

Acts 3:1-10 (NIV)

- 1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon.
- 2 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.
- 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.
- 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"
- 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.
- 6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."
- 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.
- 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.
- 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God,
- 10 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.

44-03-02-Cripples Begging at Beautiful Gates

human condition, deficits, dysfunctions, healing, wholeness
Acts 3:1-10

Jesus is still making straight what's been bent out of shape.

INTRODUCTION: (The **text** as the Scripture reading.)

–Circle *the globe*, visit *any culture*, study *all past civilizations*. You'll find that diverse groups of people all share a concept of 'the beautiful.' Beauty may be in "the eye of the beholder," but each beholder has an idea of beauty. The concept of 'the beautiful' is built into us by design. –God created a beautiful *paradise* to be the home for creatures made in His image and spiritually *in sync* with Him. But when our first parents chose to live out of alignment with His will, the human spiritual nature became bent out of its original beautiful shape. God wouldn't let us enjoy a physically perfect world in that condition of spiritual bent-ness. He caused the beauty of the physical world, including our physical bodies, to echo the bent-ness of our spiritual condition, until, finally, that condition is fully *restored*– **Rom 8:20-21**, For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its **bondage to decay** and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.
–In the midst of this present human condition of *decay, deterioration, disease and death* (which creation shares with us), God still gives this built-in longing for 'the beautiful.' We seem to know it *by instinct* as a spiritual hope. So, it's not odd that one of the temple gates was "*called Beautiful,*" and that a man with a body bent through crippling was laid at that gate to beg. That's why I chose **the title.** Christ's healing ministry was a *preview* of the beautifully restored creation. Until His Kingdom is completely fulfilled with "a new heaven and new earth," **HOM.idea.** *In one way or another...*

I. We Are All Bent– v.1-3, *One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. 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. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.*

A. Back in Eden, there were no prayer meetings; no need for them.

1. Encounters with God were *spontaneous*: God showed up, you talked with Him; He left, you got back to the work He gave you.

2. That spontaneous relationship with God got *bent out of shape*.
 - a. Work took over priority; times of prayer were planned around it— “*at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon*” (after work...)
 - b. But God still wants this spontaneous relationship with us, and He makes it possible through the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - c. We also need to straighten out our bent views of busyness or work by bringing them back into alignment— Col 3:23, Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.
- B. The man crippled from birth who begged at the temple gate called Beautiful realized his bent condition and his dependence on those who were themselves seeking help from God. (This was a strategic spot to do so. It was at a temple entrance called “*Beautiful*,” where those entering would be reminded of Psa 29:2 (NKJV), Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.)
- C. [Homeless beggars often use religious terms on their cardboard signs to draw more donations, and manipulative politicians do exactly the same thing in their speeches to win votes.] This might have been the strategy of the crippled beggar, because, on seeing Peter and John entering to pray, “*he asked them for money.*”

TRANS: As believers, we’re somewhat like this beggar. We’ve acknowledged our bent condition and realized our need for help. But the difference is this: we sit at the Gate Beautiful because our hope is in Christ, who can restore us to spiritual beauty. **Jesus is still making straight what’s been bent out of shape. We are all bent, and so...**

II. We All Need Straightened Out— v.6-7, Then Peter said, “*Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.*” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.

- A. Part of human bent-ness is relational. Before this man’s healing, Peter addressed that area first— v.4, Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “*Look at us!*” (Whether shame or apathy caused his lack of eye-contact, this man needed healing in the relational realm: he needed to see God’s love shining from other human eyes; just as many whom we meet need to see it in our eyes.)
- B. When confronted with the needs of other bent people, we usually can’t use Peter’s words, “*Silver or gold I do not have,*” but one thing is

certain, no amount of money can straighten out bent lives. The only thing that unbends human bent-ness is the touch of Jesus.

- C. The question that the Christian must face is, “*How does Jesus want to touch people through me?*” or “*What’s my part in getting the spiritually crippled to walk a spiritually new life?*”

TRANS: We can say, “*Trust the Lord!*” But God uses more than words to help bent souls walk through the beautiful gate of salvation. Peter told this beggar, “*In the name of Jesus Christ..., walk.*” Then, “*taking him by the right hand, he helped him up.*” When Peter was walking on water and sank, he learned what Jesus’ handgrip felt like. So did this beggar, when he felt Peter’s hand; and so may others, as we touch them. **Jesus is still making straight what’s been bent out of shape, and to do it, He uses our voices, our hands. It’s beautiful when that happens, because...**

III. The Straightening is a Foretaste of Beauty to Come

- A. When God straightens bent people their joy overflows— v.8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. (Such exuberance lasts temporarily, but long-lasting joy grows that deepens as a person’s spiritual straightening continues in every aspect of life.)
- B. Observers of miraculous transformation get excited, too— v.10, 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. (If they doubt that a resurrected Christ was still at work among His people, they may begin to doubt their doubts.)

CONCLUSION:

—Christ’s healing ministry was a preview of His intention to beautifully restore creation. He is **not** finished giving us that preview. Until His Kingdom is completely fulfilled with “a new heaven and new earth,” **Jesus is still making straight what’s been bent out of shape**. He continues this beautiful ministry of healing through His people—through us—as we yield ourselves to speak in His name and to be a helping handgrip, so that others can feel His touch through our touch.