

Acts 3: Curing the Disease

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Acts / Acts 3

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Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico

¹¹While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. ¹²And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

¹⁷"And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²²Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for

you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Psalm 55:17

Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.

Last week we saw a remarkable picture of the early days of Christianity. **The Holy Spirit fills the apostles and the Gospel is proclaimed with a boldness that is unstoppable. And what results is the rapid growth of the church.**

What we are going to see in Acts 3 is the story of the spread of the Gospel spreading and the **Holy Spirit continuing to work miraculously through the ministry of the apostles.**

› Pray

Acts 3

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

We find Peter and John working alongside in ministry. **Peter and John, according to historic traditions are two very different people.**

Peter is often thought of as being **bold and brash**. While John was known for his **kindness and a deep focus on others**.

What we will see is that their partnership is very effective in the Gospel ministry. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts and different leadership personalities.

Our job as a church is to help one another use our gifts with greater excellence and godliness. And in the process filling the gaps in other people's gifts within the church. And when we do this well, the church can meet the challenges of ministry.

Peter and John are making their way to the temple at the ninth hour - 3 o'clock in the afternoon. There are three scheduled times of prayer in Judaism.

The first was took place at 9:00 in the morning (3rd hour) and coincided with the morning sacrifice. The second was at 12:00 noon (6th hour), which may have coincided with the thanksgiving for the chief meal of the day. The third was at 3:00 in the afternoon (9th hour), and coincided with the evening sacrifice.

John and Peter are heading to the temple to pray. This was a common practice for those in Jerusalem. Pious Jews during the exile would pray towards Jerusalem, as we see Daniel doing in the the Old Testament.

Psalm 55:17

Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.

How many times a day do you pray?

Do you pray when you get up, throughout the day, and then before you go to bed. **Remember the early church were dedicated to corporate prayer.** And while we do not want our prayers to become just a ritual that we perform, I think we could use some regularly scheduled prayer times in our individual lives and in the life of the church.

Acts 3:2

And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

John and Peter encounter a lame beggar at the entry to the Temple.

A disabled person was not only an economic liability to the family, but they were also a drain on society.

Many times, in the pagan world, the disabled were victims of infanticide, but in the Jewish world this was strictly forbidden. So the family did the only thing they could do, and brought the man every day to the temple to beg and rely on the mercy of their fellow Jews. **This was a desperate life.**

Society many times would shun those with disabilities and considered them morally inferior.

In John 9 we see an encounter between Jesus and His disciples when they ask Jesus who sinned, this blind man or his parents? Jesus rebukes them and says that neither, but this has occurred so that God may be glorified.

Now this begs the question, **can disease or disability be punishment from God for sin?** I wish I could just say yes or no, but it is not that clear cut.

We have to think about it this way, without sin there would only be perfection in creation. So generally, disease and disability are a result of sin in the world, but it is wrong to always identify a particular sin as being the cause of a disease or disability.

Now obviously if you smoke or drink, you may suffer cancer or cirrhosis of the liver, but mostly the causes of a disability or a disease cannot be traced to a specific sin.

But no matter what, the disabled would be in tragic and urgent situations.

Acts 3:3-5

3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

Scholars disagree on which gate the lame man was begging at. **It is likely that it was a huge double gate in the southern wall of the Temple mount, because the lame were not allowed onto the temple mount and the double gate was a common entry point for Jews and close to Solomon's Porch.** The ceiling of the passageway was a beautifully carved huge dome.

This lame man is expecting to receive assistance from faithful Jews entering the Temple. **The law stipulated that caring for the needy was a requirement, so for this beggar, the temple gate was the best place to find the most people willing to give me help.**

Peter and John see him and have compassion on him. They could have ignored him, as many people did and many still do when they encounter someone suffering tragedy, but Peter and John look directly at him and tell them to look at them.

Of course with two men paying attention to him, he fixes his attention on the expecting them to give him some money. But what he will not get what he expects. **He sits at the Beautiful Gate, and Peter and John will show him an even more "beautiful gate" - one that will allow them to share the grace of Jesus Christ with this man in need.**

Too many times we expect too little of God. Or maybe to be more accurate, **we don't see the truth depth of our need and we look for solutions to our symptoms instead of the cure for our disease.**

This beggar was looking for money for his next meal, but by the end of this story he will find that Jesus has given him far more than he could ever imagine.

Are you seeking "alms" in your life when you should be seeking "healing?" We many times fail to see that our deepest needs are not physical, but spiritual.

We want God to change our circumstances, but in reality we need to be changed so that we can find joy in our circumstances.

Acts 3:6-8

6 But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Peter and John have something to give this man that is more valuable than silver and gold, **they offer him the grace and healing by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

But this gift is not just for the lame man, but it is also a demonstration of the Gospel. Peter makes clear the source of this gift.

What's in a Name

The source of this gift is Jesus Christ, and Peter is giving this gift **"In the name of Jesus Christ."**

We see this idea of "name" pops up many times in scripture and specifically in Luke's Gospel and in the Book of Acts. In chapter 2 we saw this when Peter tells people to be "baptized in the name of."

Many of us will pray and end it with "in the name of Jesus." Why do we do this? Are we putting Jesus' seal of approval on our prayers? Is there power that we can harness in the name of Jesus?

First of all we have to understand that for Luke, the name of Jesus is more than just His name. It is a reference to the real presence of Jesus. So we put our faith in the name of Jesus, we are baptized into it, miracles are performed through it, salvation is found in the name, the disciples will preach the name, and ultimately suffer for the name.

In the Old Testament the "name", again, was referring to God and is another way of referring to God himself.

In John 17, Jesus is praying in the garden and He says to God, "I have revealed your name to them." Jesus was not informing the Jews what God's name was. They had God's name numerous times in the Torah and the writings, I am that I am, Yahweh, to name a few.

Jesus is not coming to earth to say, "Hey guys, I know what God's real name is." Instead He tells them that "if you have seen me, you've seen the Father."

Jesus is telling and showing them who God is. He is revealing the Father to them.

It is what John is describing when he begins his Gospel with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

So Peter is revealing that Jesus is the source of this gift that He is giving to the lame man.

Healing Today

Should we pray for similar miracles today? Christians are divided on this issue. **But we all believe that God is still sovereign and does still act in miraculous ways in our world.**

While our main prayer should be for God to change the hearts of the lost in the world, we should never be afraid to ask God to do whatever it takes to awaken a sinner who needs salvation.

We do not control how God works, but we can ask Him to use His power to glorify Himself and save the lost.

Notice what Peter does. He tells the man to walk, but he also helps him up. Something external had to happen to the man, and he can now stand and walk, and leap.

Once healed, the man runs into the temple. Two things are interesting about this.

First, he had been prohibited from entering the temple proper and this shows that he was completely healed.

Second, this is the hour of prayer and it is likely that this man recognizes that God is the source of his healing and is going to thank and praise God. In fact, that is what he did.

But more than this man is amazed.

Acts 3:9-11

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

And Peter seizes this opportunity to share the Gospel. Remember this was not their intent for that day. **Peter and John were coming to pray, but God provides an opportunity to share the Gospel.** I wonder how many opportunities we have missed?

Acts 3:12-16

12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Peter emphasizes three theological facts;

- **The glory of Christ**

Again, Peter goes to scripture for support that Jesus fulfilled the promise of Abraham and is the true offspring of Abraham

- **The sinfulness of man**

Peter states that in their sinfulness, they disowned Jesus. Peter calls Jesus a servant, bringing to mind the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

In our sinfulness we too disown Jesus. We place what we want above the Author of our very lives.

- **The right response to the Gospel**

The only feasible and logical response is to trust in Jesus with faith and repentance. It was not Peter and John who healed this lame man, but faith in the name of Jesus Christ restored this man to perfect health.

Repent Therefore

Acts 3:17-26

17 “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that

prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

Peter urges them to respond to the Gospel. He calls them “brothers” and even says that he knows they acted “in ignorance.” He has compassion on them. **Maybe John was rubbing off on him.**

Jesus’ death was no accident, but it was the expectations of the Old Testament. So Peter implores his audience to respond to the mercy of Jesus. He calls them to repent.

True repentance has four essential aspects.

- **First, it must be intellectual—we must have an awareness and understanding that we have done wrong.**
- **Second, it must be emotional—we must hate sin as God does.**
- **Third, it must be volitional—we must have an earnest desire to change and sin no more.**
- **Finally, it must be spiritual—we must believe that Christ is faithful and just to forgive all sins and cleanse from all unrighteousness those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9).**

Peter is talking to devout Jews who are gathering at the Temple. They see themselves as faithful followers of Yahweh, but Peter tells them that they need to “turn back.” The idea that they had to “return” to God was unthinkable. In their eyes they had never left God.

But Peter has upended their assumptions and points to Jesus as the “prophet like Moses.” They must turn from their wickedness and repent.

Takeaway

- **We need to take both individual prayer and corporate prayer more seriously.**
- **Don’t just look to solve the symptoms, but seek out the cure for the disease, which is surrender to Jesus Christ**
- **Remember that Jesus is the source of all good in our lives and we can trust in His name.**
- **We must respond to Jesus in faith and repentance.**

- **But repentance must be true repentance that is intellectual, emotional, volitional, and spiritual.**
 - **And like the Jews, we sometimes rest on our laurels that we are “Christians”, when in reality we very well may be like the Jews who are so far away from God that we need to “turn back” and “return” to the true Prophet of Moses, Jesus Christ.**
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Questions for further thought

1. Why do you think Peter and John stopped to help the lame man on this occasion? How would this scene have played out differently if they ignored him or simply gave him money?
2. How did Peter heal the man? What do verses 6-7 reveal about God’s purpose for performing miracles through His people?
3. What might have happened if Peter and John had failed to glorify God for the miracle He performed (v. 13)?
4. How has repentance and turning to God brought “times of refreshing” (v. 20) to you? How can that be used as a means of encouraging others to come to Christ?
5. Are there ways that you put limits on God’s working in your life? How can you resist that temptation?
6. How can you be used by God to meet spiritual and physical needs this week?