

THE UNFINISHED BOOK IN THE BIBLE

Text: Acts 3:6

Preached by Rev. Arthur W. Rich

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Our story comes from the book of the Acts. The Book of Acts is the only book of the Bible, which is unfinished. You and I are writing the 29th chapter. Therefore we might well turn back to this story to help us in writing our chapter.

The excitement on the Day of Pentecost was over. Peter and John were going about their regular religious routine. They were on their way to the temple at the hour of prayer, three o'clock in the afternoon. A lame man, who asked them for money, stopped them. Peter looked at him and said: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." Peter saw someone who was a cripple. He was not so engrossed in his religious routine that he could pass unnoticed a man in misery. We must be conscious, of the spiritual cripples around us. The whole world seems to be going on crutches. Crippled by fear, paralyzed by hate, many are forgotten by Christians.

Peter had something that would not keep. Some things will keep like stones and diamonds. Some things can be preserved and pickled. But the real things in life cannot be kept. Try to keep love and watch it turn to lust. Try to keep money and watch it turn to mammon. Try to keep beauty and you become a mummy. Try to keep a vision and you become a visionary. We Christians have something that will not keep- the Precious gift of life in Christ.

Peter gave something that was not asked. The lame man asked for money. Peter gave him walking, leaping, praising, something far better than what the man requested. Children ask for toys. We give them toys but also, parents give them something far more valuable, they give time. God was giving the best that He had. The beggar asked only for money, but God was giving him a Savior, a man to follow, a Spirit to dwell in his own wretched crippled body and make him walk and leap and praise again!

As we study this story from the long ago, I find a message for the church. The church could say: Such as I have, I give. Here was an infant church. They did not have any seminaries and colleges, there were no church buildings, and they had no hospitals or clinics, no political prestige. Yet the church was about to embark on a ministry that would sweep away pagan gods, would make obsolete the Judaism of the Old Testament, and would make flaming evangelists of fishermen, tradesmen and housewives. To a world they could say: "Such as I have give I thee." What did the early church have?

I. THE CHURCH HAD PEOPLE.

It had a body of believers, the original twelve minus Judas plus Mathias. These were in the 120 who waited for the coming of Spirit. In that group was Mary, the mother of Jesus and the brethren of Jesus. Then there were the 3,000 converts born on the day of Pentecost with spiritual birth. These people were not ashamed to be a part of the church.

I find people who claim to be Christian who do not believe in belonging to a church. They spend their lives in spiritual solitary. Why don't they say, "I don't believe in being a human and resign from the human race?"

Some Christians are going to have to answer one day for the way they failed to unite with the church, failed to accept their responsibilities, failed to help with its program.

The reason why most people like this do not want the church is because they want to do as they please. I heard of missionaries helping build a train station. The natives were amazed at tools etc, but most of all, the wristwatch one Missionary wore fascinated them. They wanted to know what it was. "This is my watch," the missionary said. "It tells me when- to get up, when to go to bed, when to eat, when to work, and when to quit." Said one of the natives: "Why don't you throw that thing away and do as you please." Even if you didn't have a watch, it wouldn't change the things related to time, and we are responsible for what we do with our time".

The early church had people. They were not perfect. The Church is not a museum for display of perfect-saints, but it is a training school for sinners saved by grace.

II. NOT ONLY DID THE CHURCH HAVE PEOPLE, BUT ALSO IT HAD A POWER!

They had the power of the Holy Spirit, released on the day of Pentecost. This power was given for action. Too many times we have thought of the power of God as something for us to meditate upon and to contemplate. God gives power for accomplishment. Peter accomplished something. The disciples went out and accomplished something. They had power, and they used it.

The church has something better than coins and currency. We have the power to transformation, direction; destiny. This power is what makes the church distinctive, not just social service programs, not just advise to statesmen, not legislative programs. The church is the church when it is the channel for the power of God to come into the lives of men and women and give meaning.

III. THE CHURCH HAD A PROCLAMATION.

It had a message; a message of the Messiahship of Jesus. His deity. His supreme Lordship. His crucifixion and his resurrection, the coming of God in the third person of the trinity. The necessity of repentance and a new life. Open confession of faith in Christ with a baptism.

IV. LAST OF ALL THE CHURCH HAD A PURPOSE.

Jesus gave them the purpose. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Individually and collectively, they were to vocalize, publicize and personalize the message of Jesus Christ.

What is our Purpose? Our purpose is to be a Witness. What is a witness? A witness is one who tells what you have seen or experienced. The early church went out and witnessed of what they had experienced in Jesus Christ. The result was the miraculous conquest of paganism. The absence of witnessing is the only thing that stands in the way of our modern conquest for Christ. We have professionalized our witness, placing the responsibility in the hands of a few. We have paid publicists who will promulgate the gospel.

I was told of a man who was very bald, not even fuzz, on his head, but he had a luxuriant beard that reached to his waist. He said he would much rather have the hair on his head, but the problem was that he had over production and poor distribution. I fear that today, we have over produced in the area of Professional Christians, and we have too few Christian Professionals. Each of us as Christians has a purpose given to us by Jesus. It is a great thing to have purpose to live. So few people realize why they are alive. We live not to eat so many cans of spinach, wear out so many yards of cloth, wear out so many sets of tires or live under so many different roofs. We are here to be channels of communication. In the book of Genesis, it records that whenever God created living things he told them to multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:22, 28). Jesus Christ created the Church. Then he told it to reproduce. (Matthew 28:19-20) No Christian has the right to be born again without reproducing the one to take your place.