**Peter Saw His Chance and Took It!**

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

 A husband and wife were driving through the countryside one day, not speaking a word to one another due to a *heated* argument they’d had about an hour before. When the wife saw a couple of mules along the side of the road, she saw her chance to get in a cheap shot with her husband. Thinking that he was acting as stubborn as a mule, she asked him, “Relatives of yours?” He replied, “Yes, those are my inlaws!”

 Well, as you can see, that wife saw her chance to get in a *snide* word with her husband, and she took it. Although, as you can also see, she lived to regret it! But here in our text in Acts 3, Peter and John have just healed a lame man (3:1-11). And as news of that miracle spread, a crowd gathered around the apostles and the lame man they had healed. Let’s begin in Verse 11 to get the context:

 **“And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.**

**“And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” (Acts 3:11,12).**

Now usually when you see that word “answered” (v. 12), it is because someone has asked a question. And it could be that people in the crowd had asked Peter and John some questions, though we have no record of that if they did. But that word “answered” *can* mean a response to anything. And the thing that Peter seems to be responding to here is the *marveling* of the crowd, and the *looks* they were giving the apostles, as if *they* had healed the lame man by their own power or holiness.

That’s why Peter begins his answer by reminding them that they were “men of Israel.” They were men who should have known better than to think that the apostles had healed him by their own power. I mean, those Jews were acting like the dumb Gentiles we read about in Acts 14. After Paul healed a lame man in Lystra, we read,

**“...they lifted up their voices, saying…*The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men…*Then the priest of Jupiter…brought oxen… *and would have done sacrifice with the people.* Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they…ran in…crying…why do ye these things? *We also are men of like passions with you…”* (Acts 14:11-15).**

As you can see, those superstitious pagan Gentiles thought that Paul had healed the lame man by his own power, as if he himself were some kind of god. Being dumb Gentiles who worshipped “gods” like Jupiter and Mercurius, they didn’t know any better.

But the men of Israel that Peter is addressing at Pentecost in our text *should* have known better than to think that mere men had the power to work a miracle like that. I mean, they knew from their own Scriptures that only God could heal leprosy (II Kings 5:7), so when Elisha healed Naaman, they knew it was God working through him. And the fact that Peter had to remind the Jews of that shows just how *sorry* the spiritual state of Israel was at Pentecost.

Now as we’ll see in a moment, Peter went on to tell the Jews who had gathered around him that day that *the Lord Jesus Christ* had healed the lame man. And that’s something that we see *other* men of God do when people thought that *they* were capable of working miracles. For instance, do you remember what happened when Pharaoh dreamed a dream that troubled him, and said to Joseph, as it were, “I hear you can interpret dreams.” Joseph replied in no uncertain terms, saying,

**“…It is not in me: *God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (Genesis 41:16).**

We see something similar when Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel to not only interpret his dream, he asked him to tell him what he had dreamed! Daniel answered him by saying,

**“…*there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets*…But as for me, *this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living”* (Daniel 2:28,30).**

Now is there anything you can learn from that? Any time anyone praises you for being *patient,* or *kind,* or *such a good person,* you can either bask in the glow of their compliments, or you can see *your* chance to speak up and tell them that without the Lord, you’d be nothing more than a low-down, selfish, good-for-nothing pile of spiritual manure. For that’s what we *all* ae without Christ.

Now having said that, when Peter said to the Jews, “What are you looking at us for?” (as it were), compare that to what Peter told the lame man right before he healed him back in Verse 4:

**“And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, *Look on us”* (Acts 3:4).**

Now did you catch that? Peter told the lame man that if he wanted to be healed, he had to look at the apostles. But after they healed him, he told the Jews *not* to look at them.

And you know the reason for this difference. Peter told the lame man to look at them because as the representatives of Christ, they were his only hope of getting healed. But after he was healed, Peter told the Jews, in effect, “Don’t be looking at us like we healed him.”

It’s kind of like how we shouldn’t be bashful when we tell the world they have to look to us as ambassadors of Christ to be saved, for we’re the world’s only hope of salvation. We’re not being prideful in saying you can’t be saved by looking to the representatives of any other religion to be saved, that’s just a cold hard fact.

But after men *get* saved and turn their lives around, after the drunk in the gutter gets saved and turns his life around, we say to the world, “Don’t be looking at us like *we* turned his life around. We’re not able to help a drunk by any wisdom that we have more than any living,” as Daniel put it. We’re just the people God uses to share the gospel with the world—at least we *should* be.

But now if you are like me, you’re probably wondering why Peter said that they hadn’t healed the lame man by their own “holiness.” I mean, what’s holiness got to do with healing anyone? Well, it was Peter’s way of reminding them of what Isaiah said about the healing of lame men when he predicted,

**“…*your God* will come…*Then* shall the lame man leap as an hart…for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert…And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called *The way of holiness”* (Isaiah 35:4-8).**

That’s a description of the kingdom of heaven on earth, of course. When the lame man *leaped* as an hart, they should have known a couple of things were true. First, the should have known, as Isaiah predicted, that *their God had come,* and had walked in their midst in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But they *also* should have known that *the kingdom* had come. As we’ve seen earlier in this study, God was giving the people of Israel a taste of the kingdom at Pentecost—the kingdom in which *the holiness of God* will right all the wrongs in the earth, *and* all the wrongs in the bodies of people.

Right here in this passage, we see *more* evidence that they were being given a taste of the kingdom. Remember, this miracle took place in Solomon’s porch (cf. 3:11). That’s significant, for when the apostles asked the Lord if it was time to “restore again” the kingdom (Acts 1:6), they were asking if it was time to restore the kingdom to Israel *as it was in Solomon’s day.* So when Peter healed this lame man in Solomon’s porch, that’s another one of the ways we know that they were being given a taste of the kingdom.

Of course, for the Jews to *admit* that the kingdom had come, they would have had to admit that *their King* had come, for that was Isaiah’s point in that passage in Isaiah 35. He was saying you can’t have one without the other. You can’t have the kingdom without a king.

And we know the Jews knew that, in light of what they said the day the Lord rode into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass. Luke says that some of them cried,

**“*Blessed be the King* that cometh in the name of the Lord…” (Luke 19:38).**

But Mark is just as adamant that they cried something different, when he recorded some of them as saying,

**“*Blessed be the kingdom…*that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mark 11:10).**

Can you see how this shows that the people of Israel never thought of their kingdom without thinking about their king? They knew you can’t have a kingdom without a king.

Now is there anything you can learn from that? Paul says to you and I, as members of the Body of Christ living in the dispensation of grace,

**“the Father…*hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Colossians 1:12,13).**

Paul says that if you’re saved, you’re already a part of the kingdom of heaven in heaven. And that’s a pretty comforting and reassuring thought.

But it’s a thought that you ought not think about without *also* thinking about the fact that *you have a king.* You are not the king of your life. If you’re saved, *Christ* is the king of your life, and you should be thinking about ways you can *make Him* your king. Don’t be singing that grand old hymn, “King of my life I crown Thee now,” unless you mean business.

Now if you need some incentive to do that, the rest of that hymn says, “Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow, *lead me to Calvary.”* Just remember the price He paid to get you *into* the kingdom of heaven, and that should give you all the incentive you need to make Him king of your life in every area of your life.

But now that Peter has the Jews thinking about their king, he went on to remind them of what they *did* to their king, saying,

 “**The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go” (Acts 3:13).**

Now do you see what Peter is doing here? The people of Israel *loved* Abraham and Isaac and Jacob! They just weren’t too sure about this Jesus guy. But in mentioning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Peter was reminding them that there was a time they weren’t too sure about that *Moses* guy! When God picked Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses told Him, as it were, “They’re not going to believe that You sent me to them.” When he raised this objection, God responded by saying,

**“Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you”***

**(Exodus 3:15).**

God told Moses to tell the people that the God of their beloved patriarchs had sent him to them. So that’s what Peter is doing here. He’s saying that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had raised up *another* prophet, one named Jesus. They should have been especially receptive to this, for Moses had predicted,

 **“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me;* unto him ye shall hearken;**

**“According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.**

**“And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.**

**“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.**

**“And it shall come to pass, *that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”* (Exodus 18:15-19).**

As you can see, Moses predicted that God would raise up a prophet like Moses, and if the people of Israel didn’t hear Him, He would require it of them. But in saying that this new prophet would be like unto Moses, one of the ways the Lord was like unto him was in that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob raised up both.

And as Peter also mentioned, God the Father had “glorified” the Lord. And the Bible tells us about a couple of different ways that the Father glorified His Son. It is said that it glorified Him when God raised Him from the dead, and we are also told that it glorified the Lord when the Father gave Him a seat at His own right hand.

But whatever means of glorification that Peter has in mind here, it must be a something that happened *before* the Jews killed him, for that’s Peter’s point. He was telling them, as it were, “You killed the One that God glorified!” And the only time we read about God glorifying the Lord before the Jews killed Him is when the Lord’s friend Lazarus got sick, and it says,

**“When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby”* (John 11:4).**

After hearing this news, the Lord then proceeded to let a sickness that wasn’t unto death *kill His friend,* so that He could be glorified when He *raised Him* from the dead.

So Peter’s point seems to be, “You killed a guy who had raised a man from the dead. You killed someone who could give life!” We see more evidence that this is what he was thinking if we peek ahead to verse 15, where Peter told them that they had “killed the Prince of life.” Peter’s point in reminding them that they had killed a man who had given life to the dead was to inform them that they had killed a man who had to have been God in the flesh, for only God can raise the dead.

Now the reason Peter brought up how Pilate had wanted to let the Lord go is that the Jews were trying to blame the Romans for His death. We know this based on the words they spoke sometime later to the apostles in Acts 5:28, where they told them,

**“…ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, *and intend to bring this man's blood upon us”***

That was their way of saying that it was *Pilate* who killed the Lord, and that His blood should be brought on him, not on them! In other words, they were engaging in a little blame-shifting, a dodge that goes all the way back to Eden. When God blamed Adam for eating the fruit, he blamed Eve, and she blamed the serpent, and the serpent didn’t have a leg to stand on! That always reminds me of the Three Stooges, and how Moe would slap Larry, Larry would turn around and slap Curly, and Curly would turn around and—there was no one to slap!

But let me ask you, upon whom *should* Peter have brought the Lord’s blood, after hearing what the Jews said to Pilate when the governor was trying to decide what to do with the Lord:

**“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing…he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, *I am innocent of the blood of this just person:* see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, *His blood be on us, and on our children”* (Matthew 27:24,25).**

When Pilate was deciding what to do with the Lord, the Jews said, as it were, “Go ahead and kill him, His blood be on us! We take full responsibility!” But now they were saying, “You’re trying to bring His blood on us!” and Peter was calling them on this, reminding them that they couldn’t have it both ways! And then he went on to press their guilt even further when he said,

**“But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you” (Acts 3:14).**

Now that word *deny* is the opposite of the word *confess,* as we see when we read of John the Baptist,

**“…he *confessed*, and *denied not;* but *confessed*, I am not the Christ” (John 1:20).**

Do you see how that defines the word “deny” as the opposite of the word *confess?* And confessing the Lord is something they had to do to be saved, as the Lord made clear when He said,

**“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, *him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven*. But whosoever shall *deny* me before men, *him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32,33).**

And the Jews had denied the Lord when He was there among them, so they didn’t get saved. But they were getting a second chance to get saved here in the Book of Acts.

But now, there’s a reason why Peter sways they denied “The Holy One.” That exact phrase is used dozens of times *for God the Father,* the God of Israel (Psalm 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa. 1:4; 5:19,24, etc.). So in calling *Christ* “the Holy One, Peter was reminding the Jews that when they denied the Lord, *they denied the Father.* You see, Peter knew that *they* knew that the Father had someone that *He* called the “Holy One,” someone we read about in Psalm 16:10, where the psalmist prayed,

**“Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither...suffer *Thine Holy One* to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10).**

They knew that this psalm said that *God’s* Holy One died and went to hell! And Peter was reminding them that this was the Holy One that they had denied, the Lord Jesus Christ! And when they denied Him *before Pilate,* that led to His execution, of course.

Now Pilate didn’t know that He was God in the flesh. But Pilate knew He was a just man! You see,

**“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with *that just man:* for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him…When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing…he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood *of this just person:* see ye to it” (Matthew 27:19-24).**

The word “just” has different meanings in the Bible, but in that context it referred to someone who hadn’t broken the laws of *justice.* Pilate didn’t know that He was God, but he knew He hadn’t broken any laws of Rome. Being a pagan, he believed his wife’s dream, for the heathen put a lot of stock in dreams.

And Peter knew that *the Jews also knew* He was a just man—and not because of any dream. We know that they knew by experience, for the Lord had said to them,

**“*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” (John 8:46).**

The Lord stood toe to toe with the people among whom He dwelt and *challenged* them to cite even one sin that they had ever seen Him commit. He knew that none of them had ever seen Him sin, let alone break any of the laws of Rome. So while the Jews didn’t know that the One they denied was God, they *did* know that the One they denied was *just.* That’s why Peter reminds them that they denied “the Holy One and the Just.” He was pressing home the fact that they denied a just man, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them, a man they knew was *not* a just man.

And I’m sure you remember what Peter meant when he said that they desired a murderer. During the Lord’s trial,

**“Pilate saith unto…the Jews…I find in him no fault at all. *But ye have a custom*, *that I should release unto you one at the passover:* will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, *Not this man, but Barabbas…”* (John 18:38-40).**

They had a tradition that every passover Pilate would release one of his prisoners rather than crucifying him. And Peter is reminding them that they asked him to release a man that they knew was guilty and condemned a man they knew was innocent and just.

And to the Jews who prided themselves on being a just people, a people to whom God had given the highest laws of justice on the planet (Deut. 4:8), Peter’s words must have cut like a knife. But then Peter *twisted* the knife when he added,

**“And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15).**

If you want to know how calling the Lord the Prince of life twisted the knife, let me ask you what it *means* to say the Lord was the Prince of life? Well, what did it mean when Isaiah called Him “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6)? I would submit to you that this meant the Lord was the *giver* of peace. And if that’s so, then the title “Prince of Life” meant that the Lord was the giver of life! So Peter is drawing a contrast here, saying, in effect, “You saved a murderer from death, you saved someone who was a *taker* of life, and killed someone who was the *giver* of life.” I mean, talk about twisting the knife!

But now, this preference of theirs is symbolic of something, something the Lord warned them about earlier when He said,

**“I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: *if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive”* (John 5:43).**

The Lord said, as it were, “There’s another guy coming who you’ll prefer over Me.” And you know who He had in mind. He was talking about the Antichrist. Their preference of Barabbas was a type of the preference they’ll have when the Beast appears in the Tribulation.

Let’s compare what we know about Barabbas to what we know about the Antichrist. First of all, we know that “Barabbas was *a robber”* (John 18:40). But he wouldn’t have been on Death Row with the Lord had he been some penny ante thief who stole hubcaps off of chariots. Remember, Peter calls him a *murderer* here in Acts 3.

Now that’s not a contradiction. That’s the Bible’s way of giving us a full description of Barabbas’s crime. Think about it. What’s the most valuable thing that a thief can steal? The most valuable commodity that anyone has is *life.* And there’s lots of verses that say things like,

**“…they devised to *take away* my life” (Psalm 31:13).**

And what did the Lord say about the Antichrist in John 10:10?

**“The thief cometh not, but for to *steal*, and to *kill*, and to *destroy*…”**

The Antichrist will take away the *physical* life of the saints when he begins his merciless persecution of God’s people. But the *worst* thing he’ll steal is the *eternal* life of those who will believe on him.

What else do we know about Barabbas? Luke tells us that

**“…Barabbas…for a certain *sedition* made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison…” (Luke 23:18,19).**

If you’re not sure what *sedition* is, it is related to the word *insurrection,* another word used to describe Barabbas:

**“…Barabbas…had made *insurrection*…committed *murder* in the insurrection” (Mark 15:17).**

Sedition is what you do when you speak out against the government and try to get people to rebel against the government. And insurrection is when you start *acting* on those seditious words and actively rebelling against the government. In time past, the Jews in Jerusalem were accused of both, when it was said that they had raised “insurrection *against kings,* and that rebellion and *sedition* have been made therein…” (Ezra 4:19).

And Antichrist is going to speak out against the government of Israel in that day, and get people to follow him in rebelling against it. First by speaking words of sedition, and finally by rebelling against the government outright when he declares *himself* to be Israel’s king.

And Israel’s preference of Barabbas is a type of how the Jews in that day will prefer the Beast over Israel’s legitimate ruler, whoever is sitting on the throne of Israel in the Tribulation, and then prefer him over Israel’s *ultimate* legitimate ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jews’ only hope to avoid him in that day will be to let what happened to the lame man happen to them. So as we read on, Peter reminds them of what happened to the lame man, saying,

**“And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3:16).**

Now that word “soundness” is only used a few times in the Bible, and Peter knew that the Jews would remember one of those times. You see, back in Isaiah’s day,, God used it to describe the spiritual condition of the nation Israel, saying,

**“*the whole head is sick,* and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is no soundness in it;* but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. *Your country is desolate…”* (Isaiah 1:5-7).**

As you can see, the “country” of Israel was spiritually *unsound,* and needed to be healed in Isaiah’s day. And the same was true of them in Peter’s day as well.

But remember, the lame man was a type of the nation of Israel. Sitting right outside the gate of the temple begging, but lacking the strength to enter the presence of God in the temple, he was just like the nation of Israel at that time. They were sitting right outside the gate of the kingdom of heaven, but didn’t have the strength to enter God’s presence in the kingdom. But when Peter and John *healed* him, that’s a picture of how the Jews could have been saved if they did what Peter said to do in Acts 2:40 when he told them to “save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

If the Jews had just left the apostle nation behind them and joined up with Peter and John and the “little flock” of the Lord’s followers (cf. Luke 12:32), they could have entered into the kingdom, just like the lame man entered the temple with Peter and John.

But now there’s one more thing we need to point out here, and that is that when Peter says the Lord’s name “through faith in His name” had healed the lame man, that’s not talking about the lame man’s faith. You may remember from our last study that the lame man didn’t have faith in Christ. Review the account of his healing in Acts 3:2-6 and you’ll see that he wasn’t looking for healing, he was looking for a handout. So Peter wasn’t talking about the lame man’s faith, he was talking about the faith that he and John had in the power that the Lord had given them to heal. Remember, the Lord had told the apostles,

**“If *YE* have faith…ye shall…say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; *it shall be done”* (Matthew 21:21).**

Mark’s version of the Lord’s words reads,

**“…whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; *and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass;* he shall have whatsoever he saith” (Mark 11:23).**

So as you can see, it was *their* faith in the power of the Lord’s name that made them able to heal the lame man, as the Lord Himself had predicted when He said,

**“…these signs shall follow them that believe; *In my name* shall they cast out devils…*they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”* (Mark 16:17,18).**

When they believed that they had the power that the Lord said they had, their faith moved the “mountain” of that man’s lameness and healed him.

Now is there anything you can learn from that? When Paul tells you that you have the power to do things like he tells us to do in Romans 6:12, saying,

**“*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,* that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”**

Now Paul wouldn’t have told us not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies if it wasn’t something we had the power to do. So the only thing keeping you from doing it is you not having enough faith to do it. If you say, “I can’t do it,” that means you don’t really believe God when He says you *can* do it.

You say, “That’s not the same thing.” I say, “That’s *exactly* the same thing!” The Lord told them they had the power to do miracles, and He tells you that you have the power to not let sin reign in your mortal body. The only thing standing between you and *not* letting sin reign in your mortal body is believing God when He says you can do it. It’s just that simple.