

Of the things listed to which the early church was devoting themselves (2:42):

- Teaching of the Twelve
- The Fellowship
- The Breaking of Bread
- The Prayers

None of them were *devoting themselves* to signs and miracles. This is important to note because the next verse shows that there was a resultant awe from these things AND that there were miracles being done *by the apostles*. The following story, then, can seem to reveal that miracles and signs should be something which the Church *aims for*, but that is not the point of the inclusion of this story. We must beware of this type of attitude, that *seeks for signs*, for Jesus said (twice) that “an evil and unfaithful generation seeks after a sign, but only one will be given: the sign of Jonah” by which he meant resurrection after three days. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the sign of the Kingdom. But, some still believe that signs and wonders are something to devote oneself to, and in fact that signs and wonders are the signs of the Kingdom to be sought. Places like Bethel Church in Redding, California, even go so far as to have created a “School of Supernatural Ministry” because they believe that miracles and healing ought to be learned, attempted, and accomplished by every believer. Yet, in order for this to be even remotely believable, they have to diverge from the description of healing and wonders in the Bible. Unlike what we see here in chapter 3, Bethel “healers” ask people to give a subjective rating for pain, on a scale of 1-10 and then, once prayed for, the subject is asked if there is a change, from a 7 to a 5, for example. Then, this qualifies as a healing performed. Frankly, it’s ludicrous, and the teaching borders on heresy if it has not fully crossed the line, for you do not see healings like this in the NT performed by the apostles. No, in Acts chapter 3 there is no scale of 1-10. There is only “can’t walk since birth” and “walking and leaping and praising God.” The miracles in the NT were not explainable by subjective feelings of hidden pain. These types of miracles which caused wonder also were not the goal of apostolic ministry, but were analogies of the goal: repentance and moral restoration with God. Miraculous physical restorations, and they were always completely restorative in the NT, were (and are) always analogies of spiritual restoration through repentance and faith in Jesus. The goal is always repentance from self-rule and submissive faith in Jesus as our hope of restoration with God.

This is why, though there are miraculous healings and exorcisms of demons mentioned in Acts (Jesus has the authority), they were never sought out by the church, nor was the church ever *devoted* to them. The apostles didn’t walk around Jerusalem looking for someone to heal, in other words. In fact, in Acts 16, Paul and Luke were, like here in Acts 3, going to the place of prayer when a demon-possessed girl started following them around proclaiming, “These men are servants of the Most High God! They are declaring to you the way of salvation!” over and over for many days. Paul wasn’t looking to cast out the demon, but after many days of being annoyed, he finally turned around and told the demon to leave her. He was not devoted to miracles, signs, or exorcisms, but sometimes he was annoyed into them.

The inclusion of this story in Acts 3 is primarily to show the authority and power of the name of Jesus to

forgive sins, what Peter describes as "turning every one of you from your wickedness" (v26). Thus, Peter recognized that the healing of the lame man was not the point, a distinction which the observers of the healing did not understand at first. No, the purpose of the healing was to indicate the power and authority of the Christ, whom they had crucified, to rescue them and include them in the covenant. When Christ Jesus returns, full and complete healing will be complete immediately upon resurrection.

Peter's sermon, then, following the healing, functions as the primary interpreter of the healing. And, it is not about physical healing at all, but is actually a judicial verdict based upon the people's rejection of Jesus as the fulfillment of covenant promises (note the strong correlation to the OT patriarchs and Moses) to which they had placed their hope and thus their failure of these covenants. His point is that Jesus is the end and fulfillment of these covenants and He alone has the authority to include those in the covenant and keep others for destruction (v23) who do not listen to Him, and the people killed him. Boom. Yet, there is hope, for all who will change their judgement of Jesus to align with God's judgment of Jesus, evidenced by the resurrection, there is forgiveness and times of rescue at hand in His name.

This chapter is in two parts: the healing of the lame man in vv1-11, and the sermon of Peter in vv12-26.

1. Jesus Has Authority Over All Nature: The Healing of the Lame Man (1-11)
 - a. Peter and John weren't looking to do the miraculous, they were looking to worship in the Temple and pray to the Lord at the formal time of the prayers
 - b. They encounter a "man lame from birth" whom they "laid there daily at the Beautiful Gate" so that he could "ask alms" of those going to worship at the Temple
 - i. Significance of lame from birth
 1. This isn't a subjective illness or invisible pain – it is an objective visible inability
 - ii. Significance of daily presence
 1. There was routine here, expectation built on history
 - iii. Significance of Beautiful Gate
 1. He was placed near the gate which would juxtapose his need with the wealth available
 - iv. Significance of purpose of alms
 1. Alms were to be given to the poor and needy as a Jewish duty
 - c. The man asked Peter and John for alms
 - d. Peter began to stare at him, as did John
 - i. How important this is! How Christ-like this is!
 1. They SAW him: Compassion begins with seeing
 2. He was apparently not looking them in the eye (shame?)
 3. So Peter demands that he look at them
 - ii. There is healing in this alone, something proclaimed, something intended
 1. What does it mean to be seen?
 2. These two apostles treated this man as one bearing the image of God!
 - a. How often do we avoid the eyes of the beggar? Why?
 - b. Do we not want to recognize their humanity because it means we are obligated to love them well?
 - iii. The man does look at them, but expecting to receive some funds, not at all the gift that he was about to receive
 - e. Peter gives him a greater gift:
 - i. This is a gift, it is not owed to the man, it is not a duty of Peter's to heal people, it is not even commanded of the Lord. It is a gift.
 - ii. Peter had compassion on this man, and this man alone at this point, so says, "What I have, I give to you"
 - f. Peter announces the authority from which the gift comes: "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"
 - i. The "name" indicates the true agent of authority, much like an ambassador acts and declares "in the name" of his sending nation, so also do the apostles do so here and throughout the book of Acts
 1. Thus, the authority over this man's body is not found in technique, repetition, mantra, or efforts of the apostles, but solely on the authority of Jesus of Nazareth
 - ii. The authority to heal was also not found in Peter or John's "power or piety", as they assert in v12
 1. The perfection or ability or piety of the apostle does not "unlock" "activate" "unleash" or "loose" anything, especially the authority to heal.
 - a. Any "healing ministry" which depends upon the piety or performance of man is in direct contradiction to the Scriptures

- b. Peter makes this very clear
 - 2. This was important to note, because the crowd was making some assumptions
 - a. They were assuming, unlike the Gentiles whom would later attribute this authority to the apostles as gods (see Acts 19), as Jews, that God had blessed them *because of their godliness*.
 - b. They were already attributing this “blessing” to the “blessedness” of the apostles, which Peter quickly rebukes
 - 3. The reason, the only reason, that this man was healed is because Jesus set forth to reveal that He is the Messiah, the promised One who would “save His people from their sins”
 - iii. The authority is solely in “His name”, which Peter directly attributes as the active agent in the healing in v16, “His name gave this one wholeness, by faith of His name, [His name] strengthened this one whom you see and you know in your presence.”
- g. Peter commands the man to walk
 - i. How absurd!
 - 1. Think about how you would respond in a similar situation
 - ii. The fact that Peter just commands him to do something which he could not do gives indication of the absolute power and authority of Jesus, in whose name He is making such an audacious command
- h. Peter then helps him up
 - i. Note the paucity of faith, if any at all at this point, in the man
 - ii. This first apostolic miracle is the only which doesn't mention the faith of the healed person at all
 - 1. The point is not this man's faith, but Jesus's authority and the His continuing ministry through the 12 as indicative of the authority of Jesus over all things
 - iii. Note also that it wasn't this man's faith that healed him, as is evidenced, but simply the authority of the Spirit of Jesus in whom the apostles depended
 - 1. Faith is still the means of healing “by faith in His name”, but it is the faith which has been given to Peter and John, it appears
- i. The healing was “immediate”
 - i. Luke is careful to indicate that this healing was not progressive, but immediate and complete
 - ii. There was no question about the healing – it was instantaneous and complete, not partial or by degree
 - iii. When the Spirit of God is giving a sign of the authority of Jesus, the effects are always immediate and quick
 - 1. Even in the case of the blind man in Mark 8, he left Jesus completely healed
 - 2. This gives us one way to discern charlatans in regards to healing signs
- j. The man's “feet and ankles were strengthened”
 - i. Passive verb, indicating that his body was strengthened by someone else acting upon them, i.e. the Spirit of God
 - 1. The words chosen here are particularly Lukan, i.e. they don't appear anywhere else
 - 2. They were most likely medical terms to indicate Luke's understanding of what bones were miraculously restored by Christ
 - ii. The inclusion of this particular phrase indicates that the man's feet and ankles, in particular, were obviously weak and powerless
 - 1. It is possible that it was evidenced, as a man who had never used them in his entire life, in the atrophied appearance of his legs and angles

2. This shows that this miracle was not a subjective “feeling better on a scale of 1-10”, but an objective, miraculous, verifiable, unexplainable bringing of life, flourishing, and power where there was none before in this man’s legs
 - iii. Language is a strong allusion to Isaiah 34-35, the judgment of the nations and the redemption of the “wilderness” by the “glory of the Lord” – restoration of the ‘dried up’ by the presence of God moving towards the “highway of holiness” in preparation for Peter’s sermon of repentance from wickedness and the escape from judgement
 1. In other words, unfaithful Israel has become unfaithful Edom in the Isaiah judgment, but the LORD has arrived in Christ Jesus and His Spirit is working both salvation of the humble and the judgement of the proud.
 - k. The man stood up
 - i. The aorist main verb, standing, is described by the participle, “leaping up”, and the imperfect “was walking”
 - ii. You sense a kind of progression with pause, then movement – He sprang up, surprised himself and stood there for a moment taking it all in, then cautiously walks, then back and forth, then doesn’t stop walking! (Of course!)
 - iii. This healing is demonstrably complete and the result is clearly miraculous, leaving no doubt in the minds of those who saw him in the Temple
 - l. The man came with Peter and John *inside the Temple*
 - i. Now, don’t miss the significance of this event!
 - ii. He moves from outside the gate to inside the Temple, *walking with the people*
 1. The healing of the man is not merely about the ability to walk, for he will die later
 2. The healing is about the reconciliation, the restoration of the man to the community *of worship*, and would have been seen as restoring his fellowship with God
 3. This is why Peter emphasizes that the purpose of God in sending Jesus was not to heal people’s bodies, but to “turn you from your wickedness” (v26)
 - a. The entire purpose of this event is not the healing of the man, but the turning of hearts to faith in the name of Jesus as salvation from wickedness and guilt
 - b. This is why Peter’s sermon is so clearly judicial, i.e. making clear the guilt, and then moves to justification, clearing the guilt through Christ Jesus
 - m. He was “walking, leaping, and praising God”
 - i. The result of his healing is the praise of God, telling the goodness of God towards him in this moment
 - ii. Yes, he is rejoicing at his gain (walking and leaping!), AND he is acknowledging the LORD who healed him.
 1. His actions rejoice, but his words are pointing towards the LORD
2. Peter Interprets the Purpose of the Event (vv12-26)
 - a. Remember that Peter and John weren’t looking to heal anyone when they headed to the Temple
 - i. They went to the Temple to preach in the portico after their prayers, to announce the authority of the risen Messiah
 - ii. Remember that the *purpose* of the gift of the Holy Spirit was about *proclamation*, not signs/wonders: proclaiming the magnificence of God through Christ Jesus, crucified, raised, and ascended with all authority to forgive sins and include believers in His name in the covenant promises of God, which was evidenced at Pentecost

- b. They connect the arrival of Jesus and His life, death, and resurrection as “What God foretold...He thus fulfilled” to the covenants of Israel (v18)
 - i. “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the God of our forefathers glorified His servant, Jesus...” (v13)
 - 1. Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12,15,18)
 - ii. “Moses foretold of a prophet like himself...you should listen to him” (v22)
 - 1. Mosaic Covenant (Ex 19-24)
 - iii. Samuel and the other prophets, too (v24)
 - 1. Davidic Covenant (1 Chron 17:11-17)
 - a. Samuel anointed David the king, (1 Samuel 16)
 - b. Nathan, the prophet following Samuel announced the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7)
 - iv. “This is That.”
- c. Apostolic preaching juxtaposes the judgement of Man against the judgment of God concerning Jesus
 - i. Note how Peter brings their judgements before them in a very legal way, i.e. “Exhibits A-C concerning your judgement of Jesus of Nazareth”
 - 1. Their judgement of Jesus
 - a. Exhibit A: You delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, even though he had decided to release Him
 - b. Exhibit B: You denied the Holy and Righteous One (Hebraic phrasing for the Messiah) and judged him less desirable than a convicted murder
 - c. Exhibit C: The Leader of Life...you KILLED!
 - 2. God’s judgement of Jesus
 - a. Exhibit D: God raised Him from the dead (v15)
 - b. Exhibit E: God glorified His servant, Jesus (v13)
 - c. Exhibit F: God foretold of his suffering and exaltation by the mouth of His prophets (v18)
 - d. Exhibit G: God sent him to you to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. (v26)
 - 3. So, you see, YOU ARE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF GOD’S ACCOUNTING OF JESUS
 - ii. The entire revelation of the LORD to His people throughout all time has been concerning the Christ, whom you crucified, and whom God raised from the dead and gave all authority, which you see today in this man’s restoration
- d. They called the people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord
 - i. “So, repent and turn back so that your sins may be blotted out and times of refreshing may come from the LORD” (v19-20)
 - 1. CHIASM with vv19-20 at the center
 - a. Abraham and ‘the fathers’ mentioned at the beginning and end (v13,v25)
 - b. Their denial of “the Holy and Righteous One” and Moses’ prophecy of the one who does not listen to the prophet like him (v14,v23)
 - c. God foretold all of this by the ‘mouth of all the prophets’ and ‘mouth of his holy prophets’ (v18,v21)
 - d. These all point toward the middle (vv19-20), showing that this is the purpose of his sermon
 - 2. These “times of refreshing” is likened to recovering one’s breath after a long, hot, journey through the wilderness

- a. It is the rest of a guiltless conscience, the repose of a soul standing before the Lord with the same judgement: blameless
 - 3. Peter reiterates this at the very end, right before he is interrupted,
 - a. “God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” (v26)
 - ii. In other words, repudiate your previous judgement of Jesus and get your judgment of Jesus in line with God’s judgment: Messiah exalted over all things and through whose suffering you are turned from your wickedness – believe in His name (authority) and be saved
 - 1. Moses’ prophecy of Him is an example of the consequences: “if you don’t listen to Jesus, you will be destroyed from the people”
 - 2. You KNOW these things, for you are sons of the prophets and the covenants of God
 - 3. “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Abram’s offspring, who is Jesus.”
- e. Thus, the true blessing (v26) is not physical wholeness of a body made well, but the mercies and forgiveness of God in turning us away from wickedness to a place of blotted-out sins and refreshing new life from the Spirit
 - i. Note that this is the “blessing” which God promised to Abraham!!
 - ii. This blessing is found in Jesus Christ who redeems His people and turns them from wickedness, thus bringing times of ‘refreshing’ from the Lord

Conclusion:

The preaching of the apostles reveal the true sign of the Spirit and the Kingdom: the proclamation of repentance from misjudging Jesus and dependence upon Him and His great authority to blot out our sins and wickedness and restore us to the great blessing of God: holiness. This is the goal of the Spirit of God, who is the first Sent One, the ambassador, proclaiming the way of salvation to all who will hear. Brothers and sisters, steer clear of so-called Christian ministries who are devoted to signs and wonders and say little about repentance, sin, and salvation from judgment through Jesus Christ alone. Stay biblical. Unite with those who are devoted to the four things in Acts 2.

Maybe you are here today and you have misjudged Jesus. You counted a good teacher, a wise sage, or even a myth – a creation of the church. But you have the prophetic word of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and others which proclaimed his arrival thousands of years before he was born. Even more than that, you have to deal with the resurrection of this man from the dead. God raised Him because He accounted Him glorious and worthy and granted Him authority over all things. So, to you, too, the apostle proclaims, “Repent and turn back from your misjudgment of Jesus, so that your sins may be blotted out and times of refreshing may come to you.” This promise is for you. There is mercy now in His hands.

The healing of the lame man shows the authority of Jesus, and that He has the power and authority to make the broken ones whole. Yet, this wholeness of the lame man is only an analogy of the wholeness of spirit of those who close to Christ Jesus by faith. He has authority to forgive sins, to blot them out, to send you deep soul rest by squaring your record with God so that you would no longer be an enemy of God.

As our brother Jonathan Edwards has written,

“Those who are in trouble and distressing fear, if they come to Jesus Christ, have this to ease them of their fears, that Christ has promised them that he will protect them; that they come upon his invitation; that Christ has plighted his faith for their security if they will close to Him; and that He is engaged by covenant to God the Father that he will save those afflicted and distressed souls that come to Him...by his own act, he has engaged to be responsible for them; so that if they have exposed themselves to God’s wrath, and to the stroke of justice, it is not their concern, but his, how to answer or satisfy for what they have done.” (*Knowing Christ*)