
ACTS

LIFE-ON-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP

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“Better Than Silver or Gold”

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BETTER THAN SILVER AND GOLD

Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God

ACTS 3:6-8

Each time a child comes along in our family, there is this feeling of displacement. Sometimes it’s the little family dog that’s displaced.

Maybe you’ve seen the animated film, *Lady and the Tramp*. Lady feels so displaced when the baby comes along. A puppy is fine, but wow, a baby!

There is a nervousness and fear about displacement when Jesus comes to earth. All the miracles were drawing the people to Jesus, and away from the religious leaders. As glorious as Herod’s Temple was, it was nothing compared to the cosmic power coming from one true Tabernacle of God. Remember when he transfigured himself, and Peter, James, and John witnessed his glory? But his glory was on display in all his miracles. Now with the coming of the Spirit, we all become the

Temple of God. God begins to break forth, and the focus from Acts 3 to Acts 5 is a breaking away from the Jerusalem Temple to the new covenant Temple, which is Christ's Body, the Church.

Something incredible happens in Acts 3 where the leaders and priests who ran the Temple felt threatened that their nervous about being displaced. It had begun in Jesus' ministry. Jesus would do miracle after miracle and send those who were healed to the Temple to be examined by the priests. There are parts of the Old Testament law that tells priests what to do when a leper is healed, or a blind person is healed. The problem was they never had to go to those parts of the law because it never happened. And now they have streams and streams of formerly lame people who are asking for a blessing from the priests. Formerly blind and deaf and crippled people are needing the priestly blessing. And the priests feel threatened.

In the Old Testament, if you wanted to get near the presence of God, you needed to go to the Temple. If you were to go to Gilgal or Shiloh today, you will find so many feet of pottery shards. Why? Because the millions of people who would come three times a year would need to wash their Passover lamb, and break the earthenware vessel, because it was holy. They could never use it again. All the way until the time of Ezekiel, you had the Shekinah glory of God at the Tabernacle and Temple. In the days of Ezekiel, before the exile to Babylon, the presence of the Lord left the Temple, and Ichabod was declared: the glory of God has departed.

But if you wanted to get near God you went to the Tabernacle or Temple. Even in the days of Jesus, if you wanted cleansing, you went to the Temple. If you wanted to offer a sacrifice, you went to the Temple. In Acts 3 something happens where something greater than the Temple is manifested. Something greater than Herod's magnificent Temple is on display. It's the new covenant Temple: the Church.

In Acts chapter 3 through 5 the people of Israel who love the Temple begin to see that the great Temple is being displaced. Yes, it would fall in 70 A.D. But that was just an afterthought. In the first few days of the church, there is a massive Holy Spirit evangelistic outpouring. First 3000 individuals are saved at Pentecost. But just shortly after that, God saves so many people that the apostles are only able to count the men.

Many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. —Acts 4:4

People estimate with women and children, the number must have been more like 20,000. What causes all these people to be saved? A miracle by Peter and John and a message by Peter. A miracle is performed by Peter where he heals a lame man that everyone knows well and sees every day. No one can deny it. Not even the priests and leaders of Israel at the Temple can deny it. The Scripture describes this man as “perfectly healed.” So many believe. It pales the three thousand of Pentecost. Now it’s more like 20,000, since they can only count the men. Can you imagine? People are literally flocking to the apostles: “What must I do?” “Is there mercy for me? Is there mercy for me?”

Here we see the apostles continuing Jesus’s ministry in word and deed. The healing of a lame man is a deed that leads to a sermon, where even more people are touched by God than at Pentecost. After hearing that sermon, a multitude of people are converted to faith in Jesus, and the Jewish religious authorities are enraged.¹ The passage breaks down neatly into three parts. This text is about a *miracle* and a *message* and a *minefield* of persecution.

THE MIRACLE (3:1-10)

Acts 3:1-10 | Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ²And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” ⁵And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” ⁷And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful

¹ Tony Merida. *Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 59-60.

Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

When I read this text, I think about a story I heard about a poor college student attending a church near one of our local Christian colleges. On one occasion a broke college student was so poor he actually put a bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich into the offering bucket with a little note: “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give unto you!” Poor kid, at least he had a heart to give!

We laugh of course, but this section of Scripture is no joke. This passage begins with an endearing miracle of a lame man and it ends with thousands entering the Kingdom. There are *threats* and *arrests*, and a *powerful prayer meeting*. Let’s see how all this begins with a great miracle. We are introduced to a dear, forgotten, very poor lame man.

The Lame

Acts 3:1-3 | Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ²And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.

There were three foundations of Jewish life: the Word (Torah), worship at the Temple, and a walk of kindness (giving alms). Every day as the Christians go to the Temple to worship, they pass this man.

He’s been carried there almost every day for decades. The man is forty years old. This man had a familiar face to everyone in Jerusalem. They had seen him year after year. Many had given to him over the years. ² Each day, they carried this dear man “to the gate of the temple,” the Gate called “Beautiful.” It was called “Beautiful” because it was covered with “Corinthian bronze and far exceeding in value those plated with silver and set in gold.”³ This what we know today as the Eastern Gate, the massive entrance where Pentecost took place. It’s where the main entrance and exit are.

² Merida. *Acts*, 60.

³ Flavius Josephus. *The Wars of the Jews or History of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Salt Lake City, UT: Project Gutenberg, 2009) 5.5.3.

Here is this lame man just outside the Eastern Gate, because he cannot enter through it. Levitical law said that a deformed man could not enter past that gate. He is on the wrong side of a beautiful life. He is just outside the gate, and he's crippled.

No one who has a blemish shall draw near [to the Temple]: a man blind or lame, disfigured or deformed. —*Leviticus 21:18*

That's where so many people are with God. They feel disfigured. They need healing. They know they are not right with God. The man in view here is not simply broke. He's broken. He's physically crippled. He's humiliated. He's hopeless. And to make things worse, he's more than forty years old (4:22). Presumably, he'd lived this way for decades.⁴

The Look

Acts 3:4-5 | And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us."⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

The main gate to the temple might have been an excellent place to beg, but with so many people coming by him, lots of people were probably just ignoring him. Apparently, this lame man is sadly looking down. Worn out and tired, he asks Peter and John for money, and Peter tells him to look up (3:4). He makes direct eye contact and sees compassion.⁵

The beggar surely get excited, expecting a gift. But why the look? Peter and John had passed by this man probably hundreds and hundreds of times through the years. Even that week, they were meeting at the Temple "every day." So why now? The answer must be: it was God who put it in the hearts of Peter and John.

One deep, compassionate look at that man, and they were moved by God to perform a miracle. You never know what God's going to do. We have to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit as John and Peter did.

Typically, donors would flip a coin in his direction as they hurried into the temple, barely giving the poor man a glance. Peter and John fixed their gaze on him. "Look at me," they said. As if to say, "God's

⁴ Merida. *Acts*, 60.

⁵ Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 62.

about to do something!” The man responded by giving his total attention to Peter.⁶ There was something God was doing in and through John and Peter. The man fixed his attention to them. I think he was expecting money. But just maybe he knew this was going to be a day that radically changed his life, and the course of the entire world. He didn’t know it, but probably around 20,000 people are going to enter the Kingdom this day.

The Leap

Acts 3:6 | But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”

The man wanted money, but what he needed was a miracle. It’s so good that Peter was out of money! Can you imagine all the good things we all would have missed? It’s good when we find ourselves in lack and need. God’s got something cooking!

“I have no money, but I do have a miracle,” was Peter’s sentiment. “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” Hallelujah! This poor, broken man when from lame to leaping! What do you have? **Something that we all ought to have is Jesus.**

Acts 3:7-10 | And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God,¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

I love this. Peter grabs him by the hand, remembering his weakness, but the man needs no help! The lame man is now leaping up to his feet! He doesn’t need Peter’s help.

There are a lot of firsts here. For the first time, this man leaped up to his feet. “His feet and ankles were made strong.” He **stood** for the first time. He began to **walk** for the first time. He began to **leap** for the first time. He **entered the Temple** and praised God in the Temple for

⁶ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 127.

the first time! And for the first time, people were no longer looking at him in **pity**, but with wonder and **amazement** and joy! All the people who once pitied him were now envying him. What a miracle.

We see something amazing. The man didn't need the Temple anymore. He's glad to be there, but the man is the Temple. The Spirit made this man strong. Surely he comes to faith soon enough.

THE MESSAGE (3:11-26)

A Personal Message

The great crowd of people in the thousands, see this lame man leaping, and everybody knows him, and they are astounded. This would be like seeing John Soen running around leaping and so happy. They are all caught up in the wonder and the joy.

Acts 3:11 | While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

Peter takes the opportunity to deliver a very personal message to the people.

Acts 3:12-15 | And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

It's your God who sent Jesus. It's the God of the Old Testament who sent him. Jesus is not only called "God's servant" (like the Servant of Isaiah's Servant Songs), but Peter calls him the Author of life. He says something so profound, "You killed the Author of Life, but God raised him from the dead." The simple Gospel. He exposes the depth of their sin. He makes it so personal. Your God sent Jesus. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. This is the God of your fathers. You crucified him, but God raised him. We all are witnesses.

A Powerful Message

Acts 3:16 | And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Peter makes clear first of all, that there's nothing in himself that brought about this miracle. It's all by the glorious name of Jesus.

Peter is able to do the kind of thing that Jesus did by acting in the name and power of Jesus. We see there is a continuing link between the ministry of Jesus and the power of the church.⁷

So who had faith in Christ's name? The emphasis is on Peter. God is drawing the cripple man to salvation for sure, but it is not the faith of the lame that God used. It's the faith of Peter.

Where's your faith for the lost? Peter begins his message with a miracle. People are asking, how did God do that for the lame man? Is there mercy for me?

A Profound Message

Peter preached Pentecost not long before and now he tells another group of thousands how to enter the Kingdom.

Repent

Acts 3:17-19 | And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.

They knew that Christ would suffer. The prophets were clear.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

—*Isaiah 53:6*

The Anointed One will be put to death. —*Daniel 9:26, NIV*

They pierced my hands and feet. —*Psalms 22:16*

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 93.

Your sins killed Jesus. These people had actually put to death the Author of life. So Peter tells them, and all of us: “Repent.”

Acts 3:19 | Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.

God commands all people everywhere to repent. —*Acts 17:30*

What does it mean to repent? Peter gave the call to repentance with two expressions: “repent” (*metanoēō*) which means to “change your mind and position.”⁸ Peter also says to “turn back to God” (*epistrephō*).⁹ Stop rejecting Christ. Stop keeping him on the outskirts of your life and thinking. Bring him into the center of your heart and mind and worship him. Love him. Change your mind. Stop running from God and turn to God. Repent so that all “your sins may be blotted out.” What’s the worst sin ever committed? How about putting to death the Author of life (3:15)? What happens when you believe in Jesus? All your sins are taken away! “Whom the Son sets free will be free indeed” (Jn 8:36). Remember what Isaiah said:

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. —*Isaiah 1:18*

How great is the love of Christ? The Puritan Richard Sibbes famously said,

“There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us.”¹⁰ —*Richard Sibbes*

Refresh & Restore

But here is a massive application here that Peter gives to the crowd.

Acts 3:20-21 | That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. ²¹Whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

⁸ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 114.

⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 134.

¹⁰ Richard Sibbes. *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* (London: Gooch Booksellers, 1630), 16.

He says, basically, there's a coming restoration of all things. Heaven and earth will one day be restored and come together as one. "The lion and the wolf shall lay down together" (Isa 11:6). When you repent and turn to Jesus, you get a taste of that. That's what God wants you to live in. Are you living in that refreshment saint? That's what this sermon is all about. It's all about the refreshment that the lame man who is now leaping feels. Are you experiencing that in your life? Can you say that you are living in the "fullness of joy" that is found in God's presence (Psa 16:11)?

Are you feeling lame in your walk with God? Leap up in the name of Jesus! Holy Spirit, pour over me right now. No longer can we be lame. The Spirit is bidding us to get up and walk and leap for him in the name of Jesus.

Rejoice

Acts 3:21b | God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

The time is here! Let's rejoice! The prophets talked about it. Every prophet pointed to the refreshing times of Jesus, but now they are here! Dive into the ocean of God's mercy! The time has finally come! It's time. Dive into God's love!

Reflect

Acts 3:22-26 | Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

So Peter closes his message and says, "This is the ultimate Promised Son of Abraham." "This is the ultimate Prophet that is greater than Moses." "This is the Servant of Isaiah, the Messiah who would suffer." I love this. Peter says, "Turn to him who wants to bless you." Jesus wants to bless you. Turn to him now. Thousands flock to Jesus, running

to hear Peter's message and see the lame man leaping (4:4). That's what we should be seeing when Jesus is manifested. People want the refreshment from Jesus. They want a taste of the full restoration that is coming in the new heaven and new earth.

THE MINEFIELD (4:1-4)

Acts 4:1-4 | And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

People were running from every place to see this man. He was leaping who was once lame. The Temple leaders didn't like it. So they arrested Peter and John. The people didn't care. They were amazed at the leaping man who was once lame. But now they are so much more amazed at Jesus. They want this refreshment for their soul. So the people are flocking so much to be saved, that they had to stop counting men and women and children. Now they were only counting the men: heads of households. That means likely more than 20,000 people came to Christ that day.

What a minefield it is to come to know Christ. What a train wreck! But what are we afraid of? Being refreshed by Jesus is far better than any of the silver and gold this world offers.

Conclusion

Why were so many flocking to Christ? Was it just the miracle? No. It was Peter's message. He says: come to Christ and repent, and you will have times of refreshing that will give you a taste of the final restoration. And the people believed and experienced something greater than the Temple. They literally became the Temple of the Holy Spirit. People were so relieved and happy, that multitudes just kept flocking to the Lord. Family after family. They couldn't count everyone, so they counted heads of households.