

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Fortieth Week - Sixth Day

THE LAME BEGGAR

"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" (Acts 3:1-8).

We have already been told in general that many signs and wonders were done by the apostles, and a particular instance is now given. This was the case of the lame man whom was laid daily at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, a case notable from its undeniably miraculous character and the great notoriety which resulted. It was known to everyone that this man had been lame from birth, that he had never walked. The mere fact that he was constantly carried shows that his was a case past the help of staves or crutches, for his legs were dead weights beneath him. And having lain at the temple gate day-after-day for years, he must have been one of the most well known inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The circumstances of his cure are simple but exceedingly impressive. Peter and John were proceeding to the temple at the time of evening prayer, being the ninth hour (3 o'clock), when this lame beggar asked them for a charitable donation. No doubt he had long ago abandoned any hope of being healed--if he had ever entertained one. Earnestly looking at the poor man, Peter said, "Look on us," and doubtless the man looked very eagerly in the hope of some valuable donation. But Peter and John were also poor, and thus he said, "*Silver and gold I do not have.*" We may easily imagine that the cripple's face fell at this announcement, and that he was about to turn from this barren sympathy with disappointment and perhaps some little resentment at the seeming mockery of a frustrated hope when his attention was forcibly recalled by the words, "*But what I do have I give you.*" The apostle had something to give after all, and though it was not silver or gold, yet perhaps it might be as good.

And indeed it was. Peter had that to bestow which was far more precious than anything the wealthiest of those who passed by could give, far more rich in joy and blessing than the lame beggar could have received if "affluent fortune emptied all her horn." In the concentrated energy of faith, Peter cried aloud, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!*" Tingling life rushed triumphantly into his dead limbs, and Peter took him by the hand and helped him up. The poor beggar had never before set the sole of his foot upon the ground, never before had put one foot before another; but now, with Peter and John, he enters the temple "*walking, leaping, and praising God.*"

The people, recognizing his familiar face and gathering from his bursts of gratitude and adoring praise what had taken place, ran together from all quarters to the spot where he now was. Peter then took the opportunity of addressing them, disclaiming any inherent power or authority of his own to do such a deed. It was Jesus, he said, "the Holy One and the Just," whom they had lately killed. It was by faith in His name that this lame beggar had been made whole (but not, as some imagine, the faith of the man himself, but the faith of Peter and John in believing that their Lord would listen to their voice). Seeing that he had made some impression by his first words, Peter spoke more tenderly and assured them that there was still room for repentance, that they might still secure their part in the Divine kingdom that Jesus had established.

While he was speaking, a report (probably vague and garbled) of these proceedings was carried to the Sanhedrim, who were sitting in a chamber close by. The members of this high court had not expected to hear anything more of Jesus. He was dead, and his humble followers seemed little likely to revive his cause or give any ground of anxiety. No, they would quietly go back to their homes, resume their occupations, and look back upon all the past as a time of visions and dreams. But the council was grievously mistaken. That which they deemed to be ended was only now beginning.

During the interval from the crucifixion to the day of Pentecost, the quietness of the disciples had confirmed the Sanhedrim in the impression that through their vigorous treatment of Jesus they had put an end to a matter that had once seemed so threatening. This boldness, therefore, with which the apostles now came forth to proclaim the crucified Jesus as still the Son of God, still the Messiah, still the Hope of Israel, still the Redeemer of the world, speaking of his death as a murderous and fatal crime calling for deep repentance, and even declaring that He still lived and reigned--all this alarmed the Jewish rulers. With deep anxiety they wondered where it all might lead.

Therefore, word was sent that Peter and John should be apprehended; and to overawe the multitude, the Sanhedrim probably obtained the assistance of the Roman guard from the adjacent tower of Antonia. But it was already later than the time when the court of the Sanhedrim usually rose for judgment, so Peter and John were left to lie in prison till the next day. The next morning the two apostles, having had their first taste of the "imprisonments" to which they were afterward so long and often subjected, were brought up into the chamber Gazeth, where the Sanhedrim usually held its sittings.

On being questioned Peter spoke boldly, just as he had in his sermon the day before. The learned audience was amazed, and seeing that the man who had been healed stood by ready to extol and support the true miracle that had been worked, the court was not anxious to go into any evidence. Upon conferring together, they agreed that "a notable miracle" had undeniably been worked. Nevertheless it was useless, they admitted, to say anything against it or to press the inquiry further. The best course must be to smother the matter quietly and put an end to it by threatening Peter and John with serious penalties if they spoke or taught at all in the name of Jesus. But they found that the apostles were not disposed to leave freely under the shackle of any such condition: *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (4:19,20).

So after some further threatening, Peter and John were set free unconditionally. The rulers did not find any matter for which they could be punished; and they also perceived that the popular feeling was decidedly with the apostles on account of the miracle of mercy for a poor creature whose miserable condition had been constantly before the public eye, a man then over forty years of age who had been a cripple from his birth.