

Acts 3: 1-11

“Up and Running”

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June 17, 2006

I was away for three weeks. I don't sleep well when I am away from home and home for me you know, I was away from Karen, and I missed her. I missed the children, I wanted to be with my family, and I wanted to come home and be in a facility that wasn't just a bedroom. You know in a motel room, it gets old, and then in a dorm room it gets old. It's kind of nice to have a hallway and a living room, and different places in the home, and I was just so looking forward to coming home. And because I don't sleep well away from home, one of the longs of my heart was to get home, get in my own bed, get with my own pillow, to get in my own bedroom, to get next to my loving wife and fall asleep. Sleep deep and sleep good, oh men, I was looking forward to that.

So driving back Thursday night, I was thinking, oh men, I can't wait to get home, and go to sleep, and get that rest I've been missing, I was so looking forward to it. And unfortunately, Thursday night, I was so excited to be home, I could hardly sleep. So then Friday, I am dead tired. Last night, Karen and I laid down at 10h, it's the day of rest, I need rest, I have to preach three times tomorrow, and have meetings tonight you know, and oh men, here comes the rest, I know I am going to get the sleep that I need. Well, there is a factor I haven't considered. On Wednesday my son, Jeremy dropped of his brand new dog. He and his wife Lora were going to go on a canoe trip in Southern Missouri, something her family has done for 30 + years. And, Jeremy purchased an 8 week old, beautiful black lab that he named Daisy. Now, he's had Daisy for couple of weeks, and we become acquainted with her, but Daisy is kind of at an awkward age.

When our daughter drops of the Chihuahua, you just put them in your pocket and go on with life. You know, there is not much to do with them. But Daisy is too big to stay in the kitchen. She can jump over the gate that we have. You know the Chihuahuas would just look like this, but Daisy jumps over it, couldn't have her there. So, out on the deck, that's where she goes with a taller gate. Now our deck is very high, off the back of our house. And last nigh, about 10 o'clock, just as we laid down, just as sleep was coming on me, and could feel my self going to places I wanted to go, there was some unusual noise on the back of the house. And I decided, I don't even care, I am going to sleep. And there is a scratching at the front door, and I thought, oh no, who is going to scratch at my door at 10 o'clock on Friday night? And then, Karen said, you better go and check. Oh men, you know when you wife says you better do something; you might as well do it.

So I thought well, there is no way the dog would be there cause it's gated up in the deck. The only way the dog could get there would be to jump over the gate which would mean she'd have to hit the stairs going down, cause its right there and I don's see how the dog could live. The other way would be she would just have to fall off the deck and live. So I'm sure it's not the dog. I have no idea what person is there scratching on my door. So I opened the door, and here walks the dog, just as happy as can be. And I picked her up and walked out, and I checked the gate, and that gate was still locked. The dog either jumped over and rolled down the steps or fell off. Well, fortunately it was still alive, temporarily. So I know I can't keep her on the deck again, it would do this again, and we would be playing this game all night. Can't keep it inside it would jump over, it's not getting in bed

with us! What are you going to do? So first thing we do, we lock her in our bathroom. And you know, I am sure she's about chewed through the door, knocked everything off the sink and staff, and oh that's not going to work. So I am in my pajamas, I am dead tired, it's just about as dark as dark can be. I take this dog outside. Our garage got hit by lightning some time ago, and there is no electricity in our garage, so its pitch black, and our garage is used for storage okay? You know, no car has ever been in our garage. And I opened that thing, and I'm looking around trying to find something, and I've got the dog here, because if I let her down, I will never find her. So I find this nylon strap that you used to tie things down like if you got stuff on a trailer. Ss okay, I'm going to tie the dog, and so I go underneath the deck, we have a concrete patio area. I tie the dog to the center post, I dreg the dog food down, I gave her some water, and get everything all set up, she is happy, I know she is happy and she wants to sleep just as much as I do, so I get back into bed, and by this time its about 11 o'clock. And she's decided she is not happy, and she begins to whine, and hollow and carry on, and I'm thinking, well surely this too will pass.

And you know, my wife, she literally slept through the hurricane when we were down in Alabama. She just eases off to sleep, and I am just lying there, listening to this dog. 12 o'clock dog is still carrying on. Well it's going to stop some time? And I kept thinking, oh this is like contractions in reverse, cause there is just a little longer pause between yelps you know, and so pretty soon she's just going to go off to sleep. One o'clock, still barking, I am just laying there. Two o'clock, still barking. About three o'clock I am going through Ten Commandments, and I am debating with God about the one about killing. And finally at 3:30 the dog falls asleep, just warn out.

Home! You know you go home, you have expectations, you finally arrive, all I wanted was a decent night sleep, and then the grand dog was there. Things are not always what you expect them to be just because you get home. I'd like to study that with you today. Please turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 3; Acts chapter 3 as we continue our series in the book of Acts. There is a pretty neat story that is found in Acts 3 verses 1-11. Now as we read through it, I'd like you to pay a careful attention to the words that Luke uses. Let's see if he repeats any words. Let's see if there are any phrases that might be of interest to us. Let's identify who the people are there. Let's contemplate what they experience in the story, and that will help us to understand how to read the Word of God.

Here we have Acts 3 verse 1."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. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat

begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's greatly amazed." The people were amazed by what happened. The experience of the man was pretty amazing.

Let's kind of go through the story a little bit. Peter and John go up to pray at the ninth hour. That's three o'clock in the afternoon. Where are they going to pray? I am not hearing anything... Temple, thank you very much. They went to the temple to pray. Well, what does that teach us? It teaches us that after Jesus rose from the dead, and his disciples received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and they go out in His name, and work in His name, that the church that was there was not expecting some brand new thing. There were still associating with the old things. Now, granted they did not believe that the sacrifices meant anything anymore, but yet for thousands of years, or I should say for about 1500 years, God had met with his people either in the wilderness tabernacle or when Solomon came along, in the temple. And so they are going to the temple. That's were they wanted to go to pray and be with God.

Now many of us have had the impression that Acts chapter 2 is the birth of the church. Acts chapter 2 is not the birth of the church, the birth of the church pre dates it by a long time, going all the way back to Abraham; when God said to Abraham, "through you all the people of the world are going to be blessed." Abraham is the beginning of the covenant promises; Abraham is the beginning of the church. And the disciples or the apostles saw that the Holy Spirit, Jesus and all that has taken place, is just the fulfillment because Jesus is the seed of Abraham, right? And so they just see it as continuing. And this should give us great courage brothers and sisters because I believe everybody who is a member of the denomination that we are involved with believes that we need a revival. We need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God, we need a new thing. But in an attempt to have a new thing, we don't need to undo the old thing; we just need to let God carry us on into what He wants the old thing to really be. Do you understand that? Okay.

So, they are carrying on that. It says that the man, who was lame, was lame from his mother's womb. He was born with this affliction. If you turn to Acts 4 verse 22, you'll read this. It's continuing the story, it says: "For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed." So we discover that this man was over forty years old. Daily he is carried to this place. He is dependant upon others. They have to take care of him. Daily he is carried there, and daily he calls out for alms. He is a beggar. He is a very familiar sight; his voice is a very familiar sound to the people who live there. In fact, probably so familiar, they no longer see him, they probably even no longer hear him. He is just a part of their lives. He is outside the temple, he is begging there, and this man has no idea about what is going to take place. The healing is described in verses 4-7. Peter says in verse 4: "look at us." And so he is excited thinking he is going to receive something, and Peter says in verse 6: "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." Now notice this in verse 7. "So Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." So there is a description

of the healing. Peter reaches down, grabs the man, and picks him up. And as the man is being picked up, God works the miracle. Verse 8 it says about the man. “So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them – walking, leaping and praising God.” We might say he was up and he was running. He was good to go. God had worked a miracle in his life, and then the verses 10 and 11, the people are amazed.

Well, let’s look at this on several levels. Peter and John! Peter and John have probably seen the man, they probably noticed him before, but never really seen him and never really noticed him. But now that they are filled with the Spirit of God, they see with new eyes. They see humanity differently. They see the suffering of people differently, and they recognize that service to God is actually service to people. When you serve people, when you help people, you are serving God, and you are giving honor and glory to the Lord. So they have that in mind. They offer Him Christ, and miracles associated with Christ. We don’t have anything! We don’t have any silver, we don’t have any gold, we don’t have any building, in fact, we are here at the temple to worship here were everybody else is. But, in the name of Jesus rise up and walk.

What an experience it must have been for them. What about the lame man? Very few of us could actually enter in the type of pain that this man experiences. But there are some of us who can. This man obviously was happy when the miracle took place. Are you with me? I mean he is ecstatic. In fact, he was too happy to be at our church probably. But he is jumping and carrying on, he is thrilled. And it’s fascinating it describes him in verse 11 as holding on to Peter and John. He’s just holding on to Peter and John. This man who’d been dependant on others is now holding on to new people who represent Jesus Christ. What a powerful idea! You know you let go of the things that are going to be destroyed, and you hold on to that which is going to take you to eternity. That’s a powerful thought. That would be a good sermon. Some day, I hope I’ll preach it.

He went into the temple with them. Probably the very first time he’d been into the temple. Can you just begin to imagine what that meant to him? The temple was everything to people back then, in that culture. This guy was an outsider, he wasn’t in, but now he is in. And he, like the others is amazed. Just a casual reading, just a gentle perusal of this story, and immediately our minds begin to jump to the work of the church. Spirit filled people, on their way to worship God at church. That’s what we do. We come here because we want to worship God. And, we see people that have afflictions, we see people that have needs, we want to minister to them, we want to help them, and so we do that. And eventually, because the relationship comes to the point, they come to church with us. We see the church growing, we see the church moving forward, and that’s exactly how it happened back in those days. And you know what? Anyone of those perspectives would make this a good day for us. We could go home right now and say, well you know, it was okay, and I learned some things! But I want to go on deeper with you today. I want to stretch your minds and place this story in a back drop that we will use from now on as we study the book of Acts.

See, there are two questions that I would like to see if we can answer in this story. The first one is this: why is this story recorded in the Bible? And there is a reason! Why this

one? And it says in Acts 2, verse 43 when it's describing the church it says: "Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." Many wonders and signs were done, why is this one given so much coverage? What is so significant about it? Why does Luke include this in his account? I just finished a class studying about the literary structure of the Bible. And I'll just confess to you, I've never given the authors of the Bible as much credit as they deserve. I figured that, yes, they were inspired by God, and they wrote what they saw, and it just kind of worked out. So that, when you study things, you see irony here, and you see that, and that was just kind of a miracle of transition from God. But, no! These were people who wrote in their own personalities, they wrote in their own way, they had a purpose, they had an order, they had emphasis and they placed things in the context of their personality, and how they did that. And Luke does that too. In fact, Luke should be Luke Acts. That's what the scholars say. Luke the Gospel should be volume one, Luke, the book of Acts volume two of the same story. Luke one begins with, O Theophilus, and Acts one begins with O Theophilus. Same author, same story, it's just continuing. And Luke had a purpose in writing this story the way that he did.

Now I want to show you something quickly in the book of Luke. Please turn there; Luke chapter one. Unfortunately, I do not have time to explain each of these references. But you are going to catch a trend here. You will see a pattern, and if you see that pattern, that would be good enough right now. You can double back later, and chew on the individual text; Luke 1 verse 15. Here are the comments of the angel of the Lord to Zacharias. "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." That's speaking of John the Baptist. Now go to verse 35, same chapter. The angel is speaking to Mary: "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'" Now look at verse 41, same chapter: "And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Verse 67, same chapter, this is after John the Baptist was born. It says: "Now his father, Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied." All right!

Let's go on to chapter two. Chapter 2, verse 25, Jesus is taken to be dedicated to the Lord. "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Verse 26, "and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit..." verse 27, "so he came by the Spirit into the temple." Now, are you beginning to see a pattern? Look at chapter 3, verse 16. John is speaking of Jesus. "John answered, saying to all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worth to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Verse 22, same chapter: "and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Jesus," that's at his baptism.

Go to chapter 4 verse one: "Then Jesus, being filled by the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness," verse 14, same chapter: "Then

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.” Now we come to verse 16, chapter 4. Here you have the whole foundation of what Jesus is all about. Verses 16-19 are the theme of Luke and Acts. The back drop we’ll see in a moment, but here is the theme. Verse 16,” Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And he was handed the book of Isaiah. And when He had opened the book,” notice this, “He found the place where it was written:” What does that mean? He hounded around, there was a particular passage he wanted to read. Here is the passage: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Jesus in declaring His ministry quotes the Scriptures that identify Him and the Holy Spirit together. Luke, more than any other Gospel writer will mention the work of the Holy Spirit, especially at the beginning of his Gospel. Now there are two other verses I want you to look at, and then we are going to bring this into some meaning for you, all right? Turn to Romans chapter 5, but I want you to keep you hand here in Luke 4 because I am going to jump right back here in just a second. Turn to Romans chapter 5; we are going to read two verses. By the way, who was the apostle Paul’s traveling companion? Anybody knows? Silos was for a while, Barnabas was for a while, but who was the most? Luke, that’s right. The “we” passages in the book of Acts, are Luke and Paul. We went here, we went there, they are good friends. They chewed on theology together, and here you have Romans chapter 5, we are going to use some phrases from Paul, to help define Luke. 5:17, “For if by one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” One man’s offense, death reigned, another man’s obedience, life reigns.

We come down to verse 21. “So as the sin reigned in death,” literally means in Greek, reigned as a king, sin reigned as a king in death, “even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Kingdoms, reigns, a reign of death, reign of life, a kingdom of life, a kingdom of death, and you know the story. It was paradise at one time. Paradise that God created and then sin came. And with sin came the kingdom of death. There was poverty, social inequality, hunger, sickness, violence and death. But, in the kingdom of life, there is abundance, community, fairness, health, peace, and life. Jesus’ entrance into the world, by the Holy Spirit, is the beginning of the invasion to bring about the kingdom of life. That’s what Luke is talking about. I want you to picture this if you will. Picture a triangle. Comes down like this, and here you have the kingdom of death, and all those loses that are suffered. Then, picture a triangle going to opposite direction; we’ll call the kingdom of life that calumniates in a brand new heaven, and in a brand new earth, right? Now, for three decades, those two triangles intercept in a life of Jesus. Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit has come to take over. He has come to create the kingdom of life.

Now, go back to Luke 4. This is fascinating to me. Luke 4 verse one. "Then Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit" where? Into the desert, into the wilderness, being tempted for 40 days, Jesus led by the Spirit of God, goes into the wilderness, for over 40 days; He depletes His physical condition, so that as a human being He can be lower than any temptation we will ever have, and from that point He will have victory. But notice this: Jesus led by the Spirit of God! Do you know what is happening? God is taking the battle to Satan. God is rolling up His sleeves, He is saying, "Let's get it on." And Jesus established the kingdom of life.

Jesus went to the Calvary sinless. Jesus rose from the dead, evidence that the kingdom of life is here. We are now because of Jesus able to live in the kingdom of life. Now, let's deal with the first question. Why was this man, healed? Why this man? Well, go to Acts chapter 2 please. Notice Luke's response to what happens when the Holy Spirit is poured out and the God's people are up and running. Acts 2 verse 42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now, all who believe were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among them all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

Luke says this: the kingdom of death was poverty, but the kingdom of life; they had all things together and sold what they could to provide for each other. In the kingdom of death there was social inequality, in the kingdom of life, they were together. In the kingdom of death, there was hunger. In the kingdom of life, they ate their food with gladness. In the kingdom of death there was violence. In the kingdom of life, they had favor with all the people. In the kingdom of death there was sickness and there was death, but there was no sickness nor death mentioned in Acts 2: 42-47. Later we are going to read some fascinating stories about people in the book of Acts being raised to life from the dead. But Acts 3 is Luke filling out the picture of the kingdom of life, and healing is brought to a man who is born lame. And then we understand why this story is in there. Now, the reign of life is up and running. Why this man? He was a perfect example for Luke to show us what the kingdom of life is like.

But now a harder question, why not all being healed? We are still in the battle. We are not home yet. And what this story, and what the Spirit of God teaches us through His word, and through experiencing Jesus is that: I might not overcome poverty, I might not overcome illness, I might not overcome hunger, I might be taken violently, but with Christ in my heart I know it is temporary because there is going to be a new Heaven, and a new Earth. There will never be any tears there, there will never be any sorrow, there is never going to be any hunger, there is never going to be any violence, there will never be any death any more. That's the hope we live with in the kingdom that we are now dwelling in, the kingdom of life. There are some who are called upon by God to suffer. And yet their lives cry out a greater victory to us, who are not suffering like they are. And in the kingdom of life, even though we are at home with Jesus, there are still dogs that

bark. Do you get the grip? Do you understand? Have expectations, have hopes. I hope to get sleep some day, that dog or me, one of us, you know we are going to get some sleep. I have that hope. And for those of you who are suffering. Those of you who have sorrow, those of you who have pain, know this: God has taken the battle to the Enemy, and He has won! And in Him, we not only have what He offers us to know which is the ability to get through this hard times, but we have the hope for that Earth made in Heaven. You might say, "He's got us up and running." Some day we'll be home soon.

Now this battle that is taking place is happening all around us in a sense. And it's true; you may be able to come along side me and help me on my journey, and I may be able to come along side you and help you on your journey. But the reality is that the battle is actually in our hearts. And it's an individual struggle that we have in the kingdom of death, and the kingdom of life. But if we will, Jesus will come into our hearts, and He will run off the darkness of the kingdom of death. And you know what is like to be in the kingdom of death. You know what is like to have that Ruler ruling you. The habits, the hatred, the dishonesty, the pain, the miserable life, hating our selves and what we do, being destructive, all this stuff, the sin which so easily deceits us, and grabs us and ruins us; it's all there and you know that. And right now you are the only one who really knows that that's the reigning power in your heart. There is a kingdom of life, and that kingdom of life brings to us hope, brings to us joy that we never had before, brings to us a sense of peace; gives wisdom to us when we need it, strength, courage to get through the difficult times. And gives us the reality that we are accepted by God and our sins are forgiven.

So, even though we dealt with two hard questions today, why was that man's story there, why aren't all the people healed? I have a harder question! What is going on in your heart? Which kingdom is reigning? That's the most important question, you can ever answer. And today, if you would like to say to the Lord: "I want the kingdom of life," I am going to ask you to stand right where you are at.

Father in Heaven, we are standing before You, asking that You would bring the battle to our hearts and reign victories there. We pray You'll roll up your sleeves, duke it out the kingdom of darkness that's in our hearts, the kingdom of death, and You would reign supreme within us, and that life would now be our new joy, and we would serve You with gladness. We will go walking and leaping and praising You, we thank You in Jesus' name, Amen.