

The Book of Acts

Chapter 3

¹Now Peter and John went up together to the temple^a at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*. ²And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful,^b to ask alms from those who entered the temple; ³who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. ⁴And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." ⁵So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." ⁷And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones^c received strength. ⁸So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with

^a Peter and John hadn't stopped being Jews. They were still participating in the traditions of the Jewish faith. Going to the Temple to pray was an expression of that faith. Now those traditions and ceremonies had taken on a new life that replaced the dead works demanded by the law of Moses. Now that Christ had fulfilled the Law, the practices of their Jewish faith had life, meaning and purpose.

^b **More Study:** Is there significance to the name of this gate? Do a study on the gates of the temple and their names.

^c This incident would have been significant to Theophilus as he tried to make sense out of the Christian religion. Theophilus knew Luke as a learned physician so this incident spoke to Luke's area of expertise. Luke even identified the crippled body parts - the feet and ankles - that had stopped the man from walking. To Theophilus, the fact that this story was being related to him by a man of learning must have given it greater credibility, even though it must have seemed fantastic on the surface.

them—walking, leaping, and praising God.^a ⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God.^b ¹⁰Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple;^c and they were filled with wonder and amazement^d at what had happened to him.

¹¹Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's,^e greatly amazed.^f ¹²So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power

^a This is how God does miracles! There is no such thing as a halfway healing with Him! This man was born unable to use his legs (vs. 2). He was 40 years old (vs. 4:22). After 40 years of disuse, his legs and feet were undoubtedly atrophied and beyond restoration, yet at the name of Jesus they became so strong and straight that he could dance and leap! God-jobs get done right!

More Study: Do an Internet search for and listen to the Sunday school song *Walking and Leaping and Praising God*. The author found a very nice animation of that song.

^b God does know how to set a stage. This miracle occurred with so many witnesses present that no one could possibly dispute it.

^c The lame beggar was a fixture recognized by anyone who commonly used that gate.

^d For those whose hearts were soft toward God, it must have been a source of hope to see that God was *still* visiting His people.

^e The disciples were accustomed to hanging out in Solomon's porch since they had spent a lot of time there with Jesus (John 10:23).

More Study: Find a map of Herod's temple and locate Solomon's Porch on it.

^f Everyone was just assuming that the signs and wonders were done with since Jesus was crucified. They weren't counting on His resurrection and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now *any* believer could work signs and wonders! God's plan was beginning to unfold. The work of the Kingdom of God had progressed from one person (Jesus) to 12 (the disciples) to the 120 (in the upper room) to every believer on the face of the planet. Looking at it this way, it is easy to see why Jesus said, "...it is to your advantage that I go away..." and "...greater works than these shall you do" (John 14:12; 16:7).

or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go.

¹⁴“But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵“and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

¹⁶“And His name, through faith in His name, ^a has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. ¹⁷“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers. ^b ¹⁸“But those things which

^a Why is faith so important to the Lord? Peter emphasizes it here and the Lord constantly referred to it throughout the Gospels. To better understand the importance of faith, consider the metaphor God gave us in marriage. In the marriage relationship we see a picture of how the church relates to the Lord. Every husband will tell you that what he wants most from his wife is her respect and belief in him as he leads the family. The man whose wife does not believe in him is most miserable. So it is that the Lord desires for us to believe – to have faith – in His direction of our lives. He wants us to *believe* that His power will work in and through us in the same way it worked through Peter and John.

^b That the ordinary Jewish citizen did not understand what was being done to Jesus when they murdered Him is easy to acknowledge. They were following the lead of their leaders. But how could the rulers have been ignorant of who He was? The evidence pointing to Jesus as the Messiah was overwhelming. Yet it says here that they *were* ignorant. This has to do with the nature of belief. Belief is much more than mental assent. True belief includes *allegiance*, *obedience* and *shared identity*. A person who "believes in Christ" has made Christ central to his/her identity and his/her self-concept. He/she is loyal to Christ and obedient to His voice. (Consider how this fits into the marriage metaphor mentioned in the note above.) The Jewish rulers refused to believe in this way and then managed to forget all the proof they had seen. Yes, they were ignorant, but they were *willfully* ignorant. Jesus, Himself, confirmed their state of ignorance and overlooked their willfulness when He prayed, "Father forgive them..." (Luke 22:34).

The ignorance of the ordinary Jewish citizen was willful as well. They were determined that the Messiah - whom they were expecting to show up any time now - was going to be a political and military leader who would kick the Romans out and raise Israel to prominent status amongst the nations. Jesus came saying, "My kingdom is not of this world" and they really didn't want to accept Him on those terms. So, they willfully chose to be ignorant of His Messiahship.

God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹“Repent therefore and be converted,^a that your sins may be blotted out,^b so that times of refreshing may come^c from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰“and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹“whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. ²²“For Moses truly said to the fathers, *‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.* ²³ *‘And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among*

More Study: Using the book of Proverbs, write three paragraphs discussing the subject of "willful ignorance." (Note: There is a link between the concept of "willful ignorance" and Solomon's references to the "foolish" and "naïve".)

^a The concept of conversion doesn't center just on change - it involves a complete transformation. a change of identity. A Gentile could "convert" and become a Jew through a process that culminated in a baptism. In this way baptism signified the point at which the new proselyte *changed his identity* from Gentile to Jew. Peter is telling this crowd of Jews that they need to change their identity to become followers of Jesus.

More Study: Do a word study on "converted".

^b God, in creating the nation of Israel – especially in establishing their laws and traditions – created a people for whom consciousness of sin was an ever present part of reality. From ceremonial washings to kosher foods, the concept of "clean" or "unclean" was built into their psyche. They understood sin and were painfully – and hopelessly – aware of their own sinfulness. So, when Peter told them that their sins could be blotted out - with the healed man standing there lending credibility to his words - these Jews responded in tremendous numbers. At last, hope was real and attainable.

^c Imagine the plight of the Jewish person. You are constantly aware of your sin and so you constantly go through the motions of offering sacrifices and keeping all the rules, hoping that it will be enough to get you on God's good side. But deep down, you know it's all empty and there isn't really any hope – God is *not* going to forgive you. Then you see this lame man healed and hear Peter saying your sin can be blotted out. Suddenly, hope becomes real and you are refreshed in your soul like never before!

the people. ²⁴“Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. ^a ²⁵“You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘*And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*’ ²⁶“To you first, ^b God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.”

^a **More Study:** Find and read a book that details the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus’ coming.

^b Speaking by the Holy Spirit, Peter probably wasn’t fully aware of the import of his words. This was the first hint to the early church that the gospel was going to spread beyond the Jewish community.