

6. In the name of Jesus

August 11, 2013

Average people's names, like yours and my Swedish name don't mean a whole lot. They don't carry any authority. But the name of those who are in charge, like the President of the United States carries the full authority of its office. Those who receive the order know that they are obligated to obey.

But there is one name which comes with full authority that overrides any and every human's – kings, emperors, prime ministers, and presidents throughout the entire history. That is the name of Jesus. Eventually at that name, every knee shall bow , every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord. In His name, there is a healing power that a lame person can be made whole; in His name, there is a mighty power that stops the forces of evil, and in His name, there is the authority that shuts the mouths of tyrant rulers and ignorant mobs.

As we study this portion of Scripture this morning , we will find the power and authority in the name of Jesus in three ways: Jesus the Healer , Jesus the Son of God, and Jesus the Savior.

A. JESUS THE HEALER

Acts 3:1-10 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 And 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, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; 3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. 4 And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." 5 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 Then 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." 7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them-walking, leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 10 Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Please keep in mind that Acts 1-10 describes a gradual transition from Israel to the Gentiles and from "Jewish Christianity" to the "one body" made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

These two apostles were not going to the temple to participate in the hour of sacrifice, rather the hour of prayer that followed the afternoon sacrifice. They realized that the sacrificial system was fulfilled by the Perfect Lamb of God Jesus Christ on the cross.

Not all scholars agreed, but the Beautiful Gate was probably the "Eastern Gate" that led into the court of the women. The Jewish historian Josephus described this gate – made of fine Corinthian brass, seventy-five feet high with huge double doors, so beautiful that it "greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold." And it certainly was a choice place for a lame man to beg .

Some of you may wonder, "What are the differences among alms, offering , and tithe?" I am glad you asked:

Alms: Money, food, or other donations given to the poor or needy

Offering: A contribution given to or through the church for a particular purpose

Tithe: The tenth part of personal income set apart as an offering to God

The giving of alms was an important part of the Jewish faith because giving alms to the poor is an act of righteousness, so beggars found it profitable to be near the temple.

The Lord gave Peter the supernatural ability to trust Him for something completely out of the ordinary. He reached out the lame man's hand raised him up to his feet. And instantly the man was healed. Was it because the lame man had great faith in God? No, but Peter had faith in the Lord and was obedient to Him.

This brings a very challenging question to the charismatic TV evangelists and preachers who claim that you have to have a great faith in God to be healed. I am sure that they all claim themselves as men and women of great faith. As it worked for this lame man who didn't have faith, but Peter did, why don't they exercise their great faith in God to give money to poor old ladies who watch them on TV instead of begging and manipulating these ladies to send their little Social Security checks to them? You see why this is a hot button issue to me? Some of those evangelists and preachers are fleecing the biblically ignorant and naive sheep for their own financial gains.

1 Timothy 6:5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

Often, material riches are acquired and maintained at the expense of true spiritual riches. I've seen some great men of God who started to accumulate wealth because of the Lord's blessings, before long they walked away from God to worship their riches.

In the glory days of the Renaissance Papacy, a man walked with the Pope and marveled at the splendors and riches of the Vatican. The Pope told him, "We no longer have to say what Peter told the lame man: 'Silver and gold have I none.'" His companion replied, "But neither can you say, 'rise up and walk.'"

As soon as the formerly lame man was healed, he did three good things:

- 1) He attached himself to the apostles by entering the temple with them.
- 2) He immediately started to use what God had given him by walking and leaping . He didn't stay at the same spot and say, "I don't want to go to work, but somebody should support me continuously. Occupy Jerusalem!"
- 3) He began to praise and worship God for his healing .

B. JESUS THE SON OF GOD

Acts 3:11-16 Now 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, greatly amazed. 12 So 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 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, 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.

Solomon's Porch was located at the east side of the temple and it was a corridor where our Lord Jesus had ministered often.

I am sure that the healing of the lame man drew a crowd around the three men. Peter wisely took advantage of the gathering crowd. He clearly knew that the miracle in itself brought no one to Jesus, it merely aroused interest. Since the crowd was mainly the Jews and many of them were the eyewitness of the crucifixion of Jesus, Peter wanted to make it clear where the power of healing came from.

Many TV evangelists or preachers today who would never claim to heal in their own power still give the impression that healing happens because they are so spiritual, so close to God, or so godly. Peter knew that it was all of Jesus and nothing was of himself. The focus of Peter's sermon here is completely on Jesus.

Some of you may wonder, "Why did apostle Peter call Jesus 'His Servant'?" He was referring to Jesus according to Isaiah 42:

Isaiah 42:1-4 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break , And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law."

The concept of the 'Servant of the Lord' for the Son of God was well-known in the ancient Israel because of Isaiah 53 and other texts.

Isaiah 53:11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

Peter boldly set the guilt of Jesus' death squarely where it belonged. Pilate, the Roman governor, was determined to let Him go, but the Jewish mob insisted on the crucifixion of Jesus. In fact, it was not because of political advantage or circumstances that put Jesus on the cross; it was our sin.

Please notice how Peter announces Jesus in v14 after he called the Lord as "His Servant" in v13. This time Peter called Jesus 'the Holy One and the Just,' and 'the Prince of Life' in v15. Here Peter exalted Jesus as God. The term "Holy One" is used more than 40 times in the Old Testament as a high and glorious title for "Yahweh," the covenant God of Israel.

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; unless an alcoholic realizes that he is a recurring alcoholic and he needs help from God desperately, he will continue to drink and drive, ends up killing or hurting someone with his or her vehicle. Peter turned the temple into a courtroom and laid all the evidences out for everybody to see.

Nobody would dare to deny the miracle because the formerly lame man stood before them all with a pair of perfectly healed legs. 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.

In the ancient Jewish mindset, a name does not just identify a person, it expresses the very nature of his being. Thus the power of the person is present and available in the name of the person.

C. JESUS THE SAVIOR

Acts 3:17-26 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come 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 the people.’ 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 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, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

Peter recognized they called for the execution of Jesus in ignorance of God's eternal plan. If we sin in ignorance, it is still sin; but it is different from sin done with full knowledge.

Despite all the evil they did to Jesus, it did not change or derail God's plan. God can take the most horrible evil and use it for good.

Genesis 50:20a But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good

Peter brought three important people in the Jewish minds: Moses, Samuel, and Abraham. Until now, their physical lineage – being a Jew was good enough for them to go to heaven when they die. Through the Scriptures what these three patriarchs said, Peter proved their idea was far from the truth and heaven.

God had the rescue plan for mankind from all eternity, yet His plan did not force men to act against their own will. Without understanding God's plan completely, these prophets had foretold the sufferings and death of the Messiah as the Spirit of God instructed them, and the nation and the people of Israel fulfilled these prophecies without realizing what they were doing by persecuting and crucifying Jesus.

Unfortunately, many pastors don't want to call sin 'sin.' Either they call it a 'mistake,' or some lame garbage words. And many Christians don't want to go to the church that calls sin sin either. It is no wonder many Christians possess a feeling of remorse for their sins which gives them a false sense of security, even though they never repent. A vast difference exists between the words 'remorse' and 'repentance.'

People are sorry when their sin catches up with them, when they begin to reap what they sow. I've never seen any criminal who is not going through remorse – they felt bad because they got caught. If they had another opportunity , they would do it again and not get caught next time. That is their idea of remorse. But that is not what the Lord expects from us.

The Bible says godly sorrow leads to repentance. If we are truly sorry , we will not only have remorse for our sins, we will repent and change our behavior . The Greek word for ‘repent’ is “metanoeo” and it means to change direction.

C. S. Lewis wisely observed, “Repentance is no fun at all. It ’s something harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning the self- conceit and self-will we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years.”

National repentance depends on personal repentance, and the response of individual sinners to the message of salvation, as well as commitment to stay away from the same sin.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) 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.

2) The best defense of the truth of the Christian faith is your changed life in Him.