

A summary of Acts 3:1-11

- 1. Do we have spiritual companions? (Acts 3:1,3-5,11).** Chapters 1 and 2 of Acts emphasize the corporate aspect of the church life that the early believers enjoyed. As we have seen in chapter 1, the believers (about 120) were together, praying in one accord during the ten days leading up to Pentecost. In chapter 2, they were again together on the day of Pentecost, and the Spirit was poured out upon them, causing them to proclaim the marvelous works of God. Peter, standing together with the eleven, then delivered his message to the people, after which about 3000 were baptized and began to live a sweet church life together, in each others' homes, breaking bread, praying and pursuing the apostles' teaching and fellowship. However, in chapter 3, we see that such a church life was based on a daily living, not just of corporate togetherness, but of spiritual companionship, in pairs, reminding us of how Jesus initially called His disciples and later sent them out (Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 10:2) in pairs. Thus, Peter and John, in Acts 3:1, were together, and went up together to the temple to pray. In vv.4-5, Peter commanded the lame man to look, not at him, but at them (both he and John). Such a statement is striking, since it is usual for someone speaking to command his interlocutor's attention to himself only, and not his companion. It is also somewhat difficult for the interlocutor to focus on both persons while one is speaking. This demonstrates that Peter and John were very much aware of each other, and served together in one accord. In v.8, the lame man, after being healed, entered the temple with Peter and John. In v.11, the restored man clung to Peter and John, probably with each of his hands. He recognized Peter and John's companionship, realizing that even though it was Peter who had spoken to him, John also was very much involved in the whole process. What about us? Do we have spiritual companions? Do we pray together? Do we read the Bible together? Do we contact people together, with the goal to bring them to know the Lord? This is not just social companionship, though that is necessary. Any companionship that does not eventually result in a further knowing of the Lord, a further pursuing of the Lord, and contacting people to preach the gospel to them, is not spiritual companionship. Peter and John both contacted the lame man. Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up (v.7). This indicates personal contact. Such a companionship eventually led to someone believing in Jesus, praising God joyfully, and entering into the church life. Can we identify our spiritual companion? Do we pray together? Do we contact people together? Do we praise the Lord together in the church gatherings, that is, one after another? This is not obligatory, but it is a sign that we know each other's heart and spirit, and that we function together. Do we visit someone together, to give them the Christ that we have and experience. Because Peter and John were together, they were strengthened and supplied to give them Christ, and eventually become instrumental in the man's salvation.
- 2. Who are we? (Acts 3:2-11).** We are actually the beggar or lame man, though we may not like to admit it. In following the Lord, we are relatively lame. We like to sit at the "gate" of the church life, rather than enter in. For example, the Lord may ask us to give a financial offering. We may have many excuses (I am not yet working, I will wait till I get a better job, I will wait till I get a raise, or I will serve diligently in a certain area in the church life that does not require financial offering!). Where are we? At the gate of the temple. Actually, it is marvelous to be at the gate of the church life, rather than far away. Many may not even be at the gate. For example, how many attend the Thursday night skype prayer and fellowship, even for one minute? This kind of participation may be compared to being carried to the door of the church life! Actually, to pray for one minute, and then disconnect, is marvelous. At least we are willing to be carried to the gate, listening to the brothers and sisters praying! Can we at the very least be willing to be carried, even though we are lame? However, once we are at the gate, what is our attitude? Do we want to grow? If so, we need to listen to the servants of God, or the older brothers and sisters. The lame man listened to Peter and responded to him by looking at him and John (v.4-5). He understood and submitted to their words. How? It is crucial to look at the Greek word for "see" in v.3, which is *eido*, indicating an inward or subjective seeing. The same Greek word is repeated in v.9, in relation to the people who saw the lame man walking and praising God. The lame man saw Peter and John, but not necessarily with his physical eyes, but with his inner eyes. He really saw. What did he see? He saw the divine life in them, and he heard the divine life in their words. He saw their living and their words which expressed their living. Then he responded. He gave his hand to them to be lifted up. Do we give our hand to the servants of God, to receive their words of life? Eventually, after he was healed, he clung to them

(v.11). Do we cling to the servants of God? Do we grab every opportunity to listen to them and respond to the Christ speaking in them? Many people see the brothers and sisters, or the serving ones, but they do not join the corporate prayers (for example). They see us physically, and they may hear all our words physically, but there is not much effect, for different reasons. Perhaps our service is weak (we also are lame). We may not have spiritual companions. But there also has to be an inner seeing. Then we and others may be brought through the door into the church life.

3.Are we able to bring people from the gate or door into the church life? (Acts 3:2,10; John 10:9). Many people are sitting at the gate or door of the church life, begging, waiting for something real to satisfy them. They are attracted, but cannot go further. Are we able to bring them in? Our data show that we are failing in this respect. Again, how many attend the Thursday night skype fellowship and prayer? An average of eight, but even less the last few weeks. Yet there are over 30 who attend the English/French speaking second meeting, the majority reading the verses for that week for the first time! We may help people to move (very necessary), or bring them to the hospital (very necessary and commendable), or we may help them to learn French (so crucial). Some groups even feed and help the homeless (a marvelous service and not easy to do). We praise the Lord for all such services, and actually, we may even be, and are, short of many of these services. Yet, if we stop there, we may have brought them to the gate, even a “Beautiful” gate, but not further. In all our services, can we bring people to pray corporately, to touch the Lord’s heart and burden with the saints, to pray for the Lord’s need and the church’s need? In all our services, can we bring people to preach the gospel? Can we bring people to read the Bible verses during the week, and to pursue the Lord in the Bible? What about attending the conferences and trainings where the servants of the Lord speak the word of God? In all of our services, our person must be centered on Christ, to bring people to Christ. Peter and John did not give the lame man silver or gold (money), though we praise the Lord for many believers who help others monetarily. Peter and John discerned the man’s real need, which was the name of Jesus, and they had the adequate words of life to minister such a burden to the man. Actually, they brought the man, who was sitting at the Beautiful gate every day of his life, and receiving monetary supply, to the most Beautiful One, Jesus Christ. We may bring people to “beautiful” outward things that help them humanly (very necessary), but do we stop there? Do we preach the gospel to bring people to the Beautiful One, not just to the Beautiful Gate outwardly. If we preach the gospel, we can supply Christ. He is the door for many to enter. He is indeed the gate or door of life (John 10:9). May we exercise to have spiritual companions, to pray together, to grow together, and to cultivate the words of life that we may minister to others. Then, maybe, through the Lord’s mercy, others may be brought gradually to Christ Himself.

4.Do we raise up pillars to become a team and eventually a testimony to the world? (Acts 3:9-11). Peter and John loved the Lord, and they were close spiritual companions. They are definitely a pattern to follow in loving and serving the Lord. They prayed together and they preached the gospel together, and the Lord used them to save the lame beggar. Yet it is striking to observe that in v.9, the people did not see Peter or John, but they saw the lame man walking and praising God. In v.10, they recognized him to be the man who had sat at the Beautiful gate begging for alms, and were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. They were amazed at his testimony, not Peter and John’s. It almost seems as if Peter and John were out of the picture! Eventually, in v.11, the people ran to them, that is to Peter, John and the healed beggar! At this moment, Peter and John again seem to reappear on the scene, since the healed man was clinging to them, and we are presented with a complete team. What an impressive picture we see here of a team of three brothers who become a testimony to many people (later, in 4:4, we find out about 5000). This is an example for us. Perhaps we love the Lord and serve the Lord by preaching the gospel. Do we raise up others to preach the gospel? Yes, we may actively preach the gospel every Sunday afternoon. Are others being raised up to preach the gospel? We must preach the gospel diligently. Yet the impact of our gospel preaching is not in our diligence, but rather in the testimony of the ones who believe and are saved. Are we in a team (not just older brothers and sisters preaching the gospel, but newer ones who are being raised up to love the Lord)? This testimony may attract people. Eventually, about 5000 people were attracted and ran to Peter, John and the healed beggar in Solomon’s portico, or outer court. This was the outer court of the temple, indicating that many believers may be attracted by such a testimony. Therefore, may we exercise to not only love the Lord ourselves, but to also raise up pillars to become a team that can become a testimony of Christ to the world. Such a testimony (the pillars and we) may then be able to attract others who are in the outer court to come into the temple or the church life to love and follow Christ.