

19. The Book of Acts—3:1-12

(9/9/26)

This evening in our study in the Book of Acts we will be entering into chapter 3—

Acts 3:1 (NKJV)

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

In the beginning, the Church was made up primarily of Jewish believers.

At this point in Church history, they didn't really see themselves as separate from Judaism.

And as such, they still went to the Temple to worship because it remained the center of the religious life of the nation of Israel.

And therefore, like all devout Jews, according to the Jewish custom of the day—every day at 9:00 A.M., Noon, and 3:00 P.M., they stopped what they were doing and headed to the Temple, where they spent an hour in prayer.

This time began with fifteen minutes of silence where they meditated on the greatness of God, followed by thirty minutes of petition, and ending with fifteen minutes of praise and worship.

I personally think that this a great pattern for our individual prayer lives today, where we meditate on the goodness and greatness of God for a while before moving into our requests and supplications before ending with thanksgiving and praise.

I know that when we begin our prayer time by reminding ourselves of God's goodness and greatness it has a way of increasing our faith as we realize that even our biggest concerns are no problem *for* Him.

This will increase our faith and confidence in bringing our requests to Him and cause our hearts to overflow with worship and praise toward Him.

So, Peter and John were going into the Temple to serve God in prayer (Acts 13:1-2)—when suddenly, He opened a door for the Spirit to move and a life (and in the process many other lives) to be forever changed!

As you go about your day with the Lord, always be on the lookout for His '*divine appointments*.'

(Comment)

But there are several lessons that come out of this incident about the men (and women) that God uses—in that first of all:

1. They're men of prayer.

The men that God uses are first and foremost men of prayer—and that shouldn't surprise us.

Surely if I want God to use my life, I need to be in contact with Him on a daily basis.

I need to seek His guidance. I need to seek His counsel. I should not move or act independently of His directions.

This is a vital principle and one which many Christians don't pay close attention to—that no lasting and blessed work of God will ever be wrought in and through a child of God without prayer.

Acts 3:1–3 (NKJV)

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

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;

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

[A gift of money for the poor]

There were nine gates that led from the Court of the Gentiles (the outer court of the Temple) into the Temple area itself.

Scholars are not all in agreement, but the Beautiful Gate was probably the “Eastern Gate” that led into the Court of the Women.

(It was called the Court of the Women because this was as far as a Jewish woman could go)

This gate was also referred to as the “*golden gate*” because it was made of Corinthian bronze, polished to look like gold—which made it a choice place for a lame man to beg.

Remember this was before any government social programs to help people with disabilities, which meant they were forced to depend totally on the generosity and kindness of others to supply their needs.

For many years, this man had to be carried each day, by family and friends, to this spot at the Temple, where he begged people for money who were going in to worship God.

This was clever because he knew people were more inclined to be generous with the poor and needy while on their way to worship God because they were seeking to earn God’s favor that He might be kind toward them and answer their prayers!

But also, the Jews believed that giving alms to the poor and handicapped brought them favor with God and helped earn them a place in heaven—and therefore, what better place to beg for alms than outside the Temple while people are going in for prayer?

Acts 3:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, “Look at us.” ⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 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.” ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.

This gets into the second thing I see here about the men that God uses—

2. They’re men of faith.

So, here’s a man who was maybe forty years of age, who has never been able to walk.

He was a common sight to the people in Jerusalem because daily he is there at this gate, begging.

And Peter speaks to this man and says to him, **“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.”**

It is said that Thomas Aquinas visited the pope at a time when large sums of money were being counted.

The pope boasted to him, *“We need no longer say with Peter, ‘Silver and gold I do not have!’”*

To which Aquinas replied, *“Neither can you say with Peter, ‘Rise up and walk!’”*

Someone noted that this man asked for alms and God gave him legs!

As Paul said, *“He gives us exceedingly more than we can ask and think.”* (Eph. 3:20)

(Talk about how I prayed 22 years ago for God to give me a small group to teach—and instead He gave me a big city to teach through a radio ministry!)

The spiritual lesson the Holy Spirit is teaching us through this lame man is fairly obvious—it's an illustration of the condition of each fallen sinner before and after they're saved.

He was born **lame**—as are all of us are born unable to walk rightly so as to please God.

Our earthly father Adam fell and passed his lameness on to all of his descendants (Rom. 5:12–21).

The man was also **poor** which symbolizes how that we as sinners are poor and needy—bankrupt before God, and unable to pay the tremendous debt that we owe Him (Matt. 18:21-27).

He was **outside the Temple** (the place of fellowship and communion with God)—even as all sinners are separated from God no matter how '*near to the beautiful gate*' of salvation they think they are through their religion.

The man was healed **wholly by the grace of God**—to which he gave immediate testimony to by **“walking, and leaping, and praising God”** (Acts 3:8).

This man became a witness—his was truly a **transformed life** that no one could question.

To coin a really bad pun—everyone knew where he stood! (Acts 4:13-14)

Now I believe that it took a great deal of faith for Peter to take the man by the right hand and lift him to his feet.

Can you imagine yourself doing such a thing? What do you suppose was going through Peter's mind?

I know what would be going through my mind—*"I hope this guy stands! Because if he falls to the ground I'm going to be accused of cruelty to the disabled if this guy should collapse!"*

Acts 3:9–10 (NKJV)

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

As we saw a few weeks ago, the purpose of a miracle (mighty supernatural deed) is to create wonder in the minds of those who see it to act as a sign pointing people to Jesus.

That is exactly what happened here.

Acts 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. ¹² So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

The third thing we see here about the men that God uses is that—

- 1. They're men of prayer.**
- 2. They're men of faith.**
- 3. They're men who are not looking for any glory for themselves.**

One of the pitfalls of ministry is that whenever God is working in a special way through a man, people are prone to put him on a pedestal and begin to exalt him.

They begin to look at that man as though he is closer to God than anyone else, that he is a 'super-saint' in a special category by himself that other 'mortal' Christians can't compare with.

James 5:17–18 (NIV)

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Pastor Chuck Smith—

“There comes almost an aura of wonder when people get around those people that God uses. They develop foolish little things like wanting to come up and just touch them you know. ‘I touched Billy Graham, you know!’ We are so prone to exalt the instrument.”

Now listen, we can’t stop people from putting us on a pedestal as we serve the Lord—the real danger is when we *accept* the praise and begin to think we *deserve* it!

Be careful, the moment you begin to take credit for the work God is doing through you—your ministry is in a very precarious place.

Notice how Peter immediately disassociates himself from the miracle and corrects them immediately.

He says to the crowd, **“Why look so intently at us as though as by our own power or godliness we made this man walk? We didn’t have anything to do with it! Don’t give us the credit and glory for this miracle—praise God for what He has done!”**

The men that God uses are men who are not seeking glory or fame for themselves—they never want to take credit for the work that God has done.

One pastor warns—

“If you’re a musician or a Sunday-school teacher, a writer or a singer, a pastor or a worship leader, know this: The quickest way to be taken out of ministry is to say, ‘I want my name exalted.’ I know a number of men and women who were at one time greatly used by the Lord but are now on the shelf gathering dust because they wanted the glory—or even just a portion of it.”