

"HOW TO BE USED BY GOD" - ACTS 3

INTRO:

TAKE HOME: God wants to use me to reach & change others.

THE BEAUTIFUL WORK AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE (3:1-10)

1) Peter & John head up to the Temple to pray at the **ninth hour** = 3 pm ... it also was the time of evening sacrifice. Lots of people had finished their business for the day & now gathered at the Temple to worship & pray to the LORD. Why go?

1) **BECAUSE JESUS TAUGHT THEM TO BE MEN OF PRAYER:** (Luke 11; Matt. 7) Prayer was a part of Jesus' ministry and so that made sure it was a part of theirs.

2) **BECAUSE THEY WERE MEN ON MISSION:** ready to reach their world for Jesus. Knowing people gathered there daily...it became the natural opportunity: "Let's go and see what God will do".

what can I learn from Acts 3 about being used by the Lord?

4 keys in being used for the LORD:

1) **AVAILABILITY:** ("Here I am LORD...direct my steps...my day...open doors that I may do Your will!") Peter & John were available to be used...looking to be used.

NOTE: my degree of availability is often limited by my access 1st. (ex. **Nehemiah:** cupbearer to the King, at his side...heard of Jerusalem's destruction, pricked his heart, spent time in prayer waiting for God to open the door on what to do...because of his access to the King, he was able to be used by God to go rebuild the city!)

POINT: If the door is open, & the need is shared, & I feel God tugging on my heart, but I haven't done the "access" things, then I'm not fully available for the opportunity.

Peter & John had access to the Temple (being Jews, being familiar with the Temple services), they had hearts of prayer in line with God's will (available), & God was going to put a divine appointment in their daily routine!

2) lame man: (4:22 - "more than 40 years old") (birth defect in his feet or ankle bone - couldn't walk)

He was carried by others (family, friends, stranger) , brought daily to this gate called "**Beautiful**". (**Eastern Gate/ Golden Gate:** East side of Temple - 75' high, double doors (largest of all), made of Corinthian bronze) incredible gate to behold!

NOTE: daily someone carried him in his weakness...daily some laid him down at a place where he could get help...and daily they picked him back up at the end of the day & took him to his home.

Whom are you doing that for?

here this lame man asking for alms from people going into worship to give their tithes in worship... or coming from worship thinking about God & His love for them and how to be used by God. He's positioned in a good place to receive!

NOTE: Very good probability of seeing Jesus considering all the time Jesus spent in the Temple,...even on Palm Sunday passing through. Why did Jesus not heal him? Greater plan of God.

Why isn't God not healing me now? Why pass me by & touch them, I'm just as needy too? Could it be that there is a greater work ahead that will come in time? Could it be that through you He wants to do more than what you see (heal you)...maybe He wants to herald the testimony of Jesus through you, and thousands get saved? We don't know and so we simply trust Him.

3) this man sees Peter and John (not knowing who they were, no name badges or special robes of Church positions) ...and he asks for alms (it's an average moment, about to be turned into a God-moment)

4) "fixing eyes" = "look intently; fixed attention" Spirit of God poked Peter's heart to do something, grabbed his attention.

At this point, Peter could have gone on to prayer (valid, godly - why they came); could have ignored the man (later; tomorrow he'll be there)...but he remained flexible & sensitive to the Spirit's leading.

SIDENOTE: while we need compassion for others, we are not called to meet every need. Sometimes God isn't leading you to give and help out...It doesn't mean their need isn't real, but maybe God's trying to teach them something deeper through that difficulty. Don't get in the way of God's work.

KEY: I want to meet the needs that the Lord leads me to meet. And trust Him in the ones He doesn't lead me to meet.

In being used by the Lord I need AVAILABILITY...

2) **FLEXIBILITY:** I must allow God to lead me, interrupt my plans, to work His glory in my life & through my life. (So hard when so many things call for my attention!)

"look at us" (give me your full attention)...in looking at them, this man would really see Jesus.) Part of our witness to others is to say, "look at us"...why? because my actions go along with my words!

5) This man was looking for monetary help ("expecting to receive"), God had something better in mind, BIGGER in mind. Something money couldn't buy...LIFE!

NOTE: There are times when all we're seeing is the immediate need (if I just had more money) (tunnel vision), **but God has a greater plan He's working.** (to bring life into my weakness & a testimony of His power!). Trust Him...allow Him to lead the way.

6-7) Peter didn't have money on him...nor did Peter ask John to borrow a buck or two...or go to the local bank to get a loan.

NOTE: Sometimes our lack financially, is God's opportunity to do something else through us. Something we hadn't considered until that moment.

Sometimes we have money, but aren't led by the Spirit to give it. Peter chose to meet his greater need, beyond what the man could see or even thought he needed.

Needless to say, **what Peter didn't have, didn't keep him from being used by God.** He stepped out in faith and gave this man something greater than money...JESUS! (power in His Name to heal)

being used by the Lord: AVAILABILITY, FLEXIBILITY...

3) **ACTIVITY** of Faith: Faith must be worked out, taking risks for Jesus' Name's sake

NOTE: ministry always has a risk factor...things could fail, it could be embarrassing, part of what we do doesn't make sense in the natural, but when the Spirit is prompting and the heart is willing, then there must be faith exercised. **I'm willing, if God is wanting.**

...and being led by the Holy Spirit, Peter was personally involved **"he took him by the hand" (7)**

POINT: If God puts something or someone on your heart to reach - you do it...don't bring it to me to do for you, it's for you to be used by God in!...take the hand & lift them up! Step out in faith and watch God work!

"The lameness of humanity is the church's opportunity." (Chuck Missler)

Peter took him by the hand & lifted him up... ("Power was Christ's; hand was Peter's")

Where did Peter get this pattern from? JESUS! (Lk. 8 - Jairus' - ruler of synagogue - 12 yr. old daughter dying...Jesus went... by the time He got to house: "she's dead"...put people out (except Peter, James, John & parents)...don't weep, only sleeping

Luke 8:54. But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!"

everything we do goes back to Jesus...ultimately we want people to look at us & see Him!

being used by the Lord: AVAILABILITY, FLEXIBILITY, ACTIVITY of faith, PROPENSITY

4) **PROPENSITY:** (leaning) to imitate Jesus! - when the opportunity of ministry arises and you don't know exactly what to do...just do what Jesus did!

God often puts us in overwhelming circumstances, with limited resources, so that we would lean on Him and see Him work!

NOTE: Effectiveness of ministry is not determined by our budgets...it's not determined by the size of our buildings... but by the power of the Spirit!

8) What a sight! This man was alive! (overjoyed, not a care of others' opinions!) (children learn to walk slowly, this man immediately, fully capable – miraculous healing- walking & leaping & praising God!) Miracle of Jesus!

Is. 35:6 (ministry of Messiah). “Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”

where does new life go first, flowing out? where does this joy in Jesus take me? He goes right in with the worshippers in the Temple (instinctively – Go to God.. praise Him, not Peter or John...and for the first time he is where he'd never been before - closer to God, closer to worshippers!)

9-10) These people know his past (lameness) (daily passed him), and now wondered at his present condition. (miraculous, immediate cure) **HOW** can it be? **“wonder & amazement”**

When God works in your life, other's will notice...new walk, new words (praise to God)...new witness of your God's power to heal & save...He doesn't do miracles for the “wow” factor, He has a purpose: to back up the truth & power of the gospel to save men!...

THE BLESSED SAVIOR PROCLAIMED (3:11-26)

11) Crowd of over 2,000 people gathered (4:4 – 5,000 in Church after this message)...all in **Solomon's Porch**. (double rows of marble columns, cedar roof, ran along the Eastern Wall of outer court) (Jesus – John 10:23 – taught here; Church gathered here – Acts 5:12)

12) Peter sees the people gathering in amazement...& seizes the opportunity to connect them to Jesus! He is the focus, not me.

NOTE: When God works, men often seek to elevate the instrument (tangible). There is this temptation when God uses you to take credit somehow...**but the man of God knows that God works in spite of him, not because of him.** Whatever happens is grace & the glory goes to God alone!

what are we to do when we are the recipient of such ministry from others? Look at the lame man: hold on to them in love, don't idolize them, pray for them, appreciate them....but let's hold on in love, & let's listen to what comes next from their mouths: **the true servant of God points others back to JESUS!**

13-18) Peter presents the reason for this man's healing. Simple gospel message starting where his audience was at: Jewish people, in the Temple, awaiting the Messiah!

1) Proclaimed the Person of Jesus: Servant (13)... Holy One and the Just (14)... Prince (“author”) of Life (15)... Christ “Messiah” (18) Reminder: the Gospel message centers on Him.

2) Pointed out the People's sin: (3 fold: **(13) “delivered up”;** **(14) “denied” (disowned);** **(15) “killed”**) Reminder: Gospel points out our sin.

3) Pronounced the Plan of God: **(15) “whom God raised...”** **(18) “God foretold... He has thus fulfilled”**) Reminder: Men's sins cannot stop God's plan...He did what He said He would do! God is greater than our failures, whether we do it intentional or **ignorantly.(17)** – they did it ignorantly, yet were not guiltless.

Peter's point: This miraculous healing they saw came through faith in Jesus' Name (His authority). That same Faith (trust) in Jesus is the key to our spiritual healing as well.

so Peter POINTS them to Jesus...and then PROMPTS them to repent and be saved...

19-21) What's the benefit of salvation? why do I need to "**repent and be converted**"? **(19)** Why not just go to church & sing the songs & be the nice moral guy?

3 benefits of Salvation:

1) **SINS ARE BLOTTED OUT: (19A)** "smear out; obliterated"

"Ancient writing was upon papyrus, and the ink used had no acid in it. It therefore did not bite into the papyrus as modern ink does; it simply lay upon the top of it. To erase the writing a man might take a wet sponge and simply wipe it away." (William Barclay)

In Jesus I am forgiven, washed clean...separates my sin as far as East is from West, and He chooses to remember them no more! Only salvation gives you a fresh start...

2) **SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT FROM THE LORD: (19B)** "recovery of breath, revival"

Sin hinders freshness from Lord (hinders fellowship, hardens heart, breeds deadness in us). When it is dealt with in Jesus...door opens for revival continually, breath of fresh air daily from the trials of the day. Only salvation can bring a daily refreshment from the LORD.

3) **SENDING OF JESUS: (20-21)** OT prophets told the Jewish people that the Messiah would come and restore all things. Jesus is the Messiah, came once and will be coming again.

to this Jewish audience, Peter stands upon the Law and Prophets to point them to Jesus...

22-23) Moses represented the Law of God, honored among all Jews. Yet Moses pointed to Jesus - the Prophet to listen to (Deut. 18:15). So what is He saying? **REPENT AND TURN TO HIM FOR SALVATION.** If not I will face the wrath of God upon me & my sin!

24-25) Samuel was considered the next great prophet after Moses...He was instrumental in establishing the Kingdom of David, where the Messiah would come from. Even other prophets spoke of Messiah's coming, work & rule – all fulfilled in Jesus. (25)

Even the Abrahamic covenant pointed to Jesus (seed of Abraham) – blessing for all the earth.

Peter is connecting with them in their understanding of Jewish scriptures & prophets.

(OT pointed to Jesus: ministry, death, resurrection, salvation!). What they see, is what God pointed to. They should not be surprised that the Messiah would come and heal lives in many ways!

26) Peter confirms their standing as a people of covenant with God. Points out that God came to bless them, to save them from sin and make them righteous in His eyes.

PRAY