

Praise God
Acts 3:1-10

October 13, 2019

1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. 4 Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 All the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

The 2nd chapter of Acts ends with the ideal church. They are all gathered together for teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayers. They were all one mind and one heart. Then in Chapter 3 there is this healing miracle which clearly shows that the church is not isolated into its own self. The church cannot ignore the misery of the world. Peter and John do what good and devout Jews do. They go to the temple to pray. However, they are now confronted with a man who has been lame since birth. The man is doing the only thing he can do. He does what helpless people do. He asks for a handout.

In the Gospels we are familiar with Jesus doing some healing. Now in Acts, we see the power of healing, not from Jesus, but from the Apostles. They are healing in the name of Jesus and through the power and authority of Jesus. This is significant. Peter and John do not heal on their own power. They do not heal for their own glory. The good that is done is done in the name of Jesus. Jesus is identified as the Christ. This is the Messiah. This is the promised redeemer. The name Jesus and the title of the Christ are now joined together. Healing in the name of Jesus causes a problem for Peter and John. Religious leaders tried to stop Jesus by killing him but now his name lives on, his mission lives on, his legacy lives on. Now the name Jesus and the title Christ are cemented together as the power of Jesus lives on.

What if it was you that was lame from birth? You can't work. There is no way to earn a living. The only help you can get is from begging. You are dependent upon others. We don't see the father or brothers helping so there is no support at all from family or loved ones. We only see unnamed people carry him to the gate of the temple to beg for money. What if it was you or me? You probably wouldn't be happy because you wouldn't be able to enjoy much out of life. The best you could do is to hope for enough money for survival. That's it, no luxury, no pleasure, no entertainment. Notice what the man does when he is miraculously healed. He got up, began to walk, went into the temple, and praised God. The effects are visible proof of the healing in the name of Jesus.

What are we to do? The answer is to celebrate God. The man walked into the temple and praised God. You might say "Yeah but we did not receive a miracle." Well, yes we did. Life itself is a miracle. A new born baby has its own spirit, intellect, personality, and feelings. Cells multiply and divide. You and your existence, your ability to live, is a miracle. So, what are we to do? The same thing that the man did. Go into the temple and praise God. Be a witness for the

Lord. Celebrate grace, forgiveness, and the Good News. We are to appreciate what God has done for us. We are witnesses to God's glory. We are to be witnesses for God's glory.

For devout Jews prayer and alms giving is very important. They characterize Jewish piety. So, beggars go to the outside of the temple at a time for afternoon prayer. This is the time and place where they are most likely to receive help. But, according to Jewish practice the man that is lame is marked as an outsider due to his physical condition. So, his entrance into the temple shows something new. It is a characteristic of Jesus. Now, because of Jesus the conditions of the poor, handicapped, and blind are reversed. The helplessly despondent can now participate in the blessings of God's kingdom. The healing power has come to him as a gift not from the piety of the church, or the paraplegic man, but as a free gift. Just like our salvation. Grace is a free gift from God. We are all welcome in the temple. We should all praise God. We should praise out of appreciation for life, for everything that we have, for grace, and for salvation. Praise God.