

The Lame Beggar Healed

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 February 2014

Preacher: Rev Calum Iain Macleod

[0 : 00] Well, turn with me, if you will, to Acts chapter 3, on page 1098, Acts chapter 3.

Our text is verse 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. I'd like us this evening to focus on the lame beggar of Acts chapter 3, and I'd like us to look in particular at the symbolic significance of this passage under three headings.

The beggar's world, his worth, and his witness. Well, let's begin by focusing on the beggar's world.

The little that we are told sheds light on this lame beggar's lonely world, a hopeless and despairing existence.

[1 : 35] It's apparent, isn't it, that he is a dependent. He is immobile. And when you begin to try to imagine this man's circumstances, it's immediately apparent that his movements are restricted without the help of those who carry him around here, there, and everywhere.

It's also striking and sobering that he relies on charitable donations. And he probably, like most beggars, he has his favorite spots.

He will look for the more productive locations, if you like. And the gate beautiful that's mentioned here in Acts 3 is no exception.

This is the entrance to the temple, no less. Imagine, try to put yourself in his sandals. People traffic.

That is significant. Here he is disposed of. It all seems clinical. And he is left to beg for charity.

[2 : 59] And we're told that it's the ninth hour. It's approximately three o'clock in the afternoon. Perhaps this is one of several pit stops in this man's day.

Interesting that the Jews observed three times of prayer. Nine a.m., three p.m., and evening sunset. So, again, perhaps he's thinking in strategic terms.

Get me to the gate beautiful around 3 p.m. So that perhaps as folk are passing my way, they might just give me something.

Now, I say that because in Jewish culture, giving of alms, giving in a charitable vein to beggars was considered commendable, praiseworthy in lots of ways, particularly from a Pharisee or a scribe's perspective of piety.

But more often than not, men like this beggar went empty-handed. This is just a snapshot of this man's lonely, isolated world.

[4 : 25] It's striking, too, that he never knew otherwise. Luke tells us that this man was lame from birth.

It's striking that many years have passed. Again, I don't wish to be speculative, but you just try to put yourself in this man's pathetic situation.

Perhaps he's casting an envious glance at those who pass by. Perhaps little children who are walking and leaping around him.

Perhaps there are surges of bitterness and resentment. Perhaps he's asked more than a few times, Why me? Perhaps men of his generation have gone on to lead very successful lives, and here he is.

He has little to look forward to. Every single day is the same. And he's probably no stranger to low mood swings, despondency, dejection, depression, his threefold lot in life.

[5 : 48] It's not much of a profile, is it? But I did say at the beginning that we are going to focus on the symbolic significance of what we are being told here in Acts chapter 3, because I do believe that there is much to be gleaned from the symbolic significance of the gospel message as it is being conveyed to us through Acts 3.

There's much here that resonates, isn't there? Because the reality is that we have much in common with this lame beggar of Acts 3.

The reality is that you and I, just like him, we too, are spiritually lame from birth.

Our world, at one level, is no different to his world. We are all born spiritually lame. Our sinful nature, the Bible tells us, in no uncertain terms, renders you and I as spiritually crippled within the deeper recesses of our souls.

Because, as the Bible makes very, very clear, sin disables, sin debilitates, and sin incapacitates us spiritually.

[7 : 24] You don't have to turn too many pages of the Bible to discover that reality. Read Genesis 3. There, in the Garden of Eden, there's a shift, isn't there, from paradise to paralysis.

Our first parents brought a debilitating sickness, sickness, Adam's sin brought this debilitating sickness to the human race.

And we are all this evening by nature Adam's sin sick natural descendants. We sinned in him, we fell with him, the Bible tells us, his spiritual paralysis is yours and mine.

A loss of fellowship with God. No spiritual life within, no spiritual energy, no spiritual vigor, no spiritual vitality, no spiritual drive, the absence of any inclination to walk with God and worship him.

we are spiritually stationary by nature, immobile, no less. It was Billy Graham who once said, the dread of every man lies in this small, one small word, sin.

[9 : 10] it has crippled the nature of man, Billy Graham said. And so it has, the sweet psalmist of Israel tells us in Psalm 51.

It's so very clear, isn't it? I particularly like the sing psalms rendering of Psalm 51, verse 5 and 6.

from my birth I have been sinful, such the nature I received, sinful from my first beginning in my mother's womb conceived, truth you look for in my heart, wisdom to me you impart, in and of ourselves we are lame from birth.

somebody once engaged in prayer and uttered these words dear God I have a problem it's me and the Bible reminds us time and again that we have a problem the problem of sin the Bible tells us as Paul does in his opening chapters to the Romans no one is righteous not one no one understands no one seeks God no one does good not even one so we have much in common with worth the lame beggar of Acts chapter 3 his world is a world that you and I know by nature let's move on and focus on this man's worth worth when you begin to read this passage it becomes again apparent that this man considers himself worthless he probably sees himself of no value useless insignificant a loser and all of that changes in a moment look at verse 3 his eyes catch

Peter and John seeing you get the impression that they don't go unnoticed what's different about Peter and John well he thinks that they are worth asking perhaps it's because he thinks that they have access to silver and gold perhaps he has gleaned that they have been accumulating such things many people have been gifting silver and gold and money and various other items to the church perhaps this man has been eaves dropping perhaps he has an acute sense of hearing tapping into conversations as people pass and make their way into the temple but then perhaps he's thinking to himself but what would they want to have to do with me why would they be interested in me perhaps he has heard much from his particular vantage point you can assume that the main topic of conversation revolves around the

[13:25] Lord Jesus everyone is talking about him everyone is talking about the Christian faith everyone is talking about the way and again significant isn't it when you refer to chapter 2 and verse 38 look at the words Peter said to them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit what word do you think the beggar is likely to latch onto here if these words are paraphrased in his own ears I think he's likely to latch onto the word gift and perhaps he turns to

Peter and John and whatever this gift is that he understands little about he thinks it's worth asking for perhaps he's heard much about Jesus perhaps he's heard about all of the miracles all of the healings but perhaps he's thinking too little too late but he will ask nonetheless you know sometimes when you're walking along somewhere like Princess Street in Edinburgh or if you're making your way up to the mound and there you might find someone begging have you ever noticed that at times they are barely audible you sense that they have a very very low sense of expectation any change please sometimes you have to stop and come down to their level so that you can hear what they're saying and perhaps this lame beggar is no different perhaps he's saying what's the point but nonetheless seeing

Peter and John about to go into the temple he asked perhaps he was barely audible perhaps it was just a kind of a mumble jumble but but again I want to notice Peter and John's reaction so incredibly focused he asks for arms look at us Peter and John say and evidently he's startled for a moment his expectations are raised because what he is given exceeds his expectations Peter says look I have no silver or gold but what I do have I give to you in the name of

Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk it's so striking isn't it he asks for money but he's given mobility this man asks for silver but he receives the gift of salvation new life in the name of Jesus Christ we read that Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up and immediately we are told that his feet and ankles were made strong this man literally and spiritually he finds his feet new life in the name of Jesus Christ by his authority and power he is no longer hopelessly lame but happily leaping the bible tells us and leaping up we read he stood and began to walk it's incredible he had heard much perhaps in all probability about the ministry of

Jesus I said a moment ago he probably heard about the miracles and perhaps saying to himself well perhaps if I had been there right time right place but I wasn't I missed out I could have been well he may have heard much from the passing traffic one person saying to another did you hear the blind are receiving their sight did you hear that the lame are walking and he's perhaps sitting there thinking I wish it was me others are saying the blind have received their sight lepers are being cleansed those who were deaf are hearing again the dead raised up and the poor are having the good news preached to them and this man probably never imagined that he would be a recipient of this wonder working power but he is the lame beggar we read is on his feet touched and transformed by the grace of the

[19 : 48] Lord Jesus Christ again what can we glean from this passage what is so significant about what we are being told here well again there is more than an element of symbolic significance because we are being reminded that it is in and through Jesus Christ that the spiritually lame find their feet Jesus Christ and Jesus alone brings mobility to the immobile soul in Jesus the sinner is set free unleashed released the restraints of sins debilitating dominion removed sins paralysis removed new life breathed into the sinews of the soul his authority remains 2000 years later all powerful this evening and perhaps we need to grasp that as we approach the sacrament of the

Lord supper because what Jesus did for this lame man he can do for you this evening this power has lost nothing of its thrust some of us may consider ourselves to be of little worth this evening perhaps some of us are thinking I would like to be there but I feel so inadequate I feel so worthless I feel rubbish and yet we are reminded that there is power wonder working power in this Jesus

Jesus Christ of Nazareth perhaps some of us this evening sense that the gospel is challenging us to rise up and walk and find our feet in the Lord Jesus Christ remember of how David speaks again of how he finds his feet in God he speaks in Psalm 40 of having been taken from this pit of despondency and he speaks of how God has worked in his life on a rock he set my feet establishing my way that is precisely what

Jesus does for this lame beggar perhaps some of us this evening we're thinking about our own testimony experience our own spiritual journey it's good to reflect on how we found our feet in Jesus it's good for the soul to mull over how these immobile lame feet were established by his grace and if you have the opportunity to share how that came to pass in your own experience don't retreat don't walk away from that kind of opportunity share convey testify perhaps you're afraid this evening of coming to the Kirk session to meet with your minister don't share of how you have found your feet in

Jesus perhaps over a period of time you too were brought to your feet in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth you rose up and you are walking with him share tell this is my story this is my song perhaps with an informal fellowship on the weekend share when you have the opportunity to do so it's good news it's worth telling perhaps for the encouragement of others this passage is not about resolution or reformation it's about transformation and perhaps again we need to remind ourselves this evening as the writer Barnhouse puts it perhaps if you have your daily bread you'll read the footnote at the end of each page and

[25 : 27] Barnhouse from time to time contributes or at least some of Barnhouse's quotes are added Barnhouse said the Bible is a record of man's complete ruin in sin and the Bible is a record of God's complete remedy in Christ is that not what Acts 3 conveys to us this evening and so as we hear God's command through Jesus Christ do this in remembrance of me the Lord is saying to each one of us rise up and walk come in obedience and receive what has been prepared for you against the backdrop of

Golgotha's hill a blood stained cross a crucified savior and God is challenging us this evening come rise up walk come to me and I will give you rest let's move on and consider finally and briefly this man's witness what strikes us as we read this passage is that there is there's again a transition from paralysis to praise we read of how he is helped to his feet and we have this image of this man who was lame a moment ago he's now walking and leaping and praising God what does he do where does he go again it's not insignificant that he makes his way to the temple he instinctively worships

Jesus and I want us to notice too that this man wastes no time in witnessing for the Lord Jesus rise up and walk he does so he presents his body as a living sacrifice to Jesus walking leaping praising God a wonderful act of worship on the part of this man he will walk and as he walks he will worship this man is beginning to realize that the messianic era that the old testament prophet spoke of has come and has been realized in his own personal experience he is a living testimony again to what he has perhaps heard again imagine passing traffic people entering the temple main topic of conversation prophecies are being fulfilled this has come to pass for example the words of

Isaiah chapter 35 the prophet spoke of how the messiah would transform the lives of individuals just like this lame beggar then in the fullness of time when jesus comes when christ the messiah comes then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy the redeemed shall walk there and this man is a living proof of christ's kingdom which has come and has come with power again all of this is so symbolic of one's conversion experience and i want to close this evening by stressing the point that this same that this gospel proclamation this gospel exhortation continues to resonate and is being echoed lord's day after lord's day from your pulpit because what peter and john gave i give in the name of jesus christ i say to you this evening that you too by the grace of the lord jesus christ you too can rise up and walk you too can follow in the footsteps of this lame beggar because jesus says follow me rise up walk with me so will you not follow this evening perhaps you've been dithering and you've been thinking mulling over will i or will i not come into the body of the kirk will i or will i not come into fellowship with god's people on the periphery and he's saying to you this evening rise up and walk and you know it will you not follow in this man's footsteps and respond to these timeless words because if you do you will find your feet in the lord jesus you will find mobility for your soul you will find stability you will find standing you will find satisfaction in jesus it was martin luther who once said to know him is to know and have everything i believe that that would have been the testimony of this lame beggar as he testifies as he walks around the temple people are speaking about him as you continue to read this chapter people are looking at this man and they're asking is this really the same individual and

Peter and John are saying yes it's all about the name his name faith in his name has made this man strong whom you see and know and the faith that is through jesus has given the man this perfect health and the presence of you all oh he asked for silver and gold but he got much much more perhaps some of us need to reprioritize our lives this evening perhaps some of us are craving for silver and gold well all that glitters is not gold i want to finish off by sharing with you a little about sir james simpson remember how he discovered amongst other things chlorophor and by the end of his life he had made many many scientific discoveries history has it that james simpson is surrounded by students and they are asking him many questions pounding him with question after question after question about all of these discoveries in his life and then comes the definitive question tell us sir james tell us what is the greatest discovery you ever made and this was his response the greatest discovery i ever made was that i was a lost guilty sinner and that jesus christ the savior of sinners is my savior and if you have made that discovery this evening do a james simpson share it on facebook we like we share what we think is worth communicating to others let's see to it that we share that we communicate convey what jesus has done for us because no life is more secure than a life surrendered to god through jesus christ our lord so let's be encouraged at the beginning of this communion weekend because as god's word challenges us to come and do this receive this in remembrance of me we too are being told and exhorted and indeed commanded anew to come in the name of jesus christ of nazareth will you not rise up and walk and come with us and we will do you good amen let's bow our heads in prayer our gracious god we give you thanks that although your word is a record of man's complete ruin in sin yet we give thanks that it is your complete remedy that remedy is ours in christ

[36:55] whilst the wages of sin is death we give thanks this evening that the gift of god our father is eternal life through jesus christ our lord and so we would ask that you would give us to look to jesus to find our feet in him we give thanks that there is stability and security and safety and solidity in his grace and we ask that you would give us this night to come by faith give us it we ask it to forsake all that might hinder us the world behind me the cross before me no turning back we ask all of these things in the name that is above every name the name of jesus amen i i i