

Bible Stories

PETER and JOHN

Acts 5:41-42
September 16, 2023

One day at about 3 in the afternoon, Peter and John went to the Temple to pray. When they came to the Gate Beautiful a lame man asked them for a donation – he was over 40 years old.

Peter: *"Look at me. I don't have silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – get up!"*

Peter grabbed the man's hand and helped him up. Immediately the man's feet and ankles became strong and he began to leap and walk around. He was so excited that he followed Peter and John into the Temple leaping and jumping and praising God.

Everyone in the Temple was surprised because they all knew this man was lame – how could he be leaping and jumping?

When Peter saw the crowd, he addressed them: *"Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. It is by faith in the name of Jesus that this man, whom you all know, has been made strong – completely healed. Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what had been foretold through the prophets – that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.... {Acts 3:12-19}*

As Peter was talking to the crowd, priests, Temple guards and Sadducees wandered over. They were concerned that Peter and John were teaching the people about Jesus - Peter and John were arrested

But they were too late because many who heard Peter and John, believed.

The number of male believers grew to about 5,000.

The next day the religious leaders began to question Peter and John – *"By what power, or in Whose name have you done this?"*

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit responded: *"Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, all you people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." {Acts 4:8-12}*

All the members of the Sanhedrin knew these men to be uneducated and untrained fishermen, but they spoke with power and conviction and they began to understand that these men had been with Jesus.

Since the man who had been healed was standing right next to Peter and John, the Sanhedrin remained silent and sent them from the room --- *"What are we going to do? All Jerusalem knows that they have done an outstanding miracle, so we can't deny it. However, we cannot allow this to spread any further amongst the people, so, let's order them to stop talking about Jesus."*

Peter and John were recalled to stand before the Sanhedrin and were ordered to stop talking about Jesus.

Peter and John responded: *"You must decide for yourselves whether it is right for us, in God's sight, to obey you rather than Him. As for us? We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."* **{Acts 4:19-20}**

The Sanhedrin threatened them again and sent them home.

The congregation spent time praising God and asking for His guidance. As they did, the house was, once again, filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak the Word of God with boldness and with great power regarding the resurrection of Jesus.

Those who listened were moved to provide for the needy among the congregation. All the money from the sale of land and houses was given to the Apostles for distribution.

People were constantly being added to the congregation and those who were sick or filled with the evil spirits were being healed.

When the High Priest and his fellow Sadducees heard this, they were filled with jealousy. Peter and John were arrested and put in jail.

- *Acts 5:19-21a - But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.*

When the Sanhedrin met the next day, the guards reported that even though the jail had been locked and guarded, the prisoners were gone. At that moment someone came in to report that Peter and the other Apostles were teaching in the Temple. The guards quietly escorted the Apostles back to the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin: *"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."* **{Acts 5:28}**

Peter: *"We have already told you that we must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead - the same Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to all those who obey him."* **{Acts 5:29-32}**

The Sanhedrin was convicted by Peter's words and wanted to kill the entire group – I mean, how hard can it be to get rid of a few fishermen?

Gamaliel, a highly respected teacher of the law, ordered the Apostles to go out of the chamber and then he addressed the Sanhedrin: *"Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody special, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed and all his followers were scattered - it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if what they are doing is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."* **{Acts 5:35-39}**

The Sanhedrin took his advice. The Apostles were flogged, ordered to stop talking about Jesus, and sent home.

- *Acts 5:41-42 - The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

What do we do with this story?

The Peter of this story is the same Peter, who not many months before had declared Jesus to be the Son of God only to allow himself, a short time later, to be the mouthpiece of Satan – "you will not surely die."

It is the same Peter who swore that he would follow Jesus where ever He went – even to death – only to run at the first sign of trouble and deny that he knew Jesus a few hours later.

Almost everyday of the past 3 ½ years, Peter had relied on himself – all the disciples had. They were bold with their promises, but not when the rubber hit the road, so what was the cause of such a radical transformation?

The power of the Holy Spirit – full stop.

It wasn't Peter and John – the fishermen – who helped the lame man to his feet. It was Peter and John – the vessels of the Holy Spirit – who declared the man healed through the power of Jesus of Nazareth.

It wasn't Peter and John – the fishermen – who stood before the Sanhedrin. It was Peter and John – the vessels of the Holy Spirit – who stood boldly and unflinchingly.

- **Mark 13:11** - Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

It wasn't Peter and John – the fishermen – who brought conviction of sin. It was only through the indwelling Holy Spirit that Peter and John and the rest of the Apostles were able stir the crowds to seek repentance and baptism.

Day by day, people were healed, people repented, people were saved – and the church grew, but it wasn't Peter and John – the fishermen – who grew the church. It was the Holy Spirit who grew the church.

- **Acts 4:13** - When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.