

The God of Great Grace

Introduction

This passage is Peter's explanation of what the healing of the lame man means. Remember from last week, the man, lame from birth, was healed as he exercised his God-given faith in Jesus Christ. He then leaps up in fulfillment of Isaiah 35, which speaks about in the Last Days or Church Age when the lame will leap like a deer. Now we pick up the story as Peter, John, and the healed man enter the temple and are standing in the area known as Solomon's Portico.

As we work our way through this morning's passage, I hope you will take note of three important observations. First, notice with me the similarities between this explanation and sermon about the lame man and that of Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost. We will also observe God's greatness and grace in offering forgiveness to those who murdered His Son. Finally, Peter explains that all the Old Testament prophets spoke about Jesus.

Key Truth: *It is Jesus Christ who gives people the faith required to believe in Him as the Messiah and by their belief in Him they receive God's grace and gift of salvation.*

A basic truth that many do not understand is God is not like mankind. He is entirely different. If God were like people, there is absolutely no way He would offer those who murdered His Son forgiveness. We must remember that God is not like us. He is the God of great and infinite grace. It is man's nature to want to make

God like mankind to better define Him. This is something we should never do. Here is an example from Hosea of how God acts differently than men. God asks, ⁸“How can I give you up, O Ephraim? (Son of Joseph and the tribe of Ephraim occupied the territory north of the Dead Sea and was a name used for the northern kingdom of Israel.) How can I hand you over, O Israel? (Name given to Jacob and then the nation called by God) How can I make you like Admah? (City neighboring Sodom and Gomorrah and believed to have been destroyed with them. God is saying He will not destroy Ephraim, even though they deserve destruction.) How can I treat you like Zeboiim? (City adjacent to Sodom and Gomorrah and believed to have been destroyed with them and Admah) My heart recoils within me; (They had turned their back to God. God could destroy them as He did Sodom and Gomorrah – but) my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹ I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; **for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.**” (Hosea 11:8-9) God is in control of all and will not let His anger be out of control as men do, for His plan will be fulfilled just as He has ordained. So, we understand that all mankind from the vilest sinner to the nicest sinner can be saved but it will be on God’s terms. Each and every human must recognize one critical truth. That truth is; we each had a part in the murder of Jesus. Our sin is why He went to the cross. Each person must also give an account to God. Will we accept and love and trust God’s Son Jesus Christ or will we reject Jesus, as it were, and cry out for Barabbas? Will we surrender to Christ and be saved by God’s grace and mercy?

Both man’s sin and God great grace is laid before each person as Peter responds to the people who were amazed at the lame man’s healing.

Let me pray for our time in God’s Word this morning as we seek to better understand God’ grace.

Who Healed?

Peter begins with explaining who healed the lame man. Reading at verse 11, “While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. 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?” It is important that we note how quickly Peter refutes the idea that it was somehow by his power or piety this man was healed. Peter wants there to be no mistake here, Jesus healed this man just as surely as if He said the words and took him by the hand Himself. Peter was a tool of God used for the glory of Jesus Christ and operating under the direction of the Spirit and power of the name of Jesus.

Verse 11 tells us the people made a mad dash to Peter and John to honor them or even to worship them or maybe hoping to receive a miracle of their own. The people were very quick to look for a reason other than God for this lame man to walk. It is the same today, people will search for reasons other than God in order to not be accountable for their own sin and to believe in men they can see instead of a God they do not. This should remind us of verses that declare God is very serious about His glory. Reading from Isaiah chapter 42, where God the Father begins by foretelling of His Son and finishes by declaring His own holiness. ⁵“Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶‘I am the LORD; I have called you (*Jesus*) in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ **I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my**

praise to carved idols. ⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.” (Isaiah 42:5-9) God will not give His glory to anyone else; Jesus possesses God’s glory for He is God. All this is told through the prophet before it happens, so that, people may believe. A few chapters later the prophet again records the words of God. God is saying He will refine Israel before He saves them from Babylon, ¹⁰ “Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? **My glory I will not give to another.**” (Isaiah 48:10-11) Glory belongs to God alone and those who believe in God and give Him glory, He refines into His children; this is the lifelong process we call sanctification.

I recently was reading about Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel, he too, thought that he was responsible for what God did and he was great. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and tells him he must repent. Because he was unrepentant, he wanders like a beast in the fields for 7 years. Because he saw himself as a god, the true God refined and corrected him. This similar to how God dealt with King Herod, as we will study later in Acts, ²¹ “On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. ²² And the people were shouting, ‘The voice of a god, and not of a man!’ ²³ Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.” (Acts 12:21-23) Peter and John knew all glory belonged to God and unlike Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, they set the record straight. Man must never take credit for what belongs to God.

I found it interesting and I hope you do also, when we get to chapter 14 of Acts some months from now the Apostle Paul experienced a similar situation.

⁸“Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰ said in a loud voice, ‘Stand upright on your feet.’ And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹ And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ ¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ ‘Men, why are you doing these things? **We also are men**, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should **turn from these vain things to a living God**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.’ (Acts 14:8-15) We too must be very careful to give God credit for everything. If you are in some way talented or gifted or have certain skills do not ever act like it is all you. God gave that gift to you, to be used for His glory. Your gifts, talents and abilities are meant so people will applaud you, but they will praise God.

The lame man is healed and Peter is preaching and the scene is one of people in amazement. Everyone knew this man who sat at the gate for decades and it was clear that it was an absolute miracle that he now walked. Unlike at Pentecost where there remained many skeptics, here at the temple gate all witnessed, all saw the man walk and there were no skeptics. Luke says all these people were “**utterly astounded**”. It is at this moment in time that the people are gathering around Peter and John, and Peter begins to preach the Gospel to them.

They had entered the temple and the man who was healed followed them. Most likely, he had never been inside the temple before. Jewish law forbids all who were maimed, sick, or deformed from entering the temple. So, this man in his excitement follows close behind Peter and John. Now the place where this happened was Solomon's Portico or colonnade.

Author of Life

Peter begins his sermon by showing those who are listening that the God he refers to is the God they have already been introduced to by the prophets. He is the God of their ancestors. Again, the first point Peter stresses, like in Chapter 2, is that God sent Jesus as His Son, God exalted Him and God glorified Him. While God was glorifying Jesus, these people called for Him to be murdered. Reading at verse 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.” Peter made clear that even when the pagan Governor Pilate who did not know the God of Abraham, even he wanted to release Jesus, because he could find no fault in Him, yet, these Jews who knew of God and had long waited for the coming of the Messiah, they called out all the louder, crucify Him, “His blood be on us and on our children!” (Matthew 27:25) What a chilling declaration!

Peter is also very precise when he uses the title, “**Author of life**” the Greek word “*archegos*” in context means, God, the Creator of all life had sent Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel and to all the world specifically to pay for their sins once and for all giving them eternal life. Jesus came to seek out and rescue those

who were perishing and they murdered Him. Can you see the seriousness of their crime? The very One sent by God to save them was murdered by them. To further solidify their guilt, Peter adds, “**God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.**” Peter is saying, we the disciples of Christ can testify and so can many others, that Jesus Christ, whom you murdered, God raised from the dead – proving Jesus is the Messiah. Again, we see how mankind shows themselves to be enemies of God by killing His only Son.

Faith In Jesus

In verse 16 Peter restates the point of his sermon, “**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.**” They are all witnesses to the healing power of Jesus because they all see and recognize the man standing before them. He used to lay at the entrance to the temple on his mat, but now he is welcomed into the temple and is standing in their midst. No skeptics here, many of those present must have wondered when God would pass judgment upon them for their crime committed against His only Son. They must have been crushed with guilt and their hope of heaven faded.

Just as their guilt struck them deep and their hope faded, Peter continued, reading at verse 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 back, 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.**”

Even though they murdered God's Son. Even though they are 100% guilty and awaiting prosecution. Even though pagan Romans saw the innocence of God's Son and they denied it. Even though they went out of their way to lay hold of Jesus and have Him falsely persecuted. Even though they desired to see Jesus beat and crucified, Peter is making clear that this Jesus the Christ of God is offering them salvation through turning from their sin in repentance and asking for forgiveness and believing in Him as the Messiah.

It is true, Peter says, they were acting in ignorance in the sense of what God was orchestrating but they were not ignorant of their actions. They knew what they were doing and they all stand guilty before God. Their hands are dripping with divine blood. Up against the backdrop of their blood-stained wickedness is God's pure white holiness. Even though they chose deceit and murder, God still holds out the offer of life, eternal life given through His Son. We must understand, with great offers of grace comes great judgment for those who reject Christ. To refuse the Son of God is to seal one's fate forever as God's enemy.

I hope you observed with me that Peter does not point these people to the sacrificial system of the temple as a means of blotting out sin. Temple sacrifices never blotted out sin, but temporarily covered sin. Now, repentance and true forgiveness comes through Jesus Christ, God's eternal sacrificial Lamb. The sacrificial system is now obsolete, null and void because it was temporary, it was to prepare the people for the true sacrificial Lamb and point to God's final sacrifice, namely, Jesus Christ.

We also should note that Peter does not say as he did earlier, repent and be baptized for the remission of sin, but he simply says repent. Peter wants them to understand their need to repent, so again, with emphasis, he says everyone must

repent of their sin before a holy God and believe in His Son as the only way to receive God's mercy and grace. Peter's point is, they had foolishly rejected the Messiah and killed Him. Now, God offers them another opportunity to come to Him through His Son Jesus, the Messiah. This is God going the extra mile – God is going further than sinful mankind deserves. Here we see the greatness and majesty of God. Peter voices this salvation offer of God, showing that the Last Days are present, the Church Age has begun. This is a new offer. In other words, it does not come through Old Testament sacrifices, which merely covered over sin. This offer comes only through Jesus the Messiah; by believing in Jesus as the Son of God and believing in Jesus as their Lord and Savior their sins are wiped away or blotted out. This has Last Days significance to it - the time has come for the New Covenant of God. Things are different now. Jesus came to earth, lived, died, was resurrected and is currently in heaven working through His Apostles and salvation comes only through Him.

In God's goodness, He heals a lame beggar so that the very people who crucified His Son could be saved and made into the people His Son will receive as His inheritance. Verses 21 and 22 speak of the second coming of Christ, *“that God the Father 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.’”* When Jesus returns His great grace will be revealed to all and His judgment for those who rejected Him and He will restore everything as it was to be before sin entered the world. For now, the plea of Peter and John is that those listening would repent and trust Jesus, their Messiah, their King, their Savior and their Lord and if they receive Jesus, they will be saved.

Listen to the Prophets

Peter says you have seen this miracle of Jesus the Christ in healing this lame man and you have heard me tell you of your need to repent and come to our Holy God, now take heed of the prophets of God who said the same things. Reading at verse 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.”

Here, like in Chapter 2, Peter goes back to the Old Testament to add even more proof. If it were not enough that this man whom they know as the man who used to beg in front of the temple gate and is now standing healed and if it were not enough that now many of them realize the truth, that God sent Jesus to heal them and they killed Him, and if it were not enough that many of them now know that Jesus did rise from the grave, and if it were not enough that this former lame man is leaping and praising God and declaring that his healing came from Jesus – Peter opens the Scriptures and proves that Jesus is the key focus of all the Scriptures and was foretold by the prophets.

Peter says, Moses knew of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Moses said,¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen” ... now the words of God,¹⁸ “I

will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.”

(Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18) Peter confirms what Moses said in verses 22 and 23.

Like Moses was to Israel during the Exodus, Jesus will be to this generation and every generation to follow, He is a Prophet of God like Moses and yet, Jesus is far more than Moses and even Moses knew Jesus was the Messiah to come. Now comes the moment of truth for those who are listening. Moses prophesied that God would raise up a Prophet like him. Peter tells us that the Prophet Moses foretold of is Jesus, both Prophet and Son of God. For Moses and all the prophets, Jesus would be a future fulfillment. The time period for Moses’ prophecies spanned from his day until they were fulfilled with the coming of Jesus. Once these prophecies were fulfilled with the coming of Jesus, then Moses’ prophecies are completed and human history enters the next phase of redemptive history, the last days, which continue as we are now waiting for Jesus’ return.

Peter continues saying all the prophets prophesied about the coming of the Messiah, about Jesus. Reading verse 24, “And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.” Again, Peter is saying go back and read the prophecies, they point to Christ and are now fulfilled and human history has entered into the Last Days, and the Last Days continue to these days and will continue until Jesus returns.

Then Peter explains that his hearers, the Jewish people, God’s chosen people are the ones who should be receiving these eternal blessings first and foremost. Reading verse 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.’” All the nations will be blessed through Jesus and

it begins with the nation of Israel. Please understand, their eternal future hinges upon what they do with Jesus as the Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the prophets spoke of and it is through Jesus that the covenant, the Abrahamic promise will now transfer to them and other nations and through the generations. If they are to prove themselves to be the true Israel, they will embrace their risen Messiah. If not, the wrath of God will remain on them.

Even though they were the ones directly responsible for the death of God's Son, God wants them to understand His New Covenant is now begun, God has sent to them, first, the Apostles and then preachers to preach the Gospel of Good News so that those who repent and believe will be saved. This is why Peter says in verse 26, ["God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."](#) Jesus came first to Israel, so that they might repent and now Jesus' Gospel of salvation will go to the world.

God raised up the Prophet Moses spoke of, God's only Son. God sent this Prophet to His people Israel first. They rejected the Messiah and crucified Him. Even still, God sends Jesus' preachers and believers to announce the Good News that people's sins can be forgiven but they must come to God through His Son, Jesus.

The people at the temple Peter is preaching the Gospel to – will they listen? Will they repent? Return next Lord's Day and you will hear the answer.

Understand the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of great grace. He sent His Son to offer forgiveness and salvation. The offer Peter spoke of to the crowd that day is the same offer made today. So, I say to all who have ears to hear - in the name of Jesus Christ, repent!

This takes us back to verses 19 to 21, “Repent therefore, and turn back, 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.” My beloved this is the life-long path before each us.

One big mistake that some Christians make is saying, I have already repented, so this sermon is for other people; it is for the person next to me or over there who has not exercised faith in Christ. Oh, how this is not correct. We must always be hearing the Gospel and always trusting in Christ and always repenting of our sins. This is a daily event. We must continually be trusting in Christ and continually repenting of our sin. This is how we have assurance and this is how we grow in God’s grace. Amen!