

ACTS
The Healing Of The Lame Man
Acts 3:1-11

About fifty years ago, General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, made what now seems to be a profound prophetic statement. He said, "The chief danger of the twentieth century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God and heaven without hell." And may I add several others: "form without power and activity without the supernatural."

The church of Jesus Christ, especially in America, is in real trouble. The church today needs more than a lift; it needs the very life of Christ. The church needs vitality and an expectancy concerning the supernatural. The first century church really did see the mystical, supernatural workings of a sovereign Christ in its midst. A good example is the first miracle in the new age of the church - the healing of the lame man who went from limping to leaping through the experiencing of the power and life of the resurrected Christ.

The church today needs a sensitivity to the supernatural, a belief that Christ can and will work wonders in its midst. It seems as though much of the professing church is afraid of the supernatural. This fear comes from the fact that men have been raised up in a scientific, godless, humanistic society for the last hundred years and they are skeptical about any supernatural phenomena. Then there are the radical faith healers and their super-emotional healing campaigns which are obviously not of God which causes true believers in Christ to play down the supernatural aspects of Christianity, at least the healing aspects.

What if someone you knew was ill or crippled and he stood up at Grace Church and claimed a healing for himself, what would be your reaction? Perhaps he would be so excited that he would praise God in a rather loud voice. How would you react? Obviously, you would seek to prove that this healing was genuine, and if it was, would you rejoice with this person? Maybe you would think a man jumping up in church and praising God would not be dignified, but a person healed really wants to shout it out and praise God for His goodness. Remember, my friends, there is a difference between being dignified and being petrified!

Perhaps we all need a little more joy of the Lord in our Christianity which causes us to get excited and praise our God. Miracles and healings come very seldom but there should always be a vitality in our hearts for the mystical workings of God. When we hear the Word of God taught, there should be a deep sense of the joy of the Lord so that there is a spiritual leaping and praising of God. If we do not have an anticipation of the moving of a sovereign Christ, we have not really entered into the spirit of the New Testament. There is a place for joy, happiness, praise and excitement in the Christian life. There is a genuine place for emotion in Christianity, for the gospel touches the whole man, both head and heart, or it has not touched a person at all.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson tells the story of a newly converted man who was part of a very stayed Presbyterian church. In the middle of the sermon, this man stood up and said, "I got religion." The ushers came over and quieted the man. A little while later he said again, "Praise, God, I got religion!" The ushers came again and said, "Be quiet, we don't do that in our church." And the man became quiet. A little more time and the man again stood up and said, "I got religion. I got religion." Finally, one usher stepped over to him and said, "That may be true but you did not get that in our church!"

There were many miracles accomplished in the beginning days of the church and these miracles filled the early Christians with awe and fear of God. "And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles" (Acts 2:43). Yet, Dr. Luke, under the guiding of the Holy Spirit, selected this particular healing of the lame man to teach us some very significant lessons. Also this physical healing of the lame man should be seen as a beautiful illustration of the spiritual healing of a soul from sin.

ITS CIRCUMSTANCES Acts 3:1-3

Prayer Partners (3:1). “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.” -- Pragmatic Peter and poetical John were the closest of friends in Christ. They were prayer partners on their way to pray at the Temple. It was the custom of the Jews to have three set times during a given day for prayer - 9:00 in the morning, 12:00 o'clock noon and 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon. “Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur. And He will hear my voice” (Psa.55:17). The Temple was open every day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. (sunup to sundown).

Peter and John at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon had a definite hour to pray and they probably prayed more than once a day at the set times. Set times of prayer were apparently a habit for them. While we should always have an attitude of prayer (“pray without ceasing”), it is also good to have a specific time and place to meet God in prayer. Whatever Peter and John were men of prayer because they believed in a supernatural working God.

These early Christians were still going to the Temple to worship. Apparently they had no hang-ups about worshipping in beautiful buildings or going through certain Jewish rituals, but, of course, they would connect Christ with everything in the Temple worship. These early Christians felt they were the true Israel of God. They were both physical and spiritual Israel as members of the church. They believed that Christ and His church were the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Christians were soon driven out of the Temple because of persecution and were forced to meet in homes, and it was then they really understood the physical Temple was of no significance and Christ now dwelt in His spiritual temple, the church.

Paralysis Incurable (3:2). “And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down everyday at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.” -- We know very little about this lame man except that his condition was congenital and he could not only not walk but he had never walked a step in his whole life. His feet and ankles had been deformed for forty years (Acts 4:22) and he was forced to beg for a living. Of course, one of the best places to beg was in or around the Temple where people would be more generous after a season of worship.

This lame man undoubtedly had a very low self image since he was the product of a tragic life. He thought of himself as of little or no value. He was probably very withdrawn and shy because of his deformity. He may have even been bitter against God for his physical condition.

This lame man was brought each day, every day, to the same spot to beg. Jesus Christ had come to the Temple before His crucifixion and undoubtedly had seen this beggar. Yet, Jesus never healed this man and perhaps this man wanted Christ to give him a healing but was not healed and was disgusted with all the teaching about Jesus being Messiah. You see, God has a time and a place for everything, and it was not God's will for this lame man to be healed when Christ was on the earth. It was God's will to heal this man by the resurrected Christ through the Apostles. This teaches that things that might have happened did not happen because it was not in God's will for it to happen. God is in control of circumstances.

APPLICATION:

This lame man represents the unsaved man in this world who by nature and acts is sinful and separated from God. The non-Christian is spiritually lame, sick and deformed because of sin. The unsaved man is not able to walk spiritually by his own power but is carried about by the will and power of another. The unbeliever is under the influence and power of Satan and is blinded to spiritual realities.

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is

the image of God” (II Cor. 4:3, 4).

How can a man born in sin get spiritually healed? He must believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But how can he believe if he is controlled by Satan and sin? The sinner must be drawn to Christ by the supernatural power of God. “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).

Pleading for Alms (3:3). “And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms.” -- We do not know why the beggar was attracted to Peter and John but perhaps he saw in them a kind face and thought they would be a soft touch for money. At this particular point, this lame man's thinking was purely material. He had no spiritual thoughts at all.

APPLICATION:

This lame man was a beggar. All unsaved men are beggars. They are spiritual paupers even though they may be worth millions in this world's goods. Wealth, riches and materialism cannot bring one inner peace or an intimate relationship with God. All unbelievers are beggars, and if they do not understand this fact on this side of death, they will understand it thirty seconds after death. Someone said that “witnessing is one beggar telling another beggar where to get the bread of life.”

ITS CHARACTERISTICS Acts 3:4-7

Attention (3:4, 5). “And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, ‘Look at us!’ And he began to give them attention, expecting to receive something from them.” -- The Apostles must have sensed that God wanted them to speak to this beggar. They were sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and when they sensed that God wanted them to speak, they were obedient. Christ wanted to do something with this lame beggar and the Apostles were merely instruments in carrying out Christ's work.

The first thing Peter did was to arrest the man's attention. The tone of Peter's voice, which rang with authority from above, caused this lame man to stop and take notice. Peter used this technique in order to arouse a sense of expectation in this man, so that he would expect to receive something from the Apostles. He thought he was going to receive money but God had other plans. He was going to receive something that money cannot buy. This lame man had to have a sense of expectancy if he was going to receive something from the Apostles and Christ. If one does not expect something, he will rarely get it!

APPLICATION:

Sinners are spiritually lame, helpless, needing far more than all that money can buy. They are in need of salvation. When the gospel is preached to sinners, Christ through His own person and work attracts the attention of men. The unsaved man must listen and when Christ promises the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, the sinner must expect to receive these things from Christ and come to Him to get them or he will never receive salvation. Furthermore, Christians must be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and speak to men about Christ as the Holy Spirit prompts.

Abrupt Command (3:6). “But Peter said, ‘I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!’” -- The very first thing Peter did was to admit his bankruptcy in the material realm. He had no silver or gold to give this man, and, furthermore, this was an admission on Peter's part that the church's power does not lie in wealth, economics, politics, or numbers but in its dependency upon the Living Christ to work supernatural power. Peter had something more than money for this lame man. Peter had what the beggar needed; he had Christ the One who could make him physically and spiritually whole again.

Peter with calm authority in his voice said, “In the name of Jesus the Nazarene - walk!” Peter was bankrupt materially but was very adequate in the spiritual realm. Can you imagine that electrifying moment when Peter

told this lame man to walk. This was an impossible situation. Rationally, medically and scientifically this was a hopeless case. It was an impossible situation! Yet, Peter, in the name of Christ told him to walk. A name stands for all that a person is; therefore, the name of Christ includes all the power of Christ. Peter was saying, "In the power of Christ who is God, walk!" Notice carefully that Peter claims no power of his own and gives all the glory and honor to the name of Christ. Peter at this point could have become a famous healer, but he chose to direct men's attention away from himself and to Christ.

APPLICATION:

The Christian today has something far more than money and material this to give the world. Christians have the only answer to man's deepest needs and problems. They have Christ and His life to give to the world. The church must admit its bankruptcy in the material realm but must express boldly its adequacy in the spiritual realm and display to the world a confidence in the supernatural workings of Christ. While the church does have a responsibility to help the world financially when it can, this is not the churches' primary responsibility. The primary task is to preach the gospel to the world and to bring to the world the good news of Christ, who can save their souls and prepare them for eternity. The church is to do good to all men but this is a secondary task and not a primary one. Christians have Christ to give to this world. The power of the church is not physical but spiritual, not money but Christ and not poverty programs but salvation! With authority, the church can say to this world, "In the name and power of Christ, walk!"

It was the words, "silver and gold have I none" which sparked the famous conversation between St. Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent II. Aquinas came upon the Pope when he was counting a large sum of money. The Pope rather arrogantly said, "Ah, Thomas, you see the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" Thomas said, "That's right, Holy Father, and neither can the church say, 'Rise up and walk!'"

Action (3:7). "And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were straightened." -- Peter told the lame man to walk and then extended his hand to the man to help him to stand to his feet. Just think, he had never stood before and at this moment he was not yet healed. It took real faith for that lame man to grab Peter's hand. He had to do this act of faith in response to the command or he would not have been healed. What must have gone through this lame man's mind? There must have been some questions, some reservations and some doubts, but he reached out in childlike faith and took Peter's hand, and at that moment strength came to his feet and ankles. He had been the victim of a miracle through the power of Jesus Christ. When this man was healed, it was an immediate act and a complete act. It was a clear cut supernatural healing.

APPLICATION:

When a sinner exercises faith in Jesus Christ, he is saved immediately and completely. Salvation is not a step by step process. It is an instantaneous, supernatural act which comes from God the moment a person believes in Christ. A person is saved in a moment of time. There may be a gradual process of being drawn to Christ where one fights making that decision to trust Christ as Lord and Savior, but the act of salvation brings instantaneous regeneration. A person can never be more saved than he already is but he can be more sanctified. When a person trusts Christ, he receives new found spiritual strength and he begins to walk for Christ.

ITS CONSEQUENCES Acts 3:8-11

Leaping for Joy (3:8). "And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them walking and leaping and praising God," -- This lame man became a leaper. He stood up and began to walk. He had to learn to walk for the very first time. He was so enthusiastic. He was jumping up and down, leaping and clicking his heels and taking little steps and big steps. He probably laughed and cried and shouted and sobbed. He was excited because his body had been touched by God. He was a man made enthusiastic by the grace of God. He had contacted the supernatural power of Christ. Notice the first thing he did was to go into the temple to worship God because he wanted to worship with other followers of the Messiah.

APPLICATION:

A sinner touched by the grace of God and the supernatural working of God will leap for spiritual joy and praise God for His infinite goodness. There is no sinner who gets saved who is not excited about his salvation. All new Christians may not express their excitement the same way but all are enthusiastic about their new relationship with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a truly saved man will want to identify with a group of Christians and affiliate with a local church. A truly born again person will not have to be persuaded to join a local church. Some of his first thoughts as a new creature in Christ will be to unite with a group of believers to give praises to Christ together with them.

Living Testimony (3:9). “And all the people saw him walking and praising God.” -- Apparently most of the people had seen this lame beggar at the Temple. They now saw him walking and running and leaping. This was positive proof that a great miracle had taken place in his life. He was a living testimony of the grace of God and no one who knew him before could deny that a miracle had taken place on his body which also affected his soul.

APPLICATION:

When a person is truly born again from above, everyone who has known that person will recognize a mighty change in him. He is a new creature in Christ with new desires so that he turns to Christ from Satan and to righteousness from unrighteousness. A true Christian experiences the life of Christ which revolutionizes his thinking, his habits and his actions. The truly born again person does not need to carry a sign advertising his conversion or put a bumper sticker on his car, because the language he uses, the attitudes he displays, the songs he sings, the places he goes and the company he keeps will be all the advertising he needs. It is impossible to keep Christ hidden when we come to know Him as our personal Lord and Savior!

Laden with Amazement (3:10, 11). “And they were taking note 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. And while he was clinging (grasping, hugging) to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon full of amazement.” -- The healed man was hugging John and Peter and so excited about what Christ had done. This attracted a crowd and the people were dumbfounded. These unbeliever Jews stood in amazement and wonder and God used this miracle to convince many of them that Jesus was Lord and Christ and that He was with this new movement of Christianity. These unbelievers were convinced without a shadow of a doubt that God was working supernaturally in the midst of these people who called themselves disciples of Christ. Many of these unbelieving Jews never trusted Christ but they could not deny that Christ was in the midst of these Christians.

APPLICATION:

There will be great excitement in any local church where souls are being supernaturally saved by the Living Christ. Such a church will create excitement and interest among unbelievers. It will be visited by those who hear reports of people being saved and miracles being wrought. A church where revival breaks out, where lives are changed, where there is an expectancy about the supernatural, will become the center of interest. Such a church cannot be hidden. It is like “a city set on a hill.”

ITS CONTEMPORARY COUNTERPART

Sign-gifts. Does Christ heal people today? The answer is obviously “yes“. Healing is not some first century phenomena which passed out of existence. There is a difference, however, between “divine healing” and “the gift of miracles“. What occurred in Acts 3 was a miracle which came from the hand of an Apostle who had the sign-gift of miracles. The sign-gifts did pass out of existence when the Apostolic office passed off the scene around 95 A.D. at the death of the Apostle John.

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and

has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and continued the word by the signs that followed” (Mark 16:15-20).

“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles” (II Cor. 12:12).

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard. God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (Heb.2:3, 4).

These sign-gifts, which included the gift of miracles, were given to the Apostles to authenticate the message of Jesus Christ to the unsaved world, to show that God was with this new movement of Christianity.

When people read Acts 3 about the lame man, they often say, “This is what ought to be occurring in the church all the time today. People ought to be healed like this every day,” they are not clearly distinguishing between the “sign-gift of miracles” which was the temporary possession of the Apostles to introduce the new age of the church, and “divine healing” which takes place in any age and at any time God chooses to sovereignly heal. Most of the miracles in the New Testament were done by Christ or the Apostles who had the sign-gifts and the healing of the lame man falls into this category.

Sovereign Healing. Today there are no faith-healers but there is “faith-healing“. In the church age, God does choose at times to give divine healing to some people, and we are not a New Testament church unless we expect God to physically heal people. According to the Bible, there is a divine pattern for healing through prayer.

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:14-16).

God, if He chooses to heal today, does so through prayer by the elders and prayer by the people. God is under no obligation to heal but if He is going to heal, it will be through believing-prayer. A church which believes in divine healing is a church which believes in the supernatural and the mighty power of God which prayer somehow unleashes.

CONCLUSION

Is there someone who is looking for a healing? I’m not talking about a physical healing but more importantly a spiritual healing of the soul laden with guilt and frustration because of sin. God offers you a spiritual healing through Jesus Christ the Lord. God, through Christ, offers to make you whole if you will but receive Christ into your life.

Are you like the lame man? Perhaps you have been laying at the gate for years in desperate need of spiritual help. Perhaps you have sought even a physical healing but have not known that God wants to give you a spiritual healing. He wants to give you new life in Christ, the forgiveness of sins and set your destiny towards heaven. Jesus says, “In my name, rise up and walk!” Will you by faith grasp Christ's hand and allow Him to do a miracle in you? He will! And when He does, your heart will leap spiritually for the joy of a so great salvation.