

Faith Healers and Dealers

Some Thoughts on Acts 3:1-11.

"And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering." Acts 3:10-11, KJV

They were **"filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him"** (Acts 3:10). That is how Luke describes the reaction of the people who firsthand observed the apostolic healing of a man who had been congenitally lame for more than forty years (Acts 4:22). His lower extremities were but skin and bones, and worshippers at the temple saw him begging in that condition for most of his life. Healed by Peter **"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,"** the miracle stunned Jews who saw him **"walking, and leaping, and praising God"** (Acts 4:22; 3:8-11). Luke heaps up words to describe the reaction of the witnesses to the miracle, "wonder . . . amazement . . . wondering . . . marvel" (Acts 3:10-12). Have you ever asked why claimed healings today do not make a similar impression upon outsiders?

The healing of the lame man by Peter provides an interesting contrast for what passes for faith healing today. Temple worshippers knew this man's case. His illness was real, not faked. They did not have to take somebody else's word about what was wrong with the man. His medical problem was not some vague or self-testified-to internal illness, but rather a verifiably external one. For years with their own eyes, they had observed the man's paralysis.

Note too that the man was healed in a public place. He was not healed in the friendly confines of a rented arena during a carefully scripted and choreographed service where candidates are interviewed, then selected, and finally brought to the stage by the healer's handlers. Rather, in the very circumstance in which he found him, in a public place and in a spontaneous moment of time, Peter spoke a sovereign healing word to the lame man.

Look at it like this: a particular evangelist claims to possess power from God to heal people. Then, we ask, why doesn't he go to public hospitals or physical rehab facilities and call the sick and the lame out of their beds? If the pretend healer did, can you imagine the amazement that would fall over all the nurses, doctors, workers and other patients? So why don't the charismatic healers leave the friendly confines of planned meetings in rented auditoriums and go to the hospitals? Why don't they just do it? Maybe they don't do it because they can't. And if they can't, when in fact they put on airs they can, then they are liars. But if like Peter they really can but won't, then "these healers" are cruel. So their failure to heal in public places like hospitals strikes at the heart of their credibility. By failing to go to hospitals and heal, are they violating their "hypocritical" oath. In either case, they stand exposed as either liars or loveless.

Healers protest this dilemma. "It takes faith for a person to be healed," they say, "and not all sick people have faith, and therefore it is not possible to heal people in a public places." Contrast this defense with the case of the man born lame. Healing was the furthest thing from

the man's mind when he begged from Peter and John. All he wanted was money, but Peter had no money. (Oops! There goes the wealth gospel too.) So according to Peter's faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, he delivered to the lame man a sovereign surprise. In the name of the Lord Jesus, Peter healed the man through his (Peter's) own faith, that faith "**which comes through Him** [i.e., Jesus]" (Acts 3:16). In other words, it was Peter's own faith which rested in the faithfulness of Lord Jesus Christ that healed this man.

Sometime ago this question appeared in a local newspaper. It read: "Why don't televangelists go to hospitals and cure people instead of just a few on TV?"[1] Good question. To validate their message as being from God, Jesus, Peter and the other apostles healed unbelievers wherever they encountered them. Maybe today's so-called healers don't heal in public places like hospitals because contrary to their claims, they really can't heal. Their ministry is more for show than for go.

Why are unbelievers not amazed by the miracles that faith healers pretend to do? As in Acts 3:1-11, why are people not "wondering" after the sick and lame who are healed? Perhaps it's because there's really nothing happening to wonder about.

Endnotes

[1] "Let It Out," *The Indianapolis Star*, February 2, 1999, E 2.