



Perfect Health and Future Blessing

Acts 3:1-26

1. The Miracle (verses 1-10)

2. The Message (verses 11-26)

Our world is going through a health crisis right now. COVID-19 has been ravaging our world. It has brought on unpleasant sickness and the pre-mature death of many. It is a matter of daily discussion for all of us. I don't need to say much more than this: We are longing for the day when we can put this virus behind us. We long to rid ourselves of masks. We want to be done with quarantines. We look forward to walk around in public without the fear of catching the virus and without the fear of spreading the virus to those who are vulnerable. In other words, we are looking for the day when we can experience health again. Where we don't have to think so much about our health.

But there is more to life than our physical health. As a church, we gather weekly to bring our attention beyond our physical health, to our eternal health. We assemble to remind ourselves of the blessings of a life lived in obedience to Christ.

In our text this morning, we will see both of these issues addressed, both our physical health and our spiritual health. We will see a sick man experience "Perfect Health." We will hear a man preach about how to obtain "Future Blessing." My message this morning is, thus, appropriately entitled, "Perfect Health and Future Blessing." My message comes from Acts, chapter 3, the entire chapter.

For the past few months, we have been working our way through the book of Acts. It is a great book of the Bible. It tells the story of the early church, how it began, how it progressed, and how the message of the gospel spread like wildfire throughout the world. Acts is a book of triumph and progress. Seemingly everywhere we read in the book of Acts, we read of people coming to faith. We read of expansion. We read of the church spreading far and wide.

That's not to say that it's without its trials and troubles and tribulations. There are many times in the book of Acts, when non-believers rise up in hostility to persecute people of God. They mock them. They beat them. They imprison them. They even put them to death. But the difficulties cast upon the followers of Christ, don't stop the work of God. In a strange way, they seemingly press the church to go further, with even more influence than ever before, with more and more followers entering the fold.

Throughout the book of Acts, there are some incredible events that take place. We read of people being raised from the dead (Tabatha, Acts 9:36-42, and Eutychus, Acts 20:9-12). We read of people being freed from demons who have oppressed them (Acts 8:7; 16:16-18). We read of the sick being healed of their diseases (Acts 5:15-16; 19:11-12; 28:9-10). We read of prophecies coming true (Agabus, Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-14). We read of visions, directing missionaries in where they should go (Acts 10 - Peter to Joppa; Acts 16 - Paul to Macedonia). We read of Jesus and the Holy Spirit verbally speaking to the disciples of Christ (Acts 9: 13:2). We read of angels and earthquakes opening prison doors (Acts 5, 12, 16). We read of answered prayer (Acts 4:31; 12:5). We read of churches being started (Acts 14, 18). We read of many coming to faith.

It's a super-encouraging book to read. It's the sort of book that hypes you up, and gives you an adrenaline boost to encourage you in following after the Lord. We have already seen some of these incredible events in the book of Acts.

In chapter 1, we saw the ascension of our Lord, when Jesus was taken up into heaven, engulfed by a cloud, out of sight of the disciples. It was pretty amazing. In chapter 2, we saw the Holy Spirit come upon the church and empower people to speak languages that they had never studied. This event caught the attention of the crowds who were inclined to listen to Peter's explanation. At the end of his preaching, 3,000 people repented of their sins, were baptized in water, and added to the church! It was pretty amazing.

The amazing continues in chapter 3, which is our text today. In this chapter, we will see a lame man, a cripple all his life, get up and walk. But not only did he walk, but he was leaping about. All of this came through the power of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. So, let's consider our text: Acts 3:1-26. Let's begin by reading the first 10 verses. I'm calling these verses, ...

1. The Miracle (verses 1-10)

That's what they explain. They explain the miracle of this lame man walking for the very first time.

Acts 3:1-10

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 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. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 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!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all

the people saw him walking and praising God, 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.

At this point, I simply want to work through these verses, making some observations along the way, seeking to bring this miracle to life, because it truly is amazing! The scene is set in verse 1, ..

Acts 3:1

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

Peter and John were disciples of Jesus. In fact, they were a part of the inner core of disciples. Jesus had his twelve disciples, but he had his core of three of closest disciples. On several occasions, he brought these three men in closer to him to experience something more than the others did. Jesus brought only Peter, James, and John up to the Mount of Transfiguration to see him changed into white splendor! (Matthew 17:1). Jesus brought only Peter, James, and John into the inner room where he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37). Jesus brought only Peter, James, and John to be apart from the other nine to hear him pray at Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). All that to say, that Peter and John were some of Jesus' key disciples, who saw and experienced more of Jesus than the others. As a result, they became leaders.

We read in verse 1 that they were going to the temple "at the hour of prayer." On any given day, the Jews would gather in the temple for prayer in the morning, and in the afternoon, and at sunset (see Psalm 55:16-17). Luke clarifies for us which hour he was talking about. He's talking about the afternoon prayer. The ninth hour is 3 o'clock.

The big significance for us is simply that there was a crowd of people in the temple, who were accustomed to going up to the temple to pray and commune with God. But on that day, they were to experience a far greater encounter with God than they were expecting. They witnessed a miracle. Enter the man who experienced the miracle first hand, ...

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.

This man had some sort of deformity in his legs. Perhaps it was Polio or Cerebral Palsy. Perhaps he had some other condition that paralyzed him from the waist down. We don't know. I suspect that his legs were deformed somehow. Looking at him, it would be obvious to all who saw him that he could not walk. The text also tells us that this man never walked. He was "lame from birth." It's a tragedy. Can you imagine your own child, never walking.

This man was carried to sit at the gate that was called, "The Beautiful Gate." Scholars have been unable to identify where exactly this gate was. But we do know two things about this gate. First, it was beautiful. Thus the name, "Beautiful Gate." Second, we know that this was a place where many people would pass on their way to the temple. It was a gate.

It was appropriate for this man to be placed there. In Bible times, it was common for those who were handicapped to beg for their living. This was not a one-time experience. It was "daily." This man was placed here during the hour of prayer, because many people would come by. Those who would be pricked in their conscience would give him money to help him live. Two of those who passed by were Peter and John.

Acts 3:3

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.

Asking to receive alms is a way of saying, "asking for money. He isn't so unlike those in our day, who stand at the median of a stop-light with a cardboard sign in hand, asking for money. If you are anything like me, you will often avoid eye-contact with such people, because, eye-contact means that you are going to give something to the beggar. In verses 4 and 5, we see eye-contact being made.

Acts 3:4-5

Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

When eye-contact was made, this beggar was "expecting to receive something from them." He was expecting to receive some money. Then comes Peter's famous line in verse 6, ...

Acts 3:6

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!"

At first, I'm sure the beggar was disappointed. "No silver? No gold? No money? But that's what I need!" Next, the beggar was certainly intrigued. Peter was prepared to give him something else? Food? Clothing? I doubt that he ever imagined what he was getting that afternoon. He was getting "perfect health."

Before he even realized what was happening, Peter ...

Acts 3:7-8

... took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Now, this is amazing! Here's the beggar, who needs to be carried to the gate every day to beg for money, now "walking and leaping and praising God." I love how Dr. Luke, the physician, explains the miracle. "His feet and ankles were made strong." Something happened

medically with his feet. Muscles were formed. Tendons were attached. Nerves were set in place. He stood up and walked instantly.

This beggar was not like the toddler, who learns to walk, slowly over many days. First of all a small child will stand with the aid of the coffee table, falling down often. Eventually the little child will be able to stand free without the table. Upon taking a first step or two, more falls to the ground will follow. Eventually, a toddler learns to walk across the room, shaky at first, but more confident later. This entire process often takes months of learning by trial and error. Nor was this man like the stroke-victim, who needs months in therapy to learn to walk again.

This man was walking and leaping instantly. I would contend that a double-miracle took place that day. Not only were his feet and ankles strengthened, but also skills and ability to walk and jump about came instantly.^[1] So thorough was this healing, that Peter called it "perfect health" in verse 16 (thus, the title of my message this morning). But, beyond the physical healing, this man also experienced a spiritual healing as well.

This beggar was filled with thankful joy! He was "praising God!" Can you imagine the words out of his mouth! Here are some possible exclamations that he may have said: "Thank you, Lord!" "Bless the Lord!" "I can walk! Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord!" "Thanks be to God!"

It seems as if he wasn't bashful about his newfound abilities. Nor was he quiet. His actions got the attention of all who were around.

Acts 3:9-10

And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 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.

When the people saw it all, they were amazed! They were all amazed at this miracle. This is so unlike many of the "healing" that takes place today with big tele-evangelists. As R. C. Sproul says, "This was no staged plant for a healing service."^[2] In other words, this isn't some pre-meditated, pretended "healing" to get attention of the people, so that you can solicit more donations. No, these people knew this man.

This man was recognized "as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate" (verse 10). They recognized him because they had seen him a hundred times before! They saw him sitting in the same dirty place, displaying the same cardboard sign, and wearing the same dirty clothes. They heard him saying the same thing, "Alms for the poor! Alms for the poor!"

This was an authentic miracle! And nobody could deny it. In fact, later on in chapter 4, the leaders are going to convene against Peter and John, hating their preaching of Jesus. Yet, they can't deny the miracle. "Seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition" (Acts 4:14). So, they dismissed everybody and talked privately. They said, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16).

This is an undeniable, fully authenticated miracle, that could only be explained by the power of God. That's exactly what Peter does. He explains what took place, by saying that it was the power of God that did it all. This leads nicely to my second point:

2. The Message (verses 11-26)

Verses 11 and 12 set the stage for Peter's message, ...

Acts 3:11-12

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people:

By the power of God, Peter was enabled to perform this miracle, which got the attention of many. We read in verse 10 that the crowds "were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him." In verse 11, we read of how "all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's."

The portico called Solomon's was a spot inside the temple grounds, where there were some tall, stone pillars, some 30 feet tall, holding up a cedar roof. It was a great place to preach, as many could gather there. Here is what Peter said, ...

Acts 3:12-26

"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? 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. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 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.

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 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. 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. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 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.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Now, before we get into the content of this message, I simply want to point out to you how Peter takes advantage of the opportunity set before him to preach about Jesus. Because, there is great application here for us. We may not be able to heal crippled men like Peter did. But we can take the opportunities that present us and pivot to conversations to Jesus.

When the talk about the office is about the trying times of our country with the election and our division, you can pivot to speak about the secure kingdom of Jesus. Or you can pivot to talk about your comfort in God's sovereign hand over our nation. When the talk with strangers in the store are about COVID and masks, you can pivot to speak about our frailty, and how we all will die someday. Or you can pivot to talk about the hope you have in Jesus. When the talk in your family is about plans for Christmas, you can pivot to talk about the reason why Jesus came to earth. Or you can pivot to the amazement of the fulfillment of prophesy that predicted the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. When the talk with your friend is about the hardships at work, you can pivot to talk about the reality of the fallen world, that the garden is now filled with thorns and thistles that makes work so hard. Or or you can pivot to talk about the rest that is found in Jesus. When the talk with your neighbor is about events for the upcoming weekend, you can pivot to talk about your plans on Sunday morning to be at church. Or you can pivot to talk about your true joy in worship each weekend.

In these ways, you can be a witness for Jesus, which is the application to the book of Acts. This is what Peter did (verse 15). With the numbers of people curious to understand what happened to this crippled beggar, Peter made the pivot. He began by setting the matter straight of how this man was healed. He was healed by the power of God (verse 13) through faith in Jesus (verse 16). Then, Peter continued by addressing their sin: they killed the very one who had come to give them life (verses 14-15). Finally, Peter preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins (verse 19).

This ought to sound familiar. Doesn't it sound a bit like Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost? Where Peter begins by setting the matter straight (Acts 2:14-21), saying that the tongues aren't because people are drunk. Rather, the tongues is the fulfillment of the prophecies. Then Peter continued by preaching about Jesus (Acts 2:22-35), his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. Peter then addressed their sin: they were responsible for killing their Messiah (Acts 2:36). Finally, he ended up preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins (2:38).

One commentator noted the similarity between these two messages. "It seems strange, at first glance, that in his narrative Luke would place two such similar sermons of Peter so close together. But his putting the Pentecost sermon in the introductory section of Act was evidently meant to be a kind of paradigm of early apostolic preaching." This paradigm is applicable to us as well. Take the situation at hand, and address it. Then pivot to Jesus and to sin. Bring it all down to repentance and faith in Jesus.

This morning, we don't have time to do full justice to Peter's message. Next week, we will look in detail through it. But, in our time remaining, I simply want to look at the last verse of Peter's sermon, because, it holds everything together in the message. Peter says, ...

Acts 3:26

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

Peter begins this verse by talking about **God**. That's where Peter began his sermon in the first place. He says in verse 12, "Why do you wonder at this?" He was asking them about the miracle that took place. He was astonished that they were amazed, because it was God who gave the power to do this (verse 13), not because of Peter's piety. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! It was the God of their fathers (verse 13).

With all things, this is a good place to begin. For God is the answer to all of our problems. He is the fundamental explanation of everything.

Next, Peter speaks about the **resurrection**.

Acts 3:26

God, having **raised up** his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

"God, having raised up his servant." We will see this over and over again when we look at the preaching in Acts, the resurrection is prominent. It was prominent because many who heard the gospel for the first time in the book of Acts didn't understand the resurrection.

The resurrection is explicitly mentioned in verse 15, "whom God raised from the dead." The very fact that Peter was preaching the resurrection is the very issue that was hated by the religious leaders. They were "greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2).

Peter refers to Jesus as his "servant" (verse 13). He is the holy and righteous servant of God (verse 14). He was the "Author of life" (verse 15). This is the very one that they killed. This is the one that God raised from the dead (verse 15).

Why did God send his servant? To grant repentance. Look again at verse 26, ...

Acts 3:26

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you **by turning every one of you** from your wickedness.

This idea of turning is what repentance is. Repentance is going one way, but then turning to go back the other way. This is what God has done. The sovereignty of God is clear here. It is God who does the turning of people around. This is like in Acts 11, when the apostles were trying to figure out the place of the Gentiles in the kingdom. They finally determine that "to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

In verse 26, we see God blessing people by turning people from their wickedness. This is the last theme of Peter's sermon that I want to pull from verse 26: blessing.

Acts 3:26

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, **to bless you** by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

From here, I get the title of my message. "Perfect Health" for the beggar who is healed (see verse 16). And now, "Future Blessing" from the Lord (verse 26). How is God blessing you? By turning you from your wickedness.

This blessing brings us back to verse 25, which quotes from Genesis 12:3, "And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Paul said in Galatians 3:8 that the Scriptures "preached the gospel beforehand" in this quote. That is, Abraham received this promise that the world would be blessed through God's blessing of him. The blessing would come through Abraham's offspring, his seed.

Now, have you ever thought about the blessing of repentance? Yvonne and I had the opportunity to speak with someone this week who has repented. There was in this person a joy that wasn't there before, when in the depths of the darkness of sin. With repentance come light and hope and blessing. People often think in the midst of sin that this is where their joy will be found. They don't understand that the blessing is actually in turning and going the way of God, turning their backs to the ways of the flesh.

Psalms 1 speaks about the blessing of following after the right ways, not the wrong ways. The one who walks in righteousness will be steady and firm like a tree. He won't be blown around like the leaf or like the chaff that blows away. This is the blessing of repentance. When you stand in the presence of God, there will be pleasures throughout eternity (Psalm 16:11). This is the future blessing that comes with repentance. May we all come to know this blessing.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 15, 2020 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Another example of a double miracle is when Jesus calmed the storm. Jesus and the disciples were in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus "rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). Stopping the wind was the first miracle. Making the sea calm was the second. If Jesus simply made the wind stop, the sea would have continued to toss and turn for some time.

[2] R. C. Sproul, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary, Acts, p. 76

[3] Richard N. Longenecker, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9, Acts. p. 296.