



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ◇ DEO ◇ GLORIA

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Peter Heals the Lame Beggar

Acts 3:1-10

March 11, 2007

- I. The Exalted Christ Uses His People
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- The first two verses of Acts state, ‘The first account I composed...about all that **Jesus began to do and teach**, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit **given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.**’ Acts 1:1-2
- The implication in this verse is that throughout the Book of Acts, the Exalted Jesus **continued** the work [that He *had begun*] **through His Apostles.**
- At the end of Acts 2, Luke writes, ‘Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place **through** the Apostles.’ Acts 2:43
 - It was the Exalted Christ who was actually performing the signs and wonders, and He did so **through** His Apostles.
 - The Apostles in the Early Church were those who were **sent by Christ** and, as such, acted on the basis of **Christ’s authority** [NOTE: In a very real sense, Christ was the first Apostle – One sent by the Father to do His will]. This was necessary at that time because God used them to complete the writing of the Scriptures. Furthermore, the signs and wonders that Christ performed *through* His Apostles attested to the fact that they [the Apostles] were, in fact sent by God Himself. In other words, it was the signs that authenticated the testimony and claims of the Apostles and pointed to the One in whose power they were performed. The signs did not, therefore, serve as an end, in and of themselves, rather, they pointed to the One who alone had the power to perform them – Christ Himself!

I. The Exalted Christ Uses His People

- ❑ This is one of the most profound truths in all of Scripture.
- ❑ Although God Himself in His infinite sovereignty ordains the ends which He desires, He also ordains the means by which He will accomplish His ends.
- ❑ As such, God does not accomplish His redemptive will ‘in a vacuum’; rather, He has chosen to accomplish it in conjunction with His people and His Word.

As the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 10:13-17:

for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’
How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!’ However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- ❑ This gives us, even today, the profound privilege of being the ‘feet which bring the good news’ of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to a dying world.
- ❑ Luke opens the third chapter of the Book of Acts by stating, ‘Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.’
 - Throughout the beginning part of Acts, Peter and John are often seen together (3:1, 3, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14).
 - The presence of the two together is likely consistent with Jewish law that required at least two witnesses to confirm the validity of a given testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:5; 2 Corinthians 13:1).
 - This may also have been the reason behind Christ’s sending out of the disciples in pairs (Luke 10:1).
- ❑ Luke also says that they ‘were going up to the temple **at the ninth hour...**’
 - There were two sacrifices held daily in the Temple. During these two times, though, there were also associated periods of prayer. The second sacrifice was held at the ninth hour, that is 3:00 p.m., and was referred to as the *Tamid* in Jewish tradition. [NOTE: According to the first century Jewish historian Josephus, there were two daily sacrifices that took place: one in the morning and one at 3:00 p.m.; however, there was also a third time of prayer that probably took place at sunset.]

- Another aspect of this verse is that the miracle takes place in the **temple**, which was, for the Jews, the center of true worship. However, as Christ is now exalted and has [along with the Father] sent the Person of the Holy Spirit, the center of worship has now fundamentally shifted away from the physical temple, for ‘those who worship the Father will worship Him in Spirit and in truth’ (John 4:24).
- Luke continues by stating that ‘a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.’
 - The fact that the man had been lame ‘from his mother’s womb’ makes his healing at the hands of Peter all the more miraculous and also parallels the work of Jesus in John 9 with the Lord heals a man **born blind**.
- Once again, although strong parallels exists between the healings by Jesus in the Gospels and the miracles of the Apostles in the Book of Acts, one must never forget that the Apostles’ authority was always derived...derived **from the exalted Christ Himself**. Therefore, it becomes clear to the regenerate believer that, in his sovereignty and mercy, Christ chose to use Peter [and uses us today] to reveal and fulfill His will.

II. The Exalted Christ Pursues His People

- Central to Luke’s account of the healing of the lame man by Peter is the fact that **the man was not seeking what Peter had to offer**.
- In fact, the man **did not even have the ability *on his own*** to seek after anything...he had to be carried by others to the Temple.
- Yet, in happened that one day the two disciples passed by the lame man in the Temple. It was, of course, through the divine providence of Almighty God that Peter and John passed by the lame beggar.
 - In the same manner, we, as fallen men, are without hope apart from the **effectual call of God**.
 - God does not simply woo or entice us to Himself, **He seeks us out, when we are not even seeking after Him, and He effectually calls / draws us to Himself**.
 - When Peter and John passed by the man, the man ‘began asking to receive alms,’ but Peter...fixed his gaze on him [the lame man] and said, ‘Look at us!’

- This command by Peter ensured at least two things:
 1. First, it ensured that the man would take his eyes off of himself and ‘look up...’ as one who would look up to the Christ who was ‘lifted up’ [‘just as those who looked up at the serpent in the wilderness’] and live [John 3].
 2. Secondly, it also ensured that the lame man would realize that no men of Peter’s lowly [Galilean] status would inherently be able to perform such a miracle. Therefore, the miracle would point to the One who was more than able to heal him. [For, the miracle was, in fact, a *sign*.]
- After this, Peter said, ‘...In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!’ Luke continues, ‘And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up...’
 - When Peter invokes the name of Jesus Christ, He is referring to the power of God Himself – the power of the risen Messiah – the power that raised Christ from the dead.
 - Peter’s actions demonstrate how God Himself reaches down and does not simply hold his hand out, but **seizes us!**
 - Notice, however, that Peter does NOT save this man – he does not have the authority to do so. Rather, Peter has the authority, as an Apostle of Christ Jesus, to produce a ***sign*** that points to the greatest reality: the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Exalted Christ Meets the *True* Needs of His People

- Not only does Christ pursue us, He meets our ***true*** needs!
- Luke states that the man used to sit ‘down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful...’
 - This was likely one of the gates that led into the sanctuary of the Temple [the area that included the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place]. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, there were ten total gates: nine of which were overlaid with silver and gold; however, the tenth ‘was of Corinthian bronze and far exceeded in value those plated with silver and set in gold.’ Furthermore, the gate itself was so enormous [seventy-five feet tall] that when it was closed each evening, ‘it could scarcely be moved by twenty men.’ It was this gate, known as the Nicanor gate in Jewish literature, that was probably also referred to as the Beautiful gate.
 - Furthermore, notices were posted in Greek and Latin outside of the entrance into the Sanctuary which warned the Gentiles not to enter or face the penalty of death. Yet, now that Christ is exalted and has sent His Spirit, such

boundaries no longer exist. The kingdom of God is open to the whole world **without distinction** of race or nationality.

- Notice the **contrast** between the Apostles of Christ and the Beautiful Gate. Peter and John were poor by worldly standards [they had no ‘silver or gold’, yet what they had infinitely surpassed the value of the entire Temple complex.
- Furthermore, it is certainly likely that the beggar thought to himself, ‘This temple complex, and the Beautiful gate alone, are so magnificent that God **must** have blessed this place.’ In today’s jargon, this place ‘looked like a church.’ Yet, the hearts of those ‘worshipping’ there were far from Him.
- Yet, the most profound truth here is that the man was not even searching for what he truly needed. The man was asking for alms, or money to live on; however, this was not what he truly needed.
 - Again, prior to Christ, this is exactly the way each of us was. We sought the things of the world, never even realizing that what we sought was not what we truly needed. Apart from the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, we did not even realize that there was anything more than what the world could offer.
- The beggar was seeking **physical, temporary** wealth, but what Peter had to offer was infinitely better.
- In fact, what Peter had, that is God Himself, was the One who made the very gold, silver and bronze of the Temple!

May we never forget that the wealth that the world has to offer, the Church should not; but the wealth that the Church has to offer, the world cannot.

The man’s true need could not be measured by earthly standards, yet in order to realize it, he had to first be transformed.

IV. The Exalted Christ Transforms His People

- After Peter said, ‘...In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!’ Luke writes, ‘And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.’
- Then, ‘with a leap he stood upright and began to walk...’
 - This is possibly an intentional reference to / fulfillment of Isaiah 35:6, ‘**Then the lame will leap like a deer...**’

- ❑ Yet, the physical transformation was certainly NOT intended to be the primary focus of this passage.
- ❑ Rather, the physical transformation of the lame beggar symbolized the change necessary for the men to enter into fellowship with God in His sanctuary.
- ❑ In Old Testament Judaism, one who was physically unblemished was prevented from entering into the Inner Courts of the Temple.

“Speak to Aaron, saying, ‘No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God. ‘For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb, or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles.’”

Leviticus 21:17-20

“David said on that day, ‘Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind, who are hated by David’s soul, through the water tunnel.’ Therefore they say, ‘The blind or the lame shall not come into the house.’”

2 Samuel 5:8

‘Day by day he sat there at the threshold to the place of worship, but he could not enter. He was lame, blemished, and denied access to the inner courts (cf. Leviticus 21:17-20; 2 Samuel 5:8). At this time not only had he received physical healing, but he had found spiritual acceptance as well. For the first time he was deemed worthy to enter the house of worship. This theme will repeat itself in Acts. Those who were rejected as unworthy for worship in the old religion of Israel found full acceptance in the name of Jesus, whether a lame beggar, an Ethiopian eunuch, a woman, or a Gentile.’

James Polhill

- ❑ The healing of the lame man by Peter demonstrates a fundamental truth in Christianity: contrary to the teachings of modern Christianity, God does NOT love us ‘just the way we are.’ In fact, **apart from Christ, He hates our sin nature. He must change us, our nature, before we can approach Him. It is only through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ that we can come to God, for he demands perfection and He will accept nothing less than absolute perfection.**
- ❑ Further, because God demands perfection, and there is no one perfect / righteous accept God alone, God must, and does, provide that which is necessary for us to enter into His presence – the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- ❑ God reveals this truth especially in Genesis 22 [the offering up of Isaac by Abraham]. In Verses 8, 14, it states:

“Abraham said, ‘God will provide **for Himself** the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’...Abraham called the name of that place ‘The LORD Will Provide [Yahweh Yirah / Jehovah Jirah], as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.’

- ❖ In other words, God Himself provides that which He demands in order to enter into His Presence – a transformation of our nature and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness!
- ❑ As a result of the man’s transformation, Luke states, ‘he [the formerly lame man] entered into the temple with them [Peter and John]...’ Acts 3:8
- ❑ Because of the transformation of the man, he now ‘had the **ability**’ to enter into the Temple of God.

V. The Exalted Christ leads us into the Worship of God Alone

- ❑ After he was healed by Peter, Luke writes that this man ‘entered the temple...walking and leaping and praising God.’
- ❑ The man was NOT praising Peter or John, but rather God, the One who not only healed him physically and temporarily, but also spiritually and eternally.
- ❑ Yet, not only was this man praising God, he was bearing witness to the transformation in his life. Further, the effects of this transformation could not have been more radical – now he could not only walk, but worship! And the people in the temple took note.
 - ‘And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they were taking not of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, **and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.**’
- ❑ This man had been a pitiful sight, begging for alms outside of the Temple day in and day out. However, now, the man walks in the Temple and is no longer focused on Himself, but on praising God.
- ❑ The people not only saw the change in his physical state, but they witnessed the change in his spiritual nature as well.
- ❑ God was glorified in the healing of the lame man; however, He is supremely glorified in our salvation, for it is a result of the work of the Triune God Himself: in accordance with the will of the Father, the Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the subsequent regenerative and indwelling work of the Person of the Holy Spirit.
- ❑ It was because of the Exalted Christ that the man could not ‘glorify God and enjoy Him forever...and this is our chief end as well.’