acts 3:17–18). Having: announced **the crime**, presented **the evidence**, and explained **the nature of their sin**, Peter then **offered them pardon!**

¹⁹ Jesus realized they wanted to ask him about it, so he said, "Are you asking yourselves what I meant? I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. ²⁰ I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. ²¹ It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. ²² So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy. ²³ At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. ²⁴ You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy. ²⁵ "I have spoken of these matters in figures of speech, but soon I will stop speaking figuratively and will tell you plainly all about the Father. ²⁶ Then you will ask in my name. I'm not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf, –

-- Acts 3:19–26

Peter's burden was to encourage his people to trust Christ and experience His gracious salvation.

What did he tell them to do?

1. *They had to repent of their sins* (see Acts 2:38; 5:31; 17:30)

Which means to have a change of mind about themselves, their sin, and Jesus Christ. Repentance is much more than "feeling sorry for your sins."

As the little Sunday School girl said, "It means feeling sorry enough to quit!" False sorrow for sin could be mere regret ("I'm sorry I got caught!") or remorse ("I feel terrible!"); and such feelings have a tendency to pass away.

NOTE: Repentance is not the same as "doing penance," as though we have to make a special sacrifice to God to prove that we are sincere.

True repentance is admitting that what God says is true, and because it is true, to change our mind about our sins and about the Savior.

The message of repentance was not new to the Jews, for John the Baptist had preached it and so had Jesus (Matt. 3:2; 4:17).

Repentance is a gift from God (Acts 11:18)

It is the heart's response to the convicting ministry of the Spirit of God (Acts 26:20).

The person who sincerely repents will have little problem putting his faith in the Savior.

2. They had to *be converted*

"To turn again" and exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ. The biblical message is "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), and the two go together. Unless we turn from our sins, we cannot put saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Balanced evangelism presents to the sinner both repentance and faith.

Peter announced what would happen if they repented and turned to Jesus Christ.

“in order that your sins may be blotted out, in order that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, in order that He may send Jesus Christ”.

Two Promises:

1. There was a promise for the individual (sins forgiven)
2. A promise for the nation (times of spiritual refreshing)

Peter was actually calling for *national repentance*, for the nation through its leaders had denied its Messiah and condemned Him to die. The declaration is that, if the nation repented and believed, the Messiah would return and establish the promised kingdom.

The nation did not repent—and certainly God knew this would happen—so the message eventually moved from the Jews to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

Acts 3:22–25 is on *the prophets* who had announced the coming of the Messiah.

Peter did two things:

1. Quoted from Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18–19)
2. Reminded his listeners that Moses had predicted the arrival of a Prophet, and this Prophet was the Messiah (Luke 24:19; John 1:19–28; 6:14).

Not to obey (“hear”) this Prophet meant condemnation. But Moses was not the only one who foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, for all the prophets united in their witness to Him (Luke 24:25–27, 44–48).

When Peter spoke about “these days,” to what “days” was he referring?

The days of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the days when God’s Prophet would speak to His people and offer them salvation. The nation’s rejection of Him made them especially guilty because the Jews were the privileged “sons of the prophets and of the covenant.” They had sinned against a flood of light!

Note. Peter did not permit the “national blessings” to overshadow the personal responsibility of the individuals listening to his message (Acts 3:26).

God raised up Jesus Christ and sent Him to *each one* who would turn away from his iniquities (Acts 3:20).

National repentance depends on personal repentance, the response of individual sinners to the message of salvation. Peter was addressing a large crowd, but he still made the application personal.

His message produced two opposite results:

1. 2,000 Jews believed the Word and were converted
2. The religious leaders of the nation rejected the message and tried to silence the Apostles.

We have here the beginning of the persecution about which Jesus had already warned His followers (Matt. 10:17–18; Luke 21:12–15; John 15:18–16:4).

Practical truths that should encourage all of us in our witnessing for Christ.

1. God is long-suffering with lost sinners.

The leaders of Israel had rejected the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 21:23–27) and the ministry of Jesus, and yet God gave them another opportunity to repent and be saved. They had denied and slain their own Messiah, and yet God patiently held back His judgment and sent His Spirit to deal with them. God’s people today need patience as we witness to a lost world.

2. True witness involves the “bad news” of sin and guilt as well as the “good news” of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

There can be no true faith in Christ unless first there is repentance from sin. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convict lost sinners, and He will do this if we faithfully witness and use God’s Word.

But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you and when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. the world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. -- John 16:7–11

3. The way to reach the masses is by helping the individual sinner.

Peter and John won the crippled beggar and his transformed life led to the conversion of 2,000 men! The servant of God who has no time for personal work with individual sinners will not be given many opportunities for ministering to great crowds. Like Jesus, the Apostles took time for individuals.

4. The best defense of the truth of the Christian faith is a changed life.

The healed beggar was “Exhibit A” in Peter’s defense of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When all the people heard of Jesus' arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead. Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too, for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them* and believed in Jesus.* -- John 12:9–11.

We need a Lazarus in our life and ministry. Let’s go after the “hard cases” and see what God can do!

5. Whenever God blesses, Satan shows up to oppose the work and silence the witness; and often he uses religious people to do his work.

The same crowd that opposed the ministry of Jesus Christ also opposed the work of the Apostles, and they will oppose our ministry today.

Expect it—but don’t let it stop you! The important thing is not that we are comfortable, but that the name of the Lord is glorified through the preaching of the Gospel.

* Greek *Jewish people*; also in 12:11.

* Or *had deserted their traditions*; Greek reads *had deserted*.

6. God has promised to bless and use His Word, so let's be faithful to witness.

Jesus even prayed that our witness would have success,

I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message ... -- John 17:20

so we have every reason to be encouraged. There is power in the name of Jesus, so we need not fear to witness and call sinners to repent.

7. The name of Jesus Christ still has power!

We can preach the “remission of sins” in His name (Luke 24:47) so that people might believe and have “life through His name” (John 20:31). We can give someone a cup of cold water in His name (Mark 9:41), and we can receive a child in His name (Matt. 18:5). These ministries may not seem as spectacular as healing a cripple, but they are still important to the work of God.

We can ask in His name as we pray (John 14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–26). When we ask the Father for something “in the name of Jesus Christ,” it is as though Jesus Himself were asking it. If we remember this, it will help to keep us from asking for things unworthy of His name.

Yes, the name of Jesus Christ still has authority and power. Let's go forth in His name and conquer!

Home Work

1. According to Peter, how was the healing of the lame crippled man possible (3.16)?
2. Why is it important for us that the apostles did not need their own power or exceptional godliness to heal the beggar (3.12)?
3. How did Peter describe Jesus in this speech (3.13-15, 22)?
4. Because the Jews “acted in ignorance” when they disowned and killed Jesus, God will give them a second chance to repent (3.17). What will happen if they repent (3.19-21)?
5. What truth in this study seems most significant to you? What implications does it have for your life? How does it make you want to change or respond?
6. What action can you take this week in light of this truth?
7. Can you add anything to Page 24-25 of your notes?