

Apostolic Evangelism – Acts 3:1-16

We *can't be sure where exactly* the *healing* of this lame man took place. *Jerusalem*, yes; the *temple*, yes. But I have seen *dozens of depictions* of the temple in Jerusalem, and they are *all a little different*. *Nowhere else* in the Bible are we *told about* the *"Beautiful Gate,"* so it may have been a *nickname* used only in that day. But there is a *reference in verse 11* to *"Solomon's Porch,"* and in *verse 8, after the healing,* the three men went *"into"* the temple. So I am thinking that this took place at *one of the exterior gates – outside* the Court of the *Women* and outside of *Solomon's porch*.

One day, at *just before 3:00* in the afternoon *Peter* and *John* walked *toward* the *"Beautiful Gate."* On that day, *one of the greatest* of all *human events* took place. *Two Christians behaved* like Christians should and *one sick, dead, lost man became* a child of God.

Let's consider the event itself.

This man, because of his malady, had *no access* to the temple. *Because he couldn't walk* and because he couldn't walk, he was *not permitted* inside the temple grounds. So *metaphorically – symbolically –* he had *no access to God*. He was *unable to worship* the Lord according to the outline of the Old Testament law. He was *spiritually crippled – lost –* in reality, he was *dead* in his *trespasses* and *sin* in the sight of God. In fact, he had *never been able to walk*, even though his *legs were correctly formed*, despite their weak and thin condition. Apparently there was a *neurological problem* which kept his cerebellum from commanding his legs properly. Apparently *several* of his *friends* made a point to *come to his house* every morning, and then *somehow they carried* him to a corner of the gate through which hundreds of people passed every day.

Tabling for a moment his *many problems*, consider some of *this man's blessings*. He had a *few friends*, and perhaps a *loving family*. *What a blessing* there is in that. It offers *nothing for eternity* necessarily, but in the short term, it is a *great privilege* to have a friend. Then sitting *at that gate*, if anything was *happening in the temple* or even in *the city, he knew* about it. He had *seen the high priest* on several occasions, and he *could identify* members of the *Sanhedrin*. If there was a *hymn, newly composed* and *sung* by the Levites, he may have heard it. If there had been a *riot against* the *Romans* across town, eventually people would *pass him talking* about it. And he *heard about Jesus of Nazareth* long *before* he had the privilege of seeing Him on several occasions. *But he did see Jesus*, or at least he saw the *crowd of people* who enveloped Jesus as they passed through the gate. And when *Jesus cleansed the temple*, he may have laughed as some of the money changers ran past. *Of course, he knew* full well that *Jesus had been crucified* a few month earlier.

He was *living on the edge of spiritual life*, *attending* the house of God, *without really participating* in it. *His income* was derived from *people who went to and fro* from *"church."* Perhaps he would have *liked to go in himself*, but he *never could – "the good that he would, he could not."* He might have *wanted to worship* with the others, but in reality it was *contrary to his physical nature*. *He knew the way*, but he *couldn't even get to the on ramp*. Then *one special day*, by the *providence of God*, two of the *Lord's apostles chose to enter* the temple through the *"Beautiful Gate"* rather than one of the others. And in that encounter *we catch a glimpse* of one way in which *WE* can *serve the Lord* and our *fellow man*.

How often during our lives and our days *do we walk right past* a *"lame"* man *in need* of our help? You may see a *tear trickling* down the cheek of a stranger; you may *hear* a *gasp* or *groan*. *Sometimes* they *may look right at you* and *"ask an alms."* *Perhaps*, in the case of this man, the request may be *utterly unemotional* or *excited*. Do we hear or listen?

Peter heard, and the *first thing* he did was to *excite* the man's *expectations – "Look on us,"* he said. And the man *did just that*, but he was *instantly disappointed*. It didn't take long to see that *these men weren't dressed* any better than he was – *they didn't look wealthy* or *privileged*. And they were *obviously Galileans* – there even remained a *faint odor of fish* about them. *Galileans didn't* usually have *money*; that was the part of Israel which was *across the tracks from Judea* – on the *other side of Samaria*. *When Peter said, "Look on us,"* did he mean, *"Can't you see that we have no money with which to help?"* Or was he saying, *"Give me your undivided attention for a few minutes?"*

Peter saw the man's disappointment and knew he *needed to add to it* before he could go on. *"I am Sorry, but we don't have any silver or gold to share with you. We are Christian nobodies with nothing in our pockets or in ourselves."* *"Look on us."* *The most helpful* Christian *needs to admit* to himself and share with others that *he*

lacks those things which the *world thinks* are *important*. **How many** people have come to the doors of this church **asking for alms** – for money? A hundred over the years? But **we haven't had much silver and gold** to share with those people. And when it comes to **our ministry**, we don't have the **silver of eloquence**, or the **gold of worldly intellectualism** either.

After saying, "**Look on us**" Peter **turned the man's attention AWAY** from himself and John. And in **the process** he tried to suggest that **what the man really needed** was **not what he thought** he needed. **The world**, and the **lost people** who fill it, **ultimately don't need more silver and gold**. While charities, homeless shelters, homes for unwed mothers and children's may have some **usefulness**, these are **not the greatest needs or answers** to the problems in this world. The world doesn't need **psychiatrists** with their **pills** and **up-beat perspective**. The world doesn't need **more entertainment – better** entertainment, or **more vulgar** entertainment. The world **doesn't even need** more **Christians** and **churches** it has plenty of those. What the world needs is **Christ Jesus**. Christians know they "**were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold.**" And our lame and crippled neighbors need that kind of redemption. The world **needs God's people** – genuine Christians – **willing to admit** that they are **nothing** and have nothing in themselves. "**Look on us**" says Peter and "**recognize that we can't help you in the way that you want.**" **The world needs** Christian servants who can **lay aside THEIR plans**, their **strengths**, their **wisdom** and their **wealth** in order to channel the real power of God.

I saw a man Thursday wearing a **Christian t-shirt**; it had a message about an **aviation mission program**. I didn't get to speak to him, but I **wondered** if he was **Christian servant** of God. Or maybe he just found the shirt. Then I noticed he was **holding a book** – maybe 150 pages – and I wondered what he might be reading. Eventually I saw the title; it was something like "**How to Raise Money for your Ministry.**" Correctly or incorrectly, **I assumed** that he was **just another neo-evangelical** trying to employ the **techniques of the world** to do the work of God. And, brother, **it isn't going to work**; that sort of thing isn't going to help this lame man. **Peter admitted** to this poor sufferer that **he had nothing** of the **world** with which **to bless him**.

What Peter did was **turn the man's attention toward the Lord**. "**Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.**" The man might have thought, "**Ah, here again we have the name of that Nazarine. And, oh yes, I knew right away that these men were from Galilee as well. But why are they talking about Jesus of Nazareth like this? Jesus died on a Roman cross not too many weeks ago.**" **Unless** Peter **emphasized it**, the man **might have missed**, just as you missed it – the title "**Christ.**" "**In the name of Jesus CHRIST of Nazareth rise up and walk.**" Peter was **declaring** that **Jesus of Nazareth** is the **Christ**, the **Messiah**; the one whom the **righteous souls** in Israel had **been awaiting**.

I find it interesting that **Peter didn't** go into a **theological discussion** about the **Christ**. In fact there **wasn't a word of technical theology** in any of this, until Peter began preaching publically to the crowd that gathered later. **Peter didn't discuss depravity**, the imputation of **Adam's sin** or the **curse** which made this man lame. There was **no soliloquy on election** and the **sovereign grace** of God. He didn't talk about the **Trinity** and the **Second Person of the Trinity**. He simply **slid right through the truth** that **Jesus is the Christ**. And he **did it in such a way** as to suggest that **everyone ought to already know this**. I am **not sure if we should criticize Peter** for this or **praise him**, but he did what he did. He didn't talk about **Jesus' sacrifice for sin**; he didn't address Christ the **Passover Lamb**. There would be **plenty of time** for Biblical doctrine later – even in just a few short verses – but that was **not the need of this man** at this time. "**In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.**"

Peter basically **shot an arrow through** the person of **Christ** right toward **the man's heart – and faith**. Now, a **discussion of faith can often be a mistake**, if not handled properly. **Everyone has faith** – faith in **something**. For example, **how many millions** of people have **faith** that their **baptism** made them **children of God**? They may have **true faith**, but **not faith in something true**. How many of those **add faith in their church**, trusting their **membership** to meet their **eternal needs**? And then millions of **people outside of religion** and church have **faith** in their **intellect** and **education** – their understanding of the universe. Multitudes have **faith in their faith**. There are all kinds of "**faith-based**" ministries, and many of them are **like cruise ships looking for rocks** on which to wreck. But **Peter's arrow** went **through Christ Jesus** before entering the **area of this man's faith**. He said, "**Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.**" "**Such as I have give I thee.**" Can you tell me **what exactly it was** that **Peter gave the man**? As I've said, he **didn't give him**

a **lecture** on the theology of Christ – **“Christology.”** There wasn’t a deep discussion of **“Soteriology”** – the theology of salvation. **Peter didn’t** – and couldn’t – **give the man faith** to believe on Christ. He couldn’t cut off a piece of his own Apostolic faith to share with the starving man. All he could do was **exhort him to trust Christ**. **“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”** He **hoped** that this man was **going to do** what he **suggested**. So **Peter did the only thing he could** to assist a man with **neonatal faith** – new born faith. Perhaps all he did was **reach down** and **offer** the man **his hand**. **“Here take my hand and stand up.”**

“Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” **“Rise up and walk?”** the man thought. **“I have never taken a step in my life, and you say rise up and walk.”** **“That’s right. Let’s experiment with that faith of yours. You do have faith don’t you?”** **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and stand up.”** **“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”**

It may not work in every case, but usually, when you **find the word “name”** you can **substitute “nature”** or even **insert the person** himself who bears that name. **“Upon the authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I’m TELLING you to rise up and walk.”** Let me rephrase, **“In the authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth DO IT. Let’s not talk about it. Just do it.”** Here is my hand to help you. **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” just as** the Lord has **saved me**.

Most people would have **taken a few minutes to think** about Peter’s words. **“Let’s rationalize all of this – let’s try to make sense out of it.”** **“To stand and walk is as foreign to me as flying.”** But that **lost man doesn’t need to make sense** out of God’s salvation; **he can’t make** it make sense. **Later** with the **help of the Holy Spirit** he may be able to put some of the pieces together – sin requires a sacrifice – a perfect sacrifice – the son of God was perfect – He sacrificed Himself and offered His blood for my redemption – etc. **Some of us** may be able to **explain salvation** on an **elemental level**. But there is **still** that **enigmatic, eternal question** – **“Why would the Lord want to save me?”** This business of **salvation** – this **standing** and **walking** in Christ – **makes no sense** – it is not logical.

But Peter, the evangelist, **didn’t give** the man an **opportunity to ruminate** on this possible restoration. **He just put his hand down** in an offer to help. **Maybe** the Spirit gave **special direction** to the Apostles, indicating that **the Lord had prepared** this man. **Maybe God had given** this man faith to trust Him, and this had been **revealed to Peter**. But I **see no reason** to make that assumption. **Peter didn’t know if this man was elect or not**. He **simply declared** that there is **healing** – there is **salvation** – **“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.”** So **what** are you waiting for? **“Rise up and walk.”** **Here is my hand** to steady you.

The man received from Christ – by an act of faith – **strength to overcome** his **weakness**. **Could I say** that he **received Christ** and was **made whole**? Peter **“took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. and he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.”**

Isn’t this a **picture of salvation** and at the same time a picture of Christian **evangelism**? **It began** with a man who was **helpless** and **hopeless**. But in **God’s providence**, along came **an ambassador** of the Lord Jesus Christ. **In Christ is the cure** for man’s most horrible malady – **sin**. **When the Holy Spirit gives** the sinner **faith to trust** the promise of God, it is because it is **God’s will to cure him**. And ninety-eight times out of a hundred, **the Lord uses** one of his **servants to strengthen** the ankles of that faith. **The man** whom the Lord **intends to save, will reach out** to Christ, **perhaps through the hand** of someone the Lord has already saved. **Reaching** to the **Lord by faith**, he will find his **life restored**.

It’s **our job** – our **God-ordained commission** – to **reach down** to the **spiritually crippled** in this world and help them up. **“Silver and gold have we none; but such as we have we need to freely give. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”**