

The Panhandler's Real Need

Acts 3:1-10

Good morning...

As we have been going through the *Book of Acts*, I have mentioned the two extremes of Christ's followers' beliefs concerning healings, signs, and wonders.

There are some extreme emotionalists and there are some frozen chosen. I personally land in the middle of those two groups.

I believe the LORD can and does still heal people according to His will and purpose. But I do not believe that the LORD heals all people on this side of heaven, every time.

The Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthian church regarding this very thought and said in...

2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

2 Corinthians 12:8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. NKJV

Notice some things regarding this passage...

1. Paul **didn't experience a lack of faith** here that prevented his healing.
2. Paul said a **thorn of Satan** was allowed to inflict this ailment upon him.
3. Paul asked the LORD on **three separate occasions** to remove the infirmity from him, but the LORD said no!
4. The LORD allowed this trial in Paul's life so that Paul would **not be placed on a pedestal**, but rather he would **exalt the LORD** by the way he behaved during the trial.
5. The LORD is **shown strong** in whatever way He chooses to deal with His children.

Please turn in our Bibles to ***Acts 3***, as we continue in that study.

Last week, we spoke about some basics of the early church as they kept things simple and glorified the LORD.

Acts 2:46 ended with; ***they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,***

Acts 2:47 ***praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. NKJV***

Jerusalem was all a buzz as all the people had come to celebrate Passover and as the Spirit of God fell upon the 3000 new believers, the Church hit the ground running, reaching others.

The early believers were filled with awe and wonder, but now the danger of the mundane daily life for the followers began.

When exciting things are happening, we seem so strong as believers. But when the daily grind of life starts, we can get tempted to become lethargic in our walk with Christ.

I. Heading to the Temple to Worship.

Read *Acts 3:1*

Acts 3:1 tells us Peter and John went up to the Temple at the 9th hour, which was 3 p.m., remember their day began at 6 a.m.

What is so significant about the 9th hour?

a. This is the exact time Jesus died on the Cross.

John 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"

John 19:29 Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. NKJV

b. 3 p.m. was the hour of prayer and the **last** sacrifice.

3 p.m. was a time-honored tradition of sacrifice that can be traced back to Isaac in *Genesis*, along with the hour of prayer.

Peter and John went to the Temple, not to sacrifice but simply to worship the Lord. After the death and resurrection of Christ, there was no longer any need for an animal sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"

Hebrews 10:17 then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Hebrews 10:18 Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. NKJV

These men were committed to the call of the LORD, so they set aside specific times to go to the established worship center.

It was not a legalistic or ritualistic thing. It was a matter of priorities in life. We will find time to do those things that are important to us.

Does the LORD have first place in your life?

II. The need of the beggar.

Read *Acts 3:2-3*

This gate on the Temple was ornate, large, and magnificent.

The Jewish historian Josephus described this gate of the Temple. Josephus said the gate was made of fine Corinthian brass, it was 75 feet high with huge double doors, and it “*greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold.*”

Because of this narrative in the *Book of Acts*, the Beautiful Gate took on a new meaning with the healing of a desperate man.

Notice the lame man went to beg for money and was not expecting the LORD to grant him healing.

The Jewish people would give money to beggars at the Temple gate as an act of righteousness towards the LORD.

Was the lame man being short-sided with his expectations?

Peter and John went to the Temple to worship. Remember, Peter was an open mouth then think later, personality before the Holy Spirit got a hold of him. But...

a. Peter was a doer.

Even though Peter had been changed by the Power of the Holy Spirit, he still had a certain personality type.

It is awesome that the LORD’s body, His church, is made up of all kinds of different personality types. We are not robots.

The LORD changes us when we come to Christ, but we still have specific personalities. Some of the last recorded words that Peter said to the LORD are pretty telling of his personality type.

Peter asking Jesus about John, asked, “*What should that man be doing?*”

I love how Jesus answered him; “*What is it to you, Peter, I told you what to do, don’t worry about John.* So, Peter was a doer.

b. The Apostle John was a **dreamer**.

G. Campbell Morgan has said, “*John has been described as a dreamer, philosopher, and fisherman.*

He had the personality of an intuitive thinker, when he saw, he saw far more than others, when he heard he heard more than others.

John was a man ever looking for the invincible and seeing it, for the audible and hearing it; feeling after the intangible and sensing it.”

Now for those of us, Type “A” personalities, dreamers and lollygaggers irritate the life out of us. Yet contrasting personalities are exactly what make up the body of Christ!

Without the dreamers, where would we be?

The body of Christ is beautiful because it is made up of many different people and personalities.

Like Peter with John, don’t worry about what the LORD has called someone else to do; *what has He called you to do?*

The LORD has placed the members within the body and gifted them each separately in order to serve His calling for their lives.

In the case of this beggar, Jesus didn't only want to give this man money, He wanted to completely change this his condition.

With us, sometimes we want the LORD to answer a prayer or do something else, but He wants to save us and radically change us.

III. Keeping a schedule

Read *Acts 3:4-5*

It is very helpful to have scheduled times and places where we normally go for prayer and Bible reading.

It is said that any habit can be formed or broken within 21 days. With a desire and some self-control, after you start or stop a behavior or pattern for 21 days, it can become a natural routine.

Bad habits left unchecked in your life can become a foothold for Satan as well as habitual or **besetting** sin.

Peter and John head to the temple for the appointed hour of prayer and on their way, they run into this man with a need.

For the old Peter he would have probably passed right by this need because he was super focused on accomplishing the task.

This describes me a lot of times. I can be so task-orientated that I miss God-moments to be able to minister.

But this man, who was crippled from birth, had no way to provide for himself financially, so he would regularly sit at the beautiful gate of the Temple and beg for money.

Remember, Dr. Luke wrote *Acts* and described this man as lame from birth, yet 40 years after this ailment, he is instantly healed.

This sort of handicap would have been so much worse back then, as it is today with the invention of wheelchairs. Imagine never having the freedom to go places without someone's help.

Think about the symbolism. Peter had just delivered a message of freedom to a nation that was paralyzed with sin.

Peter told them that true freedom comes from having your sins forgiven and walking in Christ and now here is this man crippled from birth.

What if the panhandler didn't speak up but rather chose to deal with his lameness in silence?

There are so many people today, even within the Church who are hurting, who choose to suffer in silence rather than ask the LORD for help and encouragement.

But this man in this story swallows his pride and begs for help as he asks for money.

The LORD had first place in the lives of these two men, but they were led by the Spirit when it was time to vary in their schedule.

What if Peter and John were so hyper-focused on getting inside the Temple, that they passed a real ministry opportunity by so they wouldn't be late to worship?

We should look for God-moments to be used by Him.

May we be the conduit used to see someone freed from bondage.

Make a habit of being at church, make a habit for prayer times, reading the Bible, and meditation time with the LORD...but

We must be open to the Spirit and allow Him to change our **scheduled** times when a God-given ministry opportunity comes.

A schedule and routine are very important and even help us to remember to do certain things...but never let your schedule get in God's way.

I can't stop and minister to you because I need to hurry up and complete my task for the Lord. **People matter to God**

IV. Man's ultimate need.

Read *Acts 3:6-10*

The Holy Spirit knows this man's real need is freedom from sin and bondage so He instructs Peter and John to offer the beggar the only thing that will satisfy him completely, new life in Christ

To the woman at the well, *John 4:13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,*

John 4:14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." NKJV

It is the old saying; give a man a fish and he eats for a day, but teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime.

Jesus is the creator of life and He knows better than anyone what the true need of every person, which is salvation in His name.

Everyone needs to eat and drink to maintain life in this world, but we need Jesus to receive Salvation for eternity.

Acts 4:12 there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." NKJV

So, this man looked intently at Peter expecting a handout, and ended up getting more than he ever thought possible. The healing happened immediately, as he was set free in a moment.

The LORD's answer to prayer always varies according to His plan and purposes.

Isaiah 55:8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

Isaiah 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. NKJV

Don't let anyone discourage you if the LORD hasn't answered your prayer yet. His answers are sometimes, yes, no, or wait.

Spiritually, when you trust Him for Salvation, you are set free from the bondage you are in right now, just like this man.

So, this man went into the worship service jumping up and down and praising the Lord. *What would happen if someone did that in one of our services?* Most of us would be very uncomfortable.

What if we witnessed a family member die on the spot and then the LORD brought them back to life; would that excite you?

How many times have you witnessed someone come to Christ in a worship service, shouldn't that excite you, just as much?

Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, NKJV

People, that is good news and that's exactly why these early followers were so excited. They realized they had been set free and had new life in Christ.

Some of us long-timers start to forget the fact that we were **dead** in our sins prior to Christ. But this lame man in our story knew Who it was that deserved the Glory for his healing.

So, the man praises the LORD jumping up and down! There were up to 5000 people at the Beautiful Gate that day.

They would have just witnessed a miracle, and this man was sure to give the Glory to God.

KEY: When God uses you in some way for His purposes; be sure and quick to **give** Him all of the **Glory**.

V. Practical Application

Let's list four practical applications for a Spirit-filled follower.

- 1. A Spirit-filled person knows to watch and listen when the LORD is moving.**

Peter expected the LORD to heal this man instantly because he knew the Lord's voice. We have already said the LORD doesn't always heal, but when He says to do something, do it.

When the LORD prompts you to pray for someone, pray.

James 4:2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures NKJV

The key is praying and asking according to the LORD's will and then listening and following His directions.

2. Spirit-filled people **desire** others to be set free and healed!

Peter wanted this man to be healed, and he took time out of his busy schedule to care for someone in need. This is not a natural response of a doer...a doer is often task-oriented.

For a doer to stop and consider other people's needs and feelings is an act of the Holy Spirit within that person.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV

Peter was demonstrating the mind of Christ with new priorities, once he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

As Christ-followers, our main priority should be people being set free and healed. Whether emotional, physical, or Spiritual.

3. A Spirit-filled person brings **joy** into the life of others.

We all experience tough times and bad days, but we know that joy doesn't come from circumstances but from a right standing before a loving God. It's a Spirit thing

The lame man in our story experienced joy once he was set free from his bondage, which seems normal of course.

But in the *Book of Philipians*, we are told that Paul experienced joy while on death row in a Roman prison.

HOW? Because, by faith in Christ, Paul was sure of his future and he found peace and contentment in Christ.

His temporary sufferings were nothing in comparison to the surpassing Glory that awaited him in heaven.

1 Peter 1:8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1 Peter 1:9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls. NKJV

Inexpressible joy comes as a gift from the LORD through the Holy Spirit. If you are not experiencing joy even while suffering, then relent and let God love you

4. A Spirit-filled person is a **witness** for Christ.

We have learned this truth since we started the *Book of Acts*, we were promised the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses.

Peter recognized that this man was in need. It is always easier to share Christ with people in need.

But financially comfortable people are always in danger of relying on money and material things. Sometimes they begin to think that they have no need for the LORD, or His help.

Proverbs 30:7 Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die):

Proverbs 30:8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches — feed me with the food allotted to me;

Proverbs 30:9 Lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God. NKJV

If you think money is the answer to all of your problems, just think about all the rich and famous people with suicides, overdoses, divorces, and dysfunction.

When we encounter someone in need, don't cram Jesus down their throats, but seize the opportunity, telling how good God is.

For every person ever born single biggest need is a relationship and Salvation in Christ! Let's look to see where God is moving and jump in. May we have ears and eyes to hear and see Him.

All of this is easy if you are yielding your life to the LORD, but it seems impossible if you are trying to control your own life.

- Are you like the lame man, waiting for help and you are willing to humble yourself and call out to the Lord?
- Maybe you are like Peter and John, as you are committed to serving the LORD. Keep your heart sensitive to God-opportunities.
- OR maybe you are like the old Peter before the Spirit came upon him, so consumed with self that you neglect the things of the LORD.

The LORD has so much more in store for you. In the name of Jesus Christ, I say to you rise up and walk.

Come out of your fleshly life and become a partaker in the New Life in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. Maybe you need to pray about discernment of what God is calling you to do as a ministry.
2. This morning, if there is something you are struggling with or something you need prayer for, please allow us to pray for you.
3. There are some here this morning who have asked Jesus to be their Lord and Savior at some point but have not been following Him. Today God is calling you back to Himself
4. Then there are probably some here this morning who have never asked Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. So today is the day to accept Christ and be freed from sin's bondage.