

OUR *Guide* FOR USE IN *the Protestant Reformed Sunday School*

Lesson 62

The Healing of the Lame Beggar

The Scripture Lesson *Acts 2:41-3:26*

Peter preached a great sermon on Pentecost. And the Lord used that sermon to bring into His church 3,000 of His people. Three thousand in one day!

What were these people like? Did they believe for just a day or two and then go back to their old Jewish religion under the old Jewish leaders? No. They continued to love the Lord, and they continued also to study the Word of God under the preaching and teaching of the apostles.

Their love of Christ could be seen, too, in their love for *each other*. The Bible tells us that they “had all things in common.” When one of them was poor, or hungry, the others would right away help him. They believed that all that they had was given to them, not to be used only for their own needs, but to be used also in their service of Christ and of each other. People outside the church noticed this — and they *liked* what they saw.

The apostles, meanwhile, went often into the temple, to tell others about Jesus. One day, as they entered the gate of the temple, they saw a man who was lame from birth. This man was laid at the gate in order that he might beg from those who came there to worship. He hoped to get a little money

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from them as they entered God’s house.

Seeing Peter and John, the beggar asked them also for money. But they had something for him that was far better. Peter said to him, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” Peter then took him by the hand and raised him up. And to the man’s utter amazement he found that, for the first time in his life, there was strength in his feet. No longer would he have to lie at that gate, and wait for friends every day to carry him back home. For he could walk!

We who walk every day without difficulty do not very much appreciate that ability. But this beggar did. He jumped up, and then, accompanying Peter and John into the temple, he continued jumping and leaping, and praising God.

It was of course quite out of the ordinary to see a man jumping and leaping around in the temple, so crowds of people began to gather around Peter and John and the beggar. They right away recognized the man, for they had for years seen him lying at the gate. Now he walks. Whatever, they wonder, could have happened? They looked to Peter and John for an explanation.

When Peter saw this great multitude of wondering people, he was filled again with the Spirit so that he could preach to them. He told them first

of all that they should understand that the miracle was performed, not by the disciples' power, but by *Jesus'* power. Yes, *they* had crucified Him who was the Prince of Life; but *God* had raised Him up and glorified Him. They had committed a terrible, terrible sin for which, said Peter, they must repent. But God had used even their great wickedness to bring salvation to His people.

Peter and John Before the Council

Acts 4:1-22

All of this made the enemies of Christ very angry. Especially was this so of the men who belonged to the Jewish Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, remember, was the group of judges who had tried Jesus, found Him guilty of blasphemy, and condemned Him to death. They were wicked men. They hated Jesus. And now they hated the disciples who preached and did miracles in Jesus' name. So, when they heard what Peter and John were doing in the temple, some of them hurried over there and, with the temple police, arrested them. They took them away to a jail and locked them up.

Next morning they called a meeting of the Sanhedrin, and then brought Peter and John out of prison to stand before them. Caiaphas, the high priest, asked Peter and John by whose power they had done that miracle. Caiaphas hoped that Peter and John, standing in front of all these important people, would be scared. He hoped they would be so scared that they would make excuses, say it was all a mistake, and promise never to say anything about Jesus again.

But, to the Sanhedrin's surprise, the disciples were not at all afraid. They right away admit that they could do the miracle only in the name of *Jesus*. Peter told them, too, that this was the same Jesus whom *they* had killed. And he reminded them that David, in the Psalms, had said that that would happen. The Messiah, David wrote, would be like a stone, cast away by the builders who thought it was good for nothing; but in the end it becomes the head stone of the corner, the most important stone in the whole building. *You*, Peter said, are those builders. You crucified Jesus, saying that He was good for nothing; but *God* has

raised Him up and has made Him the cornerstone. He is the cornerstone of the *church*; for salvation for all the members of that church is possible only through *Him*.

The Sanhedrin was amazed to hear Peter and John talk that way. They spoke so boldly and sensibly. They knew the Scriptures so well. The Sanhedrin knew that Peter and John were uneducated fishermen who had never studied under a Jewish rabbi, a teacher of the law. How then did they know so much? There could be only one answer. They had been with Jesus. Pray that others may see that also in *us*.

But what could be done with Peter and John? The two disciples had broken no law. Besides, what would all the people think if the Sanhedrin punished two men for healing a lame man? The Sanhedrin was afraid of the people. They decided therefore that they could only warn the disciples that, if they ever again do anything in the name of Jesus, they will be in bad trouble.

Were the disciples then afraid? No, they were not. They explained to the Sanhedrin that the Lord had commanded them to be His witnesses; so, they said, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." If they were to obey the Sanhedrin, they would be disobeying their Lord. And that they would never do.

How could they be so brave? Jesus had told them the answer. He had said that someday they would be brought before rulers for His sake. And in that day, Jesus said, they would not have to worry about what to say, for He would give them words to speak. Peter now knew exactly what Jesus had meant.

MEMORY WORK

Group A

Luke 21:14, 15 "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

Group B

Acts 4:11 "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

ACTIVITIES

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will be used by students of all ages. The activities are designed so that the oldest will be challenged, and the youngest will find some of it within reach. Parents should encourage their children to attempt only what they can handle without frustration. For some that will be much, for others little.

DO YOU AGREE?

If you do, write Yes; if you do not, write No.

- ___ 1. The people of Jerusalem who were outside the church despised the Christians because of their pious life.
- ___ 2. When Peter and John came one day to the temple they saw there a lame man whose friends had brought him to the temple to worship at the hour of prayer.
- ___ 3. Peter healed this man, so that he was able to walk for the first time in his life.
- ___ 4. The jumping and leaping of this man soon attracted a crowd of people around the three men.
- ___ 5. The priests and the Sadducees came quickly and arrested Peter and John before they were able to preach again to a crowd of people.
- ___ 6. On the following day Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin for questioning.
- ___ 7. When they were asked, by this large body of great men, to tell by what power they had done this thing, Peter and John asked for some time to prepare an answer.
- ___ 8. When the apostles did answer, they told the Sanhedrin that they healed the man in the name of Jesus, whom they, the Sanhedrin, had crucified.
- ___ 9. Furious because of this accusation, the Sanhedrin ordered that the apostles be beaten.
- ___ 10. When they were commanded not to speak anymore to anyone about Jesus, the apostles replied that they could not obey that order.
- ___ 11. The Sanhedrin therefore ordered that Peter and John be put back in prison.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. How did the early Christians show that they were really interested in what they had heard about Jesus on Pentecost?
2. How did the early Christians show their love of Christ in their *life*?
3. What did people outside the church think about the Christians? Can you tell how that helped the growth of the church?
4. Why was the lame man in our lesson put at the gate of the temple?
5. How did the lame man act after he was cured by Peter and John? Can you tell how such behavior in the temple helped the spread of the gospel?
6. What did Peter tell the people?
7. What happened to Peter and John before Peter finished his sermon?
8. Peter told the Sanhedrin that they had themselves fulfilled the prophecy of David that the Messiah would be as a stone set at nought by the builders. Do you know how the Sanhedrin had done that? How did that stone then become the head of the corner?
9. Why was the Sanhedrin surprised by such an answer from Peter and John? What did they decide was the explanation for this boldness?
10. Why did the Sanhedrin not punish Peter and John severely to teach them a lesson? What did they decide to do instead?
11. What reason did Peter and John give for refusing to obey the order of the Sanhedrin? How was it possible for these fishermen to speak so well before all these judges?

COMPLETING SENTENCES

1. The fruit of the first sermon preached by the church of the new dispensation was that _____ souls were added to the church. The response in the hearts of Peter's hearers was a work of the Spirit of Christ, but the Spirit worked through the preaching — which was obviously also His work, since Peter would not have been able to preach that sermon before the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost. Thus did the Lord demonstrate at the very outset that there is power in the preaching, and that the preached word is *His Word*. It is evident too that the effect produced by Peter's sermon was more than a passing emotion. For we read that the 3,000 continued _____ in the apostles' _____ and _____. That is, they continued to attend regular meetings to hear the teaching and preaching of the apostles, in order that they might learn more about the Christian faith (Acts 2:41, 42).
2. Such zealotness, on the part of so large a group of converts, was observed with awe by nearly everyone else in Jerusalem. Clearly there was at work among the disciples of Jesus a power that was more than merely human — an observation that was strengthened by the fact that many _____ and _____ were done by the _____. The result was that _____ came upon every soul — a fear that must have been used also to prevent the enemies of Christ from doing anything, at first, to interfere with the activities and growth of the church (Acts 2:43).
3. The love that the members of the early church had for each other showed itself especially in the generosity of the people for the poor and needy among them. They had all things _____ — that is, so unselfish were they that, if any man had need, members of the church were willing, if necessary, to sell some of their _____ and goods in order to be able to give to the one in need (Acts 2:44, 45).
4. Meanwhile, the members of the church continued _____ with one accord to visit

the temple, for worship as well as to witness to others. The result of such piety was that they had _____ with all the people, and through it the Lord _____ to the church daily such as _____ be saved — that is, such as were ordained to salvation (Acts 2:46, 47).

5. One day Peter and John went together into the temple at the hour of _____, being the _____ hour — that is, 3:00 in the afternoon. Here they came upon a man who was _____ from his mother's _____ and was carried every day to a gate of the temple to ask _____ of them who entered. Seeing Peter and John, the man begged of them also an alms. Peter however told the man that he had neither _____ nor _____, but that what he did have he would give: “In the _____ of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, _____ up and _____” (Acts 3:1-6).

6. Like Jesus' miracles of healing, this miracle of His apostles was also a picture of *spiritual* restoration; and we have no reason to doubt that this beggar came to know also that spiritual healing through the blood of Jesus. But, at the moment, all he could think about was the great physical wonder that made it possible for him for the first time in his life to use his legs and feet. As soon as his feet and ankle bones received _____, he leaped up, and, entering the temple with Peter and John, he was not only walking, but _____, and _____ God (Acts 3:7, 8).

7. That kind of behavior quickly drew a curious crowd. Because the man had been so long a beggar at the gate, the people knew at once who he was, and they were filled with _____ and _____ at what had happened to this man who had been lame from birth. As the lame man _____ Peter and John, the people _____ together to them in the _____ greatly _____ (Acts 3:9-11).

8. Peter saw the large crowd of wondering people as another opportunity to testify of the risen Lord. So he preached another sermon. “Ye men of

_____,” Peter began, “Why _____ ye at this? or why look ye so _____ on _____, as though by our own _____ or holiness we had made this man to _____?” Peter then went on to tell them that the Son of God, whom they had _____ in the presence of Pilate, God had _____ from the dead. And as for the miracle, Peter said, it was the _____ which is by Jesus that has given the lame beggar this _____ soundness in the _____ of you all (Acts 3:12-16).

9. While Peter was preaching to the people on Solomon’s porch, the enemies of Christ and His church arrived on the scene. Besides the priests and the captain of the temple guard, there was present also a group of Sadducees who, because they denied any resurrection at all, were especially _____ that Peter and John _____ the people and preached through Jesus the _____ from the dead. These men came and made a quick arrest of Peter and John (and maybe also of the beggar) and put them in _____ unto the next day because it was already _____ (Acts 4:1-3).

10. On the following day there was an official gathering of the _____ (the chief priests), and the _____, and the _____, which were the three groups that made up the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews. After setting Peter and John in the _____, they asked, “By what _____, or by what _____, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:5-7). The high priest thus shrewdly put the emphasis, not on the *deed*, which was manifestly *good*, but on the *means*, which might be made out to be *bad* — if it implied approval of a man who had been convicted of blasphemy.

11. If the Sanhedrin hoped to intimidate the apostles by this approach, they soon learned, to their great dismay, that it didn’t work at all. For Peter, filled again with the _____, gave an immediate and masterful defense, which left the learned Sanhedrists with nothing to say. Peter

began by lightly chiding the Sanhedrin for conducting a critical examination of the _____ deed done to the _____ man. But then he got right to the point. “Be it known unto you _____, and to all the people of _____,” Peter said, “that by the name of _____ of Nazareth, whom ye _____, whom God _____ from the dead, even by _____ doth this man stand _____ before you _____” (Acts 4:8-10).

12. Peter was well aware that his answer would anger the high priest and the rest of the Sanhedrin, but, filled with the Spirit, he went on to demonstrate to them that even such rejection of the Messiah was clearly foretold in the Scriptures. With reference, as they knew, to Psalm 118:22, Peter declared that Jesus was “the _____ which was set at _____ of you _____, which is become the _____ of the _____.” Jesus Himself had once applied that same Psalm to the leaders of the Jews (Mark 12:10). Peter here announces its fulfillment, both in their crucifying of Jesus and in God’s having raised Him up. His resurrection therefore had proved His claims — His claim also to be the only way of salvation for His people. “Neither is their _____ in any _____,” Peter concluded, “for there is none other _____ under heaven given among men, whereby we must be _____” (Acts 4:11, 12).

13. Seeing the _____ of Peter and John, and knowing that they were _____ and ignorant men, they _____; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with _____. They well remembered the authority with which Jesus spoke against them, and the miracles by which He supported His teaching. Now, all that they hated in Him was reappearing in His disciples. They would gladly have tried to deny the miracle; but, _____ the man who was healed _____ with them, they could say nothing _____ it (Acts 4:13, 14).

14. Being at a loss how to proceed, the Sanhedrists

ordered that the three men be taken from the room while they, the judges, _____ among themselves. Recognizing that a _____ miracle had been performed, and that it was _____ to all them in Jerusalem, they dared not yet harm Peter and John, for fear of the people. Nevertheless, in order if possible to halt the progress of the gospel they decided to _____ the apostles, that they _____ henceforth to no _____ in this _____ (Acts 4:15-18).

15. Peter and John recognized at once that the command of the Sanhedrin was directly contrary to the command of Christ: “ye shall be _____ unto me” (Acts 1:8). They therefore responded, “Whether it be right in the sight of _____ to hearken unto _____ more than unto _____, judge ye. For we cannot but _____ the things we have _____ and _____” (Acts 4:19, 20).

16. Restrained still by fear of the people, the Sanhedrin dared do nothing but threaten them further, and then let them _____. Thus did God frustrate their counsels in order to accomplish His purpose in the spread of the gospel (Acts 4:21).

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls were added to the Christian church — a work that is properly attributed to Christ alone. Can you show, from what happened on Pentecost, that the gathering of the church is indeed a work of the risen Lord, but not *apart from* the activity of men?
2. Read Acts 2:43. Can you think of two ways in which the conduct and work of the early Christians helped the progress of the gospel at the beginning of the church of the new dispensation?
3. Miracles of healing were always performed for a purpose — that is, beyond the comfort of the individual involved. Can you think of several purposes served by the healing of the lame beggar at the gate of the temple?

4 After being healed by Peter and John, the lame man immediately leaped up and began walking and jumping. For that to happen, there must really have been *two* miracles. Do you know what they were?

5. During His ministry on earth, Jesus had plainly declared that He was the Son of God. When the people and their rulers clamored before Pilate for His crucifixion, they were deliberately rejecting Him. How could Peter say, in his sermon here in the temple (Acts 3:17), that they had done it “through ignorance”?

6. Members of the Sanhedrin were vexed by the activity of the apostles right from the start. What was it that finally convinced them that they had to act? How, and why, did they hope to accomplish their purpose without violence?

7. Read Luke 21:12-15. How was the experience of Peter and John as they stood before the Sanhedrin a literal fulfillment of the 15th verse of Luke 21?

8. Why did Peter bring Psalm 118:22 to the attention of the Sanhedrists? What was Peter telling the Sanhedrin about Jesus in the last part of Acts 4:11?

9. The Sanhedrin was apparently caught by surprise by the “boldness” of Peter and John. Evidently the Sanhedrists attributed that boldness to their having “been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). How, from the point of view of the Sanhedrin, would being with Jesus help explain what they now saw in Peter and John?

10. The truth on which all the instruction of the apostles was based was clearly the resurrection of Christ. To disprove the resurrection, therefore, would have brought the collapse of the whole movement. The Sanhedrin had once bribed the guards to report that the body was stolen. Why, do you suppose, did they never again use that testimony of the guards (or, as far as we know, any other evidence) to challenge the apostles’ doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus?

11. Peter later wrote in his first epistle that we must submit ourselves to every ordinance of men for the Lord’s sake (I Pet. 2:13). What exception to that rule do Peter and John make in their answer to the Sanhedrin?