

“A Divine Encounter with a Crippled Soul”

Acts 3:1-10

Introduction:

One of the longest discourses in the bible, of a witness in progress, is found in John 4. Jesus, we are told “had to” or “must needs,” go through Samaria.” Later we understand why. There was a divine encounter waiting for him as He rested at the well of Jacob.

- You know the story – “Have you ever had a divine encounter with a needy soul?” Have you prayed for opportunities to witness and the next day you have a divine encounter with a needy soul?

Illustration: Jody gas line hydroseed man.

Let’s look at another divine encounter!

A word must be said about the book of Acts as a transitional book as we start chapter 3. The Lord has walked with many of the people that are prominent in this book and now the Lord Has ascended into heaven. We are going to progress from the gospels, through Acts, to the epistles, and the transition that takes place is not only relational, but theological and applicable. Throughout the book of Acts the disciples will encounter many people that they will lead to Christ and teach the Christian way. One of those people will be the main character in the book of Acts, which is Paul. We will see many changes in the church and then see how the gospel message is taught from the days of Peter and Paul all the way to the modern church today. Paul will begin to establish church doctrine and polity. The teachings about baptism and church administration will develop.

James Montgomery Boyce says concerning miracles, as we have in this chapter, “that it is a transition from an age in which miracles were common to a time more closely resembling our own.” Many people claim that we can do miracles today just as the apostles did

in the early church; however, that's simply just not true, and if that were the case, the hospitals, nursing homes, and graveyards would be empty. Yes, I do believe in miracles, but I believe that God heals us today in many more ways than just a few men who have the gift of healing. More people have been healed through modern medicine than all the works of the apostles in the 1st century. God does do miracles today, he just does it in a different way.

Read Text: 3:1-10

Verse 1: God works in the ordinary routes of life.

An encounter is an unexpected situation that comes to you that you may or may not have prepared for, or you had not expected. We often pray for a divine encounter, and then as we go through our day, that encounter happens. We have to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit and let Him guide us into opportunities to share the gospel. The more you share the gospel, the more opportunities God will give you. If you're not in the business of sharing, then don't expect to get opportunities.

Prayer was offered in Jewish life at 3,6,9. Peter and John were just doing what came natural in their walk with Christ.

As it turns out, on their journey, to literally “go up” the terraces, they meet a man or maybe they knew he was there. One way or the other, this encounter was just a part of their daily routine. If you will just walk with Christ daily, you will be given opportunities to share your faith.

Illustration: We must make the most of an encounter. Billy Graham and JFK often talked about the Bible. JFK always loved to ask questions of Dr. Graham. He asked about the 2nd Coming once, and they did not finish their conversation. On another occasion, JFK asked Graham to come and finish the conversation. Dr. Graham was sick with the flu and had chills. It was snowing, and

he refused his invitation. Dr. Graham never got to finish that conversation – JFK was killed.

Acts 26:27-28 – Paul was before Agrippa - a divine encounter – God told Paul he would be before Governors and Kings (Acts 9:15). Here, he is fulfilling God's call – Agrippa went to hell because he did not heed. *The divine encounter works two ways, never forget that.* Think about it, God sent the apostle Paul into the line of Agrippa's life, and King Agrippa missed his opportunity. He rejected Jesus. What a shame that this man went to hell after all God did to reach him. Are you one of those people?

Divine encounters are important because they can be eternal.

Divine encounters can be missed if we are not attentive to them.

- Be cognizant of God working.

Divine encounters are everywhere and fashioned by God. Luke has already told us that amazing signs and wonders were being done by the apostles. Luke doesn't tell us what those miracles were, but of all the miracles that were done, Luke shares this one with us that's in our text. Boice says that *this particular miracle was important for two reasons.*

1. It gave Peter a reason for his second sermon.
2. This miracle became the catalyst for the persecution of the church.

Verse 2:

Many divine encounters are helpless and destitute people, and they do not even know it. Spiritually speaking, they are all dead already. Many encounters will be just like the disabled man; they will be spiritually and physically impotent. Our hearts must be tender and our spirits filled with wisdom to know what to do.

3 Types of Dead People:

- *Dead to self- saved and being sanctified.
- *Dead in sin- unsaved.
- *Dead spiritually- saved and not growing.

- Most divine encounters are closer to heaven than they know. This man was even at the temple. Daily he was there, but far from God. Being close to the church or even being placed right outside the church does you no good.

- I guess people gave this man food and clothes or he would not have had people put him there. Could no one share the truth with him? This man is lame spiritually and physically. You can get to heaven lame physically, but not spiritually.

- The man happened to be lame physically from birth. I want you to also know that he was spiritually lame as well from birth, and so are you. Every person comes into this world separated from God because of their sin. You need an encounter with the living Lord Jesus to fix that. This man is living an awful existence.

- Somebody loved this man so much that they placed him where he could receive alms every day. This is proof that somebody cared about this man. What a sad situation. How many people passed by this man every day on their way to worship and never told him about God, what a shame.

- Ironically, he is at the gate called Beautiful, but he stands out like a bug in a punch bowl.

Beautiful Gate – The favorite entrance of the Jew. Bronze sheathed – it led to the court of the Gentiles and to the court of women. The Eastern wall.

The Beautiful Gate was one of the gates belonging to the Temple in Jerusalem prior to its destruction by the Romans in AD 70. It was probably a popular title

for the Nicanor Gate, the main and largest gate, made of the most expensive bronze. The gate was in the Court of the Women on the east, facing the gate of the sanctuary, and must have been especially beautiful in the light of the rising sun. The Beautiful Gate symbolizes protection and transition, and was named after the biblical account in Acts 3 where the disciples showed mercy, compassion and kindness to a disabled person outside the gate. Wikipedia.

- When people are at rock bottom or at their wits end they become receptive. "Rock bottom" is a great place for people to be when they need Christ.

Verse 3:

Most lost people ask for the wrong thing, not what they need. Lord, if I ask for healing and you want to give me salvation, cancel my first request. The root word for alms comes from the word **eleos**, which is the word for **mercy**. There was a request for compassion in his request. The HCSB translation says, *the man asked for help*. I like that. Many people never get what they need because they never ask for help. Asking for help is the first step. When you come to Christ, just ask for mercy. If you are without Christ, you need help! We have forgotten what it is like to cry out for mercy. Americans are way too independent. We need to start crying out for mercy.

Matt 9:27

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

NIV

Matt 15:22

22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

NIV

Rom 9:16-18

16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

NIV

1 Tim 1:16

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

NIV

1 Peter 1:3-4

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

NIV

Verse 4: Peter was willing to share with big crowds and also with individual people. Peter and John knew the value of a soul. Big time preachers often only speak to the masses. If you are too busy for the individual, you are too busy.

- Peter and John looked right at the man. Usually we look away from people that are begging. The rule on the streets of NY is never make eye contact with the homeless. How sad we have become. The dangers of the streets have stolen our compassion with our fear and security needs.
- Peter had to tell the man to look up at him. He is obviously depressed and foreboding. The Greek word is **atenizo**, which

means to gaze intently at, to fasten the eye upon, to set the eye upon. Attention.

- The apostles meant business. They fixed their eyes upon the man and then told him to look up as well. Peter and John must have looked right into his soul. If we are to lead people to Christ we must do so with mercy for their souls.

Verse 5: The man did two things. **First** he took heed, then **second**, he was expectant. To take heed means to start listening. It refers to a mark. That is, to put down a mark where things changed in your mind. You start to listening and consider the warning. The root word refers to a time when one amends, or counts, or must needs, or to hold something as a possession. The man was now ready to hear what Peter had to say. When a person gets to this stage, they are ready to listen.

Expectation is what is missing from the lost world. They have no expectations because they have no hope or faith. Hope gives birth to expectation. This man was excited that Peter and John were able to supply mercy for something with sustenance. I promise you, with the authority of the Word of God and heaven, that I know what you need. I know exactly where you are and what you need right now.

*** Listen, this is not deep theology. This is simply a good ole fashion gospel message. You need it; God has it; you need to give it up. Look to Jesus. Look up for a change.

Isa 17:7-8

7 In that day men will look to their Maker
and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel.

8 They will not look to the altars,
the work of their hands,

and they will have no regard for the Asherah poles
and the incense altars their fingers have made.
NIV

Isa 31:1

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,
who rely on horses,
who trust in the multitude of their chariots
and in the great strength of their horsemen,
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel,
or seek help from the Lord.
NIV

Isa 42:18

"Hear, you deaf;
look, you blind, and see!
NIV

Isa 45:22 (CHS Salvation verse)

22 **Look unto me**, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I
am God, and there is none else.
KJV

Verse 6:

Spiritual healing is of greater importance than physical healing. At first, I'm pretty sure that the man became depressed even more when Peter said, "silver and gold have I none." But then, Peter and John blessed this man far beyond his expectation.

Illustration: James Montgomery Boyce reminds us of a great story from the Renaissance period. Most preachers, and probably a good portion of lay people, have heard this story, and it's worth repeating here. I'm not sure that the story is true, but the application is worth learning no matter.

Saint Thomas Aquinas was in Rome. He was walking along the street with a Cardinal. The Cardinal noticed a beggar. Reaching in his pocket, he pulled out a silver coin and gave it to the beggar. Then he turned to Aquinas, the great doctor of the church, and said, well, Thomas fortunately we can no longer say, as Peter did, “silver and gold have I none.” Saint Thomas replied, “yes, that is true. But neither can we say, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk.”

Today, the men that call themselves preachers are not healing anyone. As a matter of fact, the modern preacher would tell the beggar and the crippled man that he wasn't being healed because he didn't give enough money. They are charlatans, the bottom of the barrel, and the dregs of ministry who take advantage of those less fortunate. I have no respect for them.

Verse 7- 8:

Why did his friends not take him into the temple? The first place he went when healed was the temple. I am so glad that he went into the temple leaping and jumping. What a turn around. This is the moment of change. The one that was not a part of life, worship, or production was now imbued with all the health and vitality of a young man. Maybe he even surpassed those who had been healthy all their lives in service to God. This is a perfect illustration of the passage... “the first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

The scripture says that Peter reached down and helped the man up. “Go and walk.” What a great act of faith on the part of Peter and John and the crippled man.

Greek: egeiro, to raise up, the idea of collecting one's faculties, to arouse from sleep or death, to or from obscurity, inactivity, or ruin. This is to lift, stand, or take up. I would say that that's a pretty good description of what salvation can do.

This is what a true miracle looks like. Supernatural and sovereign intervention. The result is praise for God. The

salvation of this man and his faith in God are way more important than his physical healing.

Verse 9:

He walked and praised God! This man stood, leaped, and walked. **To stand is histemi**, which means to establish, to appoint, to continue, to abide, and to present.

When someone is saved, people that know them see the difference. The spiritually crippled, untrustworthy, unorganized, apathetic, and worthless person becomes established. Wow!

Verse 10: This man now has a testimony. Everybody that knew the man, now sees what happened to the man. The people knew that God had worked a miracle. The people knew the **before** and the **after** of this man's life. There was change in this man's life. He could have run off anywhere, but he chose to go into the temple. When you are changed by Jesus, there will be evidence. A changed life is the best witness to the gospel.

Closing: A missionary physician in one of China's hospitals cured a man of cataracts. A few weeks later, 48 blind men came to the doctor from one of China's wilds, all holding on to a rope guided by the man who had been cured. He had led them in this way, walking in chain 250 miles to the hospital. The multitudes may appear indifferent to their condition, but let not this discourage us, for many are fumbling blindly after light. It is our happy mission to tenderly and tirelessly seek after them (Sunday School Times 7700, s.v. Witnessing).

Illustration: Death- (When Loved Ones are Taken in Death, Lehman Strauss). These numbers are about ten years old but still impressive. When the world had 5 billion people living in it, 30 million people died every year. Every day 86,400 people die. That's a person every second of the day leaving this world.

When we stop and think about this we realize that there are a lot of funerals being done every day in this world, which also means there are a lot of broken-hearted men, women, boys, and girls who have lost loved ones. Not only are the broken hearted vast and grieving, but the number of people entering into eternity unprepared is staggering. ***This eternal situation makes divine encounters with needy souls all the more important.***