

“Repentance: The Road to Blessing”

Acts 3

July 12, 2020

Scripture reading: [Acts 3:1-26]

Today what I hope to help you see from Acts 3 is that ***To reject Jesus is to oppose God and incur utter destruction. But to receive Jesus, relinquishing self-will for His loving authority, is to receive the ultimate blessing of reconciliation with God.***

The Miracle (Acts 3:1-10, 16)

Two things set the stage for the impact of this miracle. First, vs. 2 tells us that this man had been lame from birth and we are told later in 4:22, that this man was now over 40 years old. In other words, time has ruled out any hope of a natural process of healing or human treatment. This man’s condition is established as permanent. Only an act of God could heal him!

Second, Everyone knew this man and his situation. His daily presence by the temple gate where he begged for money meant that everyone who lived in Jerusalem would recognize this man and be impacted by the reality of the miracle. In fact, later in chapter 4, the Sadducees who were opponents of Jesus and His followers, said in vs. 16, *“What shall we do with these men (Peter and John)? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.”*

My point is that the healing of this lame man was not just random. It was strategic. But according to whose plan? The answer begins to emerge as we investigate more deeply into how this miracle actually took place. At first blush it appears though Peter healed him. But as we read on, we discover there is more going on behind the scenes. In fact, the very point that Peter emphasizes in [vs. 12] is that Peter himself was not to be accredited with the healing. Peter is saying that the healing took place by a power other than his own. Well whose power then? Vs. 16 gives the answer: “On the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened

this man...and the faith which comes through Jesus has given him perfect health...”

Notice 4 things in vs. 16:

1. This healing was a work of *faith* (“on the basis of faith”). Whose faith? Not the lame man’s, but Peter’s. Peter is the one exercising faith for healing.
2. Peter’s faith to heal is *faith in Jesus* (“faith in His [Jesus’] name”). The name of Jesus represents the person of Jesus Himself, not just some magical formula. Peter is looking to Jesus for this healing.
3. Peter’s healing faith is not only *in* Jesus but also *from* Jesus (“the faith which comes through Him [Jesus] has given him this perfect health”).
4. *Jesus Himself* has healed this man through the faith He has given Peter (“it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man”)

So what we learn from vs. 16 is that Jesus heals the lame man by giving Peter faith in Jesus to administer healing to him. Peter has walked by this beggar many times, but on this particular day something happened in Peter that caused him to turn to the lame man with confidence and say, “In Jesus’ name, walk!” That something was Jesus giving Peter faith for this man’s healing. Yet there is one more layer to this miracle. The man’s response in vs. 8 was to praise God (the Father). And later on in 4:29-30 when the church prays for similar kinds of miracles, they pray that God (the Father—“Lord”) would extend His hand to heal through the name of Jesus. My point is that God is initiating the miracle, not Peter. This is God’s strategic plan. So here’s how the miracle takes place:

- *God* the Father is the *source* of healing.
- *Jesus* is the *agent* who administers the healing (Father and Son working together).
- *Faith* is the *means* by which the healing is done.
- *Peter* is the *instrument* that Jesus uses to heal (by giving him faith to trust Jesus for the healing).
- The lame *man* is the *object* of the healing.
- The people in *Jerusalem* are the *witnesses* of this healing (and the ongoing power of the of crucified—risen—Christ).

So here's the miracle: The Father works through Jesus to grant Peter faith in Jesus to administer healing to a lame man so that this man would have the joy and benefit of being healed, God would be glorified, and Jesus and His gospel would be validated as having divine authority.

The Miracle as a Sign (Acts 3:11-18)

So this is a multifaceted miracle that serves multiple purposes. But the focal point is meant to shed light on the risen Christ and His gospel. This miracle is a sign that points to Jesus as the Savior. That's what verses 11-18 are about.

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the insight to discern that the Lord had a greater purpose than the mere healing of a one man—as great as that was! Miracles are never meant to be an end in themselves. God works for the sake of witness and worship. When God specifically intervenes in our lives, it is never just about us or our need, but to make much of God—to point us and others to Him in a way that produces witness, worship, and faith. God's work in our lives is a mirror that reflect God's glory like the moon reflects the brilliance of the sun—a mirror not through which we see our own reflection, but a mirror through which some aspect God is reflected to us as sunlight is reflected to us by the moon. We get the benefit of moonlight at night just as this lame man got the benefit of a healed body, but his healing is a reflection of God's magnificence just as the moon reflects the brightness of the sun. God intervenes in your life, not just to meet the need but to show something of Himself to you and others.

Beloved, when God works in your life (answers to prayer for healing/provision), the glory of what He does is not to be kept to yourself. You are to share it by giving praise to God and giving witness to His undeserved grace in your life.

This is precisely what Peter does. He makes clear to everyone that this miracle has taken place through the power of Jesus who alone can save them from their sin. The physical blessing of healing is a sign that carries a spiritual meaning/message for all who have eyes to see it.

The Meaning of the Sign (Acts 3:19-26)

[vs. 11-18] Peter's spontaneous, Spirit-empowered sermon reveals who Christ is, how God has honored Him, how man has despised Him, and therefore what man must do to be reconciled to God.

First, let's take a quick survey of Peter's Sermon to see who Christ is:

- Honored servant of God (13)
- Rejected by men (13)
- Holy and Righteous One (14)
- Prince of Life, crucified and risen from the dead (15)
- Healer (16)
- Suffering Servant expected by the prophets—Messiah (18)
- Ascended into heaven (21)
- Coming King (20-21)
- Prophet of God, greater than Moses (22)
- Judge (and the law)—we live by obedience to His word or die by our disobedience to His word (22-23)
- Merciful Savior (26)

Peter's sermon not only emphasizes who Jesus is, but also builds a contrast between what God has done and what man has done in relationship to who Christ is.

Here's what God has done: God has glorified His Servant Jesus (13). This is most likely a reference to Jesus' resurrection. What God has done in favor of Jesus, He has done in opposition to Peter's listeners who crucified Jesus.

Because here's what man has done:

- Vs. 13: You handed Jesus over to Pilate and even when Pilate was ready to release Him, you disowned him. Pilate was more just to Jesus than the Jews.
- Vs. 14: You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked to trade Him for a murderer. They have hated and destroyed what is good and preserved what is evil (a picture of the human heart apart from God).
- Vs. 15: You put to death the Prince of Life!

But here's what God has done: God has raised Him from the dead (15)!

This miracle is evidence that Jesus is indeed alive and His power is the power of God.

Do you see the meaning of the sign now? The healing of this man demonstrates that God stands with Jesus whom they have stood against. This act of divine mercy toward a lame man, reveals that those who crucified Jesus are enemies of God. Yet Peter goes on in vs. 17-18 to say that though they didn't know what they were doing, God knew what He was doing! **[17-18]** While they were acting in faithlessness to God, God was acting in faithfulness to man by being faithful to His own Word! He had foretold—He had decreed—that Christ would suffer.

Here's what is so extraordinary about our God. He not only heals a lame man's body, but works through the wicked actions of men who crucified His Son, to bring about salvation for undeserving sinners through the death of Jesus! While mankind was working wickedly to kill God's Son, God was working graciously to save mankind. So who's responsible for the death of Jesus? *Jesus' death was the result of the wickedness of man, the will of God, and the willingness of Jesus.*

The Message of the Sign for Today

So Peter calls them to actively respond in **[vs. 19]** in the same way we are called to respond today. Therefore...(in light of what you have done, in light of what God has done, in light of who Christ is), "...repent and return"—that is, see your sin against God, and turn from your sin and in so doing return to God! And when you do, three things will happen as a result:

1. "Your sins will be wiped away"—You will be forgiven on the basis of the very death your sin was responsible for (19)
2. "Times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord." You will be restored in your relationship to God—reconciled! (19)
3. "He will send Jesus, the Christ (Messiah, Savior) for you" (20-21). We know from vs. 21 that Christ has ascended to heaven, but He will return at His second coming to save those who trust in Him and have returned from their rebellion to Christ as Lord.

Then Peter establishes the authority of Jesus as the very authority of God! In vs. 22 He quotes Deut 18:15 to show that Jesus is the One who would come like Moses yet great than Moses. Moses gave Israel the law. But Jesus Himself would be the law and righteousness of God by which all people will be judged. So Peter says, "obey everything Jesus says" (22) because "whoever does not" obey Jesus "shall be utterly destroyed" (23)! Jesus is the line between eternal life and eternal destruction.

And so the conclusion that Peter draws in vs. 24-26 is that through the prophets, all history has pointed to this day when God would raise up His Servant, Jesus, "to bless you by turning everyone of you from your wicked ways." (26).

The greatest blessing is not the healing of your body. The greatest blessing is the rescue of your soul from your sinful ways! Our sin against a holy God is no less wicked than the sin of those who mercilessly crucified Jesus. Opposing God with our self-will is high treason against almighty God! But the good news is that the very name and power by which this lame man was healed is the only name and power by which may be saved (4:12).

And so the greatest blessing—and the source of every blessing—is embraced on the road of repentance where we turn from our sinful self-will to believe and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and follow Him as Lord. If our sin against God is treason, the solution is relinquishing the rebellion of our self-will out of ultimate obedience to Christ. Not cold obedience as to a drill sergeant, but loving loyalty as to a husband-king. Like a bride who marries the one she loves and who lavishes love, grace, and protection on her—yet He is not only her husband but also the sovereign king!

The Good News of the Gospel

The good news of the gospel begins with God. God is perfectly holy and purely good. He created us in His image so that purpose and joy could be found only in loving submission to Him as Father. Yet we rebelled against Him with our thoughts, desires, words, and actions—sins of treason against the infinite author of life, deserving of death and eternal divine wrath. But God, in His great love, sent His only begotten/eternal Son (the holy and

righteous Prince of Life) to willingly die on the cross on our behalf. Having fully exhausted God's wrath toward sin on Christ, God raised Jesus from the dead to provide forgiveness and eternal life to anyone who turns from their rebellious ways to trust solely in God's gracious provision of Christ, crucified and risen, as Savior and sovereign Lord over one's mind, heart, body, and life. This faith in Jesus creates a union of love and joy that reconciles us to God and secures His eternal favor.

Yet those who reject Christ as loving Savior and Sovereign Lord oppose God and will suffer the torment of God's just and holy wrath for their sin as long as God lives—forever. There is no other payment that can pay off the debt of your sin against an infinite, eternal God than the payment made by the infinite, eternal Son of God.

Acts 4:4 says, "Many who heard the message believed..." Do you? What is your response to Jesus?

Prayer Challenge: "Holy Spirit, show me where my self-will rebels against God and grant me a repentant heart to turn from my wicked, treasonous ways to love and obey Jesus with a loyal heart of faith.

Faith Challenge: "Lord, grant me the faith necessary today to be an instrument for You to work through in pointing others to You."