

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it – but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”

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Text
Acts 3:1-10

Topic
Peter tells the lame man to look at him; he's healed, and he begins walking, leaping and praising God

Title
Look Before You Leap

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.

Acts 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

Acts 3:3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

Acts 3:4 And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

Acts 3:5 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Acts 3:7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Acts 3:8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God.

Acts 3:9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

Acts 3:10 Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Introduction

What's wrong with this picture? The gate was **Beautiful**. The man laid outside it each day was not.

If you didn't know the story, it would inspire criticism. What kind of a God would allow such a thing, right outside His house of worship!

There is a spiritual truth being taught. The man at the gate was physically lame from birth. He could not, on his own, approach God in worship. **Mankind is spiritually lame from birth. We cannot, on our own, approach God in worship.**

All men and women are lame spiritual beggars. It is only through an encounter with Jesus Christ that we are enabled to walk with God.

Now that Jesus is ascended into Heaven, He encounters lame men and women through His Church on earth. Believers are His body on the earth, His members who speak about Him and reach out to the lame to heal them for eternity.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Shows You Just How Lame People Are, and #2 You Show People Just How Loving The Lord Is.

#1 Jesus Shows You Just How Lame People Are (v1-3)

We're not sure how much time elapsed between the events of chapter two and those of chapter three. A few days; a few weeks. A **lot** of miraculous things were occurring. If the healing of the lame man is typical, then the miracles were occurring in the every day encounters of the apostles. Walking about, going through their day, the Holy Spirit gave them a sensitivity to people. We should ask for the Holy Spirit to give us a sensitivity, then do what He says.

Each day the apostles continued to go to the Temple. Each time, they would pass-by this lame man, in his regular spot. In fact, Jesus

must have passed-by him at least several times during the last days before the Crucifixion.

I mention this because Christians get confused about divine healing. Does God still heal? If not, why not? If so – why doesn't He heal more often?

Jesus and the apostles did not heal everyone they encountered. Healings seem more prevalent in the first century than they do today, but we can't be sure that is statistically true. Missionaries report many miraculous events. God still heals, in His sovereignty. Healing *is* for today, and for any day that God determines it would bring glory to Him.

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.

The **ninth hour** of the Jewish day was 3:00pm. Peter and John went to the Temple **at the hour of prayer**. While the priest offered incense in the holy place of the Tabernacle, Jews gathered outside to pray.

Acts 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

In chapter four we learn this man was over forty years old. Daily he would be carried to the same spot. It was his territory, so to speak. Begging was his occupation.

All the gates had names. This was the Gate **Beautiful**, the eastern gate. The lame man was positioned there. What a sad contrast – to sit crippled in the shadow of a gate called **Beautiful**.

Acts 3:3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

He was a professional beggar, in his prime! He could id people who were most likely to give him **alms**. It therefore seems odd he would single-out Peter and John. They were common fishermen by trade. They would not be wearing expensive clothing, or in any way look as if they had money to spare.

The Holy Spirit was with this beggar, leading him. I suggest also that there was something attractive about Peter and John. Their countenance was such that this beggar was drawn to them.

The Holy Spirit is in the world, with people, seeking to lead them to Jesus. You are in the world, around those people. Walking with Jesus ought to produce a certain countenance that makes you attractive to them.

All of the unbelievers you encounter... **Are lame!** They are excluded from worshipping God, and from entering Heaven, because of their birth defects. So were you until you encountered Jesus – probably through the personal ministry and testimony of another Christian.

Start seeing everyone you encounter as lame and ask the Lord to use you to bring spiritual healing into their lives.

#2 You Show People Just How Loving The Lord Is (v4-10)

I wonder what this lame man thought about Jesus and His followers? After all, the Lord had done many miracles of healing; so had the apostles. Jesus probably passed-by this man on more than one occasion when He entered the Temple. If Jesus didn't pass him by, He certainly didn't seek him out. He left him in his condition.

Regardless what the lame man may have thought or argued, Peter didn't get into a theological discussion with him. He spoke about Jesus directly to the man's need. It's good advice to follow.

[Acts 3:4](#) And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

[Acts 3:5](#) So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

Mostly people don't stop and talk to beggars; they just drop their coins into the box. If you feel led to give a beggar money, **talk** to him or her first!

Peter spoke to him, getting his full [attention](#).

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Stop after he says, **silver and gold I do not have...** **Silver and gold** is what the lame man wanted, and thought he needed. Lame mankind has ideas about what they want and think they need. For example: Education and knowledge is touted as the solution to just about every need humanity has. If people only knew more about things like AIDS, for example, we would stop the world-wide epidemic. Education and knowledge are not working; but we won't abandon education as the solution. As a race, we are still reaching-out to take from the Tree of Knowledge – thinking we can rule ourselves apart from a relationship with God.

But what I do have I give you... Peter had something far more valuable to impart to the lame man. Spiritual resources are the things we truly need – salvation, sanctification, glorification. Those are available through **Jesus Christ of Nazareth**. By His grace and mercy, this lame man would **rise up and walk**.

It is only through Jesus that mankind is enabled to rise up and walk with God. He alone is the rightful, risen, reigning Lord.

Acts 3:7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Acts 3:8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God.

The commentators all point-out that these two verses are full with medical terminology.

1. The word translated **feet** is only used by Luke, and it discriminates between different parts of the feet. Here it refers to the heel.
2. Same with the words **ankle bones**; they are only found here in all the Bible.

Luke was a physician. His testimony could be trusted. He verified this as a bonafide healing. Not only was this man's body immediately healed. He could stand, walk, and jump – *things he had never learned to do!* He needed no rehab or physical therapy.

We get stuck on the healing itself. Conservative commentators try hard to prove that miracles, wonders, and signs ceased after the apostles died. Hyper-Charismatics try to duplicate miracles, signs, and wonders in every meeting – usually reverting to the flesh.

The most exciting part of this healing is the last half of verse eight, where Luke said the lame man entered the Temple... praising God. It wasn't that he could now walk; it was that he could now walk with God.

For forty-years he had been outside the Temple; an outcast not just from society, but seemingly from God. Now, in a moment, all that had changed and his very first action was to approach the Lord for worship.

It is to restore worship that we are saved to walk with God. It is to regain what was lost in the Garden of Eden when our parents chose badly. God has worked ever since in and through our history to save us that we might know Him.

Acts 3:9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

Acts 3:10 Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

The purpose of a miracle is to inspire **wonder and amazement**. Miracles are also signs. A sign points to something; a sign represents something; a sign imparts information.

In this case, the sign pointed to Jesus Christ because it was in His name that this lame man was healed.

The sign represented the fact that Jesus was alive and in Heaven. He must be alive, if Peter could heal in His name; and He must have Heavenly authority to heal on earth.

The information the sign imparts will be the subject matter of Peter's spontaneous sermon.

Peter and John did what Jesus had been doing before His crucifixion and ascension into Heaven. They were continuing to do all that **Jesus began both to do and teach** (Acts 1:1). Jesus' physical body was in Heaven, seated at the right hand of God. On earth, He was not without 'bodies' to continue His work; He was not without 'members' by which to speak and touch people.

You and I are His 'bodies,' His 'members,' on the earth. Individually and collectively we are to continue both to do and teach all that Jesus did and taught.

Even heal people??? Yes, if the Lord so desires. Remember: When Jesus was on the earth, walking in the will of His Father, He did not heal this man. Peter and John, walking in the Lord's will, *were* prompted and used to heal him. *Go figure!*

Healing is not the place to start. If you start there, you'll be drawn away from the central focus:

1. If you start by trying to understand divine healing, you might be drawn away towards the more conservative theology that tries so very hard to prove that healings were mostly for the first century and should not be expected today. For these cessationists, God fits nicely in a theological box!
2. If you start by trying to understand divine healing, you might be drawn away towards a hyper-charismatic theology that tries so very hard to replicate healings everywhere all the time. The so-called healings are pathetic imitations. That wound and destroy lives.

Start by simply seeing everyone you encounter, who is not a believer, as a lame man or woman. See them spiritually, the way God sees them: As beggars who are outside and cannot enter the presence of God. Jesus **is** the Beautiful Gate through which the lame may come and be healed spiritually.

Healing is not the place to start. The Healer is the place to start; He is our central focus. Reveal Him and let Him determine when and where miracles, signs, and wonders will follow.

Your part is to develop a sensitivity to the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and to walk with God in such a manner that your countenance draws people to you.

