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SUCH AS I HAVE, GIVE I UNTO YOU.

– ACTS 3:1-10 – JAN. 26. –

**"The Lord is my strength and my song; he is become my salvation."
– Exod. 15:2.**

PROBABLY it was not long after the day of Pentecost that the events of this lesson transpired. Our last lesson notes the fact that the believers, filled with their new joy, went frequently to the Temple for prayer and thanksgiving. This lesson shows us Peter and John attending the Temple service at the hour of prayer, three o'clock in the afternoon. These two had been with the Lord and with each other for now several years. Both had been disciples of John the Baptist, and previously they two had been together in the fishing business. They were also specially favored amongst the twelve, being with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the inner circle in the Garden of Gethsemane, etc. Although Peter was probably the eldest of the disciples, and John probably the youngest, and although their dispositions were quite different in many respects, apparently there was a strong element of harmony between them – they both loved the Lord very intensely, and they were both of ardent temperament. It was natural, therefore, that these two should be considerably in each other's company because of special compatibility. While it is well for the stronger brethren to pray with and company with the weaker sometimes, for the assistance of the latter, it is well also that kindred spirits should come together in communion with each other and with the Lord, as in this case.

As the apostles evidently went frequently to the Temple, and probably often by the same route, through the "Beautiful Gate," it is more than likely that the lame beggar, who had long been accustomed to that locality, in seeking alms, had seen them almost daily. Indeed, it would not be surprising if a knowledge of the Pentecostal wonders [R2933 : page 9] which had converted several thousand, and been "noised abroad," had reached the poor beggar, as well as many

others of the religious class, who assembled almost daily at the Temple. Quite evidently therefore, the beggar knew Peter and John in advance of his healing. If so, it would to some extent account for his readiness of faith, by which, accepting the Apostle's word and hand, he was healed.

Why the Apostle Peter on this particular occasion was led to bestow a blessing upon this man we may never know, for it is probable that in that time, when there were no hospitals for the lame and blind, etc., the Apostles frequently passed by others as badly crippled and distressed as this one, without proffering aid. It would seem, however, that the man was an "Israelite indeed" – from the way in which he received the Lord's blessing. Otherwise, instead of having a heart overflowing with gratitude and thankfulness, he before would have been in an attitude of discontent, repining at his lot and complaining of divine providence; and in such a frame of mind his attitude after his healing would have been one of complacent satisfaction rather than of gratitude. He would have felt that he had received no more than his due. The connections, therefore, seem to indicate that the Lord's providence directed the apostles to him specially, on this account. And so it is with those of the Lord's people today who are in a right attitude of heart. They will, whatever their condition, find much to be thankful for, and can trace the Lord's providence and grace in life's affairs, notwithstanding its trials and difficulties. Such people are the objects of God's care, and have the assurance that all things are working together for their good. The Lord's providence may not always bring them physical health and strength, but it will surely bring to such the highest blessings which it brought to the poor cripple of this lesson – a knowledge of the Lord and a share of his *spiritual* favors.

At that time, when there was no provision for the indigent and helpless, alms-begging and almsgiving were entirely proper. It is creditable to the civilization of our day and land, however, that the helpless are provided for at public expense – all property paying a poor tax or alms tax. It strikes us as being as much wrong to encourage

public begging now, as it was right to respond to it at the time mentioned. If the friends of the indigent cannot amply provide for them the public can, and should, and generally does; and it would be a false pride which would ignore these ample provisions and not blush to seek others.

The Apostle said, "Silver and gold have I none." We can scarcely suppose that he intended this statement to be taken literally, for in the preceding verses we have the record that considerable property was sold, and the proceeds laid at the Apostles' feet – put at their disposal. But this evidently the apostles considered as belonging to the Lord and not to themselves – as trust funds. We assume, therefore, that the Apostle meant, Silver and gold we have none to give you, but we have something better to give you, something which God intended we should dispense. And undoubtedly what the Apostles gave was more valuable than money to the poor cripple.

So it is today; we are unable to respond as liberally as we would like to the requests which sometimes come to us for financial aid. The means which the Lord has put into our hands we understand him to intend us to transform in the main into spiritual food and clothing and strength and help, for the sin-sick and lame and for the error-blinded; and accordingly we are sometimes compelled to say, silver and gold we have little to give; but of the spiritual blessings we are willing to give liberally – without money and without price.

Our Lord's words were, "The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always." In seeking to be helpful to brethren in the Church and to the unfortunate in the world it is well that all should cultivate a largeness of heart; and yet it is well also to remember that in the cases of many of the Lord's children adversity has evidently been of the Lord's intention, to bring to them blessings which they would not be prepared to receive in any other manner. We are to endeavor to be helpful to each other, while seeking not to conflict with the operations of divine providence, and the learning of important lessons by those

whose welfare we seek. We should never forget the Apostle's inspired words. – 2 Thes. 3:10.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Undoubtedly every child of God has realized the truthfulness of this; God is ever a bountiful giver, and his people, in proportion as they cultivate this quality, generosity, are therefore cultivating a grand, God-like quality. "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again [no reward]; and ye shall be children of the Highest." (Luke 6:35.) If we cannot always give much money, or if we cannot give as much as we would like to give, to those who are in need, we may always, like Peter, give something. We cannot, like him give health and strength miraculously, since we are not endued with those apostolic powers; but we can give a word of encouragement, a kindly look, a helping hand over difficulties; and these will often be more valuable than money, and sometimes more appreciated. Even an "enemy" should be fed, if hungry; but neither friend nor foe should be encouraged in indolence, nor in wastefulness.

We notice how distinctly Peter acknowledged the source of his power, and how he was not ashamed of any feature of divine truth. He boldly declared his miracle to be in the name of "Jesus of Nazareth." He did not say, in the name of Jesus, the greatest of all Jews, the highly esteemed friend of Joseph of Arimathaea, and of Nicodemus, one of your influential rulers; but, ignoring all such human weaknesses, he plainly declared that it was Jesus the Nazarene, the despised one, whose power had healed. We find some of the Lord's people today far less courageous than Peter; inclined rather to feel ashamed of the truth and ashamed of the agencies God has used in its dissemination; – for fear that these would be a reflection against it. We should rather follow the Apostle's course, and be very courageous and **[R2933 : page 10]** ready to publicly affirm whatever we find possessing *divine sanction*. Whatever agencies God may make use of in connection with his service we may be sure that he has some purpose, some object in view, and that his purposes will best be accomplished by plain, candid, truthful statements, like Peter's.

The description of standing, leaping and walking, may well represent the first efforts of one who had been born lame, and who consequently had never learned how to walk. However, the strength was in his limbs, and abundantly testified to the miracle wrought. The poor man was not ashamed of the agents whom God had used in his restoration. He shouted praise to God, and held on to his two benefactors, advertising them to the people, and thus advertising also the Gospel message, which they had to give, which undoubtedly was the very purpose the Lord intended. Here, too, is a lesson for us, not to be ashamed of those whom the Lord may use in connection with our spiritual healing – much more valuable, much more to be appreciated and acknowledged before God and men, than any temporal blessing. Indeed, the natural sight, natural hearing, natural walking, and natural enjoyment of every kind, are insignificant in comparison with the spiritual enlightenment and hearing and strength to walk in a spiritual way, as the spiritual joys are higher than the natural.

Peter was not self-seeking; he was alert to use every opportunity, every opening, that might come to himself, to the glory of the Lord and of his cause. And so when the multitude gathered together he used the miracle of healing as his text – as a demonstration of the power of the risen Jesus, operating through him; and he straightway declared to the people that this was the same Jesus whom their rulers had crucified some two months previously. He distinctly disowned that either he or John had any power of themselves to perform such a miracle; he did not say, either, that the healing was by a natural law operated by the man's faith; nor **[R2934 : page 10]** did he say that the healing was by "Science"; nor did he deny the facts, and claim that the man's impotence was merely a wrong thought, the correction of which had given relief. He told the truth, – that the man had been ill but was now made sound by the power of Jesus. Nor did he spare his hearers, but pressed home the truth of the responsibility of their nation for the crucifixion of one who not only was innocent and just, but who was the sent of God, the Messiah, the Prince of Life.

Here is another lesson for us. When we obtain the attention of men it is not to be frittered away, either in the discussion of unprofitable topics or in personal boastfulness; but is to be turned directly to the Lord's glory, to the preaching of the good tidings of redemption through the precious blood, that it may be known that all blessing of every kind comes through the merit of that sacrifice, and from our risen glorified Lord.

Our Golden Text surely represents the heart-sentiments of every member of the household of faith. The Lord is our strength; we lean not upon human might, – neither of our own or of other men. We hold the Head, from whom not only come the laws which govern us, but from whom come the strength, the direction, the protection, the care, which we need and which we enjoy. The Lord is become our salvation; he has saved us from the condemnation of sin through faith in the blood; he has rescued us from the love of sin. He has not only revived us, but strengthened us, and enabled us to walk in the narrow way, and to do so with joy and gladness and leaping. He is our salvation already – the salvation that is to be brought unto us, and thus to be complete in us, in the first resurrection, is already begun – for we are already passed from death unto life, and have the witness of this in the holy spirit.

