

God's Validating Miracle
Grace Bible Chapel
Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 3:1-16
March 26th, 2017

Context: Luke's narrative of the initiation of the church continues. He provides the inspired record of Peter's second message leading to 5,000 believing (Vs. 4:4) but also the first opposition since the cross. Peter & John are confronted by a man born lame who is then miraculously healed. The opportunity is set by God, and Peter once again preaches to the gathered amazed crowd at the Temple. Peter uses the Old Testament Scriptures to point to Christ giving Him all credit for the miracle they witness. He rebukes them for their rejection of Jesus and uses the evidence of the fully healed lame man to validate his claim that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah promised of God.

In our study today we see how God used the disciples to further the work of Christ in the initial building of His church. These followers of Christ were validated as being from God and having His message by the otherwise unexplainable miracle performed in their midst, and the boldness & thoroughness of their claims on Christ as the Messiah.

Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).

- VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)
 - D. Salvation Message (Acts 2:22-42)
 - E. Saved Living (Acts 2:43-47)
 - F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:12)

Key Words

- people
- saw
- amazement
- faith
- gaze
- praising

Introduction:

- Salvation is by faith, but it is substantiated faith. Christianity is real, not wishful thinking.
 - It is based in a real Person – Christ!
 - It has real answers to life's questions.
 - It has true wisdom from a supernatural book – the Bible.
 - And God has seen to it that His testimony is always present & undeniable.
 - Our issue this morning as we study this historical narrative is – will we be a part of God's continuing work, are we keyed-in, in tune with Him, alert? To be a testimony by taking advantage of every opportunity God brings across our path.
- You heard the reading, this is not a doctrinal study per-say, but an historical narrative. That does not mean there are not things to learn, but our approach is different, we do not normally try to cover 16 verses in an epistle.
- Before we begin, we must first address this narrative in relation to history. This was the initiation by God of the early church. The Word of God was not yet available, & the apostles were the God given personal progenitors of the truth.
- With this is a first matter to address. Unfortunately, there are those who are either naive or who purposely use this narrative history to promote unscriptural practices.
 - The Bible is full of warnings regarding false prophets & false teachers.
 - We are told by John "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).
 - Our Lord Jesus saw the importance of accrediting Himself by His works (John 10:25; 37-38; 14:11). This is why Nicodemus stated "we know you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs You do unless God is with him." (John 3:2).

Point: God validated His Son, the Messiah, by His works & resurrection. So men are without excuse.

- So the Lord also granted that His spokesmen, the Apostles, in the initiation of the church were accredited by miracles (2 Cor. 12:12). Paul defends his apostleship.
- How do God's people know who is of God & who is not? Then it was works!

- Today, & really for more than 1800 years, such accreditation is no longer necessary – we have the inspired writings, the canon, & we determine who speaks for God by comparing the person teaching with the eternal Scripture.
- Many today claim to possess or have access to the gift of healing – hold healing rallies that run the gamut of psychological ploys, fakery, & demonic activity.
 - One of the passages used by those pushing the modern day gift of healing is taken directly from this narrative account. This is a history, not an epistle!
 - What God did here thru Peter was for validating “the name of Jesus” in the initiation of the Church – God was showing the work of Christ continues!

Point: Regardless, the initial church was not a miracle-working church, but a church with Apostles who were able to & did work miracles. Repeat – big difference!

- The supernatural accrediting miracles of the Apostles ended with the Apostles. In fact there was a gradual decrease in physical miracles even by the Apostles, but a continuing increase in spiritual wonders.

Point: Additionally, the miracle wrought in the physical is never as marvelous as the miracle wrought in the Spiritual change of life. The first is temporary & limited for the purpose of pointing to the second – the second (spiritual) is eternal & unlimited.

- Does that mean God no longer heals? Not at all! We are commanded to pray for those in physical difficulty (Jms 5). God may choose to heal in response to the prayers of His children – health & life daily is in His care.
- Look back at Acts 2:43 - in our text today we have just one of those miracles God chose to record, & God chose on this occasion to heal a man lame from birth to purposely confirm that Peter & John represent God, that the power is in Christ Jesus, & thereby initiate Peter’s 2nd recorded message.

F. **Second Message** (Vs. 3:1- 4:12)

1. **Supernatural healing** (Vs. 1-10)

- **Vs. 1-5** –importantly we need to recognize this encounter was not accidental, or random chance – everything has purpose. For those of us as children of God & His ambassadors we need to be alert to every purpose of God.
 - Here is a hopeless man – positioned to do the only thing he could do – beg!
 - The beautiful gate separated the court of gentiles from the court of women.
 - **Vs. 3** – “fixed his gaze upon” is significantly more than mere looking – atenizo – same word used in Acts 1:10 of their intense gazing at the ascending Lord.

Point: There is a spiritual dynamic, desire, & recognition in this gaze that God was about to act on this lame man– this is a type of seeing the world through the eyes of God, seizing the opportunity – today we may not be able to heal the body, but we should be alert & look for opportunities to bring healing to souls.

- We must recognize like all God’s works, this miracle was based on God’s sovereign will, it was not Peter or John & Peter will make a big point of this!
- **Vs. 6** – Peter’s response to the situation – “do not possess...” – of truth Peter had something far better – what is far better is the Gospel of salvation, here illustrated by this gift of healing, which although great is a lesser to salvation.
 - “in the name of” means based on Christ not on us!
 - The lame man’s healing was a direct act of Jesus Christ through Peter.

Point: The churches of our time are to honor Christ & to speak & work in the name of Jesus (recognizing all that He is, promoting His power, His preeminence & His glory) – if we are not truly working according to His name – we provide nothing!

Point: Peter’s life changed following the resurrection & Pentecost. His focus is on God, not on himself. Self is now aside. There are no more brag-a-monies “Lord I will never deny you” but instead Christ is all & all for Peter – Christ is everything!

Point: Also note – this activity conforms to Christ’s ministry on earth. An activity still continuing today. We are not healing the physical, but as extensions of Christ’s body & work, we are His ambassadors, He is still at work thru His people to do the greater work of salvation. Christ’s work goes on thru His people – are you continuing His work!

- **Vs. 7** – Peter physically yanks up the lame man – this is a picture, a reminder that we Christians need to get our hands dirty, to reach down as it were to the poorest, most pathetic, the least, the overlooked seeking to help them!
- Also notice the immediate results of this man who had twisted worthless limbs.
 - He has immediate full strength – a miracle.
 - Immediate balance – a miracle.
 - He walks, leaps, jumps - all previous dissipation is gone– a glorious miracle.

Point: contrast this with the fakery of today – the many so-called invisible healings.

Point: Also, as God restores new limbs, muscles, nerve systems, etc.. do you not see how He will restore glorious bodies at the resurrection – is nothing to Him.

- **Vs. 8** – The man’s reaction - remember last week (Vs. 2:47) - the climax of converted living after Peter’s 1st sermon - we said the key to what God’s people should do is praise God – so our reaction to God’s work in us, should be praise!
 - This man was praising God - he could not help himself – he is in the midst of joy doing what is fully appropriate – praising God – so should we!
 - Note - a healing that stems from God’s sovereign choice will always be for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, not for the pride or reputation of any man.
- **Vs. 9** – So what does this reaction do? “walking and praising God” is an immeasurable testimony before all these witnesses – God was validating the power of Christ’s name & that His work would come thru His people the church!

Point: There is never a time when those of us who have been born of God should cease looking for opportunity to express our gratitude, joy, excitement, & praise to God. It should be in our conversation & demeanor - it is our testimony!

- The lame man is an unwitting ambassador for Christ – so are we – nothing is more advantageous than to express faith in all circumstances (1 Pet. 3:15)!
- **Vs. 10** – we see its importance – he is a witness before all these of God’s work.
 - What was their response? “wonder...amazement” two of the strongest terms.

Point: This is not something these witnesses can just blow-off, they have met something so impactful they are stirred/perplexed to the core. God has their attention.

2. **Sovereign circumstance** (Vs. 11-16)

a. **Situation set** (Vs. 11)

- **Vs. 11** – Here is this unusual undeniable scene & setting – “while he was clinging to Peter” – the previously well known lame man now clinging to Peter the fisherman as a child to their mother – God has set His sovereign table!
 - The crowd at the temple run “together” in the “Portico of Solomon” (a covered area on the east side of the temple).
 - Notice their state of mentality – “full of amazement.” – the moment is ripe!

b. **Spontaneous explanation** (Vs. 12-13)

- **Vs. 12** – “when Peter saw” – unlike the previous Peter who was always caught off guard & most often spoke in confusion, Peter sees clearly the situation God has providentially constructed.
 - “why are you amazed at this?” A reminder, we are at the temple of the living God, what you see is the power of God at work! God can do anything.
 - “as if by our own power” – Peter will immediately point away from himself!

- **Vs. 13** – Peter’s response is peculiarly Hebrew because that is to whom he is addressing. Thus he uses familiar Scripture to clarify the true God & reinforce his argument (“God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob”)...(but not only this – notice...
 - “His servant Jesus” (Is. 42:1-4) perfect reminder of His actions before the lynch mob. (Is. 53:11) the very crucifixion described.

Point: These Jews would be fully familiar with these passages & the placing of the title “His Servant Jesus” would strike at their reasoning – their core & thinking!

- Peter brings together Scripture, historic fact, & their fresh memories as they stand together around this unexplainable miracle done in the name of Christ.

Point: Peter’s response is also miraculous – that is once again he speaks with boldness before these very ones who rejected his Lord only a few days before.

c. **Stirring rebuke** (Vs. 14-15) – but having their complete attention he doesn’t let up.

- **Vs. 14- 15** “but you” – a direct confrontation without any deviation or the finesse of smooth words. They had chosen a murderer over the “Holy and Righteous One.”

Point: Their rejection of Christ was fresh on their mind, & because of the events & circumstances, even Christ’s known resurrection, their minds are confronted.

- God has lined up the perfect circumstance for God’s Spirit to work thru the Word.

d. **Source declared** (Vs. 16)

- **Vs. 16** – “on the basis of faith in His name” – the faith here spoken of was that of Peter & John, not the lame man, the lame man had no idea what was about to happen, he was merely a recipient of God’s mercy.

- Notice the issue of “in His name” & “it is the name of Jesus” – Christ is not physically present - but His work, His power, His miraculous presence with His people spiritually, & His influence continues!
- “the name of” means based on who Christ is – His Person, authority, power & that He is a living God! “All authority has been given Him...earth” (Mat. 28:18).

Point: God purposely once again constructed an overwhelming undeniable testimony to these very Jews who unreasonably rejected their Messiah. Peter, under inspiration – led by the Spirit of God, preaches his second powerful message.

Closing:

- We need to be reminded by this that God can do anything – however....
- In saying that, what is His primary purpose in the world? To reveal Himself to those He has purposed to save – moving toward the restoration (Vs. 3:20-21) & establishment as His Son on His throne forever. So what is important really?
- All of us who name the name of Christ need to be alert to the actual circumstances around us – we are His ambassadors, we need to think via faith – always, in the daily circumstances of life – not be self absorbed but God absorbed - how can God use me to promote His truth, His salvation to others who desperately need it.
- What can I do daily in every circumstance to bring a testimony of Jesus Christ?
- The lame man would live a better quality of life but would die physically – what we all need much more than the physical is Christ in us – all need eternal life. It is far more important!
- God help us to be testimonies before others that God might use us to bring salvation.