

Victory over the devil
The Five R's: Renounce
Third Sunday of Easter,
April 26, 2009

We're continuing in our series this week, "Victory over the devil: the Five R's" by exploring our reading from Acts. I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 3, verses 1-16 so we can review the passage together and make some notes on the pages of your Bibles.

Acts is the fifth book in the New Testament, so the order goes Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – the Gospels that tell about the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and then comes the book of Acts which records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the early church. The books of Luke and Acts were both written by the same person, Luke, and were both written to the same audience, a person named Theophilus. We really don't know anything about the recipient of the two letters of Luke other than Theophilus had just 'the awfulest' name in the whole Bible, right after the poor lady also mentioned in Acts with the name "Dorcas"!

Luke wrote his Gospel based on 'interviews' he did with those who knew Jesus personally and were there during the years of His ministry. He wrote the book of Acts based on what he himself saw and experienced as a firsthand witness to the early church's beginning.

I'm not going to read through all the verses from our reading again this morning, but rather just quickly review what happened. This healing took place after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, and also after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter and John were on their way to the temple one afternoon, and they came across a beggar who had always been crippled, who asked those going into the temple for money. Peter and John looked at him, and rather than giving him money, they gave him mobility through the power of the name of Jesus. Peter then delivered a 'sermon' to those who saw all this, and by the time he was done we find out in chapter 4, verse 4, that many who heard him believed in Jesus and the number of Christians grew to 5000 men, not counting women and children.

Ok, that's the context, now how does this relate to our series and our lives today when we leave this Holy House and walk back into our jobs, our schools, our day-to-day lives tomorrow?

The name of this series is "Victory over the devil: **The Five R's**." Last week the "R" word we looked at was 'Repentance' and we saw how we need to repent and get those things in our lives out of the way that keep us from fully realizing and living in the victory Jesus won for us. This week the "R" word is "Renounce", as in "Renouncing the devil's strongholds in our lives." But first, what does it mean to 'renounce'?

As the word renounce is used in the Bible, it is from the Greek word *arneomai*, and it means "to verbally renounce knowledge or relationship; to refuse to agree with; to not consent to." Last

week we talked about repenting of spiritual strongholds, this week we talk about the renouncing of spiritual strongholds to continue to grow into the victory we have through Jesus. How do we do this? How do we renounce these? Let's go back to our passage for today.

First, we have to realize Whose we are. You can write 1 Peter 1:8-9 in the margins of your Bibles: *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* You can also write 1 John 3:1 in the margins of your Bibles: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!...*

Whose are you? You are Jesus'! You are His through His death and resurrection to cover the cost of sins. You are His through the love God the Father poured out on you. The very first step in being able to renounce strongholds of the devil is realizing whose we are. The second step is closely related to this: we need to recognize we can't do it on our own.

You and I have no personal power over the devil. Remember (and I just hate to give him this much credit, but I have to be honest), he is very powerful, much smarter than your or I, and knows the Bible better than anyone else alive today. The only thing that will work in renouncing the devil in our lives is the name of Jesus. If you have your Bibles open to Acts 3, go ahead and put a bookmark there, and turn just a few pages to chapter 19, and let's take a look at verses 13 – 16.

You and I, in and of ourselves, have no power over the devil, only Jesus does. The good news is, as we said in our first point, we belong to Jesus. Because of that, we can call on His name to overcome the strongholds in our lives. We just need to be sure we are truly calling on *His* name in belief and trust, and not as a 'magic' cure-all or quick fix or a lucky charm as some people tried to do in this section from Acts 19.

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

One man whooped seven men because not even together as a group could they overpower one demon.

Our second point in how to renounce the devil is realizing we can't do it on our own, and the third point is what we've already alluded to: Only Jesus can subdue the devil and his demons.

Let's go back to our verses in Acts 3, you can write Philippians 2:10-11 in the margins of your Bibles, "... *at the name of Jesus every knee should {will} bow, in heaven and on earth and under*

the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
This is the power that Peter called on to raise the crippled man to his feet. In fact, in your Bibles, underline an extremely key phrase in this section in verse 6 – *...in the name of Jesus...*, and in verse 16, *...it is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see...*

Now all this may be interesting enough, but what does it have to do with us today?

We said it last week – we can't have victory over anything that we still cling to while at the same time trying to get victory over it. In the same way that the devil will try to keep us from repenting to begin to realize the full extent of the Easter victory we have in Jesus, he will also do what he can to keep us from renouncing him, his works and his ways. If he can keep us from doing that, he'll continue to keep us from living in the victory we have *over him*.

In our text today, the man had an obvious problem – he had been crippled from birth. It was something that had been put on him through no action of his own. However, perhaps more sad than that, is the fact he accepted it and allowed himself to be reduced to begging for a living. Now I understand there were no programs and such for people with physical limitations back then like there are today, but the point is still the same: he simply accepted what he had – the thing that clung to him; the thing he allowed to define him.

I wonder how many of us have done the same? Oh, maybe not in the physical sense, but in the mental and emotional and spiritual sense? What labels have been put on us we remember and allow to define us? How many of us are turning to other people or other things to find and feel our self-worth? In what place has the devil taken residence? What are the lies of the devil that have wormed their way in that we need to renounce by the power of the name of Jesus that we, His saved and redeemed children, can call upon?

I'd like to show a little video. It's called simply, "Identity."

{Video} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGFBYuCdQ-8>

Seldom loved unselfishly. Don't belong. Don't quite measure up. Inferior. Unimportant.

Lies. Lies from the father of lies that would seek to keep us in the place he wants us to be: crippled and begging. It's time to renounce them. We can because our repentance leads to the exposing and weakening of the devil's hold, and we can because of Who we belong to. It's time to live in the victory Jesus has for us. It's time for the truth that calls out to us when the devil is renounced to be proclaimed loud and long from the lips of the redeemed:

God's child. He calls you His own. You have a future of hope. You are free from condemnation. You have a glorious future in Heaven. You cannot – will not – be separated from the love of God in Christ. He is your very great reward, and you are His beloved child.

Renounce all else. Renounce in the name of Jesus – ‘cause nothing else is going to do it – the lies the enemy has placed in your life. Renounce them. Refuse to agree with, and refuse to consent to, the strongholds the evil one would place in your way; those things he would use to turn you away from the truth God speaks over you, and instead listen to his lies.

Would you pray with me please?

Lord God, some of us today are struggling with accepting who we are in Your eyes because of the faith in Jesus You give us through Your Holy Spirit. For too long we’ve heard the lies of the evil one, and we have forgotten Whose we are – Yours – and how we got that way – through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Forgive us for forgetting; forgive us for not believing it fully and letting our lives be changed by it. Send Your Spirit to us to help us renounce by the power and authority in the name of Jesus all that would take us away from You and keep us from living in the victory You have already given us.

Thank You Jesus, for dying and rising again; for taking our punishment and securing our Heavenly future.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for the faith You give and strengthen, and the power You give to speak against the workings of our enemy.

Thank You our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Amen.