

Acts Series #3

“Something Better” - Acts 3:1-10

I. INTRODUCTION [GET RIGHT INTO IT]

II.TEXT

A. V. 1

{1} Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

1. At least a few days have passed since the events we looked at last week
2. The new church is growing and peoples' lives are being changed
3. Peter seems to have emerged as something of the leader of the disciples, and here we read that he and John make their way to the temple at the 9th hour = 3 PM
4. This was the hour for prayer and that is likely why they went

B. Vs. 2-3

{2} And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

{3} who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

1. There were nine gates that lead through the wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the inner Court of Women, which surrounded the temple
2. We don't know exactly which gate this was but it was probably the Nicanor Gate
3. The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived at this time, tells us it was made of the finest Corinthian bronze
 - a. it was made with such rich ornamentation it exceeded the value of some of the other gates
 - b. which were silver and gold plated
 - c. in fact, it was so elegant that it was nicknamed "*Beautiful*"
4. Not a bad place to beg, if begging is what you had to do— And that's what we find this man doing
5. We never learn his name— Just that he had been born lame
6. And every day his family or friends would carry him to the Nicanor Gate and set him there so he could beg while they went off to whatever their daily business was
7. Now, it's possible that this man had developed a neat little system for himself
8. Sure it's tragic that he's lame and cannot walk
 - a. his lameness would mean that he was kept from enjoying many of the

- blessings others enjoy
 - b. but his main concern was to earn a living
 - c. because he couldn't walk, he couldn't work
 - d. and was reduced to begging his daily income
- 11. But if begging is what you have to do, you could certainly find a worse place to do it
- 12. As I said, he may have developed his daily routine into a nice little source of income
- 13. Think about it:
 - a. each day he gets to virtually live in a place that most other people have to quickly pass through
 - b. when people went to the temple, they would often go out of their way to go through the Nicanor Gate so they could enjoy its beauty
 - c. he sat there all day beholding it's elegance
 - d. besides that, he got to stay within the temple grounds for the better part of each day
 - e. this is something every sincere Jew longed for - to just hang out near the holy of holies and that special place where God had chosen to establish His name
 - f. as well, it was a prime location for getting the charity and offerings of others
 - g. you see, stationed as he was at one of the gates leading to the temple, when people approached, they were usually stricken with a sense of the holiness of God and would try to do whatever they could to get on good terms with Him
 - h. what better way than to give some poor beggar a few coins?
 - i. we saw this when we were in Russia
 - 1) the poor and destitute hang out at the gate leading to the Orthodox church
 - 2) as people pass by, and prepare to go in to the church, they drop in a few rubles
 - 3) I guess people are more inclined to give to the needy when they are facing an immediate appointment with God
 - j. as people passed through the Beautiful Gate they were moved to dig deeper into their coin purse than at other times
 - k. so this man probably did okay in his daily occupation of begging
 - l. further proof lies in the comment that they had apparently been bringing him to this spot for a long time
- 14. On this day, as Peter and John pass through, he looks at them as he had countless others—
- 15. And asks them with the same words he has spoken thousands and thousands of times before for alms

C. Vs. 4-5

{4} And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

{5} So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something

from them.

1. Today, if you pass by a donut shop or go into WalMart or Target, you may be greeted with the presence of some homeless person and their request for change
2. And if a person does give them something, it's usually done quickly with very little fanfare or attention
3. The giver usually flips them a quarter and goes on their way
4. But things were often different in Israel at this time
5. It seems that when certain wealthy men went to the temple, they would often advertise that they were going and would get together a crowd to follow them and applaud them as they gave their offerings to the priests
6. These men, wanting to appear generous and godly, would make a big deal of their giving
7. When they passed by a beggar, they would often stop and fawn over them and then give them some special offering
8. But they would announce themselves to the needy one and demand that they pay them strict attention and show extra appreciation for their charity
9. As Peter stopped and looked intently at this man, and then stepped near and called out to him, no doubt this guy thought he was in for a special gift
10. He may have thought that Peter was one of Galilee's fat cats who had come to the temple to worship and now he would get a huge offering
11. But such was not to be . . .

D. Vs. 6-8

{6} Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

{7} And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

{8} So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them; walking, leaping, and praising God.

1. This is one of the most dramatic moments in the bible
2. Peter, simply following in the footsteps of Jesus, saw a man in desperate need, and reached out with the hand of faith and brought salvation and healing
3. The beggar expected to get some silver or gold coins
4. But Peter had something better to offer - healing!
5. And he knew where the healing came from so he said . . .

"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

6. And immediately, the man forgot all about mere coins
7. As Peter lifted him to his feet, the joints and ligaments were restored
 - a. the muscles, atrophied from decades of neglect, grew full and strong
 - b. the bones which had shriveled and twisted filled with vitality and

straightened

8. He stood up for the first time in his life and found that he couldn't keep his feet from dancing
9. Then he followed Peter and John into the temple, running and leaping the whole way
10. Sure he didn't appear very mature or as reverent as the priests would have liked of people when they came to the temple
11. But can you blame him?
 - a. think of this man's joy!
 - b. he has never walked!
 - c. when he was a boy, he had to watch and listen while the other kids his age ran and played
 - d. when they went off to school, he stayed home, confined to his pallet
 - e. when they got older and most of them walked with their brides under the wedding canopy, he had to watch from the sidelines
 - f. when they went off to work at their jobs each day, he had to lie on his bed and depend on the charity of others
 - g. the life that was *normal* to everyone else, was but an impossible dream to him
12. But now, against all hope / in spite of what he had ever even allowed himself to think about in his wildest dreams: He is standing tall!
13. Who could blame him for running in church?
14. Who could blame him for leaping and jumping up and down
15. He has years and years to make up for
16. Let him run, let him jump, let him praise the God who has given him the chance of a brand new life!

E. Vs. 9-10

{9} And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

{10} Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

1. The other people in the temple quickly realized this was the same guy they had seen for years begging alms at the Nicanor Gate
2. Soon they were all abuzz with the obvious news that he had just been healed
3. Soon they were asking how it had happened and their attention was given to peter and John

F. The Rest Of The Story

1. But what I want to focus on today is this . . .
2. This lame man had resigned himself to a life of lameness
3. And having resigned himself to his infirmity, he simply tried to make do the best he could
4. So he set up shop at the Beautiful Gate and begged alms from those who passed by

5. No doubt, some days were better than others
6. No doubt, there were good times with his friends and family
7. No doubt, there were times when his lameness just didn't bother him because he had become so used to it
8. The highest his hopes ran, the highest he let his expectations reach, were that some rich man would lay a big gift on him
9. Then, one day, Peter and John walked by
10. And at first it seemed to the lame man that they might be the answer to his dream of a big gift
11. How tragic it would have been if Peter and John had walked over and gave the man what he *expected*
12. Worse yet, how sad if they had merely shuffled over and dropped in a couple small pennies
13. Or worst of all, if they had just passed by altogether
14. Why are these things tragic?
15. Because they possessed something better—
 - a. because of Jesus they possessed hope
 - b. because of Jesus they possessed the power to heal

G. Something Better

1. This story is a picture of something bigger
2. The lame man represents the lost while Peter and John represent the church
3. They were on the way to worship God and passed by a man in need
4. While the best he could expect was more of what he already knew, they offered something better, something which would mean for him a whole different way of living
5. Before a person comes to Christ they are like that lame man
 - a. they are spiritually crippled
 - b. they cannot live and move in the realm of the spirit
 - c. so they live their lives pursuing the best of what the world has to offer
 - 1) today it might be a bronze coin
 - 2) tomorrow it might be a silver
 - 3) and still the next day it might be gold
 - d. these coins can buy a new bed
 - 1) so they can trade in their straw pallet for a foam mattress
 - 2) or they can trade in their foam mattress for a Sealy Posturepedic on a brass bedframe
 - 3) and if they get enough gold coins, they can trade in the Sealy and get a hospital bed with Magic Fingers
 - e. or maybe, with better and newer technology, they can get a motorized wheelchair, an a specially equipped van so they can get around
6. But the problem is this: they are still lame—they do not possess the use of their legs
7. All the money, and all the technology has merely allowed them to adapt to their limitation
8. The point is this: there are millions and millions of people who are spiritually lame because they are lost

9. But they have adjusted to their lostness
 - a. they think more money and better stuff is the answer to the aching emptiness within
 - b. they think technology with its endless supply of toys and electronic distractions is the best they can do
 - c. and if they are sensitive enough to realize that the problem is one of the soul and spirit, they may even try religion
 - 1) so they go on a spiritual retreat and learn how to meditate
 - 2) or channel the spirits of long departed sages
 - 3) or they may join the emerging men's movement and sit around a campfire and bang on a drum while chanting
10. But ultimately, none of these things really work
11. They may pacify for a time, but soon the person realizes they have again failed to find the peace and sense of meaning they know is out there but eludes them
12. And they, like the lame man, again hold out their hand, and look for something, someone, who can drop another coin into their hand
13. Then along come Peter and John; men who understand that there is more to life than coins
14. In fact, they know there's more to living than what the whole world thinks
15. So they fix their attention on the lame man and perceive his *real* need
 - a. not what *he* thinks he needs
 - b. but what they know the real need of man is
 - c. a living, vital relationship with Jesus Christ
16. But they want the man to know that Jesus is not merely one more name
 - a. not merely one more coin giver
 - b. not merely one more crackpot doctor dispensing snake oil
 - c. not one more of an endless line of slick operators who feed off of man's hunger for meaning
 - d. and the only way to prove it is to show it!
17. So Peter tells the man he's not going to give coins, he's going to give something better
18. He utters the words of faith, takes the man by the hand—and gives action to what he believes = HE LIFTS THE MAN UP!

H. You & I

1. You and I are Peter and John
2. We live in the midst of a multitude of spiritual lameness
3. We go to church, we enter in, we pray, we praise, we study, we grow
4. Why? Certainly not so that we can quietly sneak by the lost
5. Rather, so that we can look past the world's expectations, boldly proclaim the name of Jesus, and then reach forth the hand of faith and welcome them into a new life
6. Like the lame man - the world will seem to have no interest in anything other than it's own expectations
7. We shouldn't really expect the lost to knock down the doors of our church
8. No, we find the lost in the world - pursuing the things the world offers as

- answers
9. What we must do is show that we have something better- and we do!
 10. We must dare to live before the world in such a way that they see it is better
 11. We must dare to break ranks with what the world expects and live differently
 12. And we must be willing to get our hands dirty, reaching forth to take hold of those God is bringing to life

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Super Bowl Sunday*

1. In terms of Sports, today is the Big Day = Super Bowl Sunday
2. An estimated 135 million people will be watching, and that's just here in the US
3. Many other nations have sent special TV crews to cover the game
4. Because so many people will be watching the game, advertisers will be paying record fees for their commercials
 - a. a 60 second ad will cost a cool \$1.2 million
 - b. and of course, all the ad firms are trying to out due each other
 - c. so they will be rolling out slick new commercials
 - d. it's one of the few times when the ads will be as interesting as the regular programming
5. It's amazing to me to see all the fanfare and hoopla that's associated with the Super Bowl
6. After all - it is just a football game!
 - a. it's 2 teams of a total of what? 40 guys each, plus coaches, trainers, and support crews
 - b. the goal of the game is to take a bloated bag of pig skin and run across a chalk line while the other team tries to stop you, —
 - c. —just about any way they can!
7. Think about all the excitement the Super Bowl stimulates
8. Even here; many of us will do something today that's associated with the game
 - a. we'll meet at each other's house
 - b. we'll consume mass quantities of carbo-proteins and carbonated corn syrup water
 - c. we'll cheer for either the Boys in Blue or the Iron Boys
9. But all the excitement, all the energy, and all the money is *ultimately* a waste
10. The key word here is *ultimately!*
11. Sure it's fun to cheer on your team and to watch the new commercials, but ultimately, it's just a football game
12. And in just a few short years, very few people will remember who won, let alone played, the game
13. 100 years from now, very likely there will be no "Super Bowl"
14. What a great illustration of the futility of the things of this world

B. This Moment!

1. In terms of eternity, what we do here each Sunday is vastly more important than a 1000 Super Bowls
2. It's more important because we are studying God's word and discovering His will
3. We are growing in our relationship with Him
4. We meet together to worship and fellowship, serving one another as the Lord gives us grace
5. And the work that is done is both *eternal* and *eternally remembered*

(Mal 3:16-17) Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. {17} "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him."