

ACTS 3:1-10

INTRODUCTION

The Bible warns repeatedly of the ever present danger of heretical false teachers, they claim to represent God yet they misrepresent His truth and as a result they do great harm. The bible calls false teaches rebellious people mere talkers and deceivers (Titus 1:10). Men who oppose the truth, men of depraved mind (2 Timothy 3:8) and I could go on with many more titles and names given to such people.

Now the danger posed by such false teachers to the very early church was enormous and therefore it was imperative that there was a way of distinguishing the false teachers from those who spoke the truth from God. It is for this reason that God granted to his spokesmen in the early church the ability to perform miracles.

These miracles were their accreditation papers demonstrating they were from God and were speaking His truth. For us today this sort of accreditation is no longer necessary for we can determine who speaks for God by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures.

We were told in 2:43 that the apostles did many wonders and signs and now Luke gives us an example of one of these miracles in the verses that we are looking at this morning. This healing of a man lame from birth gathers a crowd and prepares them to hear Peter's sermon. It also confirms that Peter and John are from God and therefore they should be listened too.

1. THE MIRACLE (vs. 1-10)

Peter and John were originally fishermen before the Lord called them into fishing for men. They were going up to the temple and the perfect tense here suggests that it was their custom to go to the temple frequently. We are told that it was the time of prayer; this was three in the afternoon. On their way into the temple the two apostles encountered a man who was crippled from birth.

His case was hopeless, there was no cure for him in his day so he was taken along to the temple where he was able to beg. That was the only hope he had, he had to depend on the mercy and generosity of others. The temple was a good place to beg because crowds of people went to the temple every day but they were also religious people so you would hope they would be more willing to show mercy than others would. Besides they probably thought that giving to the poor man would be looked upon with favour by the Lord. The lame man asked Peter and John for money, no doubt the man expected to receive some money but instead he was about to receive greater mercy more than he ever expected for he is about to receive healing.

Now there are a number of aspects of this miracle that are worth noting.

a) It was unexpected (vs. 4-6) - In response to the beggar's plea for money Peter and John looked straight at him, it is interesting to note that the word "looked" is the word used of the disciples looking at the Lord as he ascended into heaven. This is not a casual look but a fixed gaze. In other words the two apostles fixed their attention on this unhappy disabled man.

The man was asked to look at the apostles, which he was glad to do no doubt expecting to receive a gift of money. But Peter's response must have shocked the man it was totally unexpected. The beggar no doubt wondered what these men could give him that would be more valuable than money. He was about to find out. What a surprise and what an unexpected gift when he is given healing.

b) It Was Done In The Name Of Jesus Christ (v 6) - The crippled man had little reason to believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus had not changed his situation and besides he had been executed as a criminal; therefore he must have found Peter's use of his name very perplexing and odd. "In the name of" means: by virtue of Jesus Christ's character and authority and power.

Here Peter calls him Jesus Christ of Nazareth that was the common title used for Jesus during his earthly ministry. What Peter is saying is that this miracle is done in the name of Jesus the Messiah who comes from Nazareth. To do something in the name of Jesus Christ is to act consistently with his will it is to do what He would do if he were still living on earth. It is to act in his authority and with his delegated power.

Peter had seen the Lord heal countless times, now acting on behalf of His Lord with the power delegated to him, he commands the beggar to walk.

c) It was instantaneous and complete (vs. 7-8) - The crippled man's confusion about the whole situation did not last long because Peter takes the man by the hand and helps him up upon his feet and immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened. The cure was immediate. Peter did not have to mishandle the cripple to get him on his feet. As soon as the healing took place the man was able to stand on his feet and walk.

He was completely healed immediately, this was not a gradual process were his legs slowly got stronger each day so that he could stand and then walk etc. No immediately the Lord heals him through Peter, he not only walks but he goes into the temple to worship leaping for joy and praising God.

His joy and excitement knew no limits; mere walking was not enough for him he was like a child with a new toy he could not resist using his new strength to leap into the temple.

There were three results of the miraculous healing of this crippled beggar. First of all there was joy as the healed man leaps into the temple praising God. The man has never been so joyful. There was never temple worship like this before.

Secondly there was real and meaningful worship as the man praised God. This is not a ritual or routine that the man is going through he genuinely is praising God and rejoicing over what God has done for him.

Finally there was amazement amongst all those that saw him that day. When they saw him walking and leaping into the temple and no doubt they would have heard him praising God there was no mistake they knew that this was the crippled beggar who use to sit at the temple gate begging for a living. They could not deny that a miracle had taken place.

No doubt the man had been begging at the temple gate for years for we are told that he is over forty years old (Acts 4:22). So he would have been well known by the worshippers so they could not deny that a miracle has taken place.

Now as we said when we thought about the signs and wonders done by the Apostles in 2:43 God designed miracles to act as signs to attract people's attention and to point people to God's truth about His Son Jesus Christ. This is exactly what this miracle did for the people gathered at a place called Solomon's colonnade were Peter began to preach to them (v 11). We will look at Peter's sermon next time but let us try and learn the lessons that we are supposed to learn from this miracle. Let's look at the divine truth that this miracle points us too.

2. LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLE

I want us to see the similarities in this man with each one of us who are also born with a condition that leaves us without hope. I am not talking about a physical condition like this man had but I am talking about the condition of sin and its awful consequences. This poor man was born crippled, the Greek literally means “from his Mother’s womb.” So this man is born into this world disabled.

Now as we think of what the Bible says we are told that from our women’s womb we have a sinful nature and that nature affects us and disables throughout life (Psalm 51:5). Every one of us is born into this world with a sinful nature and the consequences of that is that just as this man was cut off from his society so we too are cut off from God.

This man had no hope he was dependent upon others to carry him to the temple so that he could beg and he was dependent on others showing him mercy and kindness so that he could survive. In the same way spiritually speaking we are in a hopeless state before God, we are unable to help ourselves spiritually we are very much dependant on the mercy and kindness of God. We cannot do anything that would earn God’s favour there is nothing that we can do to receive the forgiveness and healing that we so desperately need.

There is something else here that I want us to notice. At least this man was brought to the right place to get help. He had come to this spot for years, and no doubt he received enough money to keep him going. He knew that the temple was the place where he could expect to receive mercy from the people who went there.

Can I say that if you are looking help to deal with your guilt and sin then you have come to the right place this morning? O this church cannot deal with your sin but we can point you to the One who can. I would encourage you to keep coming Sunday by Sunday and to listen carefully and seek God that He might impart life to you.

However this beggar did not come to the temple seeking healing that day all he wanted was financial help but went home healed. Now people come to church for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes people come because somehow or other it makes them feel good, sometimes people come looking for specific help to a problem they have but whatever our reason for coming to church we might be surprised just like this crippled man was surprised to receive more than we expected. This crippled man came looking for money and went away healed and as a result able to enter the temple and worship God for the first time in his life.

You could come to church for your own reasons maybe even selfish reasons but you could leave here today with salvation, with Christ and with a true desire to worship God. That is what God is able to do to you, and perhaps that is why God has brought you to church. As we move toward the Christmas period there will be people in this church for all sorts of reasons.

Some will come to see and support their children at the Discovery Club Parents evening. But wouldn’t it be great if they left with salvation. People will come out of sentimentality to a Carol Service but we ought to pray that whatever reason’s people have for coming to our church that they will leave with Christ and with his salvation.

You see salvation is God’s initiative just like the healing of the crippled man was God’s initiative. The crippled man did not ask for healing but money but God’s purposes were to give him healing. So whatever reasons people might come to church over Christmas let us pray that God will be merciful to such ones and that he might grant them eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Just as this crippled man was surprised to receive healing wouldn’t it be wonderful if this Christmas there were many sinners in Leyburn surprised because they have come to know Christ.

Let's be honest Christian. Were you not surprised when you found Christ? Did you ever think you would become a Christian?

Of course not, but God is sovereign and his purposes are sovereign and therefore he gives salvation to those who did not expect it or at least initially did not come looking for it.

But notice something else here. This crippled man's change was immediate and remarkable. So remarkable that people noticed. Now let us be clear here. When God visits sinners with salvation then the change is immediate and remarkable. Salvation is immediate it is not something that people grow into. When God gives life then immediately sinners are saved from that moment on.

They have moved from death to life, from the Kingdom of darkness and Satan to the Kingdom of light and God. Once that life is given then others will notice because there will be evident changes in our lives. For some like this poor crippled man the changes are remarkable and noticeable by all, in others the change is less dramatic and at first less noticeable but there are changes.

The changes in this man are very obvious.

But apart from the physical change of walking notice the other changes. He is joyful, and he is praising God. Now those are two clear signs of a saved person. God gives unspeakable joy. After all why should we not be joyful? Our sins are forgiven, we have been made right with God, our future of a heavenly home is secure, we have someone to care for us someone we can call Father.

Those truths will lead Christians to praise God for all that he has done for us through Jesus Christ. Perhaps while in our unregenerate state we cursed and mocked God. Perhaps we treated Him with contempt. Perhaps the story of Christmas left us indifferent. But now instead of cursing God we praise him and the message of the gospel warms our hearts.

Now we are constantly amazed by the message that God loved sinners so much that Jesus his only Son entered our world and lived and died so that sinners could be forgiven and saved.

Finally when salvation comes to sinners that noticeable change will lead to other believers and unbelievers being amazed and filled with wonder at what has happened. I am always amazed when God saves sinners and changes them. Each person saved is an amazing thing, it is not something that I ever get use too or become indifferent about. I am sure that is true with you as well.

Look at one another are you not amazed at the work of God, are you not amazed at who God saves and amazed at the changes that God brings into peoples lives as a result of salvation. Of course we are and we ought to pray that God will continue to amaze us.

But Unbelievers I believe also are amazed and filled with wonder when they see what God has done in our lives. They may not be able to understand how or why we have been changed but if we are saved people and living consistently then unbelievers will be amazed. That amazement is more startling when we first become Christians perhaps our friends gave us 6 weeks before it wears off but now years have passed perhaps decades have passed and we are still walking with the Lord. Perhaps those people who gave us 6 weeks are still amazed that we are still walking with the Lord and we ought to pray that that amazement will lead others to receive this wonderful gift of eternal life that is found in Jesus Christ.

But interesting this amazement gave Peter a wonderful opportunity to explain what has happened to this man and to explain by whose power he has been healed (vs. 11-26). But as I finish today, let us take the many opportunities that we have to explain the change in our lives. Let us tell people that the change in our lives is brought about by God's power.

Let us go on to share the wonderful news of the gospel, which shows us that we are all sinners and that we can all receive the wonderful and amazing gift of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen