

Thanksgiving at the Beautiful Gate – Acts 3:1-10

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. If I asked you, “What is the **CHIEF purpose of man?**” how would you answer?
 1. Many of us raised in Episcopalianism would instantly know the answer from our catechism.
 2. The chief purpose of man is **to glorify God.**
- 3. ***I Corinthians 10:31 – “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”***
- 4. That **ALL** we **DO** as Christians should be done for the glory of God is a **relatively simple concept.**
 - a. ***Ye have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body & in your spirit which are God's.***
 - b. The **idea is simple** and **obvious**, but the **practice** of this principle may be a bit more **difficult**.
- 5. More specifically, ***I Thessalonians 5:18*** speaks about thanksgiving, opening the door to **unlimited praise**
 - a. ***In EVERYTHING give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.***
 - b. The only things for which we cannot and should not praise the Lord are sinful things.
- 6. But does this mean we should praise God for **only for the GOOD things** that happen to us?
 - a. No, we should be thank for both the good and the unpleasant.
 - b. For good food and Christian friends as well as for toothaches and surgery.
 - c. ***In EVERYTHING give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.***
- B. Years ago, I became acquainted with an **interesting gentleman** living down in **Georgia**.
 1. We still have not yet met personally; our only contact in this world was through our church web-page.
 2. **Bro. Jack Gregory** has now passed away, but at the time he was in his 70's, teaching the adult Sunday School class in his little rural Baptist church, and preaching when his “elderly” pastor could not.
 3. Early on in our friendship, Bro. Gregory told me that he was not very well educated, and in fact, for most of his life, he had a hard time learning and understanding things.
 4. And then a few years ago, doctors found a life-threatening brain-tumor that required surgery.
 - a. Despite his age and the risks of the surgery, he went ahead and they cut him open.
 - b. While he was laying on his hospital bed, not knowing if he would live or die, he told the Lord that whatever providence wanted, he would thankfully accept.
 5. Well, he healed up just fine, and had only a few very minor problems before old-age caught up with him.
 - a. Off-setting problems the surgery cause, his ability to read, reason, think & learn intensified dramatically
 - b. He began learning and growing in the things of the Lord, reading good books and teaching others.
 6. During the last few years of his life, he began making up for 60 years of lost time.
 7. The cancer that started out as a disaster, became a great blessing in that man's life.
 8. One of the things he learned was ***In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*** – even cancer.
- C. In the healing the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, we have a similar kind of situation.
 1. We have a man who was **severely afflicted for forty years** and then was **miraculously healed**.
 2. Upon his healing he was **filled with thanksgiving**.
 3. Not only was he **thankful for his healing**, but he could have been, and should have been **thankful for his former paralysis**.
- D. Let's think about these four things this Thanksgiving Day-Eve: **healing, holding, hailing and hearing**.

II. The background of this story is important.

- A. The man had been born crippled and never had the privilege of walking.
 1. For 30 or 35 years someone carried him to one of the gates of the temple, where he begged for alms.
 2. He had been there perhaps as many as 10,000 times, and he had been given enough money to help his family feed him throughout all those years.
 3. But as I said in a message a few months ago, he had never been **into** the temple.
 4. And he had probably been told that God's wrath was upon him for some sin which had been committed.

B. But then along came two of the Lord's Apostles.

1. In an act that probably took less than 30 seconds, the formerly crippled man was given his legs, his mobility and his dignity.
2. Peter clearly declared that the miracle was accomplished under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Then he reached down and pulled the man to his feet.
4. Pow. The man was instantaneously healed.
 - a. Scripture says that he leaped to his feet and took a few steps – probably quite gingerly at first.
 - b. Then he began leaping and shouting praise to God.
5. The word "**leap**" is found **twice** in **verse 8**.
 - a. They are related words, but not exactly the same thing.
 - b. He jumped to his feet, and then began to **leap** and **hop**, putting his new-found limbs to the test.

C. I hope that you all **understand** what the Bible says about this healing,

1. I hope you **believe** the Bible and that this man was **miraculously** healed.

III. The second thing that I'd like you to notice is that the man then HELD Peter and John.

- A. *"And as the lame man which was healed HELD Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering" – Acts 3:11.*
- B. I can think of only **four** or **five possible reasons** why this man might have **HELD ON** to the apostles.
 1. First, he might have clung to them as he might to a **crutch** or a **cane**.
 - a. If that was the case, I'm sure that he was mistaken, and it didn't last very long.
 - b. I can remember only one Biblical miracle that was at first incomplete or that came in stages.
 - (1) There was a blind man whom the Lord healed, and who said that he saw men as walking trees.
 - (2) The Lord quickly downloaded a patch and fixed what appeared to be a little glitch.
 - c. I don't believe that **this** man needed a crutch.
 2. Second, someone suggested that he might have held on to the apostles **out of fear**.
 - a. He might have been afraid that if they left, he would once again become lame.
 - b. I think that idea is just as lame as the man's legs had been.

C. Why did the man cling to the arms, necks or clothing of Peter and John?

1. Because there was an **instantaneous bond** between them.
2. These two men had become the best friends that this man had ever had.
 - a. He **might** have thought that he had found the goose that lays the golden eggs, and he didn't want these two to leave his sight.
 - b. But I really don't think that is his real reason for hanging on to them.
3. I think that he was filled with a love for them that would not let them go.
4. Yes, it was God who healed him, but it was these two who were the tangible instruments of that healing
5. This man was like the one leper who returned to thank the Saviour, for his healing.
6. After what you've done for me, I'm not leaving your side.

D. But there might also have been one other reason: it was to **point out who his benefactors were**.

1. This man might have latched onto the apostles so that in his public praise of God, he could point to them.
2. In **John 5** there was a crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda whom the Lord healed.
 - a. He got so excited about his cure that he hurried home to tell his parents and friends.
 - b. And in the process he became separated from the Saviour.
 - c. It wasn't until later that they met again, and I'm sure by that time the man regretted having let the Lord slip away.
3. This man wasn't going to let that happen, so he clung to his human benefactors as representatives of his Saviour.

IV. The third thing that I want you to notice about the man's thanksgiving is contained in the word "HAILED."

- A. Immediately upon receiving this miracle, standing to his feet and testing his legs, this man started shouting his praise to God, and he **hailed** the crowd.
 - 1. To "hail" is to 1) Salute or greet.
 - 2. To greet or acclaim **enthusiastically**. 3) To call out to in order to **catch the attention** of someone.
 - 3. Not surprisingly, this guy got excited about his new, God-given ability – about his miracle.

- B. Have you ever meditated on how many ways there are to offer thanksgiving to God?
 - 1. I thought about it for a while and came up with a short, and probably very incomplete, list.
 - 2. We can praise God with our voices **PRIVATELY** or **semi-privately**.
 - a. We can thank the Lord in prayer from our closet, or in church, or at the Thanksgiving Day table.
 - b. There is nothing wrong with this, and we should probably do this a hundred times more often than do.
 - 3. Second, we might use our **voices** in a more **PUBLIC** fashion.
 - a. We should yearn for others to join us in shouting our praise to God amongst the general public.
 - b. Sure, this was the temple of Jehovah, but most of the denizens, really didn't know who Jehovah was.
 - c. I also hope that this man was as joyful and noisy as he went home, thru the market and into his house.
 - 4. Third, another way to show our thanksgiving to God is to **USE** the **Lord's gift** in a fashion that glorifies Him.
 - a. What was the gift in this man's case? Feet and legs which now worked.
 - b. So what did he immediately do?
 - (1) He leaped to his feet; he walked; and he began jumping and leaping.
 - c. We aren't surprised to see little girls skipping down the street – skipping is a little girl's sort of thing.
 - (1) And we aren't surprised to see a group of boys running – running is a little's boy's sort of thing.
 - (2) Here was a man who had never skipped and had never run.
 - (3) Ah, but now he was skipping, hopping, running, walking and leaping.
 - d. I think that he was behaving like a child right here, and he didn't bat an embarrassed eye-lash.
 - e. He was using the blessing that God had given him.
 - 5. But **more important** than his leaping and walking, was **where his feet** immediately **took him**.
 - a. **"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."**
 - b. He went into the temple whose gates had been shut to him for the past four decades.
 - c. He didn't hold the memory of his infirmity against anyone, especially against the Lord.
 - d. He praised God from whom all blessings flowed and encouraged all the rest of God's creatures here below to do the same.
 - 6. Another **form of thanksgiving** is **to share** what has been given.
 - a. Do you suppose that for the next week, this man was back in the Beautiful Gate trying to be a blessing to other lame people?
 - b. Do you suppose that he tried, like Simon Magus to get this power so that he too could raise the fallen?
 - c. I doubt it.
 - d. But I would be surprised if he didn't become a disciple, trying to bring others to Christ and His apostles.
 - e. And I wouldn't be surprised to find that he tried to bring Peter and John back to visit some of his former competitors in the begging business.
 - 7. I think that this man not only **shouted** his **praise** to God, but he **brought glory** to the Lord in **other ways**.

V. And that brings me to my last point: the HEARING.

- A. The end of this man's healing, leaping, jumping, walking and shouting, was another opportunity for Peter to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. **"And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.**
 - 2. **And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people."**

- B. The ***ultimate end*** of praise is the ***glory of God***, but ***the journey*** towards that glory can have ***other effects***.
 - 1. ***Why*** should we ***praise God*** and vocally give Him thanks?
 - 2. We might do it to ***make ourselves feel good***.
 - 3. Praise is a debt, and it feels good to pay off a debt.
 - 4. As long as we receive mercy we should minister praise.
 - 5. There was emotional and spiritual steam building up in this man that might have made him explode if it hadn't been vented in exuberant praise.
 - 6. It felt good to be able to praise the Lord that day.

- C. Of course, we should be thankful and praiseful people, because ***we are exhorted*** to be thankful.
 - 1. In fact we are ***commanded*** to praise the Lord.
 - 2. If you are not thankful, you are not fulfilling the purpose for your existence.
 - 3. Also, might there be ***a sense*** in which our praise ***makes the Lord feel good – ???***
 - a. You and I like to be noticed and praised when we do exceptional things.
 - b. Is there some sort of divine emotion that sinlessly parallels that fallen human emotion?

- D. Finally, there is another answer to that question:
 - 1. ***When*** we are ***diligent in our obedience*** in praise, there is an ***increased opportunity*** for evangelism.
 - 2. Did this man feel confident about preaching the gospel himself?
 - 3. I'm not sure that knew the first principles of the gospel at this point.
 - 4. But His praise gave that opportunity to Peter.

- E. I'd like you to notice the Biblical time line of this chapter and the next.
 - 1. The miracle occurs in ***3:1-11***, and the rest of the chapter gives a summary Peter's second sermon.
 - 2. Then notice ***4:1-3***:
 - a. *"And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,*
 - (1) Being grieved that they taught the people, & preached through Jesus - resurrection from the dead.*
 - (2) And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide."*
 - b. I think that was a major part of my last message from this scripture.
 - 3. Bu now look at ***verse 4: "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."***
 - 4. How much of a role did the praise of the former lame man, have in the salvation of those 5,000 people?
 - 5. If God's people, which are called by His name, and healed by His power, would be more bold to praise God for His grace and their salvation, who knows how much the Lord would bless their worshipful ministries?

- F. So tomorrow is "***Thanksgiving Day***."
 - 1. I'm not against the principle of such a day.
 - 2. But if "***Thanksgiving Day***" is a ***replacement*** for the ***responsibility of Christians*** to constantly minister through public praise, then the day ought to be abolished.
 - 3. Praise should be a ministry of the Lord's people – 24-7-365.