

ACTS

Part 7 – “A Sign of Things to Come”

Acts 3:1-10

Central Theme: The healing of the lame man is a sign both of Jesus’ power to make sinners whole and the coming new creation whereby redemption will be fully realized.

This passage describes the prayer routine of Peter and John (3:1) as they make their way to the temple. Upon their arrival, they encounter a beggar crippled from birth. The encounter consists of the healing miracle and the reaction of those who witnessed the healing. The focus is on the power of the risen Jesus who now gives attestation to the authority of the apostles and their message.

This healing miracle, like all those performed by the apostles, was a sign. That is, the point of the miracles was not to impress or to merely show compassion. The miracles pointed beyond themselves to something far greater. Generally speaking, the apostolic miracles were signs pointing to the fact that in Jesus Christ the kingdom of God had arrived. His rule and reign were firmly established. Jesus was now risen and exalted. The days of the new creation were on the way.

This lame man we are told had been crippled since birth and would sit by the temple gate called “Beautiful” every day begging alms. What a tragic sight not least of all because God’s old covenant people seem to have forgotten their obligations (Deut 15:4, 7-8). But when Peter and John see the man they engage him personally. Being poorly funded themselves, they deny him that which he is asking for (alms) and instead give him what he truly needs: wholeness through the risen Christ.

What Peter’s actions teach us about effective ministry...

1. Effective ministry depends upon the power of Jesus.

Vs. 1 – “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.”

- Notice that the disciples are going to the temple to pray at the appointed hour. Jews observed three formal times of prayer each day. For Peter and John, their status as apostles and friends of Jesus did not exempt them from their need to pray. Neither did the filling of the Holy Spirit diminish their need or desire to join with God’s people during formal times of prayer. Michael Green observes: “Prayer, not activism, is what they relied on” (268).

V. 6 – “But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’”

- Peter’s words indicate that whatever power there was to be had in his ministry owed solely to the risen Jesus. The apostles did not have the things that the world would consider necessary to help this man. What Peter did have was the power of the One who rules over all creation; whose authority encompasses sickness, decay, and death.

2. Effective ministry advances the gospel.

- As we see in verse 6 Peter has no money to offer the man. But it so happens that the man’s greatest need is not money but wholeness; deliverance from sin’s curse. After the miraculous healing, we will

see that those gathered in the temple were amazed by what they saw. Immediately (vv. 11ff) Peter begins to explain the gospel to the gathered crowds. The point of the miracle was not ultimately to alleviate a man's suffering (although compassion was certainly at work!). The ultimate reason was to glorify Jesus; to make Him known. This is the point of all our ministry labors.

3. Effective ministry is focused, as much as possible, on the whole person.

- We are not interested merely in changing minds. Our hope is transformation of the whole person by the power of the risen Jesus. While Jesus and the apostles did not heal everyone, when they did it was at least in part to demonstrate that a day was coming when decay and death would finally be overturned.
- The final defeat of decay and death was sealed in the resurrection of Jesus. But we still await the full realization of that redemption.

"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Romans 8:22-25).

- For this reason we seek to minister to the whole person as much as we are able. Where we are able to alleviate suffering we must. Where we are able to meet physical and emotional needs we should, because in doing so we are demonstrating that God's work of atonement through Jesus Christ will one day redeem them completely.

4. Effective ministry brings glory to God.

Vs. 8 – "And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God."

- Ministry in the name of Jesus will issue forth in praise. Our goal in ministry is to see increased the number of men and women who give glory to God.

Concerning Healing

- **All healing comes by the power of God.**

Sometimes God heals miraculously. Usually God heals through means that are more ordinary like doctors, medication, and various treatments. Either way, no one is healed apart from the power of God to make it so.

- **Healing is a foretaste of something greater.**

The main purpose of healing in this lifetime is to point to a greater and eternal healing which happens beyond this life.

- **Not all who are sick are healed.**

Neither Jesus nor the apostles healed everyone who was sick or afflicted. The same is true in our own day. It is not always God's will to grant physical healing.

- **All healing this side of eternity is temporary.**

The lame beggar was not permanently healed of all afflictions. He eventually died. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead but ultimately Lazarus died. Our hope is not grounded in this life but in the life to come which will be free from all death and decay.