

Acts 3:1-11

Open doors

(The pattern of NT “power evangelism” teaches us how to proclaim the Gospel.)

Introduction

1. Chapter 2 ends with an evangelistic expansion of the church. Chapter three is an illustration of how this expansion took place. You will remember that the signs and wonders performed through the Apostles (2:43) were a key part of this ministry. The summary recorded in 2:41-47 may have included the detailed account that we find in chapter three.
2. In this chapter we will see a different display of power that will lead to another sermon from the lips of Peter. Note the parallel to chapter two.
 - a. Seeking God makes us sensitive to -
 - b. The needs of others with an opportunity to -
 - c. Display power which gives opportunity to -
 - d. Preach the gospel leading to -
 - e. Mixed response
3. The lessons from this chapter can guide us in our expectations of how God’s Spirit might lead us in spreading the Gospel.
4. I Peter 3:15 provides a summary of the point of this passage. “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, not with gentleness and reverence.”

Four pre-evangelism principles

1. **Keep the main thing the main thing.** The Apostles attention was on devotion to (worship of) God – not on an evangelistic mission.

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

 - a. The Apostles were not setting out to spread the Gospel but rather to worship God.
 - b. Evangelism will be a natural response to the circumstances of life when our hearts are chasing after God.
 - c. The great commandment has two parts – love of God and love of neighbor. The first part is the foremost command and the second is inseparable from the first.
2. **The pain of life is an “open door” for the Gospel.** The Apostles were in touch with the needy around them – not just their own spiritual needs.

2 And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. 3 And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he {began} asking to receive alms.

a. The lame man was -

1. – **severely (physically) handicapped.** In ancient culture this was a very serious condition as so much of life depended upon the ability to get around. It was also commonly believed that the handicapped were cursed of God.
2. – **seeking to join others in worship.** He was certainly a God fearer if not a devout Jew.
3. – **reaching out for help from the community.** He needed others to help him to the temple where he would seek others to help him with his condition.

b. He took the initiative and reached out to the Apostles.

1. While it is not wrong to make the first step in sharing the Gospel we should note how often the Apostles (in Acts) are responding to an "open door."
2. This man was not inquiring about the Gospel message but he was expressing a need.

c. It is hard to address unfelt needs.

1. Pain provides the greatest opportunity for ministry.
2. The ability to address the spiritual pain and need of others must often be accompanied by a concern for the physical needs.

3. **Responding to felt needs can lead to opportunities to address deeper needs.** The Apostles were responsive to the cries of the poor for tangible help – not disengaged from the pain of the suffering of others.

4 And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, "Look at us!" 5 And he {began} to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!" 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.

- a. This evangelistic encounter started with a very practical, physical encounter focused on a tangible need.
- b. The lame man was expecting to receive a gift to sooth his pain (not remove his pain).
- c. The Apostles gave him what they had, not what he expected. We can only give what we have but we must be willing to do it.

d. We can identify with both the lamb man and the Apostles on a number of issues.

#1 We too often expect and offer too little.

- The church and its members are too often looking for silver and gold (seminars on managing life) rather than waiting for a radical cure.
- We have given up hope of God doing a great work in our lives.
- We need to visit this story again and renew our hope.

#2 We too often aim at just managing our pain and not curing our soul sorrow.

- This story is not about healing legs. It is about healing the soul upon looking to the authority of Jesus.
- The rest of this chapter will make this clear.

#3 We should expect God to make a spectacle of us so as to draw the world to hear the gospel.

- The man's attention is first on money, then on Peter and John, and finally on Jesus' name.

4. **Evangelism is a show and tell ministry.**

8 And with a leap, he stood upright and {began} to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to {beg} alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”¹¹ And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.”

- a. “Power evangelism” is a term developed in the Vineyard movement associated with the late John Wimber. It emphasized the need for a “show and tell” approach to outreach.
- b. While the display of miracle healings is still a part of the church's ministry today it is not the only or most common display of power that can draw attention to the message of the cross.
- c. Most, if not all, the miracles in Acts were at the hands of the Apostles. This authenticated their spiritual authority.
- d. Note two other healings in Acts – 9:32-34; 14:8-10.

Conclusion

Saints: There are two types of worshippers - those who sit at the gate hoping for a handout and those in the court walking and leaping and praising God.

Seekers: The deepest longings of your heart are at stake. Don't become a skeptic. Don't give up hope. Seek the Jesus of this story for your soul's sorrow.

Skeptics: Not everyone was healed but many were. Are you in touch with the deepest pain in your life? Are you just looking for and interested in silver and gold to ease the pain?