



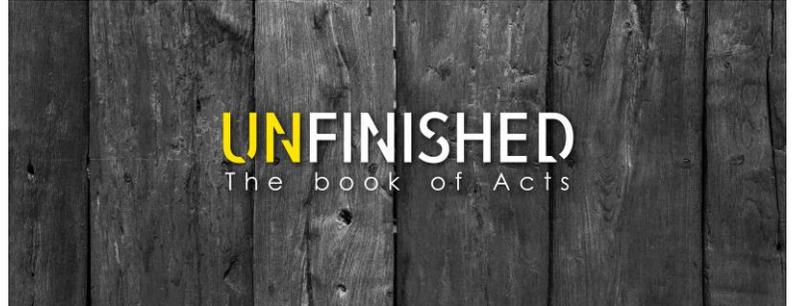
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Unfinished

Part 6: In a Jerusalem Minute—
Everything Can Change

Acts 3:1–26 | Tim Badal | October 15, 2017



For the last month we've been in our series titled "Unfinished." We're looking at what might be called the "Fifth Gospel." The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John chronicle the life of Jesus as He ministered on earth, seeking and saving those who were lost. The book of Acts then chronicles the life of the church, as Christ's followers begin to change the world through His gospel message.

Already we've logged a lot of miles. We looked at the days between Jesus' resurrection and His ascension, when He was seen by over 500 people and had interacted on many occasions with His disciples. During that time He taught them what they were to do after He was gone. They were told to wait in Jerusalem, an instruction they obeyed. During that time they replaced Judas, who had betrayed Jesus and then ended his own life.

Then on the day of Pentecost—50 days after the resurrection—the Holy Spirit came to them and empowered them for their ministry. This was first lived out in the gift of languages given that day, where the gospel was proclaimed in many languages. As a result, a multitude of people from dozens of countries who were gathered for the Pentecost festival came to hear the news of salvation in their own language. We're told that 3,000 were added to the number of disciples that day.

Last week we looked at the early church and considered how we might follow their model ourselves. In Acts 2:42, we read, "*And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.*" We aren't told about many of these wonders and signs, but today we'll look at the first of many miracles that are recorded in the book of Acts. This is a book filled with miracles. In fact, in 12 of the 28 chapters of this book there is an account of someone being healed, with a total of 14 miraculous healings.

In Acts 3, we'll read about a man who was crippled at birth, but through the power of the name of Jesus Christ he was healed and was able to leap up and run. This miracle changed the way people viewed Jesus and the apostles. As we'll see, there were some people who accepted Jesus because of the miracles and others who rejected Him.

Let's read Acts 3:

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour [3:00 in the afternoon].² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us."⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.⁶ But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.⁸ And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God,¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's, astounded. ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made

him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

¹⁷ “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²² Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

I'm a small-town boy. I've lived in the town of Hinckley my entire life and I love small-town community living. One of the great things I love about being in a small town is going to the sporting events that take place in our local schools. You know everybody. It's like a big town reunion.

At the basketball games at Hinckley-Big Rock, we walk the hallways to the gymnasium and different clubs and organizations have tables out to sell raffle tickets for their particular fundraisers. Every time I go to a game, I always throw a few extra dollars in my pocket—well, to be honest, some of them are for the concession stand—but I also donate some, because these are my neighbors and my kids' classmates, so I want to be supportive.

One day as I was walking in, one of the booster clubs was doing a 50-50 raffle. They said, “Mr. Badal, would you like to buy some tickets?” I asked the boy how much they were and he said, “A dollar for each ticket or six for five dollars.” I had a five-dollar bill in my pocket, so I said, “Give me six tickets.” I put them in my pocket and really never thought about it from that point on.

Half-time rolled around and I was deep in conversation—because I talk a lot—and all of a sudden I heard over the speakers, “The winner of the 50-50 raffle is Tim Badal.” I stopped, even forgot what I was talking about, and stood up while the people applauded. Then the announcer said, “And the jackpot for the 50-50 raffle is \$1,100.” Hallelujah! Glory! Right?

Of course, because I'm so quiet and mousey I made an absolutely amazing scene as I bounded this carcass down the bleachers. I was thinking, “What am I going to do with this \$1,100? Number one, I'm not going to tell Amanda about it. Number two, I'm going to make sure I give some of it to the Lord.” [Remember, we've got to give back to the Lord, especially when we gamble with God's money.]

I was so excited. I had all these ideas about what I could do with this money. People were watching my life totally change. I've gone from a poor man to a rich man. This is awesome. By the way, I'm a quick thinker and all of this had gone through my head by the time I reached the bottom of the bleachers. As I hit the floor, the announcer came back and said, “Ah, we'd like to apologize. The jackpot is \$11.00.”

So for those who don't do math, I just won \$6.00. Don Henley and the Eagles were right when they said, “In a New York minute, everything can change.” I went from the thrill of victory to the absolute agony of defeat. But here's the funny thing. Do you know what they had the audacity to ask? “Do you want to donate the prize money?” I would have donated the money back, had they not messed up like that. No, I took my six bucks and went to the concession stand.

Isn't it true that in a matter of a minute your life can change? I went from ecstasy to disappointment all in a matter of a few seconds. Some of us have experienced life that way. We've been having a great life with everything going well. We tell people we were utterly content with our life—only to go to the doctor's office and learn that life has dramatically changed.

Some of you have experienced the loss of a loved one, or the loss of a job, or strife in a relationship, when in a moment everything was turned on its head. You were going full speed in one direction, only to have the emergency break pulled and you suffer the greatest whiplash of your life. In a New York minute, everything can change.

Others of us have experienced great times of joy. Recently I was at a convenience store in the town where I work and as I was paying for my gas, a man screamed out—because with a scratch-off lotto ticket he had just won four million dollars. In a New York minute, anything and everything can change. Some of us have experienced the good side of that; others of us have experienced the bad side.

In Acts 3, we come to a Jerusalem minute—a moment in time when a man’s life is going to change. Here’s the great truth that arches over all we’re going to talk about today. No matter who you are, no matter what you’re going through, no matter if life has been good or bad—whatever the circumstances of your life are—when Jesus shows up in your life, in that moment everything can change. And the lame man in Acts 3 is going to experience just that.

Our hopeless situation

Look at Acts 3:1–3. Peter and John were heading into the temple, not because they were adhering to Old Testament Judaism but because the early church had no place to meet. So they were meeting in the temple court, as well as meeting day after day in one another’s homes. The temples were a great place to worship, and it was also an opportunity—as they lived out what came to be called “the Way”—to interact with friends and family members who were still tied to the Old Testament Jewish ways and who needed to know Jesus.

It was 3:00 in the afternoon. We’re not told what day it was, but it seems it was probably an ordinary day. As Peter and John were heading there to pray, they came upon a lame man. We’re told he had been crippled from birth. We’re not told exactly how he was lame, but we know his legs did not function as he needed help to go anywhere.

We need to understand two things about his malady. First, it wasn’t due to some recklessness on his part. He hadn’t gotten drunk and done something stupid. He hadn’t been aggressive or clumsy, nor had he fallen off something. We clearly know he’d had this malady from birth.

We’ll be seeing a number of contrasts in this chapter. One of the main ones is the contrast between the pitiful situation of this man who had been placed under what was called the Beautiful Gate. He’s never walked or lived a normal life. When he was a boy, he had never been able to run or play tag or do whatever young Jewish boys did in that day.

As an adult, he probably had no opportunity to work for a living. No one would hire him to do the things his other friends or siblings could do. For the most part, if you were crippled in those days, you probably never married. You would live with your family—unless they had thrown you out because they believed you were cursed.

It seems as though this man was being cared for, because we’re told he was carried every day to the temple gate, where he would beg for alms. This is much the same as we see today when someone who is needy will go to a place where a lot of people pass by. They’ll have a sign or some other way to indicate their need, and with a tin cup or an open hand they ask for money to offset their living expenses.

Our text reminds us that life can be tough.

One of the greatest truths we can take from this is an awareness that life is tough. This man reminds us how difficult life can be. Everything he might want to accomplish, including his daily personal necessities, required thinking through. Those of us who don’t have that sort of disability don’t understand how difficult this can be. In addition to his disability, this man probably lived with great disappointment. He was stationed at this beautiful gate, looking for help.

While we have come light years in the service of those who struggle with disabilities, there’s still a long way to go in ministering to those who suffer these maladies—some from birth, others from various life events.

But in the first century, life for this man was almost impossible. When we read that this lame man was asking for help, we shouldn’t think of an able-bodied panhandler. This man was utterly destitute. Being disabled in those days was actually a drawn-out death sentence. His hopeless situation reminds us that life can be tough.

What causes this? If we don’t read this passage too quickly, but stop at the description of “a man lame from birth,” we might find ourselves asking, “Why, God? If You’re such a good God, why? He hadn’t done anything. He hadn’t sinned or made a bad decision. Why, God?” Especially when we read this for the first time and are honest with ourselves, that’s the question we might ask.

Often God in His wisdom doesn’t give any answers to those who struggle with this type of question. How often have you asked, “Why, God?” only to hear crickets? “Why did You give me this condition? Why did You allow this to happen to me? How could You

allow this to happen to my children?" The missed expectations for our lives or for the lives of others bring us to look for answers that are hard to find.

The only answer I can give you is what the Bible tells us—which might satisfy you, or it might not. Peter and John came to this lame man on their way to the temple and we might ask, "How can a loving God Who is also all-powerful allow this man to suffer this way?" Let me offer you four reasons that there is disease and suffering in this world.

1. We live in a fallen world. In Genesis, we read that as God created different things each day, He looked at what He had made and said, "It is good." Then He made man and He said, "It is very good." When God created the world and when He knitted us together in the beginning of time, everything was good. It functioned as it should. It was beautiful and right.

But as we look back from the other side of the Fall, we really can't comprehend what life before sin was like. We don't know what our bodies may have been like, what our relationships could have been like. In that Garden, after God had said it was good, man rebelled against Him and put himself and his posterity—and all of creation—under a curse.

This curse brought weeds to fertile ground. It brought strife to the relationship between man and woman. It brought fighting between people. Where man once had a perfect relationship with God, he now was hostile toward Him. Because Adam sinned, now all of us as Adam's descendants have sin within us and our world no longer functions as it should.

This causes us great sorrow, loss, grief and unmet expectations. There are all kinds of dysfunction and death in our world. So we need to remember that sometimes we suffer simply because we're part of the human race. We can assume this is why the man in Acts 3 was suffering. He hadn't done anything to cause it, nor had anyone else done this to him. We have no record that his mother might have been injured by someone during her pregnancy.

All we see is what appears to be an innocent individual whose life was permanently impacted and there doesn't appear to be anything in particular to blame. He didn't make a bad decision. He simply lived in a fallen world. For some of us here, there is also no other answer other than that we live in a fallen world.

2. We have personal sin. The reason you may be dealing with suffering, or your life is imperfect in some way, is not just because of the fallen world, but because of personal sin. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:30 that in the church in Corinth there were people who were sick and dying because they were making a mockery of the things of God. Their suffering, Paul says, was specifically because of God's discipline for their sin.

So in addition to bad things happening to good people, sometimes bad things happen to people who make bad choices. In Galatians 6:7 we read, "*God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*" God in His mercy, because of the blood of Jesus, is able to overlook our sins in the sense that we don't receive the full punishment for them. But He also reserves the right to allow us to experience some of the consequences of our sins for our own good. We need to understand that rebellion against God is a serious thing.

This isn't a matter of fairness. There are some people who live with reckless abandon who never struggle with the issues their actions bring. On the other hand, a child of God might blow one area of his life, in one moment of time, and the struggle will come.

A good example of this is David's sin of adultery. He was a man after God's heart (Acts 13:22) and he did what was right in the eyes of God. But even though he had a wonderful relationship with God, one day he saw a woman bathing on a rooftop near the palace. Lust filled his heart, he decided he wanted her, and he slept with her. No doubt he wasn't the only person in Jerusalem that night who committed adultery.

But in that moment, God, in His wisdom, would not only allow Bathsheba to become pregnant, but the baby would die soon after he was born. Why would God allow that? Because He was using this consequence of David's sin to drive His child back to Himself. Had that consequence not been there, David could have gone deeper and deeper into sin.

This is really hard for us to accept, but some of us are experiencing pain and sorrow, not because we live in a fallen world and we can blame Adam for that, but because we need to face ourselves and the reality that we've blown it. A decision made in a moment's time can have massive ramifications for the rest of our lives.

3. Someone has sinned against us. Maybe your life is tough. In part it's because you live in a fallen world. Even though you yourself are not perfect, it's possible that this pain or struggle is not your fault. Rather, it may be that you're a victim of someone else's sin.

Joseph is a great example of this in the Bible (Genesis 37–50). We studied his story last year. In a New York minute, Joseph went from the position of favored son in a godly family, living in a protected and prosperous home, to being chained up and dragged behind traders who would put him in a slave auction.

Why? Did he do something wrong? Well, of course he was a sinner and he lived in a fallen world, but that wasn't the reason it all happened. Rather, his deadbeat brothers couldn't keep their anger in check. They threw him into a pit, intending to kill him, but decided to make a profit and not have his blood on their hands. He went from being a favored son to being a slave because of the sins of someone else. We also see this in the sin of Potiphar's wife. Joseph worked his way into a place of significance, but right when his life seemed to be going well, a woman accused him of rape. Even though he was innocent, her manipulation, deception and lust got him into trouble that put him in prison for 13 years. So in prison, Joseph could say it was Adam's fault—but it wasn't. It was the fault of Potiphar's wife.

Some of you are experiencing pain or sorrow not because of your own sin. And to be honest, that doesn't make it any easier.

4. Suffering comes because of demonic activity. So there's the fall, there's our own sin, there are the sins of others, but there is also demonic activity that can bring us suffering. The Bible tells us we can become direct targets of the devil. The story of Job comes to mind, where the devil says to God, "If Your hand wasn't on Job, he would surely walk away from You" (Job 1:9–11). God gives the devil permission to damage Job, within certain limits. So he takes all of the good things in Job's life—his family and his property, then later his health. But Job remains faithful.

We're told in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 that the Apostle Paul was tormented by a messenger of Satan. He asked God multiple times to remove it, but God told him no. He said his suffering was there for a purpose. Some of us are experiencing pain or torment or sorrow—not just because we're human or because we're receiving the consequences of our own or someone else's sin—but it may be that we're a direct target of the devil.

Over the past 15 years I would never have said this, but in the last six months we as elders have concluded that we are a direct target of the devil here at our church. We're feeling it. Some of the strangest and weirdest things have taken place. It's been the hardest six months of ministry for many of us. And it isn't because we're involved in some heinous activity. It's not just because the world is fallen; we've always been in the world. But something significant is happening and we're praying through it. We believe we're a target.

These are the ways the Bible helps us understand why life can be tough. But here's something I want you to know. When Paul asked God to remove the thing that was tormenting him, God told him something we also need to remember: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"* (1 Corinthians 12:9).

So if you find yourself hurting, for whatever reason, understand two things:

First, God is enough to get you through it. Does that mean you'll be prosperous? Does that mean your cancer will go away? Does that mean that your disability will be gone? Probably not. When He chooses to, God can heal and we call that a miracle because it is an exception to the rule. Remember that within our struggle, God is enough.

Second, when we are weak, God can reveal Himself and make Himself strong through you. That's the great promise we have. So when we read a story like the one about the lame man and we ask God why, thankfully the Bible gives us the ability to understand.

Sometimes our trying isn't good enough.

When life is tough, another thing we should remember is that sometimes our trying isn't good enough. When life is hard, we inevitably try to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We will do whatever is in our power to alleviate the pain. What we see in this lame man is that nothing will fix his problem. No quantity of friends can fix it. No amount of money will fix it. As far as he knows, this man will always be crippled, will always be struggling with something bigger than himself.

We should not put our hope in temporal fixes.

For the lame man, the temporal fix was begging for money in the temple court. That was the only way he could make his life worth living. A good day meant a lot of silver in his tin cup. A bad day was an almost empty cup. Maybe on rainy days people would be running by and not stopping. Or if it was hot, people would be avoiding the sun. There were lots of reasons his days could be bad. Yet money was the only thing he knew of that could make his life better. How many of us look to possessions or people or pleasures to ease our struggles or sorrows? We look to temporal things to make our lives better.

I was recently talking with a young man who had just bought a new car. He told me, "I love how this car makes me feel. I love owning a car." I pointed out, "You don't own it. You're making payments on it." He responded, "You're not happy I have a new car?" I said, "No, I'm not. If you think that car will make you happy, I don't want to be there on the day when that car no longer gives you joy."

The Bible tells us, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal*" (Matthew 6:19). Yet we do this all the time. We think a certain girlfriend or boyfriend will complete us. We think a new house or new job or new promotion or new inheritance will satisfy us.

Can I just tell you quickly? This whole Harvey Weinstein sex scandal that's going on in Hollywood tells us one thing we're always blind to, and that is that Hollywood is way sadder than we realize. They have all the money, all the pleasure, yet they're far more broken than anyone could have imagined. So stop thinking temporal things can fix your problems.

In this story about this lame man we can see ourselves spiritually. We're disabled by sin from birth. We are separated from God and thus we're unable to do the things we should have been able to do. We no longer have a right relationship with our world or with God, and as a result, we try to solve our sin problem by grabbing whatever we can to make life a little easier, a little more worth living.

Our heavenly solution

But we eventually realize that the only thing that can save us is something outside ourselves. Only by the grace and mercy of someone else—Jesus Christ—can we find the cure for our disability. Our hopeless situation leads us to discover our heavenly solution.

Scholars believe this lame man had been sitting there for some time. We're told in the next chapter that he was over 40 years old. We don't know how many years he'd been begging at the temple, but one scholar speculates he might have been sitting at that gate when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus there as a baby. Or maybe he was there when the 12-year-old Jesus taught the temple leaders, in that story where Mary and Joseph lost track of where He was (Luke 2:41–52).

The scholar wonders if he was there when, as an adult, Jesus came to the temple, took the scroll and read from the prophet Isaiah, saying, "*In your hearing this word has been fulfilled*" (Luke 4:16–30). He wonders if the man had been there when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (John 12:12–19). In other words, it's possible to believe this man knew Who Jesus was. But like many in our world today who have a cursory understanding of Jesus, he had not really experienced Him.

This solution involves Christ's followers extending love.

The solution for him—and for people today—requires that Christians extend love. When Peter and John enter the temple court, they see the lame man and their eyes connect with his. So he calls out, "Hey, guys, help me." There's no reason to believe this man knows who Peter and John are. They're just a couple men who are paying some attention to him. So he asks if they can give him some money.

Peter responds, "*I have no silver or gold.*" Now, this doesn't mean when you see a panhandler in Chicago that this should be your biblical response. If you've got silver and gold, give them some. But Jesus' disciples actually didn't have much money. Remember, they weren't working. They were being cared for by others so they could continue their ministry.

So Peter tells the man, "I don't have silver or gold, but I do have something much better." This reminds us that while we can and should help with people's temporal needs, what we have to offer spiritually is greater. Peter and John knew that even if they gave money—which to be sure would be an act of love—it would only be short-term help. But more importantly, they realized the man needed Jesus to heal him and set him free.

Consider the love this man was receiving. First, every day someone carried him to the temple. That's love. Second, he had been getting alms from people. We don't know if they were giving out of pity or obligation. After all, this man was in a perfect spot. People were headed to church and they knew the Scriptures required the giving of alms to the poor. He could obviously benefit from the guilt factor. But the people also might have been filled with compassion for him and gave to him for that reason.

But Peter and John extended love in a different way. Notice that they weren't too busy to stop and help this man. They certainly had places to go and people to see, and even may have had religious obligations, but they stopped anyway and entered into his pain. They told him to look at them, "*and he fixed his attention on them.*"

They did not allow their own good to become soured by someone who wasn't doing as well. Some of us think that if our life is good, we need to stay away from those who are hurting lest their struggles take away from our happiness. But Peter and John realized this man needed help. So they said, "While we can't help you in the way you think you need, we can help you in a way you've never thought of."

Finally, they were not judgmental of this man. How many of us have seen someone on the side of the street and judged them without knowing anything about them? How many times, without hearing their story, do we assume it's somehow their fault or somehow due to their sin? This man needed help from his neighbors because his crippled condition had nothing to do with anything he had done.

What an awesome reminder that we should always be ready to help not only our neighbors, but even strangers we encounter. I think of the words of songwriter Brandon Heath.

All those people goin' somewhere
Why have I never cared?
Give me Your eyes for just one second
Give me Your eyes so I can see
Everything that I keep missing
Give me Your love for humanity
Give me Your arms for the broken-hearted
The ones that are far beyond my reach
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten
Give me Your eyes so I can see

(From "Give Me Your Eyes" by Brandon Heath)

Some of us are blind to the hurts and sorrows around us, and because of that we are unfit examples of what it means to be a follower of Christ. We must never forget that we are that lame man and Jesus, Who was healthy and rich, came to us, got our attention, knelt down and said to us, "I can make you well."

This solution involves unbelievers experiencing Jesus.

As we'll see next week, the rest of this passage describes the reaction of the people and what Peter preaches to them. When this 40-year-old lame man was healed—a man whom they know to be a cripple—they were astonished. "Holy cow, how did that happen?" A crowd of people gathered around Peter and John, wanting to know how they were able to heal this man. So Peter began to tell them, "It isn't our piety. It isn't our power. It's Jesus—and you need to experience Him."

So how do we know, as we share Jesus with others, that they've actually experienced Him? First, we will be able to see a life change in that person. The lame man went from being on the ground to, in the name of Jesus, jumping up, leaping for joy, and praising God. That's an indisputable life change. We live in a culture where people may say they experience Jesus, but there is no evidence that they have. There was no question in the case of this man. He was running around, screaming, "I'm healed! I'm healed!" He praised God. He doesn't praise the disciples. He knew God was the One Who healed him.

If you want to know if someone's experience of Jesus is authentic, they will be pointing to and exalting Him as the One Who has solved their problems and Who has changed them forever. When anyone asks why they have joy and hope, they'll say, "It's because of Jesus." When they're asked how they can deal with their sorrows or pain, they'll say, "It's because of Jesus."

As we'll see later in Peter's sermon, the way we know someone has experienced Jesus is they'll turn from their sin in repentance. Peter says "*Repent therefore,*" in verse 19. Then in verse 26 he says they will receive God's blessing "*by turning every one of you from your wickedness.*" How do we know if someone is experiencing Jesus? Well, are they turning from their sin? Are they doing everything in their power to stay away from it?

This solution involves boldly confronting sin no matter the audience.

The people are flabbergasted by the miracle that has taken place. They've known this man to be a cripple for many years, but now he's walking. They don't know what to do with what they've seen. The chief priests and leaders don't know how to fit it into their theology. Peter realizes it's an opportunity to preach.

He could have preached about how great people are or anything else. Ten different times he points to the people, "You...you...you." And he doesn't say very nice things to them. "You delivered Jesus over. You chose a murderer over the Savior of the world. You

accused Him falsely. You did not esteem Him. When He had the opportunity to be released, because He hadn't committed any crimes, you threw Him back into prison. You...you...you..."

Some of us might react to this, saying we don't like Peter's kind of preaching. "It's too judgmental. Don't tell me what to do." But remember this isn't Jesus preaching. It's Peter, who himself denied Jesus. Good biblical preaching confronts sin. But good biblical preaching comes from a preacher who himself has sinned and who tells you to stop sinning.

Sometimes I struggle with the question of why God would allow a sinful man like myself to preach to a group of sinners, telling you that you have disobeyed God. I need to remember that when I'm pointing one finger at you, there are a whole lot of fingers pointing back at me.

Still we might think, "Who are you, Peter, to be saying these things?" Even though he is a broken man, Peter is God's divine instrument to proclaim the gospel. Evangelism is basically broken, filthy sinners saved by grace, confronting the world as we have been confronted.

Nevertheless, we are told to judge others as we ourselves would want to be judged. Confront others as we would want to be confronted. Peter tells these people, "You're the reason Christ died." But then in verse 17, he adds, "You did this in ignorance. You didn't know what you were doing. But now that you've been told that Jesus is the Messiah—the One Whom the prophets foretold and Whom we ourselves saw after He was resurrected—now what will you do?"

This solution involves offering grace to all who will receive.

So after Peter confronts them, he offers the people grace if they will receive it. Beginning with the patriarchs and prophets, Peter tells them how Jesus in fact is the One Who is able to redeem them from sin. He's the One Who can heal the lame and set the captives free, just as they have now witnessed. He then calls them to turn from their sin and experience the refreshing restoration that Christ offers.

This is my message to you today: If you're living in sin, I want to confront you with the truth that it will send you to hell. But because of God's mercy and amazing love for you, He sent Jesus to die so that you can have refreshing restoration now, then you will spend eternity in heaven with Him. What are you going to do? Are you going to stay where you've been in your ignorance, or will you bow the knee, turn from your wicked ways and follow Jesus?

This man was crippled, but he experienced God's mercy and so can you. No matter how bad your past has been—whether it was your fault or not—there's always grace. Turn from your sin and He will forgive you.

And finally, Christ followers, we are to take to heart His mission, reaching even the broken and despised things of this world with His message of mercy and grace.