
“The Power of Jesus’ Name”

Acts 3

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(Acts 3)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ²Now 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. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

⁶Then 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.” ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹²When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³The 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. ¹⁴You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶By 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.

¹⁷“Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²²For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’

²⁴“Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ ²⁶When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

Core Idea: There is power in the name of Jesus. It was displayed through the miracle performed by the apostles – and the same power will be manifested to the world today through the church. It is our privilege and responsibility to make this power known through preaching and obedience.

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon church. I pray that you and your family are doing well. As we continue to worship online, something that I read from *Habits of Grace* (our book of the year) really stood out to me. This is what the author writes, “Corporate worship is the single most important means of grace and our greatest weapon in the fight for joy. Martin Luther says, ‘At home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through’” (156-157). I don’t think Martin Luther was implying that God doesn’t minister to us when we worship at our homes; I think he wanted to highlight the beauty of corporate worship – the kind of passion, fire that comes when we worship together: to sing in unison, to feel each other’s presence, to serve one another, and to pray together. Brothers and sisters, we were made to worship Jesus *together* – and I can’t wait for the day when all of us can gather again.

Maybe for this reason, I’m reminded of the passage from Acts 2:42-47 – the description of the first church – in a fresh way. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit came down and a revival took place in Jerusalem. 3,000 people responded to the gospel and they began to devote themselves to the Word and prayer. Their hearts were completely in awe of God at the wonders and signs, which led them to joyfully, willingly, and generously share everything they had with those in need. And the Lord added to their number daily. Something exciting was happening there. God was moving. Hope was rising. But it got me thinking, “How exactly did this happen? What were the wonders and signs that caused everyone to be filled with awe? What led them to share generously what they had?” Well, in Acts 3-4, Luke shares a story to show one of the ways God manifested His power that resulted in not only the church, but also the whole Jewish community to be in awe of Him. We’ll focus on chapter 3 today, but I’ll mention a few things from chapter 4 as well. So, follow along as I read Acts 3.

[READ Acts 3 HERE]

I want to look at three things about God’s power from this passage. And by doing so, I pray that all of us will experience that power in our own lives – and that the same power will be revealed in and through City on a Hill.

- **God’s Power Displayed**
- **God’s Power Explained**
- **God’s Power Made Available**

1) **GOD’S POWER DISPLAYED**

In verse 1, we see that Peter and John were on their way to pray at the temple. We also see a man who was lame from birth begging at the temple gate. Now, when this man asked Peter and John for money, verse 4 says that Peter and John “*looked straight at him.*”

The Greek word for “*looked straight*” goes beyond just seeing – it implies that they intentionally, intensely fixed their eyes on him. In other words, they weren’t just glancing at the man as they moved on; they stopped to see the need this man had. There must have been a lot of people at the temple gate – and many of them must have seen the man. But no one paid attention to him; they simply ignored him. And maybe the man himself was used to that – constantly begging yet not expecting much. But to his surprise, Peter and John stopped to engage with the man by saying, “*Look at us!*” Verse 5, “*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.’*” What’s amazing is that Peter reaches down and touches this man. You see, people in that culture avoided people with disability because it was often attributed to his sin or his family’s sin. Yet Peter and John were different. They took him by the right hand and helped him up – and instantly, his feet and ankles became strong; and he not only stood but started to jump and walk. God’s power was displayed through a miracle.

Now, when we observe the miracles in the Bible, you’ll notice that they’re never mere display of power. It’s never just to show that the miracle worker has the power. If the goal were simply to cause the audience to be amazed, you can’t help but wonder, “Why didn’t Jesus just fly? Or why didn’t the apostles just read people’s minds?” Instead, you’ll notice that the miracles often alleviated suffering or trouble of some kind. Why? Because biblical miracles point forward to the day when God will restore all things. God didn’t invent lameness. God didn’t create suffering and a world with death. When we turned away from God, poverty, injustice, sickness, and death – they all exploded into existence because of Sin. Biblical miracles, in contrast, display what God *desires* to do – and *will* do when the right time comes. One theologian said this: “Miracles are not an interruption of the natural order but the restoration of the natural order. We are so used to a fallen world that sickness, disease, pain, and death seem natural. In fact, *they* are the interruption.” It’s no coincidence Luke records that the man jumped. He could’ve just said that he walked; but twice, he shares that the man jumped. This is significant because it should’ve reminded the Jewish readers of Isaiah 35:5-6 which is a prophetic description of what we can expect when the Messiah comes to restore all things. Isaiah says, “*Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.*” Why is this important? **Because the miracles we read in the Bible don’t just tell us that God is powerful (though He is), but they’re also meant to give us great hope – a reason to look forward.** This man jumping, walking, and praising is meant to point us to something. We can be sure that God will make all things right again – and this knowledge will help us persevere and endure all things today.

One thing I don’t understand about my brother is how he can watch the same movie over and over again. He prides in the fact that he watched movies like *The Lord of the Rings* or *Remember the Titans* over 10 times. He watched them so much that he had memorized the script and the details of different scenes. Two thoughts: first, he could’ve used that time to enjoy other movies; but second, wouldn’t it ruin the movie since you already know the ending? But someone said this, “When you know the ending, you begin to appreciate how the story unfolds – how they’re connected, how things come together. The tension lessens, anxiety goes down no matter what kind of trouble the main character is in, all because you know how the story ends.” **Brothers and sisters, the miracles in the Bible like the one that we just read reminds us how our story will end.** This is not to say that what we experience in life won’t be hard.

It's painful to lose something that we cherished and invested so much of our time and money on, to let go of our dreams and ambitions, and to see our plans crumble as life takes us to unexpected places. But in all circumstances and seasons, we can let go of our worries because we know how this story ends. It's true that we may not know *how*; but God knows how everything will come together. We may not have everything we desire here; but we will be completely full and satisfied. We may feel crippled here; but we will be restored to perfection. We may feel bogged down by our sin today; but we will be freed from sin. This is the power of God displayed through this miracle. We can hope again.

2) GOD'S POWER EXPLAINED

Verse 10 tells us that the people around "*were filled with wonder and amazement.*" Some of them must have been tempted to worship Peter and John because this is what Peter says in verse 12, "*Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? [Verse 16] 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.*" Peter clearly explains that the power that healed this man was not from him but from Jesus. In verses 13-15, Peter describes Jesus as God's Servant, the innocent One, the Holy and Righteous One, the Author of life who was killed but God raised Him up from the grave. And it is *this* Jesus who was behind this miracle of physical restoration that foreshadowed our spiritual restoration. This would've been shocking news. Think with me. Many of these people must have heard of Jesus. Maybe some actually heard Him teach. Maybe some of them shouted, "Hosanna" as Jesus entered Jerusalem, or screamed, "Crucify Him" as He was taken to the cross. Then they must have thought, "Is Peter talking about *that* Jesus? But I saw Him die on the cross. You're saying that He's alive? That this power to heal came from *Him*? In fact, that this was God's plan all along – that the Messiah would save us through His death?" And Peter responds, "Yes, He's the One whom we should praise and worship!" Brothers and sisters, I want you to see that 2,000 years ago, there was a name that when it was proclaimed and when it preached, people were saved, healed, and their lives were changed. Amazing things happened then, and I want you to know that the name is still good today. It's the same name of Jesus that we come together to exalt and proclaim today. It's the same name that saves sinners today. It's the same name that strengthens us in our weakness, encourages us when we're crushed, comforts us when we're fearful, lifts us up when we fall, provides when we're in need, and guides when we're lost. Do you believe this? Are you confident of His name today?

Then we have to ask, "*How* does Christ accomplish this today?" Undoubtedly through the Word and in our prayers. But this passage reminds us of another way: through His presence in *your* life and in mine. Think with me. Peter says in verse 16, "*It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has completely healed him.*" Then it's important to ask, "*Who* had this faith?" When we read other miracle accounts from the Gospels, we often find that Jesus commends the faith of those who receive the healing. But there's no reason in this text to think that the man had any faith in Jesus – in fact, he was simply asking for money. Then *who* had this faith that healed this man? It must be Peter. But even this faith that Peter had was a gift from Jesus given in the moment to work this miracle. **Here's my point: it was Jesus who healed this man, but He did it *through* Peter by giving him the faith he needed and *through* Peter's willing obedience to act upon that.**

In the same way, we are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ – and He will accomplish His work *through* us. Isn't that an amazing truth? Believers, it's time we realize that Christ wants to work through us to comfort, encourage, provide, and strengthen those around us. He has given us the faith to believe that there is power in the name of Jesus and reminds us that we are Christ's hands and feet. Then the question is, "Will you respond? Will you look straight at those who are in need and give yourself generously to them?" I recently read an article called *When Miracles Don't Seem Miraculous*. It was written by a pastor who learned how provision through "natural" means is a true blessing. He shared that there were some challenges at his church which caused him to be overwhelmed with rage and anger toward some members. It was unbearable as his physiology changed and emotions were stretched. So, he started praying, "God, You say I'm Your friend, but I don't feel like it. God, I need to know that You are my friend." After his prayer, he noticed that he got a text from his older, wiser friend Elizabeth asking if they could talk, sharing that she had felt the Holy Spirit prompting her to call him that day. She ended up counseling him and his wife. Reflecting on this, listen to what the pastor writes, "God could have miraculously changed my temperament, my emotional health, my thinking, or my approach to church conflict. He didn't. But He did provide miraculously. God miraculously prompted Elizabeth to call me *as I was praying*, and she ended up being part of the way God is healing me. Not only that, this way led to three blessings. First, it built community as our friendship deepened. Second, it gave Elizabeth an opportunity to use her talent to bless me. Lastly, it provided beyond what I prayed for as the counseling showed more was going on than I knew."

Brothers and sisters, there's power in the name of Jesus. It's by His name, God will bless His people. But He will do that through *us* – His people. He will give *us* the faith to continue to trust in this name – we simply need to obey. The amazing thing is that when God's people care sacrificially, our passage shows us that two things will happen. **First, the world will notice.** This miracle was not just for this man. Verse 11 tells us that "*all the people were astonished and came running to them.*" Why is this important? Because it led to an opportunity for them to hear the gospel. Pastor David Platt says, "People become interested in the gospel when they see the effects of the gospel in the community of faith called the church. When people see the love of Christ, the power and presence of Christ in us then they will want to know more." **Second, when we love sacrificially, God is glorified.** In Acts 4, Luke shares that after Peter's sermon, Peter and John were arrested for teaching that there's power in Jesus' name. But listen to 4:21. "*After further threats [the leaders] let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because **all the people were praising God for what had happened.***" Because of this miracle, because Peter responded in faith, not only did this man praise God for the healing he received, but many also began to praise God. Don't you want to be used by God today? Then how can you be Christ's hands and feet? Maybe it'll be through a simple call, a prayer, cooking, a gift package, a letter, or finance. It's true that this pandemic has caused this to be more challenging. But I wonder if too many of us are using this to justify our inactivity. Friends, let us continue to believe in the power of His name. And let us continue to care – God will continue to show us how we can.

3) GOD'S POWER MADE AVAILABLE

Remember that there must have been people who knew Jesus, but also screamed, "Crucify Him!" To this crowd, Peter says in verse 13, "**You handed Him over to be killed... You disowned Him before Pilate... You asked that a murderer be released to you... You killed the Author of life.**" Now, when Peter shares that it was by *this* Jesus' name that this miracle came about, can you imagine how scared these people might have been?

“I’m doomed. I was against this powerful man.” But Peter doesn’t leave them in despair. Listen to what he says in verse 17, “*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.*” In other words, Jesus’ death didn’t mean that He failed. His suffering on the cross didn’t mean that He was powerless. The rejection He received didn’t mean that He wasn’t the Chosen One. **In fact, those are the very things that prove that He has completed His mission, that He is powerful, and that He is the long-awaited Messiah who rescues us from our sins.** It had to be done this way because there was no other way. It was the *only* way to save us from our sins.

Peter, then, offers this invitation of hope: verse 19, “*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*” Peter calls them to repent. What is repentance? Looking at the original language will help us. The Greek word for repent is *metanoeo*, which has two parts. The first part (*meta*) is a prefix that regularly means movement or change. The second part (*noeo*) refers to the mind and its thoughts and perceptions. **In other words, the word “repent” means to experience a change of the mind and heart.** To help us better understand, Peter adds this phrase, “*Turn to God.*” It’s turning away from the heart that desires to disown and kill Jesus to loving and adoring Him. It’s turning away from dishonoring and belittling God to thinking, speaking, choosing, and living in ways that exalt God – that show how much you treasure Him.

If you’re not yet a Christian, this invitation is for you. Turning away from the Author of life is to turn to death itself, but Christ has come for you and when you repent and turn to God, the guaranteed promise is that your sins will be wiped out. You will be made clean – righteous before God all because you believe that Christ died for your sins on the cross. Christ’s work becomes yours and you’ll enjoy eternity with the Author of life. So, I invite you, plead with you to turn to Him today.

Now, repentance certainly must happen the first time we turn from our sins and Jesus saves us. **But the Christian life is a life of repentance, because though we are saved, we’re still broken, weak, and sinful.** We continue to look for life in places other than the Author of life. We want to be in control, to be comfortable. We defend our rights more than wanting to identify with the suffering Servant, who invites us to follow in His example by taking up our cross. We continue to fall to our temptations – to our lust, greed, anger, and pride. And when this continues, we find that the weight of our guilt crushes us. We feel like we don’t deserve His love and grace. We *know* that God loves us unconditionally, but we *feel* like there must be a limit. Do you think this way time to time? And is this weighing your soul down? Do you feel like you don’t deserve His forgiveness for whatever reason? If this is you, repent. Turn to God because times of refreshing will come. Turn to God because *He* desires to forgive us; because it brings *Him* greater joy to refresh us.

I want to read a portion from a book called *Gentle and Lowly* – an amazing book that reveals the heart of Jesus that He has for us. The author says, “A compassionate doctor has traveled deep into the jungle to provide medical care to a primitive tribe afflicted with a contagious disease. He has correctly diagnosed the problem, and the antibiotics are prepared and available. He is independently wealthy and has no need of any kind of financial compensation. But as he seeks to provide care, the afflicted refuse. They want to take care of themselves. They want to heal on their own terms. Finally, a few brave young men step forward to receive the care being freely provided. What does the doctor feel? Joy. His joy increases to the degree that the sick come to him for help and healing.

It's the whole reason he came. So with us, and so with Christ. He does not get flustered and frustrated when we come to Him for fresh forgiveness, for renewed pardon, with distress and need and emptiness. It's what He came to heal. He went down into the horror of death and plunged out through the other side in order to provide a limitless supply of mercy and grace to His people... *Christ gets more joy and comfort than we do when we come to Him for help and mercy.*” Do you want to be forgiven and refreshed? Turn to Him. You will be forgiven and refreshed. He will never drive you away no matter how grave you think your sin is because it brings greater joy to Jesus when we come to Him. He wants to make Himself available to you. Repent and receive Him.

APPLICATION

One application: **remember that any moment can be a God-given opportunity to share the gospel.** Peter was always ready to preach. In chapter 2, he preached to the people who gathered after the Holy Spirit came upon the church. In chapter 3, he preached to the people who gathered to see the lame walk. In chapter 4, he preached to the leaders when he was arrested. He literally saw every moment as an opportunity to preach. Do we? Someone not too long ago shared that her laundry machine broke down. It interrupted her regular schedule – and she had to visit a coin laundromat to do her laundry. As she was waiting, she started a conversation with someone there; got to know him; invited him to the church; and even offered him a Bible. Now, her laundry machine breaking was an interruption to her day. It could've frustrated her. But little did she know that God was leading her there for an opportunity to make the gospel known to this man. Another church member was riding Uber to church one day. She decided to share the gospel and invited the driver to our church. As he dropped her off, he promised that he would come another day; and he did. Friends, how are you responding to these “interruptions” to your day? How aware are you of the opportunities that God is offering you through the regular, mundane part of your day? I pray that you'll have the eyes to see these God-given opportunities to share this life-giving message to someone this week, because this is how Jesus' power will be displayed and made known.

CONCLUSION

Brothers and sisters, there's power in the name of Jesus. It was displayed through the miracle performed by the apostles – and the same power will be manifested to the world today through us – those who place their faith in Christ. It is our privilege and responsibility to make this power known through our preaching and obedience. So, I invite you to do just that. But what will ultimately fuel and strengthen us to do this is knowing that the time will come when God will restore all things (3:21). He will make all things new. He will wipe away every tear from your eyes. There will be no more sin or suffering. Jesus is our sure and true hope. The more you repent and hope in Him, the more refreshed you'll be *in* Him until the day when we are with Him *forever* – completely refreshed in His presence. So, let us repent, care, and love because we believe that there's power in the name of Jesus.

Let's pray.