

## Acts Ch 3:1-26

“The Miracle, The Message”

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven He commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. That they were to *permeate, infiltrate, inundate,* and *saturate* the world with the good news that Jesus Christ had come to this earth, laid down His life on the altar of the cross, taking upon Himself the sin of the world, being delivered up for our transgressions, and raised for our justification. That the forgiveness of sin, and salvation would be granted to all who believe in Him. and He began to speak of the special provision/protection that would be there for those who were working in the mission field, insuring them of the fact that until He’s *finished* with their lives, nothing will fatally *harm* their lives. and Amongst other things, one of the things that He said would take place through the lives of those who believe is that they would lay hands on the sick and they would be healed, they would be made whole. Now we know that there’s a definite aspect of God’s sovereignty that figures into that, that it wasn’t a blanket statement saying that with out exception every time anyone is ill or somehow afflicted that if we lay hands *on* them, and pray *for* them they’d physically recover or else we’d never die. and It’s never our heart to circumvent the will of God even in turbulent or tough times, or in areas of affliction understanding that in our weakness, God’s strength is made perfect. That His grace is sufficient for us. But when it satisfies the *will* of God, and accomplishes the *purposes* of God to the *glory* of God in the *timing* of God, He will through your prayers, and/or by your touch at times grant an individual wholeness where they were broken, exchange sickness for soundness, impart healing to their lives. (Give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness)

Acts ch 3 has just such a happening, the Holy Spirit has been *poured* out, the people were absolutely *blown* out, Peter gave the *gospel* out, and people are being saved. Jesus told them to take the gospel into all the world *beginning* at Jerusalem, and that’s what’s going on. Now they’ll meet resistance soon enough but as for now they’re receiving favor from both God and men, they’re just hanging out consistently and persistently in the Word of God, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer. and What was happening the people revered and respected, vs 43 tells us (read). and This vs serves as the basic segue or transition for what takes place in ch 3 whereby one of the many wonders is recorded for us.

Now ch 3 has 2 basic aspects to it as it relates to an outline, #1 Vs 1-11 is “The Miracle” and #2 Vs 12-26 is “The Message.” If you wanted to get a bit more specific in the breakdown of those areas Vs 1-8 is “The Occasion”, Vs 9-11 is “The People’s Fascination”, Vs 12-18 “The Explanation”, Vs 19-25 “The Exhortation”, and we might consider Vs 26 “The Invitation.”

Vs1-3

That is, a donation of some kind, and this guy was in a good place to capitalize off of people's sympathy. Right there at the Temple gate, people coming to pray, wanting to draw near to God and all, and they would naturally feel some sort of *compulsion* to show *compassion*. Now there are a couple of things that we want to see here 1<sup>st</sup> of all we note that Peter and John went up "together" and often times when we see the disciples engaged in some sort of ministry related endeavor they're at a minimum paired off generally speaking. Now Philip would act alone by the leading of God, and Stephen of course was alone when witnessing in Acts Ch 6-7 which resulted in his becoming the 1<sup>st</sup> martyr of the church. But for the most part these guys did what they did at the bare minimum in pairs. You recall when the Lord sent the disciples out into neighboring towns, He sent them in twos, never alone.

There's more than one reason for that #1 it creates an atmosphere of accountability. There are no "Lone rangers" in the ministry, you get out there and divorce yourself from any real sense of structured accountability and you're just *inviting* trouble, and questions, shades of gray, and unnecessary pitfalls to come in and sterilize/paralyze what God wants to do in your life. The bible calls us as believers to lead lives that are blameless and one of the ways that we do that is through accountability. Peter and John went out together, Paul and Barnabas went out together, later Paul and Silas would *go out* together, it's a good thing, its accountable.

But also there's the issue of safety, there's safety in numbers and the bible is clear, "*Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.*" Eccl 4:9-10 So there is *safety* in #'s, there's also *strength* in #'s, the bible speaks in Duet of how in the Lord 1 puts 1,000 to flight and 2 will put 10,000. So for reasons of accountability, showing simple responsibility with what God has entrusted to us, for reasons of safety/security and strength its good whenever possible not to take on a ministry endeavor alone. and As a fringe benefit to that the ministry will create for you the best friends you'll ever have in your life, as you venture out in the Lord. *Seeking* the Lord together, *seeing* God *move* together, will create bonds that will last a lifetime. Peter and John seemed to have the irreplaceable bonds of friendship, they were business partners, they prepared the last supper together, John got Peter access into the courtyard of the high priest at Jesus' trial. Peter was hanging out with John during that 3 day interim period whereby Jesus was in the tomb, they both ran together to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, we see them going to the temple together here, these guys were good friends who were bonded by Christ. But I wanted to emphasize this "together" aspect of what was going on, the wisdom *in* that, and the need *for* that in our lives personally, especially as it pertains to the ministry.

Now the 9<sup>th</sup> hr was 3:00 in the afternoon and this was the time that followed the evening sacrifice, their day ended at 6:00 pm. Instead of sun up, to sun up, their calendar rotated from sun set to sun set. and It's significant that they went up at the time of prayer, but not the evening sacrifice, because there was no longer the need for sacrifice, the sacrifice was fulfilled in Christ.

But Vs 2 sets the stage for us regarding this certain man who was lame from his mother's womb. Vs 22 of ch 4 tells us that this guy was over forty years old, and everyday since he was old enough, someone would take him and lay him there at the gate called Beautiful to beg for help. and Luke is setting up a contrast for us, here is this man, outside the temple of God, he's lame, he's marred, but he's at the Beautiful gate begging for someone to help him. and This is where God's sovereignty (that we spoke of initially) comes in, because seeing as how the guy was over 40, and he was there everyday, that means Jesus had to have passed by him several times throughout the course of His physical/earthly ministry. Why didn't He heal the guy at one of those particular times? I don't know, perhaps the guy wasn't at the bottom yet, and as much hardship as he'd endured in his life, he wasn't yet prepared to receive Christ into his life. Most definitely it would serve to glorify Jesus in a greater way at this point as people by the thousands respond to Christ through this in such a way as to receive Him into their hearts and into their lives. But this is what I was in reference to with regard to God's sovereignty; Jesus didn't heal every person He ever encountered that was ill. If it served the Father's will, than so be it, if not, He wasn't a Genie tucked away in a magic lamp to be at our beck and call serving our personal whims when we feel the need if we'll just rub His magic lamp with the hand of our faith. We're here to serve *His* purposes, not the other way around. and For this guy, today is the day of salvation, he's content to ask for help that would merely sustain him in the condition that he's in, but he's going to get way more than he bargained for.

Because God's not in to simply supporting and sustaining us in the lame condition we're in, He wants to *change* our condition altogether. So Peter and John are preparing to enter into the temple, and here's this guy, and he asks them for help. Know this, people in the world are so often crying out for help, we're just not sensitive enough to see it. But so many musicians sing about how empty they are, how much they're hurting, how lost, confused, and alone they seem to be no matter what they try, fame and fortune doesn't heal the human heart. The comedic actor Chris Farley who died in 1997 said this in an interview just months prior to his death. "I used to think that you could get to a level of success where the laws of the universe didn't apply. But they do," he said. "It's still life on life's terms, not on movie's terms. I still have to work at relationships. I still have to work on my weight and some of my other demons. Once I thought that if I just had enough money in the bank, if I had enough fame, that it would be all right. But I'm a human being like everyone else. I'm not exempt."

Translation: "I need help" fame and fortune on the outside, but a beggar in need help in his heart. This guy is asking for some sort of help from Peter and John.

Vs4-10

Several things going on here, I want you to notice that this man was thinking that the answer to his problem was lying in the things of this world. He needed money, needed to buy bread that he might simply *survive*. But Peter was about to introduce him to the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ that He might really *live*, that is eternally. He's wanting Peter to turn him onto a few bucks for some temporal gain but Peter's fixing to open the door to *eternal* riches for him. He asks for help, Peter looks at him and says, "Look at us.." The man locks his eyes on Peter's, Peter says, "The answer's not found in the *silver* of this world, but in the *Savior* of this world, in the name of Jesus Christ Nazareth, rise up and walk." and He grabs him by the right hand and jerks him up, now that's quite a bold move of faith, this isn't simple saving faith at work here, this is the supernatural gift of faith that Paul speaks of in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor ch 12. That faith that goes beyond what one might consider saving faith that is able to believe God for what would otherwise be impossible. This man has been lame from birth, ankles out of socket and disjointed, he's never walked, his legs look like sticks, and now Peter is yanking him up before he knows what's even happening, what if he falls down, what if I'm reading the Spirit wrong here? None of that was going through Peter's mind because God granted him the faith in that moment to know that Jesus was going to change this guy's life forever. and In using the *name of Jesus*, it's really pointing more to His person and character than like a postage stamp that takes our prayer mail to Heaven. So that He's saying, "By the person, and power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." and His feet hit the floor, and just like that his stand was made for Jesus, 2 things to notice about vs 8 #1 The man praised God, not Peter.

Remember what Jesus said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*" Matt 5:16 Way to go Peter that's exactly what's happening. But the other thing that struck me was that Peter spoke of him being made whole through the name of Jesus and the guy praises God, because no one but God could do such a thing, which to me is simply another pointer to the fact that Jesus *is* God.

Something else I want you to see in vs 10 is the astonishment of the people over the fact that this guy is completely different than he was 30 seconds ago prior to his encounter with Christ. What's my point? That Jesus changes lives *noticeably*. If you claim to be a Christian and there's been nothing change in your life than prior to the time you were a Christian, or no one is able to discern a single difference between you and anyone else, you have cause for concern and would do well to reevaluate where you're at with Christ making your calling and election sure. Because Jesus is in the business of changing lives in a manner that's noticeable. (Paul, from killing Christians to preaching Christ)

We can't move on from the miracle to the message with out drawing attention to the fact that though this was something that happened practically, this event is also a picture of you and me personally. From the time this guy was born he was in a helpless state, outside of the presence of God, unable on his own to enter into the Temple.

All of us are born with the inability to walk in a manner that's pleasing to God, we're born intrinsically or innately in sin. David said, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*" Ps 51:5 Which is to say that when we were conceived sin was inherently present, it's a part of our nature. So that when Adam fell, he passed on from that point forward to all his children this lame condition of sin that we would all be born with. "Disjointed" if you will, unable to walk uprightly before God in holiness or righteousness. This man was poor, we're all spiritually bankrupt before God, its impossible for us to somehow payoff this sin debt that we've wracked up before God. Again he was outside the temple, all of us are separated from God, no matter how near the door we might get it's impossible for us to gain access to His presence on our own, be it by good works, giving money or being a fair person or anything else. But at some point you cried out for help, you were at the end of you, you'd looked to the things of this world only to find them faulty and futile. and You may not have known what exactly you were in store for but God *touched* your life, forgave your sin, and healed your heart. This man was made whole, and his healing was complete, it was instant, and it wasn't because of anything in him, it was completely and totally of the grace of God. It wasn't money that made things better, it was Jesus Christ Peter said, "...*you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*" 1 Peter 1:18-19

When Christ forgave your sin and healed your heart, your life was changed forever, you would never be the same. It was evident that this guy was different, and as we'll see here once this guy was able to stand, there was no question *where* he stood. I pray the same testimony is true of each and everyone of you, if God has raised you up, forgiven your sin and through that has given you the strength to stand and to walk in a manner that reflects Him, that there's no question where you stand. Do people know what you're about, not just because of what you say, but by the way that you live, does your walk *confuse* people as to who Jesus is, or *clarify* the issue as to what Jesus can do in people's lives? These people were *amazed, astonished* at the change in this man's life.

Vs11

Which is to say that this commotion resulted in thousands of spectators (Vs4 ch4) but being sensitive to the Spirit, Peter sees this as an opportunity for outreach. But real quick, take note of the fact that this man who has just been healed, "held on" to Peter and John. To me this speaks of discipleship, if you've had a life changing encounter with Christ, you do well to grab hold of some solid men (if you're a guy) or some godly women (if you're a gal) and just stay close *to* them, receive *from* them, be open to learning things *by* them that you might become rooted and grounded in Christ yourself. Find people that have walked with the Lord, and have grown in the Lord over the years that you might glean from them things that will aid you in your life as it pertains to your spiritual health and well being. There was nothing to stop this guy from walking and leaping right on down the road praising God all the while. But he knew that these guys knew Jesus and he wasn't letting them out of his sight.

So see the scene, this guy is totally stoked, Jesus has changed his life forever, everyone is wondering what's going on, they begin to recognize this man who's been there at the temple (we'll say conservatively for 20yrs) begging because he can't walk, and he's jumping up and down, shouting at the top of his lungs, praising the Lord.

There's no denying the legitimacy of this miracle, and there are scores and scores of people just in awe, gathering around to see what's happened.

Vs 12-16

You might take note of the fact that this *miracle*, simply serves to lead the people to the *message* of the resurrection, the Spirit of God leading people to the Word of God that they might be saved. Because faith doesn't come by *seeing* miracles, it comes by *hearing* the Word of God. The miraculous can gain attention, but it can't save a soul, salvation is through Jesus Christ Alone.

We commend Peter here for being careful to divert the attention off of himself and onto God, and the person of Jesus Christ Because so often when God begins to use a persons life, people begin to look to the person and there's a temptation for that person to begin to present himself as being a bit more spiritual or connected with God than any other. and Begin to receive the accolades and praise of men rather than giving glory to God where it's due. This could've been the beginning of The International Healing Ministries of the Apostle Peter. He could've passed the offering plate and offered to continue to minister should the love offering be large enough to keep the ministry going. But instead he says, "Why are you guys looking at us, as though we by our own power, or godliness made this man walk? There's nothing special about us, we've got no line on God that you don't in Christ, we're just like you." So often people want to praise God's instruments, and the instruments like the praise, so they walk a little straighter, speak in a tone that's a little more spiritual, wave their arms so that people can be slain in the spirit and things that are just bogus. But how many people having had cancer cut out of their bodies, or a tumor removed from their brain go back to the doctor and say, "Can I see that scalpel?" and Then they begin to praise the scalpel, "Oh you're so sharp, you did a fantastic job, thank you for being sterile and cutting with such accuracy, you've saved my life!" People don't praise the instrument, they praise the one that wields it, so to with the way God uses people, we're not to praise the instrument, we praise God who wields and works through the instruments. As the Psalmist said, "*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory,*" Ps 115:1 Peter carefully gives the glory to God.

Then he simply gives them a history lesson, "Why are you guys so astounded that the God of Ab, Isaac, and Jacob would heal this man? Does the Red Sea ring a bell, the burning bush, 40 years of food and water in the wilderness, the walls of Jericho, Gideon, David/Goliath, Elijah/Elisha, we serve a God of miracles, is there anything too hard for God? Why should it blow your mind that the God of all the earth, who created all things should be able to heal this man

From that platform he delivers the gospel message, “This is to the glory of Jesus Christ whom you delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let Him go. and When Pilate was trying to set Him free, you demanded that a murderer be released instead, denied the Holy and Just One, and killed the Prince of life.” Think of that, Jesus came that we might have *life*, and that more abundantly, He is the way, the truth, *and the life*, He offered the waters of *Everlasting life*, and yet mankind accepted a murderer (one who took life), and murdered the Prince of Life. and That Word “Prince” there could be rendered, “Author” or “Pioneer” He is the pioneer of resurrection life, the author of everlasting life, but this statement is irony at it’s worst, “Having *killed* the Prince of *life*.” But God vetoed the decision and raised Him from the dead, and Peter says, “We’re witnesses of His resurrection.” and In vs 16 Peter re-emphasizes that its all about Jesus, it’s His name, through *faith* in His name that has made this man strong. and He doesn’t even take credit for the faith, even that is a grace gift of God, underline that portion there (read).

Perfect soundness, that is, complete wholeness, it’s a medical term used only here, his life has gone from shatteredness to soundness, and its through faith in Jesus Christ that he’s been made whole.

#### Vs17-18

How did he know that they’re rejection of Jesus Christ was done in ignorance? Because Jesus said even as they raised Him up on the cross, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*” Luke 23:34 Paul told the Corinthians, had they known they wouldn’t have crucified the Lord of glory, but through their ignorance God fulfilled the foretelling of the prophets of how the Christ would suffer. So Peter is giving *compelling* and *convincing* evidence, *conviction* sets in, next comes *conversion*. There’s no *conversion* apart from *conviction*, because until a person is able to recognize the fact they they’re a *sinner*, they’re unable to see their need for a *Savior*.

#### Vs19

What blots out our sin? “Baptism” no, repentance, “Repent, change your mind as to who Christ is, be converted, and your sin will be washed away, blotted out, cast as far as the east is from the west.” and Notice that through repentance God will refresh your life, if you’re burdened by sin you can receive the blessing of forgiveness through repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ Jesus said, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” Matt 11:28 and Again, “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*” John 7:37 Times of refreshing granted through repentance toward God, faith toward Jesus Christ The burden of sin is too heavy for anyone to bear, and this is the beauty of what Peter is saying, you’ve done this, you’ve rejected Jesus Christ murdered the Prince of Life, but God will forgive your sin, if you’ll but repent *now* and give your life to Christ.

## Vs20-21

Peter, are you saying that if the nation of Israel would've repented as a whole and responded to Jesus in the affirmative that Jesus would've come right then and established His kingdom? That's exactly what Peter was saying, but they didn't receive Jesus nationally, they rejected Him, so its pointless to speculate the what ifs and why fors about it all, only God knows how things would've turned out. But now he quotes scripture again to support the reality of who Jesus is.

## Vs22-23

Take note of the personal responsibility of all of mankind, "Every soul" can choose to hear/heed and receive Jesus, or harden their heart, rebel and reject Jesus, but each will be held personally responsible for their own decision. and To reject Jesus Christ is to (ultimately) invite eternal destruction into your life.

## Vs24-26

The term "Servant" being applied to Jesus is a messianic term Isaiah used, and they were all familiar with what Peter was saying in employing that title with Jesus. That He was the promised Messiah sent to bless all the families of the earth in the forgiveness of sin. To the Jew 1<sup>st</sup>, and then to the Gentile; and I pray that it's the testimony of each and everyone of us that we've received the blessing of Jesus Christ having been turned away from our iniquities and robed in His righteousness. That's the message, that if you repent, and receive Jesus Christ times of refreshing will visit you from the presence of the Lord as He forgives your sin and makes you whole.

If you've never received Jesus Christ let God bless your life today in granting you the gift of forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ He wants to wash away your sin, and refresh your life, but it's by faith in Jesus Christ that you'll experience perfect soundness, complete wholeness, there's no other way, come to Christ, open the door of your heart and let Him in, you'll never be the same.