

## **A Miracle to Confirm the Word**

Acts 3:1-10

1710

If you have your Bibles, turn to Acts Chapter 3. We're dealing, of course, in the early chapters of Acts with the birth of the church. Our blessed Lord has ascended into heaven. He has...we saw that in Acts 1. In Acts 2, He sent the Holy Spirit to equip the church to do the work that He had begun to do. And we'll remember our study of Chapter 1 and the fact that the Lord gave the church all of the equipment to do the job. We saw that He gave the proper message, the proper manifestation, the proper might, the proper mystery, the proper mission, the proper motive and even the proper men as He filled up the ranks with Matthias.

He gave them everything they needed to finish His unfinished work that which He both began to do and teach. On the day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God came in Chapter 2 all of these ingredients came together in that church and mighty indeed was that church. In the first day of it's existence 3,000 were added to the beginning 120 and it began from there to minister for Jesus Christ and continued to do so today in 1972.

And from that very first day that the church was born, the Spirit of God gave gifts to the members of the church by which they could build the body up. Certain grace gifts, karismata, spiritual gifts, by which they could ministering to each other build the body. In addition to that, to that early church, God gave certain signed gifts. Gifts which were not meant for the building of the body, but which were meant to be signs to unbelievers for the purpose of confirming the preaching of the gospel.

Now we've talked about that at some length. And just a brief word of review. The Lord knew that there had to be some kind of confirmation of His witness. And so during His own lifetime, He not only said things, but He did things. And He said it is not only a matter of the words that I say, but you should believe me for the very works sake. In other words, the works that He did corroborated the words that He said. Nicodemus got that. He said, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God not because of what you say only, but because nobody can do the things that you do except God be with him."

So Christ, Himself, accredited His ministry by certain miracles. In the early church, He gave that same capacity to the apostles and the prophets in order that the word that they spoke might also be confirmed by signs and wonders and mighty deeds. The confirmation of any man's ministry today is not that any longer, it is whether he matches the word of God. This has become the standard. Because it is God's final revelation. But before the New Testament was complete in the era of the early church, the accommodating miracles gave confirmation to the gospel. When we read, for example, in 2 Corinthians Chapter 12, verse 12, which we've read before, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience and signs, wonders, and mighty deeds." They are there called the signs of an apostle. These gifts were given to the apostolic era for confirming the word.

And then, of course, we've read Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." And how was it confirmed? With signs, wonders, diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Certain of the spiritual gifts then were signs of an apostle for confirming the word. When the apostles passed from the scene, and they are foundational as Ephesians 2:20 says, so did those gifts.

Now we have studied that those gifts were miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. They were signs to unbelieving, particularly unbelieving Jews, but unbelieving people confirming the gospel that was preached by the apostles. Now one of those gifts was the gift of healing. God granted to them, even as Jesus Christ had exercised that the ability to give physical recovery to the sick in order to verify that they were divine messengers. And when they would go somewhere to preach, they would accommodate their preaching with miracles, which would be evidenced to the people gathered around that God was acting. And if God was acting, then likely God was speaking, thus their gospel became believable.

And you'll remember that after the miracle of the languages in Act 2, 3,000 believed. After the miracle of the lame man in Chapter 3, by the time you get to Chapter 4, verse 4, there are already 5,000 believing men, plus women and children, or young people, that may have been as many as 15,000 converts within the first week of the birth of the church and it wasn't just the message. It was the message and the confirming miracles along with the message.

Now as soon as the church was born on the very first day this confirming ministry of healing began. Look at Chapter 2, verse 43. And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. This miraculous kind of ministry began immediately on this the first day the church was born. Now as we come to Chapter 3 then, the Holy Spirit merely selects one of these miracles as an illustration. And the miracle occurs in verses 1-11 and then Peter's sermon in verses 12-26. You see the miracle gathers the crowd and confirms the testimony that Peter is about to give as being from God. And it's undeniable as we shall see.

And so Chapter 3 then is kind of a living illustration of the fact of Chapter 2, verse 43. It's just one particular illustration the Holy Spirit chose to show us how this miracle gift of healing accommodated the gospel message. Now before we look at the passage itself, verses 1-11, which we'll consider. It's a very simple passage and we can go through it briefly. Before we look at it though, I want to give just some biblical facts regarding the whole problem of healing, because there's much confusion about it today. And I want you to know that I give these because I believe that the word of God has some things specific to say about it. There's much confusion. There are all kinds of people who claim to be able to heal. There are certain people who claim to have the gift of healing. There are healers that run the gamut all the way from demonic healing to that which is supposedly of God and which, in fact, is of God.

There are all kinds of claims being made and there are people confused about what is the biblical teaching of healing. So I'm going to give you a very long introduction and a very short sermon. And you've been waiting for months for a short sermon. So let me just give you some facts to begin with that I trust will be of help to you in understanding this whole situation. First of all, I believe that the gift of healing as indicated in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12, the gift of healing was one of the gifts of an apostle. That can be verified throughout the book of Acts. It was definitely one of the gifts of the apostles.

We also would conclude that the apostles have passed from the scene. They are the foundation says Paul. They had their day. An apostle, in fact, was one who had seen Jesus Christ, with the exception of Paul who was an apostle in a special sense. We would say then that when the apostles passed from the scene so did the gift of healing along with tongues, interpretation of tongues, and miracles, the other gifts of an apostle. So that whatever exists today in the area of healing, it would not be the apostolic gift of healing.

Secondly, let me say this and these may or may not be connected, they are points in themselves. Secondly, Satan and his demons can heal. They can effect verifiable healing. And watch this, they can do it even in the name of the Jesus Christ. So just because some would be healer uses the name of Christ or the name of God in his incantations or in his technique is no guarantee that it is, in fact, God who is involved. Our Lord, Himself, predicted that false Christs and false prophets and false apostles would arise and, according to Mark 13, would perform many demonic signs and wonders. In Matthew Chapter 7 it indicates that same of them would even be done in the name of the Lord. They come before Christ the judgment Lord, Lord have we not done many wonderful works in your name, cast out demons in your name. He said, "depart from me," what, "I never knew you." There are people operating on the behalf of Satan in the name of God and in the name of Jesus Christ and we must be aware of this.

Satan functions as an angel of what? Of light. He masquerades in the character of Christ and godliness. Paul spoken about seducing spirits. He spoke about the doctrines of demons. And the power of healing is very often manifest in spiritism, spiritualism and demonic activities. In both white magic and in black magic. Black magic having to do with Satan himself, conjuring Satan up or demons directly. White magic having to do with incantations and magic that don't name Satan, but really deal in his realm.

So we must be very careful to beware of occult healing methods. And the danger of delusion in this area I think is compounded in the day in which we live as we get closer to the coming of Christ for the Bible tells us clearly in 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2 that in the latter times particularly in the tribulation there will a great increase in the working of Satan through these delusions. The text says, "even him," that's antichrist, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power signs and lying wonders." You see. And he was all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie.

During the tribulation, of course, this reaches an apex, but the mystery of iniquity is already beginning to work now and demonic activity is reaching a high point. And we need to be very much aware that God is not necessarily involved in everything that comes under His name. Do you believe that? You better believe that. The word of God is clear about that. The name of Jesus Christ is used in all kinds of ways that have nothing to do with Him. And I've told you many times the most subtle activity that Satan has is usually in the masquerade of the church of Jesus Christ, masquerading behind the pulpit claiming to be a minister of God or of Jesus Christ, is a man controlled by Satan himself, an apostate, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

This is Satan's subtle activity. And it is just as...we think of it in terms of liberalism, but it is just as true in the area of all of the healing thing as well. We need to be aware of that. Dr. Unger has written an interesting book in which he discusses demons in the world today. He's from Dallas Seminary. I

quote one statement from Dr. Unger. "Demonic white magic can affect healings even when the Scriptures are profoundly believed." It's interesting. "With the use of Christian prayers laying on of hands." Now that is a statement that is very interesting that actually in a thing that is apparently Christian, it is demonic activity that is going on. He continues, "If the practice opposes God's will as expressed in Scripture, danger of demonic intrusion is present. Since cures by white magic take place under the guise of Christian truth and allegedly by the power of God, this type of healing is much more widespread than black magic and much more deceptive. Naive believers and sometimes those who have some knowledge of God's word are ensnared believing this healing method to be Christian. In reality, the use of the Lord's name to affect such healings violates the second commandment which says "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain." This is exactly what the magical healer does. He prostitutes God's name for an unworthy purpose."

Many healers use the name God, the term Christ, the term Jesus, and the term Holy Ghost usually as an incantation or as a charm word to key an emotional response or a demonic response. I had the shocking experience this week of seeing the movie entitled Marjo which is a documentary in which a particular man who spent his life in healing comes clean supposedly as clean as anyone could come, as debauched as that individual is and is hypocritical. And apparently he came clean because he saw money in Hollywood at a faster clip than he saw it in his healing methods. But apparently he came clean anyway on the surface and he reveals the fact of all of the tricks of the trade. And in the picture it shows the so-called healings going on. If I know anything about what's going on, if I know anything at all about the Scripture what was going on there was certainly the intrusion of demonic activities. Even to strange convulsions on the floor and the strange vocalizations, things that were terrifying were occurring obviously brought about by demons. And all done in the name of Jesus Christ by a man who behind the scenes laughs and mocks and blasphemes God and Christ.

It showed him sitting on his bed counting his money and saying thank you Jesus for helping me to bilk the people. This was all done in the name of Jesus Christ, every bit of it. But it was demonic, there's no question about it. And so just because somebody invokes Christ means nothing. If demons can accomplish their purpose in the name of Christ, they will do it. You watch healers often forcing people to be healed in the sense that they may grab them and say I command you to be healed. That is absolutely unbiblical. That is the antithesis of the statement in the word of God in Matthew 6, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

It is the opposite of simple trust and obedience. You say well why do they do that? Don't they know the Scripture? Well, generally not, but they have some verification that they have assumed from Isaiah 53. The typical healing movement is based upon a misinterpretation of Isaiah 53, the statement "By his stripes," what, "we are healed." And healers have historically used that to mean that in the atonement there is physical healing for everybody. That is a gross misinterpretation of Isaiah 53. It has nothing to do with physical healing. Christ didn't die for the ills of the body, He died for the sin of the soul. We know that.

If there was healing in the atonement somebody sure should have informed the apostle Paul about it as he never got rid of his problem. No healing can be forced on anybody nor in this age can any healing be commanded. And anybody who goes around commanding people to be healed is taking a liberty that God's word does not give him. He is therefore functioning on a non-biblical base. And that's important to recognize. And if healings are being effected at that point, they are psychological or they are demonic. Now there's some interesting reading on this. I suggest that you might want to

get a book entitled Occult Bondage and Deliverance by Kurt Coch.

Now he is a very, very astute German theologian with a worldwide reputation for accuracy and faithfulness as a believer, also a fine keen mind. He's made a lifelong study of the phenomenon of healing as it relates to the occult. And it's interesting to note that he brings out in his book that the theology of faith healers is generally unsound. That if you go into their basic theology, they are usually replete with the wrong doctrines of the Holy Spirit, wrong doctrines of spiritual gifts, wrong doctrines of sanctification, and very often wrong doctrines regarding salvation. An illustration and point that he gives, a man in Germany, Munich, by the name of Kurt Trampler who is a well known healer and also an author and a lawyer has had many of his healings authenticated. And there seems to be little doubt that he has, in fact, effected healings. He always in his healings uses the name of God and the name of Christ. But he denies the clear teaching of the word of God. And he is a mixture of pantheism, mysticism, naturalism, and Christianity.

In fact, I think it's he who says that it is this angel who stands beside him all the time who does the healing. I think he's right. But I think that's a fallen angel. But he does it always with the name of Christ and the name of God. Charm words to activate demons. Mary Baker Eddy Patterson Glover Fry the founder of Christian Science healed by mental telepathy. She was not a believer in the truth of the word of God by any stretch of the imagination. And yet she effected healings that are verifiable. Demons can heal. She did it in the name of Christ and the name of God.

Satanic healing has always been common among healers and we must be aware folks that just because the name of God is involved, the name of Christ is involved, the name Jesus or Holy Ghost or any other biblical term does not mean that God is involved. In fact, when someone is healed in the name of Christ under an unscriptural approach a non-biblical technique that smacks of typical media mystic activity rather than charismatic activity then we need to take careful notice.

And when it's...when at the core of the healing is wrong doctrine, then we need to be careful again because very seldom do right things come out of wrong doctrine. Raphael Gasson who was a formally spiritistic medium healer was converted to Jesus Christ in a wonderful conversion. He's written a startling book, a paperback, entitled The Challenging Counterfeit. And in that paperback he says this and I quote from it. "There are many spiritualists today who are endowed with this remarkable gift of healing by the power of Satan. And I myself having been used in this way can testify to having witnessed miraculous healing taking place at healing meetings."

Through the power of Satan. I suggest you read his book. The introduction to it is written by Walter Martin. In it he shows how diabolically like the truth faith this demonic system is and that if Satan wants to affect a counterfeit he will invariably use the name of Christ. And he will trap people in this counterfeit. I give you an illustration from the word of God in Acts 16, verse 16. "It came to pass as we went to prayer," this is Paul, Silas, "a certain maid possessed with a spirit of divination." Now here is a demon-possessed individual, a medium. "Who brought her master's much gain by soothsaying." Here she comes. "The same followed Paul and us and cried saying these men are the servants of the Most High God who show unto us the way of salvation." Stop right there. Sounds terrific. Terrific. Hey we got a new PR agent over here. She's...we're the Most High God servants. We've got the message of salvation. All the right words right out of the pit. Confusing the issue.

Verse 18, "And this did she many days but Paul being grieved turned and said to the spirit I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

That was Satan. That was demonic. The declaration was accurate to the very letter. The source was hell. Watch Satan, he works as an angel of what? Of light. Of light. You know, I believe that even dear Christians who know and love Christ have been duped to believe that what Satan is doing God is doing, and it is not so.

Thirdly, you say where was secondly? That was a long time ago. Thirdly, you don't need to worry about the numbers. Much of so-called healing today in the name of Christ falls under several categories, fraud, such as in the case of this man who was exposed on television. What's interesting is having a conversation...it was all like a news reel. The people who were making the movie had no idea it was exposure. They thought it was legitimate and it was going to present his ministry. And it's shocking. In fact, his parents who put him up to the whole thing who were the biggest frauds of all, thought this was all very wonderful and kept talking about God had anointed them and so forth. And it exposes them as charlatans from beginning to end. He was sitting and talking with some pastor and this pastor said to him, "you know there are some healers who are in it for the money and who are fakes, but we always have you because we know you're real." Some of it is fraud. He made the confession that on all of the years that he had done this on the Dick Cavett Show that never had he seen a legitimate cure.

He was operating on the basis of fraud. There is also the problem of mass hypnosis where so people believe so strongly in an authority figure that they release their emotions to that figure and come under the spell of it and they have what we could call an emotional compensation. Their illness is overridden by their emotion to be well and the authority figure commands them to be well and in response to that they supersede the illness with a consciousness of health. Psychologists would explain it better than that.

There is also the fact that Mayo Clinic says 85% of the people that come there are psychosomatically ill. And so there's an awful lot of people to deal with in that case. So just because healings are going they're not necessarily verifiable by scriptural principles nor are they activity of God. And I'll give you some clearer principles as we go.

Fourthly, let's look at the word of God. What does the word say about healing? What...how can we judge and how can we evaluate. Now I'll try to give you this as clearly as I can so that you'll be able to get a grip on it and understand it. The gift of healing, we're talking about the charismatic gift of healing, the gift of healing in the apostolic era was limited to the apostles and prophets. It was limited to that time, I believe that and it was limited to God's sovereignty. Not everybody was ever healed. It was limited in every sense. And so we would believe then that it would still be limited if it were around but we don't believe it's around because we believe when the apostles ceased so did the gifts of an apostle.

But there are some biblical indications about healing apart from the gift of healing. Let me just dig a little bit deeper into the gift of healing for a minute as I think about it. As I read the New Testament, there is no indication in all of the New Testament church, watch this, that the apostolic gift of healing was ever exercised in the behalf of the believers. Now mark that. I don't find in the book of Acts the occasion where the gift of healing was exercised in behalf of the established church. It was like all those other signed gifts. It was a sign to whom? Unbelievers.

Now it may have been that at the moment of the miracle, the man was also saved. There was also salvation, but at no point do you find the apostle Paul going back to the established churches and

healing the sick people there. It is always a sign to the unbeliever, you see. It is never designated as that which is to be constantly administered within the framework of the body. Illustration in point maybe would be in Acts 19:11, "God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons and the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out of them."

That was a fantastic thing. You'll notice that the ones who were healed were having evil spirits released. These are not the believer. This is the beginning of the ministry in Ephesus and to confirm the word, these miracles happened. Well, the results were fantastic. Verse 18, "And many that believed came, confessed their sins." You see. "Showed their deeds and then they sold their magical books or got them together and burned them, counted the price and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." A pile of unbelievable value and all of this "so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." And then the church was established.

But you see all of that was only to get the thing going as a sign to unbelievers. Then when Paul got ready to leave Ephesus, what did he say? He said, "Okay you elders, feed the flock and take care of the flock." And he never said and keep on healing the flock. At no point do you find in the established church the ministry of healing going on. That is always at the beginning at the outset to confirm the initial preaching of the gospel. They didn't need confirming signs after they were saved, did they?

They had already believed. That is so very important for us to understand. So we do not then assume that the biblical gift of healing was to be activated in the behalf of the church. People today who claim to have the gift of healing claim that all Christians have the privilege of receiving the benefit of that gift. And if you go into the Bible you'll find that was never given in the behalf of the Christians. It was given in the behalf of the unbelievers. And Jesus was invariably going about healing unbelievers.

And so we must assume then that not only does the gift no longer exist today, but if it did exist, it would be a sign gift to unbelievers not something to be exercised upon all Christians all the time. Which is primarily what the healing ministry does today. It's just constantly involving Christian people. You say are you saying that God doesn't heal? I am not saying that. God does heal. Are you saying God doesn't answer prayer? I am not saying that. I know God answers prayer. What I am saying is that in all that Paul has to say to us he continually reveals to us that God shall do that which pleases him to do.

And so when we pray, we must pray not commanding be healed, but we must pray if God be so desiring be healed. You see we cannot command. We don't have that right. And any man who stands up and commands people to be healed is accepting a prerogative that is not given to him by Scripture. Healing by God is in response to prayer and to his will. To his will. And the only instruction we ever have from the apostle Paul is just to pray for all saints and let God do his perfect will.

Do you know that God is thrilled and excited when certain Christians get sick? Did you know that because it is testing them and refining them and equipping them to be what they otherwise could never be. God didn't choose to remove Paul's infirmity did He? And some of you have gone through sicknesses. And even myself in the limited little things that happened to me, I've asked God why I've had to itch for two weeks. And why I have to take oatmeal baths twice a day. And why I have all this stuff all over me. It's going away and I'm praising the Lord. But you know He's taught me some things. Simple little things that I needed to learn about trusting Him. And I thank Him for it. I'll be glad

when it's over, but I thank Him.

See no where in the church epistles is anything said about anointing the sick or the positive promise unconditionally that the prayer faith shall save them. No faith healer can demand or command and if they do it is psychological or worse it is demonic. And please God does heal, I know that. Don't you know that? God does heal, but He heals by His will. And God does answer prayer and He often answers it with the word what? No. Now with that background we come to the message.

Acts Chapter 3, this is exciting because now you understand the biblical pattern of healing and I hope you'll understand what happens here a little better now. Keep in mind that the healing was just a sign just like the languages in Acts 2. Remember what happened in Acts 2? They spoke in wonderful works, the people gathered, Peter preached, and they were saved. In Acts 3, they did a miracle, the people gathered, Peter preached, and they were saved. Same thing, confirming miracle.

Now, we can divide these 11 verses into three simple points describing the lame man. And I thought of a lot of good outlines seeing, strength, and standing; lame, loose, leaping; hopeless, healed, hopping; poor, powered, and praising. But I settled on a different. The scene, the sign, the sequel and the sermon which isn't too bad. The scene, let's look at the scene to begin with and see what's going on. And it's really the crossing of two habits at this point. The habits of Peter and John and the lame man, verse 1.

Now Peter and John went up together in the temple at the hour of prayer being the ninth hour. Now Peter and John were buddies. They had been fishermen together and they kind of hung around with each other. They were in the inner circle, Peter, James, and John. And they were the ones running to the tomb when the morning of the resurrection arrived and they were the ones kind of traveling together in the early chapters of the book of Acts. It's interesting to note that John never says anything. Peter does all the talking. But before you chastise Peter for his problem of talking too much, keep in mind that he was the chosen instrument of God to preach the gospel to the Jews. And John was his companion. That doesn't reduce John to less than Peter. In many ways, the qualities of John superseded the qualities of Peter. But it does illustrate to us how God chooses two people for two specifically different things, each having a single place of majesty in his plan.

And here they were together and as was there custom it says they went up and that's an imperfect in the Greek. It means a continuous action. Apparently they did it all the time, in to the temple the temple courtyard, which would be the court of the women where they would probably have their time of prayer, at the hour of prayer. Now there were three Jewish hours of prayer. The third, the sixth, and the ninth hour. Since the Jewish day began at 6:00 in the morning the three hours would be 9 o'clock, 12 o'clock and 3 o'clock. This being the ninth hour was 3:00 in the afternoon. And this was the time of the evening sacrifice and the evening prayers and Peter and John, as was their continual custom, arrived at the temple.

In fact, they did it every day. At the end of Luke I think it's the last verse in the whole book of Luke, it says, "And they were continually in the temple." And then in Chapter 2 of Acts in verse 46 it says "they were continually daily with one accord in the temple." So they went up all the time and the Jews had always had these three hours of prayer. Daniel 6:10 tells us that Daniel observed them. Psalm 55:17 indicates that these were three times observed by the Jews for prayer.

So they went to the temple for the time of prayer and you can imagine that it was crowded there when they would all arrive. It was an awful lot of people. This is a common thing in the east. We were in Israel last year and it was interesting to see the minarets, in all of the east, the Mohammedans and Muslims have these minarets, these little cylinder things that stick up in the middle of the town and the priest goes up there and he yells to everybody in town when it's time to prayer. In our modernized technological society, he pushes a tape recorder button and that tells everybody to pray. But five times a the Mohammedans do it. Five times a day the Zoroastrians do it. Twice a day at sunrise and sunset the Hindus do it, and the Jews did it three times a day.

So as was their custom, they came to the temple. They had not, as you see, yet understood the final break with Judaism. That came gradually. We'll see a little about that in Hebrews because the book of Hebrews covers the issue of the transition. All right, they went into the temple, into the courtyard. They would have to go in going to in the inner part through the gate beautiful and we'll see about that in a moment, but they are crossed...their habit is crossed by the habit of another man, not so fortunate a man. Because he needs to be carried there, he's a beggar. Now there were certain customs in those days that beggars kind of operated on even the Roman beggars, as well as those in the east. They always chose one of three locations to beg. They sat, for example, at the rich man's gate. Remember Lazarus in Luke Chapter 16. Or they sat on the highway leaving the city. Remember Mark 10 blind Bartimaeus on the highway or thirdly and the best spot in town they sat at the gate of the temple.

Now this was a terrific choice place because the crowds were there and not only that people on their way to worship God would be very likely to impress God with the validity of their worship. And a little charity would certainly do that. And the Pharisees would be concern with doing their alms before men and you could be sure that when the Pharisees came by you were in for a few shekels. Plus I'm sure that they knew that the temple treasury was in there by the gate beautiful and the people who came there came to give to the Lord and maybe they could assume in their own minds that giving a little to the beggar would be the same thing anyway. And so it was the best spot, the choice spot. And the true worshippers, the truly godly ones would be kind and dispose to give. And so this man had found his space. And I imagine he had territorial claim to it. Because it says that in verse 2, "He daily was brought there." "A certain man lame from his birth," that's Luke's medical note to indicate to us that had he not been, maybe some doctors could have helped him perhaps, but his case was hopeless. Kind of let's the doctors off the hook. "A certain man lame from his birth was carried whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called beautiful to ask alms of them that entered into the temple." This was his territory.

He's carried there and the verb again is the imperfect, which means he was habitually being carried there. He was 40 years old, it tells us later. Who knows how many of those years he had been carried there. Probably at least 20 or more. That was his spot. He was well known. They would go in and out almost without seeing the guy because he'd been there so many years. Now, he gets himself at this gate called beautiful. I ought to mention a note. We don't too much about it except what Josephus tells us that all of the gates in the innermost court were folding kind of things and they were made overlaid with silver and gold.

But Josephus says that this one was bigger than all the rest. It was 75 feet high, if you can imagine that, and 60 feet wide and it was overlaid with the thickest plates of gold and Corinthian brass. It was made of Corinthian brass overlaid with gold. It took 20 men to close it. And that's where he sat. Verse 3 gives us another little note for the scene. "Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the

temple asked an alms." Now he is asking for mercy in the form of cash basically, but he's about to receive grace in the form of healing and salvation. That's the scene.

Secondly, let's look at the sign. Let's see the miracle itself. Now there are four things about this miracle that strike me. Number one, it was unexpected. But isn't that how God's grace comes. It's never what you think it's going to be. Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto who is able to do," what, "exceedingly, abundantly of all you could ask for," what, "or think." I mean it always comes out like that. Always does. So he's asking for a little mercy in the form of cash. He gets a little grace in the form of salvation and healing.

And watch verse 4. Watch how unexpected. "And Peter fastening," and the word here is the same word as used in 1:10 where they stared at Jesus ascending. It means to fix their gaze. It's a stare, they were locked in on this guy. They stared at him and said, "Look on us." The two men riveted their attention on the unhappy cripple. Now it's so interesting to me that God brings this intersection here. I don't know how many beggars Peter and John had already passed walking through Jerusalem, but I'm sure there was one at every crossroads. But God had not designed to heal all of those. God had a critical thing to do at a critical moment. This was His moment and this was His man. And the miracle was unexpected because the miracle was sovereign. Did you get that? It was sovereign. It was God doing it.

And so they said to him, "Look on us." Verse 5, "And he gave heed unto them expecting to receive something from them." He thought boy I've got a couple here, they're going to really unload on me. See? Eager expectation, but he didn't get what he expected. He looked for money and what he got was an unexpected miracle. I love verse 6. "Then Peter said silver and gold have I none." If he had stopped there that probably would have made the guy mad. You see. Oh yeah, that's what everybody says. "But such as I have I give thee." And that leaves it kind of hanging but then he says this. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Now you know that's an interesting statement. If I had been a cripple sitting at that gate for 20 years plus maybe, and I knew that Jesus had been tried and branded as a blasphemer, and some guy had come along and said to me I can't give you any money, but in the name of Jesus rise up and walk I'd have thought he was mocking me. See? What reason did that guy have to believe in Jesus that beggar? What did he know about Jesus Christ other than that he had been tried as a blasphemer and executer.

But somehow in some way God by sovereign salvation began to move in his heart. He had no reason to believe Peter and John apart from maybe that he had heard some truth. It doesn't say. It would have been so easy for him to say stop mocking me. Fake healers, you know, but he didn't do that. He heard what they said and I'm sure he sensed the power of God moving in his life. Jesus never promises anybody material gain. Peter and John are living proof of that. They had nothing. They had poverty and power. But Peter says what I've got I give you. It was unexpected.

He never dreamed this would happen. But you see that's how the sovereignty of God is. A man can be going along in his own way thinking all he needs in life is money. All he needs in life is a little comfort and God reaches into his heart and redeems it and a miracle happens that he never dreamed possible. Wasn't that how it was with you when you met Christ? Something happened far beyond what you ever imagined. Life became fuller than ever you dreamed it could be and so many things replaced the mundane and the temper of it you thought were everything. So God began a

sovereign work. The miracle was unexpected.

Secondly, it was in the name of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Just so you don't make any mistake about who this Jesus is. And Christ, the man knew meant Messiah. In the name of Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth. Now any time you see a statement in the name of Jesus Christ, that has import. It is as if Peter said because of who Christ is, what He is, by virtue of His character, His authority and His power, rise up and walk. Peter is saying, I stand here in the place of Jesus Christ.

Remember in John 15 when we studied how that Jesus said "If you ask anything in my name I'll do it." What did He mean by that? We studied the fact that He meant this. If you're praying in the name of Jesus Christ, you're praying like this. Dear Father, I am asking You this because this is what Jesus would want. That's in His name. So Peter is saying that. Rise up and walk I speak in the behalf of Christ. This is what He wants. Listen, they were so sensitive to what the Spirit of God was telling them that they were acting in the behalf of Jesus Christ.

And dear ones that's what every spirit filled Christian does. He acts in the behalf of Christ. They were acting in the behalf of Christ, speaking for Him. Marvelous thing. Well, they said this to the beggar. And then watch what happened. Not only was the miracle unexpected in the name of Jesus Christ, but it was instantaneous, verse 7. "He took him by the right hand and lifted him up." Peter just reached down and lifted him up. And watch this, "And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." And all those words at the end there are medical terms that Luke chooses. He was healed. His problem was remedied immediately. Now that's how God heals.

His miracles of healing, Christ's miracles of healing are always instant. There is no natural process involved. They are instant creative acts. In tender love, Peter's available to be used by Christ. And he reaches down and picks him up. Oh there's a great truth in that, you know? The power was Christ's but the hand was whose? Was Peter's, you see. I mean that's exactly what God wants to do in us. Not the apostolic gift of healing, but all the ministries that God wants to bring to bear, He wants to bring through our availability.

Remember when Gideon's army got around and the cry of battle was not just the sword of the Lord. That's all we ever hear. The cry was the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. God was using Gideon. That's how we're to minister. We stoop to lift up the fallen in love with our hands by Christ's power. I just have a thought at this point, maybe you thought about it already, the Spirit spoke to you. I wonder if we're this sensitive to people as Peter and John were to be available to be used by God to lift them up. You know we so many times come in and out of this place as they were going into the temple and we walked by people whose lives are broken and we don't even see them. We walk in and we plank ourselves in our little pew or a seat and we sit there and it's so nice and we sing our little song and we do our little whatever and we get up and out the back door into the car, whip home and eat. And we have not been sensitive to anybody around us.

And there are people with broken lives and broken hearts. There are lonely people. There are people hurting. There are people who are lame with fear and lame with doubt and defeat and trial and they're searching for love and they're searching for restoration and they're searching for a hand to lift them in the love of Jesus Christ and all God needs is an available hand, you see, to minister.

And so often we come into this place and out the door and we're insensitive. I mean, do you know who's around you? Maybe you said hi to them this morning when we had a minute for you to do that. Do you care? I mean, do you know that maybe somebody is here that God wants you to minister to. Remember we talked about the responsibilities of fellowship. So much to be done in ministry to each other as we're available. I say to you as your pastor, we don't want your attendance. We don't want your money. We want you. Ministering and caring and loving and being sensitive to each other. That's what God wants. That's what we want. So Peter took his hand, had time for him and lifted him up. God did the miracle.

And it was instant. You see God's miracles are always instant. They're instant acts of creation. You know every miracle that Jesus did was a creative miracle. You know what He did that for man then? He just recreated his legs. Just gave him new bones, muscle tissue, fiber, skin, the whole bit, just gave it all new to him. In an instant created him all over again from the knees down or wherever his problem was. Apparently from the knees down. New tissue, fiber, cartilage, bone, the whole thing instantly just like that in the name of Jesus Christ. This is just how he dealt with Lazarus. He said, "Lazarus come out." Out he came.

By that statement, He reversed every decaying process in Lazarus and recreated him. He created wine. There was an impotent man laying by the pool all those 30 some years and he said would you like to be healed. The man said certainly would and Jesus said you are pick up your bed and go. Instantly recreated every organ in his body that wasn't functioning. His miracles were all instant miracles. He didn't say look I know it's going to hurt for five or six days but you'll work it out. He didn't you're doing fairly well that's a few little steps and in a week or two you'll probably be able to run. That man had an instant miracle, stood up, never took a step in his life, walked and jumped all over everywhere. And you don't learn that that fast. Instant, so the miracle was unexpected in the name of Christ and instantaneous.

Fourthly, it was complete. He never does a miracle that isn't total. Verse 8, "He leaping up stood and walked." Notice how fast he starts walking. Never walked in his life and he entered with him into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God, you see. It's a complete, no painful, slow rising and creaking of the bones and having to go to remedial walking class conducted by the apostles for all those whom they had healed. He was up and moving. He didn't need anything. It was complete. Now that's a good checklist for God's miracles. Now I believe God heals through medicine. I believe God uses doctors. I believe God has given us wisdom to perceive and to find these wonderful tools that we have today to heal. When God decides to do a supernatural miracle, if you want to check Him in the word of God, you'll find they always had four characteristics. They were sovereign, they were supernatural, they were sudden, and they were completely sufficient.

Or to give it to you as we gave it to you, they were unexpected in the name of Christ, instantaneous, and complete. That's a good checklist for a miracle. So the scene and the sign. Now watch the sequel. This is really good. Oh the man was so overwhelmed. The first sequel was the joy of the man. Verse 8, "He leaping up stood and walked and entered into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God and all the people saw him walking and praising God. This guy was full of joy. Can you imagine? Forty years of begging and now he's up and jumping around. And the whole temple echoes his joy.

Can't you imagine? They're all in this very silent and somber and they're all praying as the custom is to pray in Israel and they were all going through the evening sacrifice and it was all sort of pomp and

circumstances and dignity and all of sudden this guy bursts in there and he's jumping and yelling all over everywhere and you can imagine the shock of the people as they turned around and saw who was making the racket disturbing the evening sacrifice.

Do you know that God deals in joy? Do you know that? God deals in joy. That's a commodity that He bestows upon us. Jesus gave it to us. "My joy I give unto you our fellowship demands it." "These things write unto you," John said, "that your joy may be full." Paul commands it "rejoice always and again I say rejoice." This is part of worship. And it's interesting to me that the only real worship going on in that place was that man. Whatever else was going on was after the fact, right? Jesus had already performed the final sacrifice. All the other worship was empty ritual. The only true worship was that guy jumping all over messing up the ritual.

You want to really worship God, worship God with a job of your heart. All right, so first of all, the first sequel, the first result was joy to the man. Secondly, he praised to God. We saw that in verse 8 and 9. He was praising God in verse 8 and he was praising God in verse 9. He gave God the glory. True worship. True worship is praising God with a heart full of joy. That's the real stuff that worship's made out of. Worship is not stained glass windows and organ music and sober faces.

If you come to worship God this morning with the face of a sour grape because you're griped at your wife or because you're bugged about your kids or because you don't like your boss or because you're irritated at what's going on in your Sunday School group or because some other dear brother in Christ has rubbed you the wrong way and you're sort of gripey and sullen, you may follow the order of service, but you haven't worshiped God. Worshipping God is giving Him praise from a heart full of joy. That's the only true worship.

So two results, joy to the man, praise to God. Three, testimony to the people. What a shock for the people. Verse 10, "And they knew that it was he who sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple." How do you handle that problem? They couldn't. Over in Chapter 4, verse 16, "They say what shall we do to these men?" Peter and John, "For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all those who dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot," what, "deny it." We can't...look there's the guy jumping around. What a shock. No deception here. Now this was more than a miracle dear ones. This was a sign. Listen to what I say.

The very behavior of this former cripple was a sign to those who had eyes to see, watch this, that the messianic age had come. You say why? For long ago, Isaiah said in 35:6 "then shall the lame man leap as a deer," when, "in the day of Messiah." And here was the classic proof. The lame man leaping all over the place. Testimony complete that Messiah had come. That is the purpose of the miracle to produce wonder. Look at verse 10, "if they'd have only known the Scripture truly they'd have seen Messiah's signs. But at least they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."

And that set the stage for the fourth point the sermon. Look at verse 11. "And as the lame man who was healed held Peter and John all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's greatly wondering." God had used this sign to gather the crowd in a state of shock over what had happened and then Peter began to preach. And I want you to notice something that is fantastic. They got them in the outer courtyard there, the large courtyard, the one where the pillars held up that beautiful carved cedar roof and they were porticos all around it. One of those porticos was called Solomon's porch. Jesus had stood there and given the discourse on the Good Shepherd

in John 10. So Peter and John slid into Solomon's porch with all the people massed and jammed in there beneath and watch this. Guess who's up there on the platform with them? "As the lame man who was healed," what's the next word, "held Peter and John." Can't you just see this guy? Living verification of a miracle and he's right locked between Peter and John, right in the middle of Solomon's porch. They've got their living illustration. They're hanging on to him. He's hanging on to them and in that scene, Peter begins to preach.

What did Peter say? Come back next week and you'll find out. Let's pray. Father, we're so thankful for the time we've shared in the book this morning. It's been rich and it's been sweet. We thank You for the cripple. We thank You that he was born that way because You wanted him born that way. That just like Lazarus his sickness was for the glory of God. We thank You for him because he shows us how to worship with joy and praise to You. Thank You for Peter and John because they show us how to be available. They show us how to be vessels to be used by You.

We thank You for what You've shown us about healing. We thank You that You've said You'll hear and answer our prayers, but the healing is a matter of Your will, not ours. We thank You Lord that You've taught us to carefully examine what we see to be sure it's of God. Many lessons we've learned this morning. We pray the Spirit will continue to teach us and make these truths indelible that we might be able to interpret life in the light of them. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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