

WHAT I DO HAVE, I GIVE TO YOU**Acts 3**

Intro: My mother made the best shoofly pie. She made it more in Philadelphia Pennsylvania Dutch style of my home area which was far superior to the Lancaster County Pennsylvania Dutch style even though that version still very, very delicious.

A number of years ago, I got a hankering to make some shoofly pie because my sister had mentioned in an email me that she had made it and how delicious it was. I knew that she had our mom's recipe so I asked her for it. She promptly typed it into an email reply and I quickly and hungrily got to work. I made a beautiful pie, though it seemed awfully full as I poured it into the pie crust. You see, the main ingredients of the filling are boiling water, dark molasses, and baking soda topped with crumbs made from copious amounts of butter, sugar and a little flour. But I figured it was okay as I placed it in the oven and it commenced to bake. Soon I smelled something burning and realized the boiling filling was pouring over the sides of the pie plate and into the bottom of the oven. About that time my sister called me and said, "Oh, by the way, that recipe is for two pies." Now you tell me! It was too late to take care of the mess in my oven, and the pie turned out to be more disastrous than delicious. One pie crust will not accommodate the filling intended for two pie crusts. You will only have a mess.

Our world looks like such a mess. Everywhere we turn things could certainly seem to be disheartening at the very least, and chaotic at the very worst. Many people are feeling overwhelmed and the question is, what can the Church offer to an overwhelmed culture? The answer is we can offer Jesus. And it's definitely not too late to take care of the overwhelming sense of doom many people feel.

In this short three week series entitled *Overcoming in an Overwhelming Culture*, I will be looking at Acts 3-5. I'm not going to look at every verse in those chapters, but I will cover enough to see how the newest Christ Followers in the brand new church overcame despair and pain in a culture that was overwhelmed with it.

Today, I'll read most of Acts 3 in sections and comment on it as we go along.

(Read Acts 3:1-9)

The lame man who was a fixture at the beautiful gate of the Temple had been crippled from birth. The only life he had ever known was helplessness. If anyone felt overwhelmed it was him. Jesus was the answer. Jesus was the answer then, and Jesus is the answer now. As we look at being overcomers in an overwhelming world, let's begin by looking at how the Church ministered.

First of all . . .

They prayed!

- We must not overlook this. It's really only mentioned in verse 1 where it says *Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour*. I don't know how significant it is, but the ninth hour, or 3 PM is the same time of day, precisely, that Jesus died. Jesus died at 3 PM for the sins of humanity, and two of his disciples, newly minted leaders of his movement were there to pray.
- Prayer must bath everything first. The apostles did it, and so must we. Overcomers pray. Remember that.
- Overcomers are also . . .

Unified

- F. B. Meyer points out that Peter and John were different in age and point of view. John was probably the youngest of the disciples, perhaps only in his teens when he travelled with Jesus and the other 11 disciples. Peter was older and more experienced, and certainly less naïve and innocent. They had maybe even been rivals of a sort for Jesus' attention – Peter who tried to answer Jesus's questions first and John tried to be the favorite kid brother. But whatever happened then they were now united in their mission to spread the Good News of a risen Messiah. That same Jesus was the one who united them.
- Overcomers are united. And they proved very quickly to this helpless man . . .

Silver or gold is nothing compared to healing

- And the healing that happened here is not just feet, bones, ankles and legs working in proper order for the first time in the 40+ years this man had lived, but healing for a lost and overwhelmed soul.
- *I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you.* (v. 6a). And what I have to give you is, Jesus! Yes! *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!* (v. 6b) That name! There is power in that

name. There is healing in that name. Peter made sure that the lame man and all the people that had observed what happened understood it was not him, but that here is salvation in that name. He was essentially saying, “Why look so intently at us, as though our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

- FB Meyer says, *“Let us so move among men as to lead them to expect that we have something to give, and then give them Jesus.”* We might not be rich in what the world can offer, but we have everything in what heaven can offer – we have Jesus to share – and Jesus is what an overwhelmed world desperately needs.

People were amazed!

- But they shouldn’t have been. But then again, the fact that God still had a plan for a creation that had rejected him could be considered miraculous.
- Let’s read on. (Read vv 11-16)
- Notice that Peter’s teachable moment with the excited onlookers was not condemning or accusatory. In other words he's not blaming it on the Jews or the Gentiles, but on humanity. Jesus died for us and he died because of us. All. Bigoted, racist and anti-Semitic people through history have called the Jews Christ Killers and used it as an excuse to persecute and murder but the truth is as David Guzik points out, *“If you want to know who put Jesus on the Cross, look at me - or look in the mirror.”* Jesus died and rose again for me and you because me and you needed a way out of the clutches death. We put him there and he went willingly in our place.
- Instead of overwhelming chaos, we can have direction and peace. It’s what Peter calls . . .

Times of Refreshing

- First, listen to the remaining verses (Read vv 17-26)
- Times of refreshing are exactly what this exhausted and distracted culture need – and we have the not so secret ingredient – Jesus. And we had better not keep him a secret. We have the good news. There is still time to repent and we need to tell the world. Peter preached it here in verse 19 and we need to as well.
- Guzik writes, *Peter knew that saving faith did not come by seeing or hearing about miracles, rather faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17.* It was wonderful that a man was walking for the first time in his life, but the real miracle was what the apostles were offering. Back in verse Peter looked at the man and said, “Look at us.” When they told him to look at them, he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. The lame man was correct in expecting to receive something from them, but he received much more than the monetary donation he would have been satisfied with. Many have yet to come to the place where they really expect something from God. This is faith plain and simple - even if the man expected less than Jesus wanted to give. Better yet, we should expect the right things. We are often too ready to settle for much less than God wants to give us, and our low expectations often rob us. In other words, physical healing for the lame man was so much less than that salvation of his soul.
- When we get so wrapped up in the things of this world, we are settling for not even second best, but it doesn’t even make the charts. It’s not surprising that this world seems so hopeless, they think money and power and prestige and even political freedom is what we need, but it’s not. All that is empty. The world needs Jesus and that’s enough.
- So let’s repent of aspiring to anything less than Jesus. Guzik write, *“Repentance does not describe being sorry, but describes the act of turning around. And as he used it in chapter 2, here also Peter made “repent” a word of hope. He told them that they had done wrong; but that they could turn it around and become right with God.”* Flee to God! Giving our lives over to God is true freedom.

Conclusion: What we do have, we need to give to an empty culture. We have the promise of being a new creation. That’s how we can be overcomers in an overwhelming age.

More next week. Amen.