

It must have been tempting for some in the early church to try to preserve the apostolic fellowship, to linger in their Acts 2 experience, to cultivate an esoteric club-like atmosphere and perhaps unknowingly, smother the Spirit's fire with exclusiveness. But they did not do this. What they experienced under the Spirit's reign was so explosive and expansive, they just had to get going! So in Acts 3 we see the church moving out into the world with healing power-Exhibit A of what a Spirit-filled church can do.

### **What the Spirit Filled Church Imparts (vv. 1-11)**

The example that Luke chose to share was Peter and John's encounter with a lame beggar. Verse 1 gives us the setting: "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer-at three in the afternoon." The apostolic church had not yet broken with the temple, and so, as with all devout Jews, Peter and John continued their attendance at the designated times of prayer. Perhaps this time of day, even then, held special significance for them because it was the hour when Jesus cried from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Whatever the two apostles' reason, it was the busiest of prayer times, and so they were part of a large throng moving into the temple.

Verse 2 completes the setting:

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.

As Peter and John moved along with the flow of the crowd, they providentially encountered a beggar being borne on a litter to his usual post. He had been a congenial cripple for all of his life. Having never taken a step, he had to be carried everywhere he went. His begging post was one of the best spots in the entire city because it was at the Beautiful Gate, of Nicanor Gate, which Josephus tells us was fifty cubits high and forty cubits wide. This gate was overlaid with Corinthian bronze, and was such a work of art that it "far exceeded in value those plated with silver set in gold." What a compelling sight the impotent beggar made against the backdrop of such opulent surroundings! It was the perfect place to solicit funds. Further, Judaism considered almsgiving a meritorious art. So the man's position at Israel's religious center would have profited him well.

Now came the divine encounter:

*When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. The Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."  
(vv. 3-6)*

Though they had not even come to the gate, the beggar caught sight of Peter and John, who probably looked like good prospects. So he began his mechanical beggar's wail, which he had undoubtedly repeated millions of times: "Gentlemen, just a few cents please..." Peter responded, "Look at us!" As the beggar turned expectantly Peter said, "Silver and Gold I do not have." Perhaps the beggar began to frown. Perhaps he thought he was being mocked. But then came

those immortal words: "...but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Dr. Luke is very careful to make sure we get the total impact of what happened next. Verse 7 and 8 tell us:

*Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking, jumping and praising God.*

The poor man knew he could not walk, so he did not budge. But Peter, doing a typically Peter thing, grabbed him by the right hand and began to hoist him up. At that moment (the Greek says, "instantly") everything came together. One commentator says:

Perhaps only medical men can fully appreciate the meaning of these words; they are the peculiar, technical words of a medical man. The word translated feet is only used by Luke, and occurs nowhere else. It indicates his discrimination between different parts of the human heel. The phrase ankle-bones is again a medical phrase to be found nowhere else. The word "leaping up" describes the coming suddenly into socket of something that was out of place, the articulation of a joint. This then is a very careful medical description of what happened in connection with this man.

Sometimes we miss the drama and significance of miracles like this one because we do not allow our imaginations to catch the fact that it happened instantly. In Matthew we read that one Sabbath Jesus told the man with the withered hand to reach out his hand, as he did, his hand was healed. That hand was crippled, and before everyone's eyes it became whole. In Matthew 8 at the end of the Sermon on the Mount we learn of a leper who came through the crowd crying, "Unclean, unclean." The man was full of leprosy. He had grotesque features, and Jesus healed him in full view of the people. The man's eyebrows grew back, and his face took shape. His hair and his vocal chords were made whole. He was healed right before their eyes!

So it is with the text we are studying now. The man was healed in a flash. The text says, "He jumped to his feet and began to walk." He began hopping around the temple terrace-leaping around and praising the Lord. With a volume not appropriate for most of our church services he was shouting, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! I've been healed!"

*When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 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. While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon Colonnade. (vv. 9-11)*

The word used here to describe how he was clinging to Peter and John is used several times in the New Testament for police arrest. He was holding on tight, perhaps partly from gratitude and partly from fear. "They recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple

gate called Beautiful.” Thanks to the miraculous power of God, the lame man was jumping, and everyone was flying high.

What does the Spirit-filled church impart? It imparts what it has!

Notice verse 6:

*“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”*

The Spirit-Filled church has the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of Jesus (Philippians 1:19) as it is called in Paul’s letter is what we have to impart. This is what Peter and John possessed, and this is what they gave. They had within them the Spirit, “another Counselor” (allos parakletos, John 14:15)- another Helper like Christ. “Christ lives in me,” Paul said (Galatians 2:20), a lived in Peter and John as well. They were members of the living Christ. They were “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4, KJV). They could impart the power of Christ because they were full of Christ.

The old commentator Cornelius a Lapide tells how Thomas Aquinas once called on Pope Innocent II while he was counting a large sum of money. “You see, Thomas,” said the Pope, “the church can no longer say, ‘Silver and Gold have I none.’” “True, holy Father,” said Thomas, and neither can she now say, ‘Arise and walk.’” What about us? What is our experience with Christ? The Spirit-filled church imparts what she has.

She imparts healing. The miracle was both literal and parabolic, because the Spirit-filled church dispenses more than just care for the body- she brings healing to the soul. In place of spiritual lameness, there can be leaping!

The Spirit-filled church imparts joy. When the rejoicing cripple entered the temple, the echoing chambers resounded with his jubilation. Hallelujahs rang from the vast cedar ceiling of Solomon’s Porch as everyone stopped (even the money changers) to watch the high-jumping cripple!

Erma Bombeck tells how she was sitting in church one Sunday when a small child turned around and began to smile at the people behind her. She was smiling, doing nothing else, not making a sound. When her mother noticed, she said in a stage whisper, “Stop that grinning-you’re in church,” gave her child a swat, and said “That’s better!” Erma concluded that some people come to church looking like their deceased rich aunt left everything to her pet hamster! In contrast the Spirit-filled church overflows with joy!

Also she imparts wonder. The temple regulars could not believe what they were seeing and hearing. As usual when there is joy and power in the church, they became curious about what had happened and how.

## **How The Spirit-Filled Church Imparts (vv. 12-20)**

When the Spirit-filled church begins to exhibit power and healing, there is a danger to avoid-people may focus on Christ's servant rather than on Christ. John and Peter were quick to counter this, and in doing so they explained how the Spirit-filled church is able to impart what she has.

How did Peter and John heal the cripple? First and foremost, not by their own power.

*When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"*

They disavowed and power in themselves, unlike so many today who measure their ministry success by the number of times their name is in print. Peter and John rejected the people's adulation because they knew the power to heal was not theirs.

They went on to explain that the miracle happened through Christ's name (v.16). Peter had already said this once, in verse 6- "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Jesus was from Nazareth- he was a Nazarene, and this had been used to insult Christ during his life on earth. But now Peter waved it like a banner.

Not everyone had heard all this, so Peter explained it (in verse 16, leading up to it in verses 13-15).

*"The God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go."*

Peter thus reminded them that they had Jesus when they said, "We have no king but Caesar!"

*"You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you."*

They had said, "Give us Barabbas."

*"You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."*

Now he was ready to make the definitive statement:

*"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong."*

The Apostle was saying, "Listen, Israel! It is through the name of Jesus that this miracle had happened!" Many people decide who and what you are when they hear your name. The name Joni invokes a mental image. So does JFL of Pope John Paul II or Michael Jordan or Billy Graham. Names come to stand for one's character and power. Peter did this miracle on the basis of what Jesus is-his name.

More exactly, the healing happened through faith in Christ's name.

*“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.” (v. 16)*

The church had power because she had faith in Jesus name-it fully trusted him.

This is so simple but so true. Faith in the name of Jesus Christ brings power to the church. Any man or woman who has ever done anything substantial for Christ had done so only by faith in his name. If we could assemble the great missionaries of the cross, we would have the most extraordinary collection of idiosyncrasies the world has ever seen. They would not understand each other. Some would not like each other. But there would be one common, exciting characteristic in them all- a flaming earnestness of belief in the power of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must remember that even our faith is a gift (Ephesians 2:8). It does not come through the resolution of human will but by asking God to grant it. Let us exalt and proclaim Jesus in all the fullness of his name, affirming our belief and living in faithfulness to him.