

Acts of the Apostles - Acts 3:1-10

Introduction - As we have followed the new Testament Church in this book of Acts by the Apostles written by Luke we have seen some very significant principles for the church.

- I don't want to spend a lot of doing this, but I think that it is necessary to review:
 - We have seen Jesus give us our commission.
 - We have seen an obedient church following Jesus' commission.
 - We have seen the Holy Spirit's power given to that obedient church.
 - We have seen fruit from the Holy Spirit's work and the Early Church's obedience as thousands came to know the Gospel.

Transition - And now we are faced with an account of Peter and John as they journey to the temple for prayer, they continue to obediently follow the commission of Jesus' being His witnesses in Jerusalem.

READ: ACTS 3:1-10

The Message - Peter and John offer to the lame beggar the Gospel Power of Jesus Christ. They live as examples for us to follow as disciples.

Transition - I think we begin here with a necessary background of this account to properly understand what is happening here - This seems odd to us that this man's family would carry him to this gate daily to beg, and yet it seems as you consider the religious practices of the Jew it becomes better understood.

We need to recognise that his family placed him there because **The Lame Expected Charity from the Religious. (1-2)** - It was part of the Jewish experience to give alms to those who were in need.

- The Rabbis taught that there were three pillars for the Jewish Faith - The Torah, Worship and Showing Kindness.
- Almsgiving was one of the main ways to show kindness and was considered a major expression of a Jew's devotion to God.
- The generous giving of Alms then would have been expected at the Gate of the Temple - those gathered there were expected to be people of Great charity.
- I do not think that any of us would be surprised to know that the same expectation exists for us, New Testament Followers of Jesus.
- The world, indeed still believes that those who serve the God of the Jews and have salvation in the Son of God - to be a charitable people, a people who give because of the commands and life of the savior.

- In the previous chapter we were told that the New Testament church gave, “to all who had need” among them.
 - But, here we see this expectation of giving, from the world, to those who have need.
- We would be foolish to believe that the world does not have this same expectation for those who follow Jesus today.
- Christians are to be marked as people who give to others for the sake of their wellbeing.
- This expected charity is not a negative mark, it is simply the truth of the expectation of those who follow Jesus.
- For us - In order for us to be charitable - you must be charitable. Indeed, you and I must give so that we, as a church, can give.
 - Just this week I was reminded of this - As we seek to be charitable to our school children in a program started and led by Linda Fitzgibbons we are able to feed those in our schools who are the most needy among us.
 - This week this program was expanded to our High School - we now send food home on the weekends so that we are assured that those who are some of the most vulnerable among us may eat.
- We are charitable because you have been charitable, you are charitable because Jesus is charitable - an expectation of the world around us and the Word that instructs us.

Transition - But, we can not stop at simple charity - and this is what this account of John and Peter teach us, they did not offer the alms that was expected, instead they met the lame man with **The Gospel Mission: The Lame Received Gospel Power from the Disciples. (4-6)** - I do want us to see the compassion and care that is expressed here by Peter and John - don't miss their heart.

- “Look at us” - I love this picture - there is a man in need who is asking for physical support and Peter and John want to look him in the face. I get the impression that they want to see his eyes.
 - Is this not the exact opposite of what we do when we see those in need in our community or even as we travel. - Think New Orleans, “whatever you do, don't make eye contact”.
- Instead, we see here a sense of compassion and care on this one who was lame and had been laid at the gate to collect alms.
- I think this picture helps us to understand that what Peter and John had to offer was much more personal than just financial support.
- I often feel this way about the sharing of the mission that we have been given by Jesus to make disciples, to be His witnesses.

- It is easier for us to throw “alms” at the Lottie Moon Christmas offering, or the Annie Armstrong Easter offering than it is to look at those who need the Gospel in the face.
- But, to be sure, by looking those in the eyes that need the Gospel it makes us more compassionate and caring.
- Sharing the Gospel with others is much more personal than sharing our money.
- Yes, it is easier to be charitable than it is to be missional.
 - Yet, our call clearly is to be missional.
- This is what Peter and John had to offer - The name of Jesus Christ. It was in the name of Jesus that this man would be made well.
- Something else that is worth noting here: This sharing of the name of Jesus occurred in the ordinary daily walk of the disciples.
 - As it is to happen in our lives - as a matter of fact as we consider the Matthew 28 mandate to make disciples, we are told “as we go...” meaning in the ordinary everyday activities of our lives, we are to share this Gospel Power that we possess.

Transition - We share this Gospel Power because we believe that it is what has the power to change the lame man, and what has the power to change our hearts.

In The Gospel Power: The Lame Can Walk. (6-7) - The account tells us that this man was lame from birth - he had never walked before and the simple spoken words of Jesus held the power to take what had never been well and make it well.

- We can't overlook that we have two disciples of Jesus speak and there is a miracle that occurs before them.
- We often say that this is an apostolic exception, meaning that the Apostles - as we understand them - were able to do things that we are unable to do today.
- And I will remind you of the words of Jesus in MATTHEW 9:1-8.
- The miracle that occurs today as a result of our obedience to the mandate to be the witnesses of Jesus' Gospel is much greater a miracle than the picture that we have in Acts from the words of Peter and John!
- Indeed, by the words of the Gospel - Sins are forgiven! People are taken- not from lame to walk- but from death to life! From Darkness to Light.
 - Yes, we are in the miracle working business still as we proclaim the gospel and we see people come to Jesus!
- This is our call - to make the lame-walk to make the broken-whole! We see this when we see people trust in the Gospel!

Transition - And then, those who are made whole, become called to the same purpose that the Apostles have been called. This is another fascinating element of the Gospel Power...

The Gospel Power: The Lame Can Witness. (7-10) - Immediately, we find this lame man making known what had happened to him - He who was the recipient of the obedience of the disciples now is found himself being obedient to the Acts 1:8 command of Jesus.

- We might think, but it is so soon for him to be used as an example of The Gospel Power, and yet his witness is immediate to the work of Jesus.
- We might think, but his change was visible and evident, we need to wait until we see evidence of a change before we let someone be a witness - to which I say if there is no visible evidence there has been not Gospel work - these two things can not be separated from each other!
 - Yes, even this man immediately becomes a witness - and that is our call as a church and your call as a disciple. Even if you feel like you are not worthy of us - Maybe return to verse 1...
- Consider Peter as the witness we might even say the most unlikely witness.
 - A man who denied Jesus is now speaking the Gospel of Jesus and seeing fruit. A man who was lame, made well, is now speaking the Gospel of Jesus and seeing fruit.
- This is each of our-those who claim to be followers of Jesus-call to be a witness to His work in our lives.

Conclusion - Peter and John offer to the lame beggar the Gospel Power of Jesus Christ. They live as examples for us to follow as disciples.

- This Gospel Power is the same power that we have as a church and yet, we seem not to rely on it to change the lives of people.

Thomas Aquinas visited Rome and Pope Innocent II, the Pope welcome Aquinas into the Vatican City that day to view the headquarters of the church which is filled with riches, the Pope was proud of the riches of the church and the Pope said to Aquinas, "No longer do we say, "Silver and gold have we none." Thomas Aquinas looked at the Pope and said, "Maybe that is why we can no longer say, "Rise up and walk."

Your Response:

- Trust Jesus to heal your sin.
- Join us as a church to continue to be obedient to the commission together.