

Healing With Purpose—Acts 3:1-12—4/21/24

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Open your Bibles to Acts as we continue to study the history of the church from its beginnings that we've seen in the 1st two chapters.

We've marveled at the experience of these eyewitnesses of Jesus' life & ministry & death & resurrection & ascension.

Jesus had promised it would be better for Him to go away because He would send His Spirit from the Father to indwell them.

So the Holy Spirit came with a display that symbolized God's judgment on Israel's unbelief & God's new era of the church.

The miracle of many languages was explained by Peter as the dawn of the last days when God's Spirit would bring salvation to all nations.

In Acts 2:21, Peter quoted Joel 2:32 in proclaiming that *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

Peter explained that Jesus is that same Lord of the OT with the same name in the sense that a name stands for all that Person is & does.

Peter's sermon in Acts 2 extolled Jesus as the promised Davidic Messiah or Christ & the Lord who lives forever.

But Jesus was also the One the Jewish leaders handed over to Roman leaders as crowds of Jews also cried for His crucifixion.

So Peter called them to repent & follow Jesus & be saved & 3000 responded & were baptized & added to that 1st church.

God's Spirit transformed them into a devoted community that shared life together under the leadership & instruction of the 12 Apostles.

Those 12 Apostles were specially chosen as eyewitnesses of Jesus who could pass on all He said & did.

Read Acts 2:42-43 to recall the special role of the Apostles as God's proven instruments of revelation testifying of Jesus. [READ]

The Apostles' teaching was foundational & that was proven by the many wonders & signs taking place through them.

As Luke wrote Acts 2:43, he had in mind to write an example of what such wonders & signs looked like & that's what we read in Acts 3.

So let's read the full thrilling account in Acts 3:1-26. [READ]

Wow! I pray you are amazed at this miracle of healing with purpose.

It was a sign & wonder that God planned in its specific time in a specific place with specific people with specific purposes.

We're going to unpack 5 divine purposes from it from verses 1-12 to fuel our amazement at the power & authority of Jesus.

We want the details of these 5 divine purposes lead us to faith & praise of Jesus & appreciation of the Apostles & their role.

Let's take this a verse at a time—read verse 1 again. [READ]

We know who Peter was & this John was the beloved Apostle in Jesus' inner circle along with his brother James & Peter.

Since John was with Peter in the fishing business & in following Jesus after His arrest & in running to see Jesus' empty tomb, it's no surprise to find them together here.

They were continuing normal patterns of Israelite worship of God that were described in Acts 2 & at the end of Luke 24.

They had not yet broken with Jewish customs since the newness of the church as distinct from Israel had only begun to be clear.

Luke's choice to report this miracle was partly because it led to the arrest of Peter & John that increased the distinctive separation of the newly formed church.

As Acts 2:46 said, these believers were continuing with one mind in the Temple & that included the daily prayers of faithful Jews.

This was the Temple complex as a whole & not the Holy place.

Jews went up to that temple area in approaching God 3 times a day as mentioned in Psalm 55:17 & as modeled in Daniel 6:10.

They prayed at the 3rd, 6th & 9th hours of daylight & the 9th hour was 3pm our time & coincided with the evening sacrifice.

God planned this time with many there who would've known this congenitally crippled man that we read of in verse 2. [READ]

This certain man had a physical handicap from his mother's womb—congenital by some deformity or development deficit.

It was not from an accident or injury or anything where his legs had ever experienced standing or walking or jumping.

This was not something psychosomatic or seasonal or that could've been rehabilitated or helped with therapy.

And this was a grown man—not a child—as the Jewish leaders said he was more than 40 years old in Acts 4:22.

His parents had likely tried to help him & yet he found no way to fix or improve his crippled legs for over 40 years.

He could not walk or limp or use crutches & so a plural number of men were required to carry him each day to the temple gate.

The man could not work & so he was placed there to beg alms, or ask for charity or donations, from those entering the temple.

His normal place at the Beautiful Gate was likely the largest entrance, also called the Nicanor Gate on the east side above the Kidron Valley.

According to Jewish historian Josephus, this Beautiful Gate was covered with Corinthian brass & plated gold & was 75 feet high & 60 feet wide & required 20 men to open & close.

So it was a broad entrance where many would pass by this man.

They would've known him as he asked for gifts like we read of him doing in verse 3. [READ]

This man asked Peter & John for a gift just as he had many others & that clues us into the reality that this healing was totally unexpected.

No one was expecting a healing of this man who was old enough to have tried everything & to be known by everyone.

He was known & the inability to fix his crippled legs was also known & so God had planned this healing to be undeniable.

No one would question if this was an injury or ailment that improved over time or was helped by splints or therapies.

What we find in these 1st 3 verses to note as a 1st point is that God purposed this healing to be unexpected & undeniable.

#1—God purposed this healing to be unexpected & undeniable.

Peter & John were simply going about normal life patterns & this lame man was being carried to do his normal begging.

No one entering the temple at that public hour was expecting this & so it was clearly not a setup or staged performance.

Only God knew this plan at this time for this man.

Yet that unexpectedness made it undeniable when it happened.

Acts 4:22-23 reports that after arresting Peter & John, the Jewish leaders *“let them go ... on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this sign of healing had been performed.”*

The miracle was undeniable & the rulers could not question or refute it because the man was known by his incurable ailment.

This was not a Benny Hinn show where you are screened to see if your ailment is easy enough to appear healed before crowds & cameras.

That’s fraud by a heretical huckster like the other professed prosperity healers of the past century.

This was not like those liars & charlatans who deceive others.

And the healing in Acts 3 was also not done in an isolated place where stories trickle out with no ability to validate it or determine if it’s been embellished or exaggerated.

No, God planned the healing in Acts 3 to be unexpected & undeniable.

The man was desperate & needy & seeking money, not seeking healing because he seemed to have no hope for healing.

So Peter & John wanted the man to see them—read verse 4. [READ]

Even though Peter is the spokesman throughout this chapter, Luke was clear that John was alongside Peter.

Peter must’ve stopped walking into the temple to focus on this man like the disciples had gazed at Jesus as He ascended in Acts 1:10.

And Peter wanted the man to look back at him & John to see clearly who would give what was coming.

Read verse 5 to see the man’s response. [READ]

The man was responsive, having his focus on them, looking up to see them & what they might be giving him.

Read verse 6 to see the unexpected gift he received. [READ]

Silver & gold were not present with Peter & money was also not the most valuable thing Peter could give him.

Peter had the power & authority of Jesus the Christ to unleash on the man for both physical & spiritual healing.

And Peter could give that freely in a command that included the ability to obey the command like Jesus had done before.

The way Peter commanded the man’s attention & spoke put the focus on the content of the words he was saying.

Those words pointed to Jesus to newly form the man’s legs & give a new ability in his brain & nervous system to move them.

But before we read that amazing result, let’s note a 2nd point of this purposeful healing that we don’t want to miss in the excitement of it.

Point #2—God purposed this healing to be Apostle-affirming & Christ-exalting.

God purposed this healing to be (1st) unexpected & undeniable & (2ndly) to be Apostle-affirming & Christ-exalting.

Peter did not heal before the man looked at John & him & saw who these men were so that all also would know who did it.

But Peter also made it clear that he did not do this on his own.

The wording in the original may have included the words ‘*rise up &*’ before the word ‘walk’ as in some manuscripts.

But what is clear in all manuscripts is that *the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene* was first, before the command to walk.

The source of this miracle was Jesus who had proven to be the Promised Messiah or Christ, meaning He was King & Savior.

And that Jesus was the Nazarene who was crucified & rose again.

But His name was not a magical phrase to be used by anyone.

It was the authority & power of His Person given to His Apostles.

The focus was on Peter & John as messengers & on their words that depended on *the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene*.

And as in Acts 2:21 & Joel 2:32, that name was significant to represent all that Jesus was & is & had said & done & promised.

His name is His Person & character & power & authority that was being proven & mediated through His Apostles.

That's what I mean in saying 2ndly that God purposed this healing to be Apostle-affirming & Christ-exalting.

As we said earlier, the apostles' teaching was foundational as Jesus had promised for His Spirit to lead them into all the truth.

True teachers needed to be validated before the canon of Scripture was completed to evaluate teachers like we do now by the Scriptures.

As Nicodemus told Jesus in John 3:2 he knew He was a teacher come from God because no one could do the things He did unless God was with Him & the same was true of the Apostles.

This healing in Acts 3 was one of many wonders & signs noted in Acts 2:43 that confirmed the Apostles as qualified to give NT revelation.

Last week we mentioned 2nd Corinthians 12:12 where Paul defended his apostleship by saying that "*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.*"

Those signs & wonders & miracles were distinct above the norm as proofs of the Apostles, not done by others & not expected to continue.

Only close associates of the Apostles like Stephen & Barnabas are recorded in the NT doing such signs & wonders kind of like the 70 sent out by Jesus in Luke 10.

Acts tells of Simon Magus who tried to buy the Spirit's miracle power & was rebuked & the sons of Sceva who tried to claim Jesus' power over demons & were beaten & chased away.

So we need to let these miraculous gifts of the Apostles be just that—miraculous gifts by the Apostles.

That means they were unexpected & undeniable acts of God above & beyond the norm that only occurred at special segments of history when God was giving new revelation.

They were only done by the Apostles & close associates in this new era of the church while the NT was being written.

We make this point not to limit God or to put God in a box or to say God cannot or will not work supernaturally now.

Rather we make this point because it's the purpose stated in the NT for the miracles & they ceased during the Apostles' lives.

The later NT letters say nothing about the sign gifts that appear in Acts & the earliest NT letters because they gradually phased out.

That's the cessation or ceasing or ending of those signs & wonders & miracles that pointed to specific people as Apostles of Christ or possibly those working alongside the Apostles.

Ephesians 2:20 calls such Apostles & prophets the foundation of the church & that solid foundation was only built once.

2nd Corinthians 12:12 & Ephesians 2:20 & Hebrews 2:3-4 are helpful passages to remember on these issues.

Hebrews 2:3-4 says after this salvation “*was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*”

God purposed signs & wonders & miracles to testify & confirm the Apostles who heard Jesus & proclaimed His salvation.

That purpose was complete once the NT was finished & that purpose was impossible once the Apostles had died.

But that purpose was evident in how Peter called the lame man to look at him & John & how Peter exalted the name of Jesus Christ as the power & authority from which the healing came.

And before we read further in amazement, I want to correct & clarify something often misunderstood about cessationism.

Listen to this from Tom Pennington’s recent book “*A Biblical Case for Cessationism—Why the Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit Have Ended*”, that came out with the recent Cessationist film.

“*Cessationists are often misrepresented as believing God doesn't heal people today. But that's dead wrong. We believe that God is the only One who heals and that He does so constantly. Exodus 15:26 says, "I, the LORD, am your healer." In Deuteronomy 32:39, God says, "It is I who heal." Whenever anyone recovers from a sickness, disease, or illness, God Himself is responsible.*

God normally uses means to heal. Most commonly, He uses the body's own immune system. He precisely designed the human body with its ability to heal and fight disease. He also often uses doctors with their

procedures and medicines to bring healing. God occasionally intervenes supernaturally to heal. In a few brief periods of biblical history, He gave unique men miraculous power to heal. And He has often chosen to heal directly, not using any means but acting by Himself (Acts 28:1-6). To suggest that cessationists do not believe God heals today is just not true!

Instead, we believe that the miraculous gift of healing is no longer in operation today. The biblical gift of healing was a supernatural ability to cure physical illnesses and congenital diseases or abnormalities, ... Those endowed with the gift of healing didn't use it to heal everybody they interacted with but only as the Spirit directed in specific situations and settings. The apostle Paul, rather than encouraging Timothy to seek miraculous healing for his stomach illness and other "frequent ailments," suggested that he drink wine, a common medical practice in the first century (1 Tim. 5:23). In his last canonical letter, Paul also wrote that he had left his friend and ministry partner, Trophimus, sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).

With the real New Testament gift of healing, the results were complete, immediate, permanent, and undeniable. The apostles healed with a word or a touch (Acts 5:12-15). They healed the blind, deaf, and lame—organic and congenital physical issues where healing could be seen and verified with its permanent results (Acts 3:1-10). Their healings weren't done for wealth and fame (Acts 14:8-18) but served a unique purpose: to validate their apostolic ministry (2 Cor. 12:12). And when the apostles exercised their healing gift, everyone knew a miracle had happened (Acts 4:16-17). ...

The New Testament records dozens of miracles performed by the hands of the apostles. Their healing ministry is the standard by which all reported miraculous healings are to be compared. Anything short of that standard is not the biblical gift of healing.” [123-125]

That is such a helpful clarification.

We believe God still heals in answer to our prayers at times & through various means & over time & sometimes unexplainably.

But those are not the miraculous gift of complete, immediate, permanent, undeniable healings through God’s messengers.

That's why it's helpful to see that God purposed this healing in Acts 3 to be (1) unexpected & undeniable & (2) Apostle-affirming & Christ-exalting, & then also that it was (3rdly) immediate & complete.

Acts 3 was not healing after people prayed & then the sick got better later or with help or care or rest or medicine or the body's own immune response.

This was immediate & complete healing by a word or touch like Jesus did for crowds as He passed on that power to His Apostles.

So as an important 3rd point of this healing with purpose, note that God purposed this healing to be immediate & complete.

Read verse 7 to marvel at what happened after Peter spoke. [READ]

#3, God purposed this healing to be immediate & complete.

The command in verse 6 could have continual emphasis—*be walking*, but Peter only grabbed the man's hand once & raised him up.

As a doctor, Luke included the details of immediate re-creation of ligaments & tendons & muscles & possibly joints & bones in the man's feet & ankles that made them firm & strong.

This was suddenly in an instant that the man's feet & ankles were remade to bear weight and balance and be coordinated to walk.

That was complete, but it was not all—read verse 8. [READ]

If you question whether Peter's hand was required to raise the man up to be able to stand & walk, the answer is no.

Literally, verse 8 reads, "*& leaping, he stood & was walking*".

Leaping is a present participle describing the man who then stood upright & began walking & kept on walking.

There was no risk of reinjuring & no need to be cautious here.

Nothing had to be protected by slow progress & nothing had to be learned or relearned.

This was instantaneously & comprehensive healing.

As he kept on walking, he went with Peter & John into an area of the temple where he likely was never welcomed to come before.

But what's even more vividly compelling is how Luke added the 3 final participles of verse 9 to describe the man's continual ongoing walking & leaping & praising God.

He knew this was from God & the right response was to praise God.

People were probably solemnly gathering in that temple area for prayer & this guy was inescapably leading worship with what must've been celebratory skipping & singing.

This was not to be contained to a small audience for gratitude—it was spread for the crowd to join the thanksgiving to God.

So you might say, 4thly today, that God purposed this healing to be public & praiseworthy.

God purposed this healing to be (1) unexpected & undeniable, (2) Apostle-affirming & Christ-exalting, (3) immediate & complete, & now (4) public & praiseworthy.

Read verse 9 as we continue. [READ]

All the people—that's not a small group—that's the large crowd gathered at the hour of prayer at the temple.

That's where it was unmistakable & inescapable to all the people there who saw this same man walking & praising God.

So this was public & all knew this man as we see in verse 10. [READ]

All the people—that's the they—were continually & gradually recognizing this man.

That term means observing & witnessing, knowing fully, having complete certainty.

In other words, everyone in this big crowd could've testified that this truly was the crippled & lame beggar that had to be carried & set down by the Beautiful Gate to beg each day.

No one doubted or questioned this or second-guessed whether the man had been only partly paralyzed before or only partially healed now.

No one asked about his rehab program or therapy regime as all the people saw & clearly identified him.

That public perception affirmed this power from God.

It was obvious to all that God had done a miracle.

There was no other explanation for what had happened to this man.

So they were filled with wonder & amazement, shock & awe.

They were astonished out of their minds, shaken at this sight.

God had purposed this healing to be public & praiseworthy, but then He had also purposed it to be extoled & explained.

So note that as a 5th & final point today—point #5, God purposed this healing to be extoled & explained.

#5, God purposed this healing to be extoled & explained.

This was healing with purpose & we've noted many of those purposes.

But the ultimate purpose was to glorify Jesus & lead people to worship Him as we begin to see as we read verse 11. [READ]

By extol, I mean God purposed this healing to be admired, commended, praised, honored, & exalted.

It was not extoled in itself, but as a sign pointing to something & someone greater in the Person & work of Jesus Christ.

Remember this is an example of the wonders & signs done by the Apostles as mentioned in Acts 2:43.

It created wonder & it was a sign pointing to a greater reality.

All the people that had gathered for prayer did not delay responding to the miracle that had obviously taken place.

They rushed to respond—they ran together quickly as a crowd moving from the temple court of the women to the court of the Gentiles at this porch or patio.

That area was called Solomon's portico because Solomon had built up that eastern side of the area.

It had big columns holding a roof where a large crowd could gather like they did in John 10 when Jesus spoke.

They ran there utterly astonished because that was where Peter & John went with this healed man sticking close to them.

The man clinging to them made the sign obviously point to Peter & John & set them up to explain what happened.

Seeing this, as verse 12 begins, Peter replied—read verse 12. [READ]

We don't find a question stated, but Peter answered what was in the minds of the people.

They were amazed & they knew this was divine power.

He respectfully appealed to them as men of Israel & explained.

These were Jews who would've known the history of God's power.

They should've known Isaiah 35:6 promised the lame will leap like a deer in the future messianic age.

So they should not have thought this was impossible.

And they had also heard or seen the miraculous power of Jesus.

So he asked why they marveled at this when they knew what God was capable of & they knew what Jesus had done.

Peter & John were not the source of the authority to do this.

Obviously, the man had been made to walk—that was done in the past & the results remained for all to continue to see.

But Peter & John's power & godliness had not achieved or earned the status to be used by God to make the man to walk.

That power was from the historic God of the OT by the proven authority of Jesus the Christ.

And Peter preached his second sermon in Acts explaining that, but we'll have to wait for next week to get into that.

For today, simply note that God purposed this healing to be extoled & explained as Peter began doing here in verse 12.

God purposed this healing to be (1) unexpected & undeniable, (2) Apostle-affirming & Christ-exalting, (3) immediate & complete, (4) public & praiseworthy, (5) extoled & explained.

So just realize that this really happened!—isn't that amazing?

This showed the power & authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as mediated by His apostles so that His Word would be proven.

And listen—now you have His Word.

Jesus has all authority in heaven & on earth given to Him & He promised to be with His people in the Great Commission as we go & make disciples & baptize & teach.

That's His authority with us to proclaim His truth & be His people.

That's His power of the Gospel to change lives & save souls & lead people out of darkness into His marvelous light & transform them by His freeing promises of life.

If you don't know that power in Jesus Christ, we'd love to lead you to Him if you'll come talk with us & let us help & pray for you.

If you do know Christ, be emboldened & encouraged to walk in Christ's power with His authority for His glory.

This miracle was about the power & authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that was commissioned to give His Word & build His church.

Remember that's what God is doing on the earth in our time—He is moving through the church by His Word for His glory.

And you are the church—so be empowered & excited—be thrilled & thankful & eager & bold & faithful to live for the glory of Jesus.

We know & serve & proclaim the same Lord Jesus Christ & we inherit the promises handed down from the Apostles.

So be eager to seek Him in prayer & serve Him with joy & faith.

Let's pray for our response to Him & His truth as we close.