

Bible Study 10 – Acts 3:1-10 – Apostolic Signs

We pick up where we left off last time. We join the apostles, Peter and John, in Jerusalem where the church continues to worship, work and witness to the gospel as called and commissioned by the Lord Christ.

We find the church worshipping and witnessing at the Temple and enjoying worship and fellowship in house groups, for the law did not permit them to build their own places of worship. And we encounter them on the streets doing good and sharing the good news. I have titled this week's study 'apostolic signs' because the miraculous healing of the lame beggar in today's text was not an end in itself but needs to be seen as a sign of Jesus Christ's presence and power at work through his chosen apostles. It is a witness to Jesus and therefore a prelude to sharing his gospel, as we shall see in the coming weeks.

Let us turn to Acts 3:1-10...

Text: Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 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!" 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

1. We encounter the apostles, Peter and John, making their way up to the place of worship:

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

a) They are going to the Temple for afternoon praise and prayer which was at 3pm – the 'ninth hour' by Jewish computation. You will recall how Jesus was crucified at the 3rd hour which is 9am in the morning and gave up the ghost at 3pm in the afternoon. These were the times of the morning and evening sacrifices at the Temple which also included praise and prayer. And this practice was commonly replicated in the church in these parts in the past when on the Lord's Day there was morning and evening worship.

b) Peter and John, and others went to the Temple to both worship and witness to the gospel. The good news was to the Jews first. And this was the principal place of worship where praise, prayer, scripture reading and preaching (Old Testament) and sacrifices were daily practiced. This was the place where the people gathered to worship. And they came from near and far...

c) It was also the place that had a close association with Jesus, who not only worshipped there but also taught the people in its colonnades or cloisters. The Temple had been a type of which Jesus was himself the antitype and fulfillment. His departing from it had signalled God's departure from it. And he also prophesied its destruction which was fulfilled in AD70 when a Roman army reduced it to rubble. Nevertheless, it was the place where the scriptures were read, the psalms were sung, and the people congregated. And so, it was an obvious place for the apostles to frequent. And they did until persecution prevented them from doing so...

2. We encounter a paralysed or lame beggar outside the entrance to the Temple: And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.

a) This man had been disabled from birth and was unable to walk. He was wholly dependent on others carrying him to and from the Temple so he could beg financial assistance from the

worshippers. He was reliant on the generosity of those entering and departing the Temple putting something into his begging bowl. And so daily he was found at one of the gates leading into the Temple precincts.

In many ways, this is a picture of fallen humanity dependent on God's grace to lift us up.

b) This man was sitting at the Beautiful Gate which was an ideal location to beg alms.

Scholars are uncertain which gate this refers to and whether its description describes its adornment or is being used metaphorically as depicting the way to worship in the beauty of holiness or something similar! We know the Temple was beautifully adorned and furnished so the likelihood is that its name refers to the actual beauty of the door.

c) This man seeing Peter and John making their way to the gate and entrance to the Temple asks them for money.

3. Peter proclaims good news and offers the lame man a helping hand: And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 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!" 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

a) Peter craves the lame man's attention. He does so to communicate Jesus Christ and elicit a response from the man. Because faith comes from hearing the word in scripture regarding the Word Incarnate. And this is the faith that works wonders.

b) Peter calls and commands the lame man to get to his feet and walks in Jesus' name. The apostles have something to offer the man which is much greater value than money. They offer help, hope, healing, and health in the name of Jesus Christ.

They do so to authenticate and affirm the good news that Jesus, the Christ, crucified and risen, is Lord and Saviour. It is his presence and power that is at work in and through the apostles by the Holy Spirit. And so Peter commands authoritatively – rise up and walk.

c) Peter cares to extend a helping hand. Here is faith and love in action. Moreover, it is further evidence to us that God is working through the apostle.

Peter, like the other apostles, speaks and acts in the power of Jesus' name.

4. The poor lame beggar by God's amazing grace walks and worships God.

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

a) The lame beggar's transformation is instantaneous and obvious. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk...

b) The former lame beggar leaps for joy and rightly attributes his healing not to the apostles but to God who is working through the apostles in the name of Jesus... The right response to God's grace is gratitude expressed in praise.

c) The former lame beggar gladly goes into the place of worship with the apostles to praise the God of grace who works miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, who has come that we might have life, have it abundantly and have it everlastingly.

5. The people naturally responded in awe and amazement: And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

a) The people saw with their own eyes the former lame beggar utterly transformed, walking, and leaping, and praising God. God's grace and power were evident to all... It was not a report of a miraculous healing but one that had taken place before their very eyes.

b) The people were accordingly filled with wonder and amazement. Word no doubt spread quickly near and far. They recognised the transformation and were rightly amazed. Who were these men? Peter and John, apostles of Jesus Christ who had cause a stir at the Temple and

had been condemned and put to death by crucifixion by the authorities! And yet in the name of Jesus Christ this lame man is now utterly changed for his good.

c) The people have cause to listen and learn from the apostles and look to the Jesus they proclaimed, trusted, and obeyed.

The healing of the lame beggar is a signpost to the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Questions

1. What activities were prioritised by the apostles?
2. How important are such activities to the church today?
3. In what ways can we offer people a helping hand today?
4. Are we comfortable speaking and acting in Jesus' name?