

## THE LESSON APPLIED

1. We read that Peter and John were on their way up to the temple for the hour of prayer. This shows the *intimate connection between Judaism and Christianity*. Christianity sprang out of the Jewish church, and at first there was no inclination to strike out on an independent path for itself. The New England colonies shared in the national life of Britain at first, and had no notion of a separate career. But the foolish and stubborn policy of Lord North drove the thirteen colonies into a separate nationhood.

Peter and John and the other leaders had an intense affection for the church of their fathers, and desired only to put into the temple worship a new faith and enthusiasm. It did not dawn on them to break away from the Jewish organization in which both they and their Master had been born and nurtured. This relation between Christianity and Judaism was soon to be dissolved through the blindness, traditionalism, and jealousy of the established church. Strange, is it not, that our faith began its career as an outcast religion,—a religion that could not be tolerated, because it introduced new ideas and a new outlook into the venerable institution of Judaism?

2. In the story of the lame man we have the record of *Christianity's first contact with the social problem of the ancient world*. A lame man took up his post at a convenient place where he might beg a few coins from the worshippers. Peter and John were arrested by the outstretched hand and beseeching tone of this helpless man. The apostles did not dole out charity, for they were themselves penniless, but their beneficence took a wider sweep. If the man's mental outlook and physical condition could be changed, he would have a new chance. The aim of the apostles was not temporary relief, but the starting of new impulses, hopes, and activities in the man's life.

Is it too much to deduce this lesson for our guidance to-day, that the church's main task is not the distribution of money and alms, but the infusion of new strength, the impartation of new desires and powers to do the will of God. This will not be done if we neglect the outward conditions of human

beings in society, and preach only what is so wrongly called the "simple gospel." Peter so touched the man's physical and spiritual life at one and the same moment, that the beggar disappeared and a joyful, active man stood in his place. We must do two things at once; seek to win human beings to Christ, and improve their external conditions if these need improvement. It is said that 200,000 children in New York City last winter were underfed, and were unfit for their school work. "Until the housing conditions of our great cities are Christianized," said General Booth, "there is no hope of reaching the people with the gospel." Thus we see that we must hold these two things together in our minds and prayers, the improvement of external conditions, and the inspiration of the soul with new faith and hope in Christ.

3. Let us look more closely at the gift of Christianity. Peter could give the beggar no money but he gave him something better—the power to walk. The primary reference is to the man's physical strength, but may we not lay to heart this important lesson, *that the name of Jesus Christ transforms weak human beings into strong men who "walk" in the light of a new faith that fills their hearts with gladness?* Christ transformed Peter himself. The world is condemned to weakness apart from the gospel of Christ. Many hoped and believed that when the War closed we would all be brothers in our willingness to bear one another's burdens. The lesson of sacrifice, so it was held, would possess us all. But the ghastly reality is that we seem to be plunged into an orgy of selfishness. A manufacturer declares unblushingly that his industry does not exist "for the glory of God," but for the highest profits that can be squeezed out of it. Many who have not the chance still declare openly that they would "graft" if they could. Only the Spirit of Christ can transform this ugly and loathsome spirit permanently.

4. Peter proclaimed the crucified, and now risen Christ, as the lame man's healing, v. 16. Paul afterwards declared to the Corinthians that the one theme of his preaching was Christ and him crucified. Miss S. MacNaughton, writing recently the story of her