

“Nor Silver or Gold”
Acts 3:1-26
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Good morning/evening brothers and sisters. I really must tell you that the Book of Acts amazes me. Listening to the lectures, really getting my nose in the lessons, and now in preparing for this lecture, well, I’m loving this book!

Before I review the remarkable story in the third chapter of Acts, let me ask you a question, albeit an uncomfortable one, or at least it was when I asked myself.

Have you ever intentionally avoided eye contact with someone asking for money, like maybe at the market or in a parking lot? No hands please. As you know from our lesson, Dr. Luke recorded a story, as only a doctor who loves the Lord Jesus could, about a man who had a divine appointment with two of Jesus’s apostles. He asked them for money, but instead of giving him something he wanted, he got something he needed.

So far in our study in Acts, we’ve learned that the church was born at Pentecost; three thousand people were baptized; believers met every day devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, praying, and eating together. And the apostles were performing many signs and wonders which validated that Jesus had been sent by God.

Not all the signs and wonders done by the apostles made it into the Book of Acts. However, in Chapter 3, Luke documented the first major public miracle since Pentecost.

Doctor Luke was such a great storyteller. In Acts 2, he described the followers of Jesus just doing normal stuff; God showed up in a miraculous way; people came to check it out; Peter preached a bold sermon; and thousands were saved! Luke used the same storytelling for Acts 3: Peter and John were doing normal stuff; God’s power was seen; people gathered; Peter preached a bold sermon and well, the rest is coming up!

The chapter could easily be divided into two parts: the miracle and the message, but oh, but there is so much more. God’s power, His *dunamis* in Greek, was weaved throughout the chapter, therefore, in this lesson, I focused on:

- A powerful healing
- A powerful sermon
- A powerful call

Luke wrote, “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.” (3:1) Even though the apostles were separated from mainstream Judaism because they acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, they had not been told to stop being Jews. So, they continued to meet in the temple, and on this occasion, they were going to the 3:00 prayer time as usual. Jewish tradition established three times a day to pray - the morning prayer at 9:00 AM, the afternoon prayer at 3:00 PM, and evening prayer at sunset.

“Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.” (3:2) The lame man had been carried to the temple, possibly by friends or relatives. They surely would have wanted to

have him there at the busiest time of day and where the traffic would have been the greatest to be seen by the majority of worshipers. They took him to a gate called *The Beautiful Gate*. This was an ornate gate to the temple area. It surpassed other gates in beauty as it was made from costly, shiny, Corinthian bronze.

Each day as Peter and John were “going up” to pray, it coincided with the arrival of the lame man “being laid down” beside the Gate. The man was born crippled and Acts 4:22 tells us he was over 40 years old. “Lame beggars had little hope of escaping their way of life and only by begging would they receive support to live.” (Life Application Bible)

Over the years, numerous Temple worshippers would have passed by the lame man. Scholars speculate that it’s likely Jesus would have seen the man many times. In the perfection and sovereignty of God’s will and omniscience, *if* Jesus had passed him, He chose not to heal him. We must trust that the Lord’s timing is as important as His will. Remember Lazarus? Jesus waited four days after Lazarus was dead to raise him back to life and the results of that miracle caused many people to believe in Him. I imagine God knew it would be for His glory that Jesus heal the man **from heaven** through His apostles.

I envisioned the lame man was probably placed on the ground near the gate. I doubt he even raised his head to look up because most people would ignore him anyway. Maybe he only saw their feet - a hurtful reminder that his didn’t work. “When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.” (3:3) Most people who want to ignore beggars are careful to not make eye contact with them, but Peter and John **did** notice him: “Peter and John looked straight at him and said, ‘Look at us!’” (3:4) The term “looked straight at” meant they fastened their eyes upon him. “So, the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’” (3:5,6)

Being called a Nazarene in those days was meant to be a slur, but Bible teacher, David Guzik said, Peter “waved [Jesus’ title] like a banner.” The apostles didn’t tell the man, “Now, take it easy, test out your legs before you start moving.” There’s no indication he got up slowly to make sure his legs would hold him, which is often how the healing is portrayed in movies.

Peter said, “walk”. “Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk...” (3:7,8a) In raising the man by the hand, Peter pulled him up from an inactive posture of weakness to a standing posture of strength. Reverend Thomas Walker said: “The power was Christ’s, but the hand was Peter’s.” And taking him by the hand was something Peter saw Jesus do when He healed Jairus’ daughter.

Luke’s reporting of the miracle hinted at his background as a physician. In Luke’s use of certain medical words, he conveyed a *significance* to the man’s healing. He recorded that the man’s “feet and ankles” were instantly healed.

Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan said Luke’s words were “technical words of a medical man. The word translated *feet* is only used by Luke and occurs nowhere else. It indicates his discrimination between different parts of the human heel. The phrase *ankle-bones* is also a medical phrase found nowhere else. The term *leaping up* describes the sudden coming into place of something that had been out of place – the connection between bones or joints.” Another Bible teacher, Chuck Missler said, “The term in Greek for feet and ankle bones is a medical term meaning

that they had to be *resocketed*. His ankles had never functioned because he had never walked before.”

The man moved quickly from standing to walking to jumping. Luke used the verbs walking and jumping regarding the healed man as if to emphasize the incredible fact that his crippled legs and feet were *instantly*, fully functional. The prophet Isaiah wrote that when the Messiah came, He would bring movement to the paralyzed: “*Then shall the lame man leap.*” (Isaiah 35:6)

“Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.” (3:8b) What was the once crippled man’s reaction? He went from lying helpless and dependent, to dancing and praising God. He came to God *through* his healing.

His jumping, worshiping and excitement attracted the attention of the those gathered to worship in prayer. Perhaps they suddenly realized it was the beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, and they were absolutely astounded because he was jumping around! The reaction of the eye-witnesses to the miracle, to those who heard about it, and to those who saw him in the temple was “wonder and amazement.”

In Jewish thought and in biblical language, a person’s name represented the essence of one’s character and reputation. Jesus’s name represents and includes His sovereignty, His authority and His power. When Peter appealed to the **name** of Jesus, it was because of the *apostle’s* faith **in** Jesus that caused the man’s healing.

Luke didn’t record that the *man* had faith to be healed, nor was it *required* for him to have faith to be healed. He hadn’t asked for healing - he asked for money. There are Biblical accounts of healings wherein the person’s faith wasn’t needed for their healing, such as with the man at the Bethesda pool, the blind man, Malchus at Jesus’s arrest, the demoniac in the Gerasenes and certainly that must be true of some of the multitude Jesus healed in Luke 6.

The gospel doesn’t say, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be healed.” It says: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” (Acts 16:31)

In Acts 3, the healing of the lame man was because of *Peter and John’s* faith in the name of Jesus. The Lord allowed the man’s healing to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and in *His Name* was the power to heal.

So why were Peter and John led to heal that particular lame man, at that particular time, at that particular place? Have you heard of, or experienced, a “divine appointment” which is a meeting between you and another person that has been specifically and unmistakably ordered by God.” (5 minutes discipleship.com)

I’d like to share a personal divine appointment with you. Perhaps you’ve heard that in April 2023, I was walking in a park near my house and sat on a bench there, (actually it was in a pretty gazebo) praying for God to lead People of the Word to a new location. I finished praying and looked up just as a friendly looking man was walking by me. We began a conversation which included what we each were praying for that morning.

Our conversation included what churches we attended, and I asked if he thought it would be ok for me to call his church and ask if they would be interested in hosting our Bible study. He said,

“Sure!” and gave me the name of who to ask for. Only right before we parted did he tell me he was the pastor of the church, the very one we are meeting in now!

I was walking at an unplanned time, on an unplanned route, and ended up in that park, sitting and praying about People of the Word at exactly the same time the pastor of this church walked by! I later learned that Pastor Darden and I have lived two blocks from each other for over two decades and yet we had never met each other before! God allowed me to experience that divine appointment which always reminds me of His power.

I believe the Lord had been preparing for the divine appointment between the apostles and the lame man so it would gather a crowd, to give Peter another opportunity to share the Gospel, to point to Jesus as the reason for the healing, and so it would cause a series of evangelistic opportunities no one except God could orchestrate.

“In the book of Acts, this healing was not an isolated instance but a pattern. At least seventeen times in the book [of Acts] a miracle helped lead to conversions. The working of miracles, that is, signs and wonders, helped bring people to Christ. That was what Luke wanted us to see.” (Pastor, John Piper)

In chapter 2, Peter used the people’s bewilderment at Pentecost about the disciples speaking in different languages to preach about Jesus the Messiah. So too, in chapter 3, Peter used the people’s amazement about the miracle of a lame man’s healing to credit Jesus, the One who healed him.

Bible scholar, Matthew Henry said [Peter’s] sermon was to “explain the miracle, and to sow the ground the miracle had broken up.”

Verse 11 says the healed man was holding on to Peter and John as they were standing in Solomon’s Colonnade. Why do you think he was holding on to the apostles? Was he afraid if he let go, his lameness would return? Could he have been so grateful he didn’t want to let go of the men he thought had healed him? Perhaps it was like the man in Mark 5 whom Jesus healed from a legion of demons. That man had **begged** Jesus to let him stay with Him.

In amazement at seeing the very public healing of the man, throngs of people rushed to Solomon’s Colonnade. The Colonnade, or Portico, was a great place for a crowd, which Acts 4 tells us would have numbered in the thousands.

The Colonnade is in a part of the Temple complex in which both men and women, Jews and Gentiles, adults and children, would have gathered. It featured double rows of tall, marble columns supporting a roof which provided protection from weather. It ran along the walls of the outer court of the temple. Jesus Himself had walked and taught in Solomon’s Colonnade. Peter seized upon the opportunity to preach to those gathered there.

Peter asked them: “Fellow Israelites, why does the healing of this man surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” (3:12) But before Peter told them who healed the man, he reminded them what the Jewish Scriptures said about Jesus: “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed Him over to be killed, and you disowned Him before Pilate, though He had

decided to let Him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.” (3:13-15)

Peter used some heavy, accusatory language in telling them they killed the Messiah they had been waiting for. And in demanding a murderer be released, they killed the very One who came to give them life. But death didn't win because Jesus' disciples were eyewitnesses that He was alive! Peter spoke boldly to them about their sin. His goal wasn't to make them feel bad but to encourage them to repent, believe and be saved.

Historically, the Jews have been blamed and persecuted for being the sole responsibility for killing Jesus. Yet Scripture insists that all of us, Gentile and Jew, share culpability. Jesus died because we are **all** guilty of sin - **all** of us.

“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” (Romans 4:25) It's **our** sin that put Jesus on the cross. Yet, remember Jesus's words from John 10:18: “No one can take my life from Me. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.”

After Peter told the people who Jesus was, he pointed to the once lame man and deflected the attention away from both himself and John to the One who caused the healing: “By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know, was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.” (3:16) If we receive attention or accolades for doing good works, we should follow Peter's example and put the praise back on Christ. In verse 16, the healing was called “complete. I think Dr. Luke wanted his audience to know the healing was a thorough and perfect restoration of the man's crippled legs.

Although miracles of healing still occur, God doesn't promise to grant them every time He's asked. If that were true, we'd have a whole lot of 2,000-year-old Christians walking around. For those of us who call Jesus the Savior, we may have to wait for healing until in His presence. Until then, let's continue praying for the Perfect Physician's hand to move in accordance with His perfect will.

Well, there's nothing better than a miracle to introduce a sermon! After Peter credited the healing to Christ, he preached about Him, starting by telling the thousands wanting to hear more: “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that His Messiah would suffer.” (3:17, 18)

Peter acknowledged the people had acted in ignorance. Remember, in Luke 23, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” And yet, His death fulfilled God's plan He foretold through the prophets that His Messiah would suffer.

Peter didn't excuse their sin because they were ignorant, and just as he did in Acts 2, he called upon them to repent: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” (3:19) When you hear the word “repent” do you think of someone on a street corner shouting, “Turn or burn!”? To “repent” simply means to change direction.

Spiritual repentance starts when we choose to repent of our sins; when we choose to turn *from* our sin and turn *to* God. Repentance is turning away *from* the death we deserve and turning *to* the way of life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter said repentance will lead to sin being “wiped out.” I wondered if Peter chose those words because at that time, the ink they used didn't sink into paper, so ink-written words could almost always be wiped off with a damp cloth. Perhaps the phrase ‘wiped out’ helped them visualize how easily sin can be removed by God when there is repentance.

Peter also referred to “times of refreshing” which may have two meanings. It may mean the renewal God provides when one receives salvation, because in the original Greek it means: a cooling or refreshing, a time of spiritual relief, peace. Another possible meaning of “times of refreshing,” could mean the time when Jesus will return and rule the earth in righteousness.

After Peter said “that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” he continued: “and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive Him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.” (3:20,21)

David Guzik said that Peter’s words may imply that if the Jewish people as a whole repented, God would send Jesus to return in glory. Peter made it clear that Jesus will remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, and since the repentance of Israel is one of the ‘*everything*s’ to be restored, there is some sense in which the return of Jesus in glory will not happen until Israel repents.”

Then Guzik offered a hypothetical question: “*If* the Jews of that day had received the gospel as a whole, would Jesus had returned way back then? Hypothetically, this may have been the case, but there is no point in speculating about something that *didn’t* happen!” Interesting to think about but not to dwell on.

Peter then reminded his audience of Scriptures every synagogue-attending Jew should have known. Moses told them God would send them a “prophet like him [Moses]” and that they were to “listen to everything He tells them and anyone who does not listen will be completely cut off from their people.” (3:22,23) That Prophet of course, would be Jesus Christ.

Peter continued his review of the Jew’s history reminding them how special they were to God. The Israelites should have known and remembered that:

- Beginning with the prophet Samuel and all the prophets after him, it had been foretold that the Messiah was coming.
- Through Abraham *all* people, both Jews *and* Gentiles, would be blessed.
- God’s Servant, Jesus the Messiah, was sent first to them “to bless them by turning them from their wicked ways.”

The phrase, “sent first to them” was to emphasize that the salvation message came first to the people of Israel. They should have known the prophecies and recognized the Messiah when He came to “turn them from their wicked ways.”

So, how should we apply this knowledge to our lives?

Just as Peter's audience was required to do, and those in the subsequent 2000 plus years since, those who hear about Jesus must decide to either walk away in disbelief and denial or embrace the truth that He is Messiah and Savior.

God has promised our sins will be blotted out when repentance occurs, He will turn us away from sin, death, and hell—and turn us toward His mercy and love and His *dunamis*, His **power** which in the Greek is *power* - because He is able to do: “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His *dunamis* at work within us.” (Eph 3:20)

The lame man's story isn't over. In chapter 4, we'll learn what the effects his healing and Peter's sermon had on Jerusalem, the Apostles, the followers of Jesus and the religious rulers.

And as we continue to study Acts, we'll see how the power of the name of Jesus rose above the struggles of the early church and drew people to the Kingdom that Jesus spoke of.