

"Jesus Christ in the Church"

Part 3

Acts 3

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we stepped into chapter 3 where we found Peter and John going to the temple at the ninth hour/the hour of prayer. It was at the Beautiful Gate that they encountered a man who was lame.

Notice Acts 3:1-5

His condition was not due to any accident. He was born lame. Everyday he was carried and laid at the gate where he would receive alms to help with his daily needs. This man was over 40 years old, so he had been laid at the gate many years. This means that Jesus most likely had contact with this man. He did not heal him because the time was not right. He would be healed at a later date to set the stage for Peter's sermon where five thousand would be saved. Last week we looked at this man as a picture of many people in the world today. He can be seen as a picture of many men today who are spiritually lame in the sense that they are dependent upon others to do what they should be doing. They should be spiritual leaders in their family, but instead they are spiritually lame. They are like this man in the sense that they are looking to the material world for satisfaction and fulfillment. This then consumes their entire life. They therefore have no time to study the Bible, nor will they make the time. So they have very little spiritual strength and many times their wives must do for them what they cannot (by choice) do for themselves and that is to lead the family. Any Truth that they do get is from someone else because they are too busy.

This man can also be seen as all people who come into this world. They are born lame spiritually speaking. They cannot walk in a way that is pleasing to God and like this man they too do not realize that Jesus has what they need, and it is free.

Tonight as we come back to this text I want to build upon these thoughts as we move on.

I. The Situation

Part 2

Notice Acts 3:6

Here in this verse we see that Peter and John had no silver or gold. There is a valuable point to see here. We know that money is needed in this life to buy what we need. But it is not what our lives should revolve around. If our lives were to revolve around money, then these two men would not have been at the temple, but they would have been out working or

looking for work. Our lives are to revolve around making Jesus known to the unsaved of our world. What people need is not more wealth if they did then the Lord would have given the Apostles an abundance of wealth to carry our and distribute. There were many in Jerusalem that were struggling to make ends meet. Remember what Luke recorded in Acts 2?

Acts 2:44-45

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

There was much poverty in Jerusalem, but God did not give buckets of gold to the Apostles to hand out because there was a need which the people had that was far greater. They need saved therefore God gave them a Savior and He gave them 12 men to go and tell them. I point this out because in the day in which we live in many believers get caught up in money and trying to make more because of the rising cost of living. Be very careful that you do not get caught in that trap.

1 Timothy 6:5-10

⁵ Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.

⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Notice Acts 3:6 again.

I want to draw your attention to how Peter refers to Jesus in this verse. He called Him "Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Why did Peter not call Him, "Jesus Christ of Bethlehem"? He was born in Bethlehem not in Nazareth. Peter identified Jesus with Nazareth because that

was where Jesus was raised and if we go to Nathanael's words, we can see what that area was like.

John 1:45-46

⁴⁵ Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

⁴⁶ And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Nazareth was a rough area as we can see from Nathanael's words. Anyone who was raised in Nazareth was considered to be no good. So why does Peter identify Jesus with Nazareth? God moves Peter to use this reference to help all who read to know that no matter your background, no matter how messed up your past is, no matter what your reputation is, Jesus can meet you and He can save you. He can identify with the sinner no matter what they are coming out of.

Hebrews 2:9-10, 17-18

⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

¹⁰ For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

II. The Miracle

Notice Acts 3:6-7

Peter commanded the lame man to rise and walk and he then took him by the hand and pulled him to his feet. Luke the physician then gives the details of the Divine healing. Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. This is how God performs miracles. When He performs a miracle, it is COMPLETE. There was no need for physical

therapy or for rehabilitation. The man was fully and completely healed. He did not need to be taught how to walk or stand and he did not need to be on any medications. I point this out because we need to know that when God miraculously heals someone it is complete and instantaneous.

Before we leave verse 7, we need to consider Peter's actions in this verse. When Peter announced the healing, he then reached out and took the man by the right hand and lifted him up.

Application:

We all fit in one of the categories represented by the three men in this text. You are either lame and need the power of the Holy Spirit in your life or you are like Peter and John, and you have the power of the Spirit in your life. God would want all of us to be as Peter and John not that we are going to heal anyone. This was a gift of the Apostles, and this gift does not exist today. God can still heal people, but we do not have the gift of healing to command people to be healed.

But there is something that we can do for those who are spiritually lame. We can come alongside of them and take them by the hand and help them to get on their spiritual feet. Too many times one believer will walk right past another believer who has become lame. Sometimes the spiritually lame are criticized and left to sit in their lame condition.

Let us consider a few verses.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

We are to be involved in the lives of one another and this is especially true as we look around and see the day of the Lord's coming approaching. These verses give the idea that as we move closer to the rapture of the church there are going to be many believers who are weary and lame.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 20, 26

¹² For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

When a believer becomes lame, we have the responsibility of taking them by the hand and pulling them out of their lameness and help them move on toward spiritual maturity.

I want to take your attention to Psalm 23 to see something very interesting.

Psalm 23:3a

3 He restoreth my soul:

Psalm 23 is the Shepherd's Psalm. As David wrote this, he was thinking about the sheep which he watched over as a shepherd and he was seeing himself as a sheep under the watch of his Lord, his personal Shepherd. One of the things which shepherds had to watch for was sheep that had fallen over on their backs. They referred to them as "cast sheep." If they were not helped, they would die in that position. When a sheep was "cast" it was helpless on its own. There are several things that can cause a sheep to be cast.

1. Comfort

If the sheep finds a soft and comfortable depression in the ground and it lies down and rolls over into the depression it will be cast. Without help it cannot get back to its feet again.

Application:

The believer can become lame when he or she begins to walk down the path of least resistance. There is danger in comfort. Often believers will search for some cozy corner where they can avoid the heat of the spiritual battle. I understand that the cozy corner is very appealing, but it is a dangerous place for us. We need the trials and the pressures of life to drive us to God so that we are dependent upon Him. We need these experiences of life to keep us sharp. It is in the cozy corner that the believer can become lame through ease.

It is our responsibility to reach out and take the hand of our brothers and sisters in Christ and help lift them from this lame condition.

2. Too much wool.

A sheep that had excess wool was in danger of being cast also. The wool would become weighted down and it became a heavy weight so that if the sheep laid down and rolled to far the weight of the wool would carry the sheep over on its back. It was then cast and unable to get up. The shepherd would need to do something that the sheep often fought against and that was shearing. The heavy wool needed to be cut away.

Application:

Wool in the Bible represents pride and the self-life. We as believers can become spiritually lame when we get weighted down with the self-life. When a believer gets his or her focus off the Lord and on themselves, they get entangled in living for self and this causes spiritual lameness. This can also entail the believer going back to the former sins and practices of the old life.

God will take His sheep aside and in His own way He will cut away the excess self and pride. God knows how to shear His sheep. It is something that we often resist but it is what is best for us. We who are walking with the Lord have a responsibility on this also just as Peter and John. We see this in the resurrection of Lazarus.

John 11:43-44

⁴³ *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

⁴⁴ *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

It was the responsibility of Lazarus' friends to unwrap him from the grave clothes.

Conclusion:

Let us remember that we are all one body. We need each other. The church is our family and our support group.

Hebrews 13:3

³ *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*