

## Bible Study 61

# Strength to Stand

BY ALLEN JAMES

**Read Acts 3:1-4:23.**

Why were Peter and John going to the temple? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was the crippled man at the gate of the temple? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened to Peter and John after Peter spoke to the onlookers? Why?

Upon their release, what were Peter and John ordered not to do? \_\_\_\_\_

Did they obey?     Yes     No

Anyone who has ever been around church much while growing up has probably heard this familiar story. It was customary for cripples to place themselves outside the gate leading to the temple to ask alms (to beg) from those individuals who were going to worship inside the temple. On this particular day, a crippled man begged for money from Peter and John which opened up a very unsolicited and unexpected opportunity to witness.

**When was the last time an unexpected opportunity came along for you to share your faith? How did you respond?**

On several occasions I've encountered people who were ready to hear the gospel. Essentially they have asked me, "How can I have eternal life?" However, most times the opportunities are there, but people are not eagerly waving me over to share my faith with them. Peter and John were on their way to the temple at the customary time of prayer when this crippled man asked them for help. He was probably expecting some type of monetary gift, but God had something else in mind. Peter and John could have looked down at the ground to avoid making eye contact with the man and walked on into the temple. Yet they both listened to the Holy Spirit and responded, giving him the help he needed.

**Where were you the last time you had an encounter like this (e.g., seeing someone with a "will work for food" sign while waiting at a stoplight)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was your response?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are some ways God might use us to meet the needs of people like this?**

Seeing the unexpected opportunity that God had planned, Peter stepped up and began to share with the crowd how Jesus Christ could heal their spiritually crippled condition if they would repent and seek God's forgiveness.

**P**eter and John were vessels whom God used to heal this man. The passage reveals to us that the man had been lame from birth and that many in the community knew him. We also find that he is over 40 years old. Can you imagine this scene? A 40-year-old man who had never been able to walk, run or play as a child now had the strength to stand and walk. Can you imagine the excitement in his voice as he began walking and jumping throughout the temple courts?

As he returned to Peter and John, a crowd of people followed him. Seeing the unexpected opportunity that God had planned, Peter stepped up and began to share with the crowd how Jesus Christ could heal their spiritually crippled condition if they would repent and seek God's forgiveness. Notice in Acts 3:11-26, Peter never drew any attention to himself or to the other apostles. Everything he said pointed to Jesus.

**What was the effect of Peter's message on the crowd? (Acts 4:4)** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was the effect of the message on Peter and John? (Acts 4:3)** \_\_\_\_\_

**When was the last time you remember God moving in a mighty way?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you ever been persecuted for your faith or for sharing Christ? Explain.**

**D**oes it amaze you at the stand Peter and John made even while in jail? What was their secret? Acts 4:13 is an incredible statement about these two men. It says that the rulers, elders and leaders of the law "took note that these men had been with Jesus." Peter and John had been through much the preceding few months. Peter had even denied Christ. Yet God had provided them with the strength to stand in this moment. Even after they were ordered not to speak of Jesus anymore, they took a stand. Peter and John knew three things. They knew where they came from, they knew what they came for, and they knew who to point to. *On mission* Christians know where they came from, what they are here for, and who to point to. What kind of stand are you taking right now for Jesus?

**What are some areas in your life where you need to improve on taking a stand?**