

The Parish of Peasedown St John

'Be Daring and Dynamic' 24 Studies in Acts

Acts 3:1-10 – Where God's power flows

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage

Acts 3:1-10

1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer-- at three in the afternoon.

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.

3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"

5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God,

10 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.

2. Talk Notes

The Book of Acts – Vital Statistics

Purpose:

To give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the early Christian Church

Author:

Luke (A gentile physician)

To whom written:

Theophilus and the early Christian Church

Date written:

Between AD 63 and 70

Setting:

Acts is the connecting link between Christ's life and the life of the Church, between the Gospels and the letters

Key Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 1:8

Key People

Peter, John, James, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Cornelius, James (Jesus' brother), Timothy, Lydia, Silas, Titus, Agabus, Ananias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, Luke.

Key Places

Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Malta, Rome

Special Features

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Because Acts ends so abruptly, Luke may have planned to write a third book, continuing the story.

2.1 Introduction – What are miracle!

- Peter performs a great miracle.
- It is 3pm in the afternoon, the hour of prayer in the Temple, Peter and John are heading up to join the throng at the great House of God.
- On the way in, as they come to the Gate called Beautiful, a gate inlaid with gold and precious stones, situated as an entrance in the Eastern side of the Temple courts, they came across a man who has been crippled since birth.
- This poor cripple wasn't allowed inside the Temple to join in prayer, because the religious authorities of the day felt that he was blemished - not fit for the house of God.
- But, as Peter and John approach on this particular day, this cripple sees them, and he asks them for alms.
- Peter and John stop as he speaks.
- Peter says: *"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."*
- With that, Peter takes hold of the man's right hand and lifts him up, and in that moment of time strength comes into that man's feet and ankle bones for the very first time in his life. And he leaps up! And he begins to dance around - before all the hundreds of Jews coming in for prayer - and he praises God!

2.2 We NOW are the vessels of God

- This lame man has been a cripple for 40 years and has clearly sat at the entrance of the Temple for many of them.
- The Temple was supposedly the very House of God - the "HOME" of God's presence - and yet here this cripple was all his life camped at its gates and he is still a cripple!
- For all their religious fervour, there would appear to be nothing that the religious authorities or those devout Jews of his day could offer him! The best they could do was a few copper coins to ease their consciences as they passed by.
- So where was God? Has he left the temple? And if God has left the temple where has he gone?
- When Jesus hung upon the cross and uttered those last triumphant words "IT IS FINISHED", the Bible records that the curtain in the Temple which for centuries had barred man from the presence of God was torn in two, right down the middle, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, torn by the very hands of God! What did that signify?
- We are usually told that it signifies that because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we can now enter the Holy of Holies - that's correct, BUT THAT'S ONLY ONE HALF OF THE STORY!
- The curtain is torn in two to signify that God's presence is no longer veiled in seclusion, but now He has come out AND HE LIVES IN HIS NEW DWELLING PLACE - the one He has always longed for since time immortal - He dwells in the lives of them that love Him. WE ARE THE VESSELS OF GOD.

2.3 The religious authorities fail to understand the significance of the curtain being torn in two

- When the curtain was torn in two, THE RELIGIOUS FOLK GET REALLY NERVOUS.
- Someone was interfering with their safe little religious lifestyle! Someone was interfering with their cosy club. Someone was interfering with the way they had done things for the last 50 years or so.
- So what did they do?
- They tacked that curtain back up.
- When that curtain was torn away, God was making His final declaration about where He intended to reside
- He was residing IN THE LIVES OF THESE TWO DISCIPLES OF JESUS - Peter and John.
- This lame man had been sat at the gates of the Temple all of his life, but now he experiences the real power of God's presence.
- Ironically God's power was not flowing out of the doors of the temple but it was walking up the stairs into the Temple in form of two disciples Peter and John.

2.4 Peter sees the cripple with the eyes of Jesus

- Peter "fixes his eyes on" this poor cripple.
- No-one else would have anything to do with him.
- The Jews believed that such a man must be a sinner (or perhaps his parents were) to be afflicted by such an infirmity - this was the punishment of God.
- Peter looks at him perhaps as he hears the words of Jesus ringing in his ears: *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."*
- Peter reaches out and heals the man.

2.5 Are we challenged by this story?

- Do we see ourselves as vessels of God? Do we believe that God resides in us by the power of his Holy Spirit?
- If we believe that God resides in us, will that not encourage us like Peter and John to step out in faith and do the things that Jesus did, knowing that God will give us the power to do them.
- Are we like the religious authorities of that time, so set in our ways that we cannot see God doing something new or something different?
- Do we have a heart for the lost, for those on the margins of our society, are we prepared to stop and consider them and to maybe stretch out the hand of God to them.
- Peter and John are just like us, ordinary folk who are so filled with the Holy Spirit that they are prepared to step out in faith. And as they do so GOD'S POWER FLOWS THROUGH THEM.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 Why had the lame man remained unhealed outside the temple gates for so long?

3.2 *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* (Matthew 27:46, 50-51.) What is the importance of these events?

3.3 If God resides in Peter and John by the power of his Holy Spirit what does that mean for us?

3.4 Why are we so slow to step out in faith?

3.5 A friend of yours is convinced that she has not been well recently because God is punishing her for things in her past. How would you respond?

3.6 Who are the equivalents of the lame man?

- i. In Peasedown St John
- ii. In the United Kingdom
- iii. In the world

How should we minister to them?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293