

Well, good morning everybody. It's always good to be here. I love this fellowship and appreciate so much being with you. It's interesting. As my year lays out, I plan my trips in different countries and so forth, and I just had a couple overseas trips lined up. But nothing was open in February, and I'm going, "Lord, what do you want me to do in February?" And there was just nothing there - no speaking engagements, nothing. And then I got a call about Jack needing somebody filling in for Jack, and so I was available this Sunday. And next Sunday I'll be down in Phoenix, and then I'm going to come back here again the following week to be with you guys again. But God has a wonderful way of working in our lives. You know, we really don't call the shots, do we? And He's in control. And we don't understand why certain things happen at certain places and times, but the fact is that we can rest in Him, and we know that God is in absolute control today, and He sits on the throne. And so our prayers are definitely with our Pastor Jack, and may the Lord just touch and restore him quickly, bring him back again. Anyway, I was in Brazil in January - had a wonderful time there, first time in Brazil, and was with the Calvary Chapel Bible School there. They have a beautiful piece of property that the Lord blessed them with there, and so I was able to go in and teach the Bible School and had a wonderful time there. So, that's kind of been my journey so far this year. I was in Guatemala just before that, in December, and the Lord blessed that time also.

But, anyway, this morning I just want to get into the Word with you. We're going to get into Acts, and it's our history book of the New Testament. I love Acts. It's such a beautiful study, and we're going to look at some principles of ministry in our text this morning. We're going to be reading about the paralytic that was healed, the lame man that was healed by Peter and John on their way to the Temple that day. But what has happened, of course, you're familiar with - how the disciples were waiting together in Jerusalem for Pentecost, and Jesus had told them to wait. The Holy Spirit was going to come upon them, and then we know that the Holy Spirit did come, in fact, and began His ministry in the early church - which it continues on to this very day. Interesting thing - when you get to the end of the book of Acts, there's really no ending because you and I are a part of that fulfillment of the history of the church. And we know that Jesus is going to come back soon, but there's so much that He's doing in these days. And so Jesus said,

"Wait, the Holy Spirit's going to come upon you," and we know that He did, and He came with great power. And these disciples, who were constantly having a struggle and hard time; and we're going to see Peter, a man that was constantly putting his foot in his mouth and just lots of issues. God was going to raise him up along with the other disciples, as the Holy Spirit began to fill them, and the Holy Spirit began to work through them. And we're going to see that this morning as we work with our text.

And so, we're going to read just a short part of our text this morning in chapter 3, starting in verse 1. "Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, 'Look at us.' So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, '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.' And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him."

Join me in a word of prayer. Father, as we divide this text this morning, again we call upon You, Holy Spirit, who came at such an amazing time in the early church and filled them with Your Holy Spirit. This morning, would You come and continue that work that You've been doing for all these years through the church? And so, Lord, speak to us this morning, and give us that freedom to understand what You want us to pick up this morning. And so we give You praise in Jesus' precious name. And everybody said, "Amen."

Well, what we're going to look at is some principles of ministry as we work through this story in our text this morning. It's much more than just a story, but there're very, very important principles. I wonder. How many of you here this morning are called to full-time Christian ministry? I don't see a whole lot of hands. Okay. How many of you are born-again believers? Okay. All right. I got quite a few more hands here. Okay. I've got good news and bad news for you this morning. The

good news is when you invite Christ to come into your life, the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Amen? He dwells in you, and the minute you become a believer, you are called to full-time Christian ministry. There is no such thing as a part-time Christian. We are full time in the ministry of serving Jesus Christ. And so, by the way, the bad news is you don't got a choice. We are all called to serve Him. We've come into the family; not for a free ride, but we've come to serve Him. We've come to be a part of His kingdom and His purpose and His plan. A lot of Christians don't really understand that, and they think full-time Christian ministry means you're like Pastor Jack or Pastor Gerard or the different staff here; they're full-time Christian ministry. Well, folks, we're all called to be full-time Christian ministers. Not everybody gets a salary for doing what I do or Pastor Jack and so forth. But we're called to serve Him. And so there're some beautiful principles here that I want you to see as we work through our text.

And so first of all, if you'll notice in verse 1 of chapter 3, Peter and John were on their way to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. So 3:00 hour, where they're going to pray. And one of the things we notice is that prayer was very important to the disciples. They had learned from Jesus how to pray. If you remember, the disciples found Jesus alone praying, and they said, "Jesus, teach us to pray." And they began to realize, slowly, the importance of prayer. And so, now that the Holy Spirit has come upon them, they're going to continue in prayer. Prayer is such an important thing, and that's our first principle of ministry. You and I are called to be people of prayer. Last time I was here, I talked to you (a little bit farther in our text) about the power of prayer - a prayer that the disciples had prayed. And so often we don't realize the incredible power that lies behind this tool that God has given to us, this tool of prayer. And it's so interesting in the church; if you look around, you know the least most attended service of all the services that our churches offer today? It's the prayer meeting. Why is that? Well, I really believe it's because many of God's people don't understand the power that lies behind prayer. And you and I are called to pray every day, to seek His face.

And so that's our first principle - as we see as the disciples are on their way to the temple now, and we're told that there's this lame man (in verse 2) that was lame from his mother's womb. So he's never walked before. And every day, he was carried to the gate of the temple which was called Beautiful. So here's a man, now is fully-grown. We know that he's actually more than forty years of age when this miracle occurred. And every day he's carried to the gate that's called Beautiful.

But I want to tell you something. He was not beautiful. His life was a mess. He was crippled. He couldn't go into the temple, he couldn't worship like others. People thought that he was a sinner because of his condition. And so this man, every day, is brought to the temple, the gate that is Beautiful. But it's not so beautiful to him. And all he's doing is begging. And so, as Peter and John come upon this man, this man fixes his eyes; he sees them, and he's going to ask them for alms. And I want to remind you that Peter and John have walked by this guy many times before; if you realize, Jesus Himself would have walked right by this guy. And so this guy's about to ask for alms, (and we're told in verse 4), "and fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, 'Look at us.' " So Peter has now stopped. They'd been going to the temple, and they're going to pray, but suddenly they've stopped. Why? Why did they just suddenly stop and give attention to a guy that's been a fixture there? Everybody recognizes this guy. Well, they stopped because the Holy Spirit was moving in them to minister to this man. You see, they were willing to be flexible. Are you willing to be flexible in the ministry that God's called you to? Do you realize every single one of us has a ministry that God's called us to? Are you willing to be flexible? Are you willing to change direction? You may be going in one direction, but the Holy Spirit stops you to minister to this one here. And so, they fix their eyes on him, and they're focusing on this guy now. One of the things I learned, living in the Philippines - we had beggars everywhere. And if a beggar came up to you, if I didn't want to give them anything, I just ignored them. I had somebody last night when I was walking into Stater Brothers, "Got some spare change?" I didn't want to give him anything. I didn't even look at him. And I had this one guy in the Philippines. I mean every time I'd be walking down the street, this guy - he was really good - he'd come up behind me and tap me on the shoulder, and I'd turn around and look at him, and there he is with a big smile on his face with his hand out. You know? Well, once I connected with his eyes, oh, man, it's so hard not to give him something. So I'd reach in my pocket, give him a couple pesos, and he walked away smiling, thanking me. But I learned I didn't want to focus on them. But Peter stops with this beggar, who's asking for alms, focused on him.

Verse 5, "So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them." So here's our third principle. First, we've got to be people of prayer. Secondly, we've got to be flexible. The third thing is this man was expecting something. He was looking to get something from Peter and John. Man, they're giving him their attention. Do you live expectantly? Do you expect God to move? Do you expect Him to work? A lot of days we just get up, we run through our day,

we have no sense of expectancy. I believe that God has called us to live expectantly. Every day, He wants us to be available for Him. "Lord, what do You want to do today? Lord, I just thank You for this day." There're two ways we get up in the morning. One is, "Lord, good morning Lord. It's so good to see You. And Lord I just thank You for this day, and I'm just excited. I want to live expectantly today." Or we get up in the morning, and we go, "Good God, it's morning." How do you get up? Are you living expectantly? Well, Peter said to the man now (verse 6), "'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you.'" Now, you see this guy? He's got his hand out, he's got a big smile on his face, he's about to get something from Peter and John, and Peter says, "I don't got any money." Can you see the guy just go, "Oh, what a bummer! No money." But he says, "'What I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'" And I want you to notice (in verse 7) what he did here. This blows me away. "And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God." Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, rise and walk." He did not go, "Boy, I sure hope this guy gets up." But he just reached down, took ahold of the guy and pulled him right up. I honestly don't think Peter thought it through. "Yeah, we're going to be on the way to the temple today, and we're going to see this lame man - we see him every day, and we're just going to do something this morning with him. We're just going to pray over him and pray for a healing for him." Peter was just going along. The Holy Spirit stopped him. He knew the Holy Spirit wanted to do something, and he pronounced healing to this man, and then he just reached down, and he pulled him up. Boy, that's bold!

And that's the next principle. You and I need to be bold in the ministry. When the Holy Spirit is working, just go along with Him! Don't think it through. Just go along with what the Holy Spirit wants to do. Sometimes we think it through, and we don't want to do it at all. We get fearful. We're afraid. But you need boldness in the ministry, and a lot of times we don't do things because of fear, because we're afraid what somebody might think about us or something. And so we need boldness. Every day we need boldness - boldness to share our faith, boldness to reach out and touch somebody's life. God has called us to a ministry of ministering to others, and we need that sense of boldness. And so I want you to notice that the man, now, he came up and immediately his ankle bones and his legs received strength. Do you know what this guy's legs would look like? He's never walked before. He would have no muscle at all. But he has such an incredible miracle -

instant healing - that he not only stood up but he was walking. Now think about that for a moment. You know none of us just jumped out of the womb and started walking. It was a process. And I love watching my grandchildren as they're coming along. My latest one is just a little over a year old and a little gal, and she's such a cutie. And she's been pulling herself up. About ten months, she's pulling herself up and standing there, and then she'd take a step, and she'd fall flat on her face, and she'd cry, and then she'd pull herself up again. She kept going at it, and eventually she starts walking. It's a whole process. But this was such an incredible miracle. This man never learned to walk! He just simply was walking. But notice the text says he was leaping. And, again, you just don't do that until you learn to walk first; and then, slowly but surely you can do a little bit of jumping and so forth. So, it was an amazing miracle. He was walking and leaping and praising God. And so would you, if you had been this man.

But I want you to notice something so interesting. It says that he entered the temple with Peter and John. This was the first time this man has ever gone into the temple! And it's such a beautiful picture of salvation because before you met Christ, you could not enter into the Holy of Holies. But because of Jesus Christ coming into our lives, you can now enter into His Holy of Holies and worship Him and praise Him. You can communicate directly to God. And what a joy this man must have been experiencing that day as he was walking and leaping and praising God, and he's actually in the temple now! And it says (verse 9), "And all the people saw him walking and praising God." This was a miracle - interesting - with a man everybody recognized. It wasn't just you hear about these miracles, these guys that get healed. I'm sure you've seen it on TV and so forth - great miracle of healing - and you don't even know if it's a true, legitimate thing. You don't know the person. But everybody knew this guy. There was no mistake about it. "Then they knew" (we're told in verse 10) "that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." And so there's just this incredible crowd that has gathered together now.

"Now as the lame man" (verse 11) "who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed." So everybody's now gathered together. They all recognized there's a miracle that has just happened here. And notice verse 12, "So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: 'Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man

walk?' " So, the text says, "Peter saw it." What did he see? Well, he saw everybody looking at them and the lame man, and they're pointing the finger. "Yeah, those are the guys. They just did that miracle on that guy." Peter saw everybody looking at them, and he said, "Why are you looking at us, as though by our own power we've made this man walk?" And you see what Peter's doing? And this is the one that catches so many people. Peter is not taking the glory. Don't seek your own glory when God uses you. I've seen so many pastors fall because they got into position, and everybody's looking at them, and they're giving him lots of attention, and he falls. And it's so easy for all of us to want to take that glory. When God uses us, it's an exciting thing. I'll never forget this time there was a gal in our church that I was pastoring, and she had a real big physical issue, and we had prayed over her. And the very next day she called me on the phone, and she said, "Pastor, I woke up this morning. I've never been able to sleep the night. I know God has just healed me." And it was a wonderful miracle. And I was so excited about that I thought, "Wow, maybe God's given me a ministry of healing," and so now I'm looking for people that I can pray over. I remember hearing about this lady that was in the hospital, dying of cancer. And so I went in there believing God, that He was going to heal this lady, and I laid hands on her, and I prayed over her, and she died in two hours. So the moral of the story is you don't want me to pray for you, okay? (Laughing) But you see, I assumed something. I took a position that really wasn't mine to take. See, if God wants to do something through us, it's going to be Him, not us.

And so first we must be people of prayer. Secondly, we've got to be flexible. Thirdly, we've got to live expectantly. Fourthly, we need boldness in our ministry. And fifthly, we're not going to seek our own glory; we're not going to make that mistake. But we're going to give Him the glory. When God does something, we give it all to Him.

Now notice what happens next in our text. Peter went on, and he began to preach, and he said, " 'The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the

presence of you all.' " Folks, Peter was going very clearly, "Hey, it's not me. It's Jesus." And that's so important to remember that it's Jesus; it's not us.

And Peter goes on, and he preaches to this crowd. And I'm not going to go through the rest of the text there with you, but he's going to preach a powerful message. And we know, in chapter 4:4, it says, "Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." It first started with the twelve and some of Jesus' followers, and a hundred and twenty of them gathered together - filled with the Holy Spirit. And then Peter preached to a crowd, and there're three thousand more added to their numbers. And now there're another five thousand people. I want to ask you the question - what would have happened if Peter, on that day, along with John - they got to the temple gate which is called Beautiful, they saw the lame man, but they said, "Oh, man. We're late. Man, we gotta get in there. We're not gonna get a seat." And they just rushed on by. Well, I believe that one man would not have been healed. But think about it. Five thousand souls would not have been saved that day. Do you see how important obedience is? And that's my last point with you this morning. Obedience is critical in the ministry - that we obey in the little things. And obedience will lead to even greater ministry.

I had a pastor friend in the Philippines who was sharing with me how he had gone up to Manila and had been at a pastors' meeting with about four hundred pastors, and these pastors were from all different denominations. And he said at the meeting, a general was sent by the President to talk to the pastors, and he was a very famous general. His name was General Florendo, and everybody loved him, and he was really highly-respected. So, anyway, he came to this meeting, and he shared with the pastors, and my pastor friend shared with me. He said, "You know, as he was talking, I could tell he wasn't a born-again believer. And the Holy Spirit was prompting me to go and talk to him. And so as he continued to talk, I just feel this prompting I'm supposed to go talk to him after the meeting. But," he just said, "I heard every voice you could imagine that said, 'You are stupid to even begin to think that he would give you an audience. He's famous. You couldn't talk to him. He won't listen to you. Who do you think you are?!' " And he said, "I heard all those arguments go through my mind. But," he said, "it was so strong," he said, "I just felt I had to obey, and so I didn't know what was going to happen, but I went up and started talking to the General. And," he said, "I got an audience with him, and we started talking. And then it became more intense, and I started sharing the gospel with him, and," he said, "then I began to realize God - I could see something

was happening. A little tear came in his eye, and I said, 'General, would you like to pray to receive Jesus right now?' " And he said, "To my amazement, he said, 'Yes, I really do.' " And right there, he led that General in a prayer to receive Christ. And then, when he got through praying, the General looked up to him, and he said, "Thank you so much." He said, "I've been missing something all my life, and I knew there was something missing, and this is it!" And he went out that day a born-again believer. Five days later, he was asked by the President to go to a mountainous area where they were having lots of problems, got into a very heated argument, guns came out, bullets started flying through the room; and one of those bullets went right through the heart of General Florendo. He died instantly. Five days after receiving Jesus Christ into his life.

And the question is - what would have happened if my pastor friend had listened to those voices? It's a scary thought, isn't it? That somebody can slip into eternity because we're not being obedient to the call of Jesus Christ.

Folks, we are called to full-time Christian ministry. Every single one of us is to be ready to share the hope that lies within us, to reach out to those around us. And it's not just the pastors but all of us. God has a special calling in our lives. And I want to encourage you today that you would live by those principles - that you would be a person of prayer, that you would be flexible, that you would live expectantly, that you would be bold, that you wouldn't try to take the glory when God uses you, and finally, you're going to be obedient, and God will use you to bring about even greater ministry.

And so, Lord, we thank You for your Word this morning. We thank You that You desire to speak to us. And, Lord, we believe that You have done that this morning, and we want to thank You for speaking to the hearts and lives of Your people. Father, forgive us for the times when we haven't been obedient, when we knew You were speaking to us, but we just didn't want to be flexible, we didn't want to change direction. And Father, I pray this morning for this fellowship. I pray for each person sitting here this morning. Lord, would You strengthen them in their walk with You? Would you help them to live in these characteristics? Help us to follow these principles every day, Lord. Father, forgive us those days we wake up, and we're just not expecting anything to happen. And so often You really want to do something, but we're just not available. Lord, make us available. Help us to be available every morning. Lord, here I am. Lord, use me. Father, You know the needs here this morning. Would You just allow each of us to be sensitive to the

needs of others? Lord, if there're those that need prayer this morning, would You just give them the freedom to come, and come down front? And, Lord, others that just turn to their friends and say, "Hey, pray for me. I'm going through this issue." But Lord, we thank You, that You have called us to be Your people. So help us to be those people. Lord, forgive us for our lack of prayer. Lord, we often aren't praying like we should. And so, Lord, would You help us today to be Your people? We give You the thanks, we give You the praise. In Jesus' precious name. And everybody said, "Amen." God bless you.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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