

The Book Of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

Acts 3:1-10

As we come to chapter 3, Luke ties the very first miracle in the Book of Acts to his prior narrative.

Verse 1: “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.”

This is a direct proof of the apostles and the 3,000 plus believers devoting themselves to “the prayers”. Luke says that Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer. Temple prayers occurred at regular intervals for both the morning and evening sacrifices. Luke references the evening prayers (3 p.m.).

Verse 2: “Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.”

- **Historical Background - The “Beautiful Gate”:**

“Beautiful Gate”: A popular title for the Nicanor Gate, (named for its donor who was from Alexandria). Archeologists suggest this was the Temple’s largest gate: 75’ high with huge double doors.

The Beautiful Gate was on the east side of the Court of the Women and led to the “Court of Israel”. It sat at the top of fifteen steps. Women, people with physical deformities, and the ceremonially unclean were restricted to the “Women’s Court”.

Beggars and invalids gathered on its steps to ask for donations. Begging alms at public places was very common in antiquity, although the Jewish people stressed this kind of charity more than most other cultures.

Judaism specifically allowed those who could not work to make their living this way.

John Stott: “Luke’s medical interest seems to be betrayed in the brief clinical history he gives. It was a congenital case, he tells us; the man was now over forty years old; and he was so severely handicapped that he had to be carried and put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.”

Unable to work, the crippled man had to make his living by begging. When the man saw Peter and John, he asked them for money. He couldn’t have expected what happened next: “Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.”

The man expected to get some money from Peter and John. Peter expected to give him something else: “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

- A Confluence Of Several Things:

1. First time in Acts someone (Peter) invokes the “Name of Jesus”. Peter is, in effect, saying, “By the power and authority of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

Historical Notes: 1. In the ancient world congenital illnesses or infirmities were believed to be much harder to cure than other kinds. (See: John 9:32) 2. In the ancient world, miracle workers often invoked the names of spirits rather than commanding the sick to be healed.

In the Old Testament we do find several examples of miracles that followed a simple declaration of the “Word of the Lord”. See: 2 Kings 4:43; 2 Kings 2:21-22.

Peter uses Jesus’ fullest title: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” He is intentionally using the fullest name as an identification of the authority that has been passed to him from the Lord: Jesus, (his

human name), Christ, (his messianic name), of Nazareth, (noting his geographic marker – as an Israelite).

Peter is the only one who will use this fullest title of Jesus – and it only appears in Acts chapters 3 and 4. It is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. (Peter is making sure that only Jesus can be credited with what is about to happen).

It's an audacious command, unless Peter knows the power of the Holy Spirit is there. We'll see the same thing happen later in Paul's ministry in Acts 14: The Lame man of Lystra.

Verse 7: "Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong." There's a confluence of faith here: Peter has faith the man will be healed, and the invalid also expresses faith by taking Peter's hand and trusting him.

Peter's actions weren't without precedent. See the case of Jesus and the deceased 12-year-old daughter of Jairus: Mark 5:41-42

Verses 7-8: "Instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."

- **A creative miracle:** Luke uses the word, "instantly" in the same vein that Mark so often uses the word "immediately" in his Gospel as he records Jesus' various miracles: "Instantly, the man's feet and ankles became strong." Two types of miracles: creative miracles and progressive miracles.

V. 8: Peter, John, and the former invalid passed through the Gate Beautiful into the Temple courts, and into the eastern colonnade which remained from Solomon's original Temple.

- **The response of the Temple crowd:** v. 9: "When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful,

and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

This is the fourth time in these verses that Luke emphasizes the man was walking. It's meant to be a contrast. First, he was begging, now he is walking.”

A crowd quickly gathered. Why? “They recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful.”

Aside from all the other divine reasons God might have chosen this man for this healing ... it was because the man's disability was thoroughly known to many who were there when he was instantly healed.

There could be no doubt in their minds that this was a genuine miracle: They could verify his previous condition was genuine. There was no room for contradictions.

The crowd's reaction: “They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.” This ties in with Acts 2:43: “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”

Faced with a self-authenticating miracle, they had a similar question the massive crowd on the Day of Pentecost entertained when 120 Galileans praised God through the supernatural medium of glossolalia.

Here were Peter and John, who for all practical purposes were just two ordinary Jewish men. Yet, one of them had just healed a man who had been crippled since birth. The crowd wanted to know, “What does this mean?”

This is a corollary to what happened at Pentecost. An authentic miracle has occurred: Those who witnessed it want to know how it happened and what it means for them.

For the second time, Peter is prepared to tell an inquisitive crowd what it's all about. And he is going to start at the same place – with a sermon about Jesus Christ.

Stay tuned! Next time we will see what he tells them.