

## EXPOSITION OF ACTS

### Message #9

### Acts 3:1-10

There is nothing wrong with doing helpful things for people. There is nothing wrong with us taking supplies of food to the hungry or medical supplies to the hurting. In fact, those are good things to do. But the thing that must go hand in hand with these kinds of things is clear, verbal presentation of the Gospel as it relates to Jesus Christ so people may have their sins forgiven. I am convinced that we must do good things to help people physically, but we also must open our mouths and communicate truth about Jesus Christ to help them spiritually. We must do this even if a political or religious government says no.

I am deeply disturbed by some Christian philanthropic activity that does not openly proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ. I have known of mission agencies, who have gone to countries to physically help people, who promise the government that they will not preach the Gospel. They try to carry on some clandestine covert operation. You cannot possibly get that idea from this book of Acts and you certainly cannot get it from this text. Truth is, Peter and John got in serious trouble for doing this very thing.

We may recall that Jesus told the apostles that they were to begin proclaiming the Gospel in Jerusalem. Not only did they proclaim it in Jerusalem, they went right into the Temple and proclaimed it even though religious leaders didn't want them to do it. **As the Church Age began, God was doing amazing things through the hands of the apostles (Acts 2:43).**

They did on occasion help people physically, but they proclaimed the Gospel loudly; and by the time you get to Acts 4, they are in serious trouble and end up in jail (Acts 4:3).

**PETER AND JOHN PERFORM AN AMAZING HEALING MIRACLE SO THEY CAN POINT PEOPLE TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST SO THEIR SINS COULD BE WIPED AWAY, AND THE END RESULT IS THEY END UP IN BIG TROUBLE.**

No matter what we do for other people, their greatest need is to have their sin-case closed in the sight of the living, Holy God. Their greatest need is to believe on Jesus Christ to be saved. Whatever else we do or say, nothing must prevent us from sharing the Gospel.

**FACT #1** – The time of this miracle. **3:1**

There were several times a day when the Temple in Jerusalem was open for prayer. Based on Psalm 55:16-17, three specific times were designated. **These new believers in Jerusalem were still involved in Jewish things.** Some of the specific prayer times included 9 a.m. which would be the third hour (Acts 2:15); 12 noon which would be the sixth hour (Acts 10:9); and some occurred the ninth hour which is 3 p.m. If hour one is 6 a.m., then the ninth hour is 3 p.m. So we may assume that Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the 3 p.m. prayer meeting. They literally physically did have to “go up” because the Temple sat on a mount and you had to ascend up to get to it. They do not shy away from proclaiming truth in the very places and to the very people who killed Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that there are some critical things that happened at the ninth hour:

- 1) Jesus used this hour to describe when the late laborers were hired (Matthew 20:5).
- 2) This was the hour when Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me” (Matthew 27:46).
- 3) This would be the hour when Cornelius would have his remarkable vision of law versus grace Acts 10:3, 30.
- 4) This was the hour when the lame man is healed here.

This is the perfect hour for a grace miracle.

**FACT #2** – The lame man who needs a miracle. **3:2**

It is specifically stated that this man had been crippled since he was a baby. Luke, who is writing this, was a medical doctor and he wants us to know specific medical facts that surround this miracle. The actual word “lame” (χωλος) means the function of his legs had been halted and he could not walk (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 486). We know from what he says in **Acts 4:22** that this crippled man was over forty years old. **So he had been literally, medically, and physically crippled for over forty years.**

He was living in a totally helpless and hopeless condition. In fact, he had to be carried every day to the Temple. **This is a critical miracle for it is a miracle of pure grace.** This man could not keep the law; he could not even go into the Temple. He was a beggar with no hope in and of himself of salvation. **This is a great miracle to begin the Grace Age with, for it perfectly illustrates what grace does; it transforms sinful beggars who have been sinners from their mother’s womb.**

People would carry this poor guy every day to the Temple gate named “Beautiful” so he could sit and beg for “alms.” The Greek word “alms” (ἐλεημοσυνην) actually means mercy or pity (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 145). There were no social programs to help the handicapped. There was no government funding or federal aid; so he would beg people every day to mercifully show pity on him, and the way one typically expressed mercy or pity was to give him a little money. This was a legitimate need. This is not some lazy derelict that refuses to work; this guy could not work because he was physically handicapped.

Many scholars believe that the gate was located on the eastern side of the Temple, which led from the court of the Gentiles to the women’s court. This gate would have faced Mount Olivet. One problem that interpreters have wrestled with is that there is no gate that we know of that was actually given the formal name “Beautiful.” This however must have been the name of a gate in Luke’s day. Josephus, in his description of the Temple, says all gates were beautiful, but there was one specific gate that was more beautiful than the others. It was called the “Corinthian gate” because it was covered with Corinthian brass along with silver and gold. It was located on the eastside of the Temple. Josephus claimed that it was richer and more beautiful than all other gates (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, Kregel Publications, pp. 554-555).

There is no question that this would be a good place to beg for money because many people would just want to see this spectacular gate, so it would be an area of high traffic. Beggars know how to figure out high traffic areas. In fact, one person who actually studied beggars in cities all over the world claimed that beggars not only know where the high traffic areas are, they also watch people's eyes because they have learned the type of person who is likely to respond.

**FACT #3** – The crippled beggar asks Peter and John for money. **3:3**

Now the man is setting outside the Temple because he was not allowed to go in the Temple. Any person with any defect was not permitted into the Temple. Actually, according to Levitical law, one could not be a priest and go near the altar that had any physical defect (Leviticus 21:17-23).

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the Temple, he asked them for alms or money. He probably did not recognize them as being apostles. More than likely he had no idea who they even were. He obviously did not imagine there was even a possibility of being physically healed. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the Temple he asked for some money. It is interesting that the verb “asking” is in the imperfect tense, which means this man had been repeatedly doing this for years and years.

He becomes the perfect candidate for grace because he is known by all as one who had been broken down and mangled for years.

**FACT #4** – Peter and John heal the crippled beggar. **3:4-8**

Now keep in mind that Peter and John have just been involved in preaching God's Word and literally seeing God save thousands of people. They had been involved in big-time ministry with big-time results. They could have easily walked by this one guy without batting an eye. After all, what is one broken-down beggar compared to thousands who had just been saved? But this teaches us something about the early Church. One was just as important as thousands. These apostles took the time to minister to one hurting sinner. We must never forget this. Reaching one is just as significant as reaching thousands. Some churches get all caught up in numbers, not Peter and John.

I want us to carefully notice what happens here:

**Action #1** - Peter and John fix their gaze on the crippled man. **3:4a**

Most of the time when you and I see a beggar, we don't make eye contact with them. Kenneth Gangel said imagine the drama here as Peter locks his eyes on this beggar (*Acts*, p. 43). Rather than reaching for some money, they stare straight at him with a very focused look.

**Action #2** - Peter and John command the man to look at them. **3:4b-5**

The verb “look at us” (βλεπον εις ημας) is an aorist imperative. Peter is basically commanding this man to “look at us right now at this specific moment.”

Some have wondered why Peter and John command him to look at them. The answer is because beggars are always looking for their next potential donor. A beggar is not interested in you but your money. His eyes are always on the lookout for someone else he can hit up for money. When Peter gave him this command, with his sharp eyes looking straight at this guy, he got this beggar's full attention. He focused his eyes on these apostles expecting to receive some money.

**Action #3** - Peter and John inform the man have no money to give him. **3:6a**

The first words out of Peter's mouth must have been a shock to this beggar. Here is a guy who commands you to look at him, and the first thing he tells you is that he has no money to give you. **By the way, we may learn a very important Grace Age principle of giving here; God does not expect you to give what you do not have.** Churches and religious organizations that make people pledge money that they do not have are not Biblical. Peter does not say, "If God gives us some money we will give it to you." He says, "I do not possess silver and gold."

The reason why he didn't have any money is that he had been involved in that Holy Spirit led giving. He probably had sold his Jerusalem home and gave the money to the work of God (Acts 2:45). They had no money to give this beggar.

This is very important to see because in the early days of the Church, **the thing that the apostles did to change people's lives was to preach the Word, not organize and run welfare social programs. These apostles were not trying to buy people's affection.** They were not trying to run a social marketing blitz so people would like them. They didn't make generous donations to people, hoping they would believe in Jesus. They simply proclaimed the truth about Jesus Christ. What we really need to do to make a big difference in our society is not give a bunch of money to charity. We need to proclaim the Word of God so that the power of the Holy Spirit may transform lives. This Church Age did not begin by running a social program; it began by preaching the truth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Just imagine today some missionary coming to you and asking for support and you say, "I have no money to give you. But I will offer you something better. I will pray for you. I will write to you. I will ask God to powerfully use you." Most missionaries today would be more disappointed than this beggar.

Just imagine a church today who says - we don't have a lot of money, but what we do have is the power of God. We don't have big budgets and buildings, but we are dedicated to Jesus Christ and to the Word of God. We will not offer you high tech electronic church services. We will give you the whole counsel of God. We will carefully feed you God's Word, and that Word will make you well and set you free.

In many commentaries I read a story about Thomas Aquinas who was visiting Pope Innocent II in Rome. Aquinas was shocked by the wealth and opulence of the Vatican. The Pope supposedly said to Aquinas, "No longer do we say, silver and gold have we none." Thomas Aquinas said, "Yes, and that is why we no longer say rise up and walk." The moment we think our power lies in money, we have the wrong perspective. A church may have a lot of money but have no actual power of God, or a church may have a little money and have great power of God.

**Action #4** - Peter and John command the man to walk in the name of Jesus Christ. **3:6b**

The verb tense “walk” is present, which means they say we command you to start walking continually right now. The power to do this is in the name. This name of “Jesus Christ” has the power to save you right now from this moment on. He can save you from all of your sins (Acts 4:12).

Notice they bring out the fact that Jesus was the Nazarene. We may recall that Nazareth was the Galilean hometown of Jesus Christ. These words would not sound good to most Jewish ears hearing this around the Temple area.

The Jews didn’t think anything good could come out of Nazareth (John 1:46). They did not think that any prophet could come out of Galilee (John 7:52) and when Jesus was hung on the cross, they wrote a sign that said “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” (John 19:19). But this One they had rejected is God with all the power of God.

**Action #5** - Peter and John seize him by the right hand and raise him up. **3:7**

Can you imagine the thought of this crippled guy who is grabbed and raised to his feet? The text stresses this happened instantly or immediately. He was immediately healed. Thomas Walker said the power was Christ’s but he used the hands of the apostles. As he was getting up, his crippled feet and ankles were completely healed.

The Greek words indicate that this man was crippled on the part of the feet that one would step on which would be the soles of his feet (βασεις), and he was also crippled in his ankles (σφυδρα) (Smith, p. 78). There were no corrective surgeries that could be performed. These are very technical words that only a medical doctor like Luke would use to describe this.

This was a miracle. What is even more amazing is that this happened to this man in no connection with his faith at all. This fact shows the fallacy of today’s phony faith healers. Religious faith healers put on a show and carefully select their candidates. They do this for money, and if the person isn’t healed they blame it on a lack of faith. This man who was really healed had been crippled all of his life and he didn’t have any faith.

He was just the recipient of this amazing act of grace; and according to **Acts 3:16**, it not only affected him physically but spiritually too. As Kenneth Gangel said, “As strength entered his ankles, faith entered his heart” (*Acts*, p. 45).

Peter and John had something far better than silver or gold. They offered him Jesus Christ and that gave him a right relationship with God.

**FACT #5** – The crippled beggar is instantly transformed. **3:8**

There were five amazing grace reactions:

**(Reaction #1)** - He leaps up to his feet.

There is a Messianic prediction made by the prophet Isaiah which says “the lame will leap like a deer” (Isaiah 35:6). This crippled man had just experienced the power of the Messiah. He was leaping like a deer.

**(Reaction #2)** - He stands upright.

**(Reaction #3)** - He began to walk.

**(Reaction #4)** - He enters the Temple with Peter and John.

For the first time in over forty years, he is in the Temple worshipping God.

**(Reaction #5)** - He walks, he leaps, and he praises God.

Notice carefully, he is not happy because he has money - he didn't get any money from these apostles; he is happy because he is healed in his feet and in his relationship with God.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is exactly what God will do for any who will believe on Jesus Christ. All of us have been crippled by sin; and when we believe on Jesus Christ, He causes us to stand straight in a relationship with Him. We begin to walk in newness of life. We leap for joy in our hearts and minds and we go to church and we worship God and praise God with the people of God. You may be crippled in your life by sin. You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will leap for joy.

**FACT #6** – All the people at the Temple saw this. **3:9-10**

Being the ninth hour of prayer, this would be a time when the Temple would have huge numbers of people in it.

They all saw him walking and leaping and praising God. They all knew this was the crippled man who had begged for years at that Beautiful Gate. There was no mistaking his identity.

This miracle left this crowd filled with wonder and amazement. This truth about Jesus Christ and the power of His name was about to start a war with the religious world. Religious leaders do not like the idea that Jesus Christ, and He alone, can give you a relationship with God.

But this is the truth. No matter how broken up or crippled you have been by sin, if you will believe on Jesus Christ you will be saved.