

The Spirit had been poured out on men and women. The church began at Pentecost with the sudden spiritual birth of 3000 men and certainly many women as well. Instead of returning to their homes in distant lands, they stayed in Jerusalem so that they could learn from Jesus' disciples of the life and teachings of Jesus. They shared what they had so they could devote themselves to what became known as the Apostle's Doctrine, and to fellowship, and prayer. Signs and wonders were performed through the Apostles, and God added new converts to the faith on a daily basis.

¹ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

Acts 3:1 This was three in the afternoon, the time of the afternoon sacrifice. The Mishna describes what took place after the sacrifice was offered up. *When he stooped to pour out the drink offering the Prefect waved the towel and Ben Araza (a priest) clashed the cymbal and the levites broke forth into singing. When they reached a break in the singing they blew upon the trumpets and the people prostrated themselves (in prayer); at every break there was a blowing of the trumpet and at every blowing of the trumpet a prostration (in prayer). This was the rite of the daily whole-offering in the service of the House of our God.*⁴

The apostles and the early church were still participating in the worship at the temple, only it had taken on a whole new meaning. The lamb that was sacrificed looked back to what Jesus, the Lamb of God, had accomplished for them (Exodus 29:38). The prayers were no longer looking toward the coming of the Messiah, but gratitude for His coming and all He had taught and accomplished in His death and resurrection. This reminds us how Jewish that early church was. We have so much variety in worship styles that we have become finicky about everything being to our particular taste. The apostles could worship in this setting the Mishna described. The setting and particulars are not as important as we so often make them out to be. It is spirit and truth that are the only essentials to genuine worship that God is seeking (John 4:23).

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. Acts

3:2 The gates of the temple saw many worshipers and were therefore good places from which to beg. It was thought that gifts to the poor and needy given near the temple gained special favor with God. There must have been quite a demand for the best spots. Apparently this man had his reserved space near the Beautiful Gate. He had to have friends or relatives carry him there because he was born without the use of his legs.

The gate in question is thought to be either the gate that leads from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women or the eastern gate of the temple mount. Josephus wrote that nine gates into the temple grounds were covered with silver and gold, along with the posts and lintels. All of them had double doors and were 45 feet high and each door was 22- 1/2 wide. The gate that opened into the Court of the Women was 75 feet high and each door 50 wide covered with magnificent thick gold and silver plates. But the

Commented [PW1]: m. Tamid 7:3

Commented [PW2]: Exodus 29:38-39 (ESV)

³⁸ "Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly.
³⁹ One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.

Commented [PW3]: John 4:23 (ESV)

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

eastern gate just outside the temple was of Corinthian bronze which was even more valuable at the time than gold.³

Commented [PW4]: Josephus, 5.5.3 - 201

I would guess that the Beautiful Gate was the eastern gate as the Sadducees kept those people with issues of various kinds and also, some believe, those with certain deformities from entering the temple grounds. The eastern gate today is built over the ancient one and is sealed by the Muslims because of the predictions of the Jewish Messiah entering by that gate. They put a Muslim graveyard in front of it because they knew the Jews believe walking on a grave would defile a person. Someone needs to tell them they were too late. The Messiah already entered 1500 years before they built this new gate. After a heavy rain, an archeological student was walking in front of this gate and saw a sink hole had opened up in front of it. He climbed down into it and was able to see remains of the very gate that Jesus did go through when going to and from the Mount of Olives.

There is no record of how long it had been between Pentecost and the healing of the beggar. It has been suggested that it might be as long as two years. I lean toward it being the same year. Remember that our last passage said signs and wonders were being done through the apostles (2:43). The miracle in our passage would not have drawn such a response if those in Jerusalem had already seen miracles like this.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."* Acts 3:3-4 The lame beggar was humbly looking downward while pleading for alms. He could not earn his own living because of his disability. He had no other choice but to beg for money to sustain his living. Peter and John are on their way in to observe the sacrifice and pray with their fellow Jews. They must have come this way many times before and seen this man, but this time was different. This time the Holy Spirit prompted Peter to allow the power of Christ to flow through him to heal this man. So Peter told the beggar to look at them.

Commented [PW5]: Acts 2:43 (ESV)

⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

⁵ *And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.* Acts 3:5 Peter was directing the man to exercise his faith and cooperate with what God was about to do. Can you just see the man looking up expecting that they just wanted him to know who who it was that was giving him a coin?

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.* Acts 3:6-7 Peter and John have put their money into the community funds (2:44). But they have something much more valuable to give the man. They command him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to rise up and walk!

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⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

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Commented [PW8]: Acts 2:21 (ESV)

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Commented [PW9]: Acts 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

Commented [PW10]: Acts 4:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.

We are so removed from this culture that we need to understand what Jews meant when they called on a name. Various cult members would call on the names of their gods when requesting something from a god. Jews also made requests by calling on the name of God. Peter had told them in the Pentecost sermon that Joel prophesied that *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved* (2:21). This is the first record of what will be many times that the apostles make requests in the name of Jesus (4:7, 10;

16:18). The salvation Peter is asking for is that of the beggar's body. It is to call on the authority of Jesus to act. The Law declared that those who speak in God's name must be heeded but to presume to speak in God's name without the authorization of God would mean death (Deuteronomy 18:19-21). That command from the Law came just after the verse predicting God would raise up one like Moses to whom we must listen. Either Jesus is Lord and will grant Peter's request, or Peter should be stoned for falsely claiming to speak in the name of the Lord. **The miracle was an affirmation that Jesus' name was the authority of God.**

In the book of Acts we see apostles baptize in Jesus' name (2:38; 10:48; and into the name (19:5). Believers will and are today witnessing "on behalf of" and suffering for the name (9:16; 21:13). The name of Jesus gains authority over the demonic. In this verse we are introduced to the power and authority of Jesus over the material world when applied at the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is speaking with God's authority.

⁸ And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. Acts 3:8 He's not just tottering gingerly along. He's leaping as he praises God. Leaping is mentioned two times in this verse. The emphasis on his leaping points us to the prediction in Isaiah 35:6a ^{6a} *then shall the lame man leap like a deer...* It pointed to the saving acts of God predicted to come to pass in the last days. This is one reason the crowd was awestruck by the event.

I want us to understand physiologically just a bit of what had to take place for this miracle to occur. The man had never used his legs. They were atrophied sticks that just got in his way. At Peter's command, the beggar's muscles would have grown and responded immediately to the signals from his brain. The witness that amazed the crowd was the man's complete ability to walk and jump along with the prophecy of this miracle accompanying the end time. Angel and Marty's granddaughter was born this way and it has taken doctors six months to align her legs so she could learn to crawl over time. The beggar received all of that in a flash!

Paul Brand helps us understand what would have to happen physically as he describes an infant's effort to walk. *If we traced all the bodily signals involved in walking, we would find in that grinning, perilously balanced toddler a machine of unfathomable complexity. Over one hundred million sense cells in each eye compose a picture of the table she is walking toward. Stretch receptors in the neck relate the attitude of her head to the trunk and maintain appropriate muscle tension. Joint receptors fire off messages that report the angles of limb bones. The sense organs inside the ear inform the brain of the direction of gravity and the body's balance. Pressure from the ground on each toe triggers messages about the type of surface on which she is walking. Just for the toddler to stand, the muscles which oppose each other in the hip, knee, and ankle must exert an equal and opposite tension, stabilizing the joints and preventing them from folding up. "Muscle tone" describes the complex set of interactions that keeps all the infant's muscles in a mild state of contraction, making her erect posture as active and strenuous as the movements that follow it. A casual glance down to avoid a toy on the carpet will cause all these sense organs to shift dramatically: the image of the ground moves rapidly*

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¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

Commented [PW12]: Deuteronomy 18:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

²¹ And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'—

Commented [PW13]: Acts 2:38 (ESV)

³⁸ And 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.

Commented [PW14]: Acts 10:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Commented [PW15]: Acts 19:5 (ESV)

⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Commented [PW16]: Acts 9:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Commented [PW17]: Acts 21:13 (ESV)

¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

*across the retina, but the inner ear and stretch receptors assure the brain the body is not falling. Any movement of the head alters the body's center of gravity, affecting the tension in each of the limb muscles. The toddler's body crackles with millions of messages informing her brain and giving directions to perform the extraordinary feat of walking.*²

It takes a baby with a rapidly absorbent brain eight months to barely walk while falling quite frequently. This beggar went instantaneously from never walking to leaping while praising God! Consider how miraculous that was.

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. Acts 3:9-10 Depending on where you lived or worked would determine which gate you would use most often to enter the temple grounds. He was always at the same gate, thus those who regularly came for prayer knew his face. To see him leaping must have been shocking.

Healing can be a witnessing opportunity. I've told you of the Indonesian woman I met who sees healing as an inroad for the gospel in remote Muslim villages. I've heard of Muslim areas that send their sick to Christian missionaries rather than the imams because they know Jesu is the God that can heal. While in West Africa I talked to an elderly village imam who sends those under his care to Christians for prayer for healing, and readily accepts prayer from Christians for his own condition.

God had mercy on this beggar, but it was also an opportunity to further proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior. Peter will go on to preach another sermon that results in the salvation of thousands. That is the main purpose of miracles, to help people see their way out of false belief systems and into the revelation of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

People often ask why we don't see more of these kind of miracles in the West. I would guess that it is because we so quickly discredit it and call it "spontaneous remission." We've also been blessed with medical care unavailable in much of the third world. But even so, we have witnessed God doing what man can't. Many of you were here when Philip shared his testimony of when he was a baby and God created his stomach and healed the many holes in his heart in answer to his parents' prayers. We've seen God answer prayers many times in miraculous ways. He answers those prayers according to His will. He may choose not to answer a prayer for healing for reasons we don't understand. He may be using it to draw the person to Himself and to teach them to depend on Him. It may be the person's time to leave this world (Proverbs 31:15). Who but God can know what a death early in life might save them from in the future had they lived. The Apostle Paul's prayer to have his thorn in the flesh removed was not answered because God was using it to keep him humble and dependent on Him (2 Corinthians 12:7). God has His purposes, many of which we will only learn of in heaven.

This account of the miracle at the Beautiful Gate has more to tell us than healing miracles. I believe there is something even more profound that the Spirit would have us understand. We are sinful from birth, just as the man was born lame from the womb. We

Commented [PW18]: (Yancey, Philip; Brand, Paul; Zondervan. In the Likeness of God (p. 186). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.)

Commented [PW19]: Psalm 31:15 (ESV)
¹⁵ My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

Commented [PW20]: 2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV)
⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

are unable to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). The nature we inherit from Adam has caused us to be born as spiritual cripples (1Corinthians 15:21-22). When we receive the Gospel, we are instantly healed of this spiritual paralysis and enabled to walk with the Lord. For some new believers, the change is so dramatic that they can spiritually leap. For most of us, it has been a long learning process teaching our spiritual muscles how to work in sync at response to our spiritual head, Jesus. As members of the body of Christ, we have the freedom to not respond when the signal comes, so we need to train ourselves by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), so that we readily obey those messages from the Head.

Our witness to the world will amaze and attract their attention to hear the Gospel when we are completely cooperative with the signals from our spiritual Head, Jesus. When Jesus tells us to offer to pray for someone right then and there, and when the words of the prayer are directed by the Spirit, they will be amazed. When we are generous with our time and finances at the leading of the Spirit, they will be amazed and want to know what happened to us. When we show God's love that is unconditional and genuine, we attract them to the source. ²⁵ *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.* Galatians 5:25

Can you walk spiritually? Are you keeping in step with the Spirit, or are you begging for this world to meet your need for satisfaction and contentment? Are you spiritually walking and leaping and praising God? We can hold out this spiritual healing to those who are begging. We can tell them in the name of Jesus to rise up spiritually and find fulfillment, love, joy, and peace in Him. We can take them by the hand and tell them to rise up and walk. The sovereignty of God is going to put you in the path of spiritual beggars who realize they need more than silver and gold. Will you be ready to hear the Spirit tell you to take them by the hand and command them in the name of Jesus to rise up and walk? *Ask and you shall receive!* Matthew 7:7a

Questions

- 1 Why were Peter and John going to the temple?
- 2 How did temple worship change for them?
- 3 Why was the beggar there?
- 4 Why was the miracle so amazing?
- 5 Why did Peter say "in the name of Jesus"?
- 6 What would "leaping" remind the Jews of?
- 7 What took place physiologically?
- 8 Why does God use healing miracles?
- 9 Why don't we see more in the West?
- 10 Are you spiritually walking and leaping and praising God?

Commented [PW21]: Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Commented [PW22]: 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 (ESV)

²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Commented [PW23]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.