

Word about Election:

**Prop 1 -**

As most of you are aware, abortion rights are already guaranteed by California law—they are in no danger of being overturned since our governor and legislators have declared California to be an “abortion sanctuary.” Our state has some of the most progressive abortion laws in the nation, which guarantees a woman’s right to an abortion, with reasonable limits on late-term abortions.

Prop 1 would bake into California’s constitution one of the most extreme abortion laws in the world. Most states and 47 European countries limit late-term abortions, as California law currently does. Unlike current state law, Prop 1 contains no limits on abortion, allowing taxpayer-funded, late-term abortions at any time, for any reason, up to the moment of birth—even if the baby is healthy and the life of the mother is not threatened. Voting “no” on prop one does not change existing California law, it only rejects making it even more extreme.

**Local School Board Candidates-**

If you’re like me, when it comes to filling out your ballot in the section for Local School Board candidates it’s tough to find enough information or to know how to vote responsibly. As you know, in these days school board candidates have become a hot topic. So, we are making available to you a resource that will help you. Each candidate completed a non-partisan questionnaire and the results have been collated into one document for your review as you complete your ballot. We’ll be sending out a link to this resource the week before the election in the Foothills Monthly.

## **Introduction**

Today in our teaching time, we take another step in our series in the book of Acts. The book of Acts is a history of the beginning of the church and the spread of the transforming story of Jesus. In our journey through this history, we're going to review the ancient story of how the good news of Jesus spread from a hundred or so believers in Jerusalem to the regions around Jerusalem to what now is modern day Turkey and Greece and ultimately to Rome.

And periodically along the way we're going to press pause on the ancient story, and we're going to revisit the modern-day story of how the truth of Jesus and the church is spreading to the far reaches of the globe today. We're going to be checking in from time to time with our alliance international workers or missionaries to hear about what's happening today. Our next check in will be with Aaron and Rhoda Steinert the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

## **Last Week:**

In Acts the truth of Jesus was spreading like wildfire in Jerusalem. Last week we saw a description of how the infant church was caring for all the new believers that were being added to their number daily. Luke describes for us in the final verses of chapter 2 how the Holy Spirit had captured the hearts and lives of the early believers and it was finding expression in how they related to God and how they related to one another. We saw how their newfound faith was thriving on a steady diet of God's word and worship. And we saw how their newly transformed hearts extended to one another in the same generous way God had extended to them. It's a beautiful picture of the church—loving on each other without being creepy, as Phil reminded us last week.

**[Transition]** - As we step into chapter 3, we see an incredible story and demonstration of *the power of the name of Jesus*...and how it can heal body and soul.

But, before we jump into our story, I think we need to play a quick game of Simon says. Do you remember this game? I'll be the leader. And you

only do what I ask you to do when I say, "Simon says." Let's practice. Simon says stand up. Simon says scratch your belly. Now, raise your hand.....oops...if you raised your hand, you have to sit down cuz I didn't say, "Simon says."

Simon says, Wave. Simon says, pat your head. Simon says march in place. Now stop marching...oops did you stop? I didn't say, "Simon says stop marching." Okay...Simon says, sit down.

**[Transition]** - Why in the world did I ask you to do that? Well, today, we're going to see a story of Simon Says...well, more accurately it's Simon Peter says...get up and walk.

In our story today in Acts 3, Peter and John are keeping a tight schedule and they were on their way to a 3 O'clock church service but they end up engaging in two very significant, life changing interactions with the people they encountered. Look with me at verses 1-10. Read verses.

### **The name of Jesus can bring strength and healing for the crippled body (vs. 1-10).**

This man was crippled from birth. Daily he was carried to the gate "Beautiful" to beg. {show pic of gate} This is the gate called beautiful. It's on the Eastern side of the city wall. Ironically, it is the gate the Messiah is said to enter when he returns from the Mount of Olives. As you can see, it's blocked up tight. It was blocked up by the Muslims to prevent the returning Messiah from entering.

The crippled beggar was placed by this gate. Every day at the same gate. Every day at the same spot. So, every day his day was the same. Now, the Temple goes in those days were much like you and me. When you come to church do you drive the same route? When you park, you park in the same basic area? And you enter through the same door pretty much every week, right? And I know you even sit in the same seat. Ha-ha...am I right?

So, those who entered the Temple courts through that gate would walk past him every day. How many people do you think actually saw him anymore? It happens, doesn't it? We go blind to what we see every day.

**[Illustration]** - You've heard of "nose blindness?" Nose blindness is a temporary, naturally occurring adaptation of your body that leads to an inability to detect or distinguish common scents in your surroundings. It's sometimes also referred to as olfactory fatigue or olfactory adaptation.<sup>1</sup> But when that same thing happens with our vision it's called "inattentional blindness." (also called perceptual blindness). It is the failure to notice something that is completely visible because of a lack of attention.<sup>2</sup> This often happens when we are so familiar with a space or a path or whatever that we become blind to what's right there in plain sight.

Because this guy was a permanent fixture by the temple gate and probably invisible to most people who walked by on a daily basis. But today was different. Peter and John, now filled with and captured by the Holy Spirit, take notice of him on this day. Though they had likely walked by this guy countless times before, this day was different. Today they "see" him. They stop and they offer what they could to help him.

Miraculously, this crippled beggar was healed, and he is overjoyed, follows them into the inner courts of the Temple, causing quite a scene, running and leaping and praising God. Now the rest of the people see him and recognize him as the dude who sits by the gate. Now, notice what Peter says. Look at verses 11-16

Notice, Peter, and John are adamant about how this miracle of healing happened. It was all possible as they ministered to his man, in the name of Jesus! Why do they make such a big deal about the name of Jesus? Is it like a genie bottle that you rub and you get three wishes? Is it like a magical spell...say the name and the gates of heaven automatically open

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/nose-blindness#what-is-it>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.apa.org/monitor/apr01/blindness>.

and give you whatever you ask? Of course not, not at all. But it's easy to slide into that thinking.

When a person ministers in the NAME of Jesus it means that they are ministering or serving in the reputation, authority, power, and character of Jesus. Remember it this way...in the Bible, Name = nature/essence. So, in practical terms...belief in Jesus' name is the same as believing in Jesus himself.<sup>3</sup>

While powerful, the name of Jesus is not a magical word that locks God into action or obligates him to grant what is asked. It's not like Peter said, "Simon Peter says" get up and walk. The use of the expression "in his name" expresses the fact that the disciples spoke and acted like Jesus had taught them. They spoke on his behalf and with his clout and with his authority as they were enabled by the Holy Spirit.

And that was a message God wanted his people to get loud and clear. The power of God was present and being administered by followers of God as they were enabled by the Holy Spirit. The title of this message today is "What can one person do?" ***And the answer is: More than you might imagine, when you are willing to be a servant and to be used by God as a conduit of his power.***

This is why the Apostle Paul says, "**20** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..." Ephesians 3:20

In our story today, God chose to change this man's life through the ministry of Peter who noticed him, was willing to stop, notice it says, "He looked straight at him," and he did what he could do. Now, I don't want you to miss the fact that this healing was very purposeful and a part of

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<sup>3</sup> R Youngblood, *Names in Bible Times, Significance of*, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Edited by Walter Elwell, p. 750.

God's larger, sovereign plan. Notice, verse 13...the healing was accomplished by God's sovereign plan to glorify Jesus in that moment.

Now sometimes we see Jesus healing for reasons that mostly seem motivated out of plain compassion and love. But, fundamentally, miracles are purposed-filled...they serve to advance God's sovereign plan in the world. You could say that miracles are most often about glorifying God, not glorifying us.

**[Illustration]** -In John 9: 1-3, Jesus and his disciples come upon a blind man and his disciples asked Jesus about the source of his blindness...did it come from the sin of his mother or father. And Jesus replies, *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."* Then he healed the man to glorify God and to demonstrate that he was the Son of God. The miracle was not so much about that man, as it was purposeful and fit into God's sovereign plan and God's bigger picture of life.

**[Transition]** - Now, keeping God's sovereign plan and perspective in view, I don't want you to miss that this power for healing this crippled man is still available today. Many people ask about this? Does God still heal today? Or, does our church believe in healing? And the answer is; absolutely! But, I want to make sure we have a proper understanding about healing in the context of God's sovereign care of our lives.

You see, through his death, resurrection and exaltation, Jesus, makes available to us every blessing that God desires to give to man—Spiritual, Physical and Mental—things like: forgiveness, new life in our souls, restoration, assurance, cleansing, deliverance, his Holy Spirit, eternal life and healing to name just a few.

By making peace with God and reconnecting creature with creator, Jesus makes available to us all that God earnestly desires to give us. And like this physically crippled man, you and I are invited then to step out in faith

and in obedience to God's Word and open ourselves to these blessings in our lives.

Now, it is CRITICAL to realize that not all the blessings made available in Christ's death and resurrection operate in the same way. When we place our trust in Jesus to be the leader and forgiver of our lives:

- Some of the amazing results of that are available immediately (Power and presence of Holy Spirit). But other results will come in the future (final glorification of our bodies and our eternal lives with Christ in heaven).
- Some are gradual (like the gradual growing in the knowledge and understanding of God and learning to obey Him). And others are instantaneous blessings (like when we are judged "not guilty" for our sin because Jesus took on our guilt and when new life is granted to our souls).
- Some of the amazing blessings are once-for-all (like when we are adopted into God's family). But others are extended to us as often as we need them (like forgiveness, grace and mercy).

All these blessings are made available to us through a personal trusting relationship with Jesus, but they are not all available in the same way.

**For example**, while the blessing of salvation or forgiveness is *always* granted by God to the genuine repentant sinner (Rom. 10:9,3:22), God *may or may not depending on his purposeful sovereign plan and perfectly loving will for our lives* choose to grant a genuine request for healing.

The book of James 5:14 clearly instructs us to pray and ask God for healing "in the name of Jesus" believing that he is able to do it. So, when this is lived out in our lives, it seems best for a believer to pray, believing

in the power of God to heal... but then to pursue any normal medical procedures available today.

God may answer that prayer miraculously or through the advances of medicine that he has allowed to be discovered in our day. Both glorify Him and can be useful in accordance with his purpose-filled sovereign care of our lives.

**[Transition]** - The stunning message in the healing of this lame man by the Gate Beautiful, was clear to all: **the power by which Jesus had healed such people during his public ministry was now being ministered through his followers.**

This was not welcome news to those who thought they had killed the miracle working Jesus once and for all on the cross. This amazing miracle and the man's head over heels reaction of praise that followed drew the attention of the folks in church that day. And Peter seizes the moment to share something else in the name of Jesus. Read verses 17-26.

**The name of Jesus can bring forgiveness and refreshment for the crippled soul (vs. 17-26).**

In addition to healing a crippled body, the name of Jesus can bring healing for a crippled soul. Peter shares this gracious proclamation of divine amnesty, offering a free pardon to all who took part in Jesus' death, if only they acknowledge their error, confess their sin, and turn to God in repentance.

Have you ever doubted whether God could or would forgive you and what you've done? Have you ever had a wobble of doubt? When you have those moments...remember these verses. Remember what Peter is saying right here in these verses.

Peter is promising forgiveness and restoration to the very men who demanded Jesus be crucified on the cross. The very men who rejected



him and disowned him in front of Pilate. The very men who demanded a corrupt, hideous murderer be released, and Jesus be crucified.

Inconceivably, Peter was promising grace and forgiveness to them if they would only change their former attitude toward Jesus and bring it into line with God's attitude toward Jesus which was now clearly evident through the resurrection, and through the miraculous healing in Jesus' name that was occurring.

The resurrection effectively corroborated the truth claim that Jesus was in fact, the promised Messiah. If they turn from rejecting Jesus to accepting him as Savior and Lord, Peter promises them that their sins will be totally cleansed and blotted out and times of refreshing would come to them from God.

And just like the healing of the crippled ankle, healing for the sin-crippled soul is still available today. It is God's sovereign plan to extend this blessing of forgiveness of sins to each one of us whenever we call on the name of Jesus. If you have been ignoring Jesus in your life or rejecting him in your heart, God in his amazing pardoning grace continues to offer you another chance. Though Jesus is eager for you to come to him and graciously inviting you to come and receive forgiveness; don't miss the warning of verse 23. There will come a time when the opportunity to turn to him and receive forgiveness and refreshment will end.

And those who refuse to change their attitudes toward Jesus will be cut off. And since we don't know how long the opportunity will be available, I would invite you to make today the day when you allow your soul to be healed and when you stand and begin to walk with Jesus.

All it takes a decision in your heart that is communicated with a prayer to God. *"God, I know I need you. I have mostly ignored you in my life to this point, but today I recognize you as my Savior. And I want to stand and walk with you. Forgive my sin and bring your refreshment to my life."*

**[Transition]** - Pretty amazing trip to Church for Peter and John don't you think? What can one person do when they go to Church? What can one person do when they go to their workplace? What can one person do in their neighborhood?

These two engaged in two very significant, life changing interactions and Peter seized the opportunity to share two very powerful truths. When you ask the question, "What can one person do?" The answer is, "more than you might imagine when you are ministering in the name of Jesus!

In this story...everybody was standing around in awe with their eyes locked onto Peter and John. And notice how adamant Peter is about how these amazing things happened...look at verse 12...and then verse 16.

**The power is not in your piety, it is in the name of Jesus (vs. 12 &16).**

- It's not about your quality of faith; it's about the object of your faith.
- It's not about the quality of the needy person's faith. It's about the object of their faith, the object of their belief.
- It's about ***who they are putting their faith in***. The power is in the name of Jesus, the person and authority of Jesus ministered through us by the Holy Spirit. ***Belief in Jesus unleashes the power of God for what God wants to do IN you and what he wants to do THROUGH you.***

What can one ordinary person do? Extraordinary things in the name of Jesus. Take courage, then, to stop and extend in relationship...take courage to stop and make that phone call, take courage to walk across the room and connect, take courage to ring the doorbell, write a note or leave a message.

What can one person do? Take courage and confidence because it's more than you might imagine when you cooperate with the Holy Spirit and minister in the name of Jesus.

It's not about our power or piety. It's about making ourselves available and taking the risk to let God do what God wants to do through us.

Let's keep our eyes and hearts open for those little opportunities to "raise people up" in the name of Jesus. Many walked by this beggar, but Peter and John noticed him and looked straight at him and extended to him. Who knows what God wants to do through you. What can one person do? More than you might imagine in the name of Jesus.