

Power of Jesus' Name

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] I'm sorry I keep doing this to you guys. I have to shorten the passage again. There's just a lot in there.

Acts chapter 3 verses 1 to 16. 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.

[1 : 14] 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 enter 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.

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.

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.

[2 : 27] 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. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Last week we saw Luke's summary description of the early church, who devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.

And among other descriptions of the church, we saw in chapter 2, verse 43, it said that awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done among them through the apostles.

And we see one instance of such miracle wonder that's being done by an apostle here in chapter 3. And through this account, Luke's intentions to teach us that we should demonstrate and proclaim the powerful name of Jesus.

That's how I'm going to go through this passage. First, to demonstrate the power of Jesus and to proclaim the name of Jesus. It begins in verse 1 this way. Now, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

[3 : 40] It's possible that Luke is adding this detail merely to provide some circumstantial context, to tell us that this is the time and place when this miracle took place.

But I don't think that's what Luke is doing. Because Luke, more than any of the gospel writers, emphasizes the importance of prayer. And he peppers throughout the book of Acts examples of the early church praying together.

In fact, he just told us in chapter 2, verse 42, that the early believers devoted themselves to the prayers. Matt pointed this out last week.

The prayers. There's a definite article, and it's plural. The prayers. Which indicates that this is likely not a reference to the private prayer life of individual Christians, but to designated times of corporate prayer.

We saw earlier in chapter 1, verse 14, and verse 24, and later in chapter 4, verse 23, as well, that this was a regular habit.

[4 : 39] Early church gathered together to pray together at appointed times. And we see that this was also a habitual thing for Peter and John. It says, now Peter and John were going up.

The tense that that verb is in, the imperfect tense, it frequently denotes habitual regular action. A customary activity. For example, the same tense is used in verse 2 to describe how people carry the lame man and laid him daily at the gate of the temple.

So then Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour, as usual. This was their custom, their habit. The Jews divided the day into 12 hours, from dawn to dark.

So ninth hour would be 3 p.m. or so. And this was when the Jews offered the second of their two daily burnt offerings prescribed in Exodus 29. This was a really important occasion for the Jews.

The Jews considered these daily sacrifices and offerings to be so important that when the temple complex was besieged by Pompeii-led Roman army in 63 BC, they didn't stop.

[5 : 50] They continued to offer the sacrifice while they were surrounded and besieged by the army. This reminds me of the story of D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who was the pastor of Westminster Chapel during World War II.

He lived in the days of Hitler, Churchill, FDR, and his church was a stone's throw away from Buckingham Palace. And on one occasion, a bomb fell just a few yards away from the church during Sunday worship, causing the plaster of the ceiling to fall down from the roof and onto the heads of the congregation.

And one parishioner recalled thinking, she said that she thought she was in heaven after seeing other believers around her coated in white dust. And this happened during the pastoral prayer time of the service.

But Lloyd-Jones didn't stop praying. He finished praying. And then he paused for a moment to motion to the church members to take cover under the gallery.

And then he proceeded to preach his entire sermon. I find these stories inspiring because they are examples of people for whom the vertical reality, the intercourse and transaction between God and man, was more important than all horizontal realities.

[7 : 10] Even more than history-altering wars. Similarly, when King Darius the Mede issued an edict that prohibited people from praying to anyone but to himself, it says in Daniel 6.10 that when Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem.

He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously. Daniel could have prayed with his windows closed in the privacy of his home so that these malicious, envious officials couldn't spy on him and report him to the king.

He could have altered his praying schedule to throw off the people who are trying to watch him. But he doesn't. And there's something powerful about that defiance.

He's saying, I will not let my prayers to God be interrupted by what's happening in the world because my relationship with him, my allegiance to him, is far more significant than any of those things.

My appointment with God Almighty is more important than whatever else might be going on. This kind of attitude makes no sense to the world, to people whose lives revolve around not God, but other things.

[8 : 42] our leisure, our friends, our jobs, our children, our health, our hobbies, our romance. Brothers and sisters, I urge you to establish this kind of habit of prayer and worship in your lives and let the other things in your life revolve around it, not the other way around.

It may well be that we don't see the kind of power displayed here in this chapter in our own lives precisely because we don't access and appropriate that power for ourselves. And as Peter and John, most likely, John, the son of Zebedee, were going up to the temple to pray, he says, 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 is lame from birth. He evidently can't walk at all because he has to be carried presumably by his relatives who expected him to contribute somehow to the family fund at least by begging.

And they drop him off at the same time each day where there's most foot traffic in the temple. And we find out later in chapter 4, verse 22, that this man was over 40 years old. He's not young.

So for the 40 plus years of his life, or 30 plus years of his life, probably, this man was begging, has been begging. He has never walked on his two feet.

[10 : 16] And verse 3 continues, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, this lame man asks to receive alms. He's just asking for some spare change. But apparently, this man wasn't even looking at Peter and John when he asked because verse 4 tells us that Peter directed his gaze at him as did John and said, look at us.

This lame man is used to the casual disregard with which people often treat beggars. So he has ditched the conventions and courtesies of human interactions. He doesn't even look as he asks.

Hey, can you spare some change? He's probably expecting Peter and John to ignore him and pass him by like most others. How often do we pray and ask God like this lame man, expecting silence, expecting God to ignore us and pass us by.

But Peter and John do not ignore this lame man and they direct their gaze at him and ask him to look at them and at that point, the lame man fixes his attention on them expecting to receive something from them.

Now he's expecting something. He's like, you're driving and there's, if you're a homeless person begging on the street at an intersection, you start to see the window roll down and now you're paying attention.

[11 : 29] You're going to get something. So that's what this man's doing. But he's quickly disappointed because Peter says in verse 6, I have no silver and gold. He's not going to get what he was expecting.

But Peter continues, what I do have I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Peter addresses a more fundamental need.

He gets to the root of this man's poverty, the reason why he begs. Peter has no silver and gold, but he does have access to the power that resides in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

And by the authority of Jesus Christ, Peter commands the lame man to rise up and walk. A 16th century pastor and theologian, Cornelius Allipide, once told this story of Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century theologian.

He says, one day, he was visiting, Thomas Aquinas, was visiting Pope Innocent IV while the Pope was in the middle of counting an enormous sum of money in front of him.

[12 : 36] Upon seeing Aquinas, Innocent referenced this verse and quipped, You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say silver and gold have I none with some measure of pride in his voice.

To which Thomas Aquinas replied, True Holy Father, but neither can she now say rise up and walk. A church that offers people silver and gold but has no power to restore them is a travesty.

A church that depends on earthly riches and earthly means to accomplish earthly purposes but has no spiritual power to accomplish God's heavenly purposes is a tragic failure.

Instead of crowing about the church's great wealth, Pope Innocent IV should have been weeping at its loss of spiritual authority and power. Often those things, those two things are inversely related.

The more earthly power and means we have, the more we depend on them and not on God's power which makes us spiritually impotent. We're not a big church with great means.

[14 : 00] we can't pay off people's mortgages like some churches do. We can't host big conferences and festivals but I pray to God that he would make us a church with spiritual power.

When Peter says rise up and walk the result is immediate. It says in verses seven to eight and Peter 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 him walking and leaping and praising God.

This kind of thing didn't happen regularly in the ancient world and it's not like the people in the ancient world were just more gullible. A cripple being healed is verifiable.

It's quite obvious whether it's happened or not. That's why he says later in verses nine to ten all the people saw the formerly layman walking and praising God and recognized him as the one who sat at the beautiful gate of the temple asking for arms and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

So people are doing double takes here at this formerly layman. How is it? Wait, isn't that the guy that was begging in front of the temple? I've seen him for years. How is he now inside the temple jumping around and praising God?

[15 : 23] And Luke, remember he's the author of this book, is a doctor, a physician by trade. And the words that he uses here for ankle and feet are technical medical terms that are never used in scripture beside here.

It's something that only Luke could have written. It's like saying, you know, immediately his talus and tibia and fibula were made strong. It's like technical terms. I don't even know what they are.

I knew when I looked it up when I looked it up. And Luke, as a physician, understands well that this kind of thing doesn't just happen. From the ancient world to the modern age, people who are lame from birth have been considered beyond healing.

Hippocrates, the 5th century B.C. Greek physician, often called the father of medicine, lists lameness as an incurable condition in his book on diseases. The renowned 2nd century A.D.

Roman physician Galen wrote, some things are naturally impossible and the healing god Asclepius does not attempt these things at all but chooses from among the possible what is best to be done.

[16 : 35] People in the ancient world knew well, just as well as we do, that lame people do not start walking and yet that is exactly what happened by the power of God.

And like a man who doesn't quite know the new strength that he now has in his feet, this man puts some weight on his feet and then he leaps up from the ground.

And the verb leap, which is repeated twice in verse 8, is the same word that's used in the Greek translation of the prophecy in Isaiah 35 verse 6, which says that when the glory of the Lord is revealed and when God's people are restored to Zion in the last days, it says, then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

So Jesus, the promised messianic king, fulfilled this prophecy during his earthly ministry and now through his apostles as the prophetic heirs of Jesus' ministry, the apostles are continuing to do the same work and making the lame leap like a deer.

This is a clear demonstration of the powerful name of Jesus. The same power of the Holy Spirit now resides in us and we are called to demonstrate this powerful name of Jesus in our lives.

[17 : 51] Do you trust that God can and will demonstrate his power in you and through you? John Wimber was a self-described quote, beer-guzzling, drug-abusing pop musician, a pianist and singer for the Righteous Brothers, two of whose members were eventually inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

But more importantly, John Wimber was converted at the age of 29 quote, while chain-smoking his way through a Quaker-led Bible study. After his conversion, Wimber had a voracious appetite for the scriptures and spent many hours poring over especially the gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus.

And when he and his wife Carol visited a church early in his spiritual journey, John approached the pastor after the service and asked him, hey, so when do we do the stuff? To which the pastor replied, the stuff.

What's the stuff? You know, John continued, the stuff in the Bible. Like healing the sick, casting out demons, the stuff.

Oh, the well-meaning but mistaken pastor replied, oh, we don't do the stuff. We believe they did it back in biblical days, but we don't do it today.

[19 : 08] With a rather confused look on his face, John thought to himself, well, and I gave up drugs for this? This is his own telling.

I'm not making stuff up here. And many of us, like that pastor, we rationalize away our disobedience when scripture commands us to pray for healing.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12, 27 to 28, now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it, and God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating in various kinds of tongues.

The apostles, prophets, and teachers are ordered numerically, first, second, and third, because that's the usual order by which God establishes churches. First, apostles are sent out into new areas where the gospel has not been proclaimed, and then the prophets and their close associates, evangelists, mentioned together in Ephesians 4, 11, they reveal God's will and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

And then teachers and their close associates, shepherds, also mentioned in Ephesians 4, 11, they teach and guide people in the whole counsel of God. But these are not the only gifts that God gives to the church.

[20 : 27] God also gives miracles, gifts of healing, helping, administrating. This verse hopefully reorients us because we tend to think of helping and administrating as ordinary, mundane gifts, but according to Scripture, they are just as much gifts of the Holy Spirit as miracles and gifts of healing.

They are spiritual gifts. But not only that, we tend to expect gifts of helping and administrating in the church. Oh, she has the gift of help, he has the gift of administrating.

But we don't tend to expect miracles and gifts of healing. And that's unbiblical too. God continues to give these gifts to the church and we see many such signs and wonders throughout the book of Acts.

Even if you don't play any video games, you probably know something about the classic Super Mario Brothers arcade game. You guys know what I'm talking about? Yeah.

Daniel. So normally, normally Mario needs to take care not to touch the animals that come out of the sewer.

[21 : 42] but when the star power, you guys know what I'm talking about, enters Mario, right?

He becomes invulnerable to these enemies, right? And so, when that happens, you know, Mario has powers that he could never otherwise dream of wielding. And it would be a waste of that star power if Mario continues to move around and jump around and run away from these sewer animals while he had the star power.

I almost feel irreverent using such a trivial illustration to describe something so magnificent. But Christians have been permanently indwelt by the spirit of the living God.

We have access to the power of the God who created the cosmos. And yet, so many of us live powerless lives and act like our lives are no different from when we didn't know the Lord Jesus, from when we didn't have the spirit of God indwelling us, and that's not right.

Brothers and sisters, let's live according to what scripture says is the reality. And let scripture dictate what we seek and not our experience.

[23 : 07] Keep in step with the Holy Spirit. Let's not demean the spirit's power by expecting so little of him and pray to be filled more with the Holy Spirit and use his power and believe that God will powerfully use us to proclaim his good news and to demonstrate his good news by doing good works.

But note well that the healing is not the end of the story. It's only the beginning. Look at verse 8 with me. The previously lame man knowing that he was a beneficiary of a powerful work of God, he doesn't go home.

Instead, it says he enters the temple with Peter and John walking and leaping and praising God. This is a picture of this man's spiritual restoration.

As we see in John 9, 1-2, there was a stigma against people who were disabled from birth. Jews assumed that some terrible sin must have been committed by his parents or someone else to make someone be born with deformities or disabilities.

And Leviticus 21, 18 stipulated concerning priests that no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or limb too long.

[24 : 27] This commandment, which was intended to communicate the holiness of God, the perfections of God, applied only to priests who were offering sacrifices and it didn't prevent lame people from entering the temple in general.

However, later, extra-biblical Jewish traditions that developed and the collection of Jewish legal writings known as the Mishnah did explicitly prevent lame people from entering the temple.

They were allowed in the temple complex but not inside the temple proper. And so then this man, lame from birth, had been begging daily at the gate of the temple for what is likely decades but never able to enter into the temple to offer the burnt offering, to pray.

And after being healed, where else does he go but straight into the temple with Peter and John walking and leaping and praising God. that's what's possible by the powerful name of Jesus.

And that brings me to my second point. We should not only demonstrate but also proclaim this name of Jesus. Later in Acts chapter 4 verse 22, Luke calls the healing of the lame man a sign of healing.

[25 : 49] There's a reason why the Bible consistently calls such miracles signs. It's because they signify something. Because they point to something of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the gospel, the saving news of Jesus Christ.

To fixate on the sign and not on Jesus is like being too busy staring at the sign on the highway that you actually missed your exit. The sign is there to point you in the right direction, not to distract you.

And that's exactly what Peter does in the following verses. He brings the attention, the focus to Jesus. It says in verses 11 to 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. 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 formerly lay man clung to Peter and John and all the people, he says.

And noticing this healed man, people flock to Peter and John. The portico is basically an extended porch. It has a roof, but it's a colonnade. It's open on the sides, but it has a roof on the top.

[27 : 07] It offers shelter from the elements, but because it wasn't completely enclosed, it could accommodate a lot of people, large crowds. And seeing an opportunity to proclaim the gospel here, Peter addresses the crowd, but the first thing he says is, why do you wonder at this?

Why do you stare at us as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The healing of a man lame from birth would be a wondrous thing indeed if humans by their own power or piety did it.

That would be amazing. But if God did it, then it's nothing to wonder about. Our society is obsessed with self-promotion and celebrity.

But as Christians, we have to take our cues from Scripture and not from the culture. Instead of being preoccupied with making much of ourselves, praising our athleticism, praising our intellect, our ingenuity, our beauty, our capability, our righteousness, our power, our piety, we ought to be preoccupied with making much of God in God's wisdom, God's righteousness, and God's mercy, and God's power.

It would have been so easy. And I would have been sorely tempted if I were Peter and John to bring attention to myself.

[28 : 40] Men of Israel, well, we do spend quite a bit of time praying every day. I mean, I did spend several years with Jesus.

But they don't do that. they insist that it's not by their own power or pie that the lame man was made to walk.

It's so beautiful what they do here. Something I struggle with in my own life. We should have this deep desire to be hidden behind the glory of God to bring all glory to Him.

No matter how fine an instrument might be, without a musician to play it, he cannot play a single note of music. It's the musician who deserves the credit for beautiful music.

Likewise, though God used Peter and John to heal the lame man, they are mere instruments. And it is God who deserves all the glory. Peter then explains more specifically in verses 13 and 15 that it was by the power of the name of Jesus that the lame man was healed.

[30 : 23] And he begins by establishing common ground with his Jewish brethren, but then takes a sharp turn Jesus. He says, 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.

And 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. The phrase glorified his servant is an allusion to the servant songs in the book of Isaiah. In particular, Isaiah 52, verse 13, to 53, verse 12, which is the only place in the Old Testament where those two words, glorify and servant, occur together, are combined.

That passage begins with God saying this, Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted or glorified. But the path of this servant of the Lord's glorification goes through humiliation.

As it says in the following verses in Isaiah 53, verses 3 to 5, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

[31 : 37] And as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His wounds we are healed.

The glorious Son of God, the heir of God Almighty, humbled Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross, and therefore God exalted Him to the highest place above every name.

This is the beautiful paradox of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And note the contrast between the actions of God on the one hand and the actions of the Jews on the other in verses 13 to 15. God glorified His servant Jesus, but you delivered Him over and denied Him, despite the fact that even Pilate wanted to release Him.

You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. He whom God Himself honored and glorified, the Holy and Righteous One, we mere humans, delivered over to die on the cross like a piece of trash, like a low-life criminal.

[32 : 59] He whom God Himself chose and anointed, we denied Him. He whom God would raise from the dead, we by our sins killed Him.

How dare we? And yet, that's what we did. And the Holy One and Righteous One are both titles that are given to God throughout the Old Testament, especially in the book of Isaiah.

And interestingly, both of those terms are also used to refer to the promised Messiah. Isaiah 53, 11 says, By His knowledge shall the Righteous One, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities.

It's precisely because Jesus is the Righteous One that He's able to make us to be accounted righteous. If He were guilty of sin and deserving of death like we are, His death would have been insignificant and inefficacious.

But because the innocent one died in the place of guilty sinners, because the righteous one died in the place of the unrighteous, our penalty is paid and we are counted righteous.

[34 : 10] Instead of the death that we deserved, we receive life eternal because we killed the author of life, the source of life Himself. But God raised Him from the dead.

The word translated author here, we saw this earlier in the assurance of pardon from Hebrews 12 when it describes Jesus as the founder of our faith.

It's the same word, the author of our faith. We see that in Hebrews 2, 10 as well, the founder or the author of salvation. Later in Acts 5, 31, the same word is translated as leader to refer to Jesus as the one who leads the charge.

Jesus is the one who initiates. He's the author and the pioneer of our salvation and faith. This is why later in Acts 26, 23, Paul calls Jesus the first to rise from the dead.

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead who imparts eternal life to those who follow in His footsteps. That's how He is the pioneer of life, the author of life. And it's by the name of this glorified servant Jesus that the lame man was healed.

[35 : 20] Look at what Peter says in verse 16. 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.

Just as the person and work of Jesus Christ is the grounds for our forgiveness of sins, the person and work of Jesus Christ is also the grounds for our healing from sickness.

Matthew 8, 16-17 make precisely this point by quoting from the Servant Song of Isaiah. That evening, they brought to Him many who were oppressed by demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word and He healed all who were sick.

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. This is a paraphrase or a loose citation of Isaiah 53, verse 5, where it says, by His wounds we are healed.

Sin, sickness, and death are wrapped up together and are all characteristics of a fallen creation that is groaning for redemption. And the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the basis for healing.

[36 : 40] So Peter is here calling his audience to faith in Jesus. You seem quite enthusiastic about this sign of healing, but you were not so enthused about Jesus last month when you killed Him.

But it is precisely by the name of this same Jesus that you killed that this healing has taken place. And this miracle is proof that Jesus has been raised from the dead and is ascended to the heaven as the Lord over all.

And now you must turn to Him and trust Him for salvation. That's the main point of Peter's sermon in Luke 3 and 4, Acts 3 and 4.

The powerful name of Jesus must be believed in and appropriated by faith. Peter emphasized that, and His name, by faith in His name. And the faith that is through Jesus has given this man perfect health.

Faith was the means by which the power of Christ was appropriated for healing. Most likely here, it's the faith of the lame man that is intended, not the faith of Peter and John.

[37 : 45] This is confirmed later in Acts chapter 14, verses 8 to 10, by another very similar account of healing. There Paul encounters a lame man who was crippled from birth and had never walked.

And it says, Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, stand upright on your feet.

And he sprang up and began walking. Paul perceived prophetically that this lame man had faith to be healed. And Peter may have had similar insight.

We don't know. It doesn't tell us. But the point Peter is making when he says that faith in his name has made this man strong is that just as this lame man was healed by putting his faith in Jesus, you too should put your faith in Jesus' name.

If Peter were pointing out the great faith that he had that enabled him to heal this man, it would contradict the spirit of what he just said in verse 12. When he said, 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?

[38 : 49] It was not Peter's power or piety that made this man walk. Peter's faith is assumed. In fact, we can't sincerely pray for God's healing unless we have faith that God can heal.

It's not a remarkable thing for Christians to believe that God can heal. After all, we believe in the God who raises the dead. It's the lame man's faith that is in view.

Peter commanded the cripple to rise up and walk in the name of Jesus, but the name of Jesus is not some incantation or magical formula that affixed to an end of a sentence to make things happen.

The cripple would have received no healing had he not responded in faith to what Peter said by putting weight on his feet and standing up. Faith is important.

This role of faith is helpfully illustrated in the Gospel of Mark. In Mark chapter 9, the father of a boy who is demon-possessed and is having seizures, he asks Jesus, if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

[40 : 08] To which Jesus replies, if you can, all things are possible for one who believes. And now here, Jesus is not talking about his faith.

He's not saying, all things are possible for me because I believe. No, he's saying, telling the boy's father to believe because he's not satisfied with if you can because that's not exactly a vote of confidence.

He says, if you can, of course I can. All things are possible for one who believes. Jesus is challenging the father of the child to have greater faith, which is why the father responds by saying, I believe.

Help my unbelief. And Jesus immediately casts the demon out. Now contrast that with Jesus' interaction with the leper in Mark 1, 40 to 42. The leper comes to him imploring him and he says, if you will, you can make me clean.

Now that's a prayer of faith. Not if you can, but if you will, you can. So Jesus' response to him is very different. He says, move to pity. Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean.

[41 : 17] When it comes to Jesus' power to heal, it's not a question of ability, but a question of willingness. This is why at the end of Matthew 13, 53, 58, it says that Jesus did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Because these miracles are supposed to be signs that point to Jesus, Jesus doesn't perform these miracles for people who have no faith, for people who are not interested genuinely in believing in him, but are simply looking to use him like a genie in a bottle.

But we have to take care not to use this to bludgeon Christians who have genuine faith in Christ and earnestly seek healing yet are not healed. Because there are people like that.

We have people like that in our church. We shouldn't blame them for not having enough faith to be healed because that's a totally different situation. God doesn't heal every bodily ailment.

Even the Apostle Paul who was used by God to heal many, says in Galatians chapter 4, 12 to 20, that he had a bodily ailment that he was afflicted with that the Galatian believers had to attend to.

[42 : 43] He also mentions a thorn was given him in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12. We don't know exactly what this thorn in the flesh is, but most people speculate that it was some kind of bodily ailment because he describes it as something that's in the flesh.

But the fact that God does not heal everyone should not make us stop praying for healing. In the same way, the fact that God does not save everyone should not make us stop praying for people's salvation.

As John Wimber used to say, I'd rather pray for 1,000 people, even if only one gets healed, than not to pray for any and none gets healed. And please note that, and I thought this might be helpful for us as we're talking about it's getting into people getting vaccinated and whatnot.

I'm not saying that by saying we should pray for healing that God doesn't use other means. God does use medicines and doctors to bring healing as well.

1 Timothy 5.23 where Paul enjoins Timothy says, no longer drink only water but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. Paul's telling Timothy, hey, you have stomach ailments from drinking unclean water.

[44 : 06] It's okay to drink some wine from time to time. In fact, Paul traveled on his missionary journeys with a doctor named Luke. And in Joshua 5.10-12 after the Israelites finally crossed the wilderness and entered the promised land, they celebrate the Passover and it says there, the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

This is because God can provide supernaturally by raining bread from heaven as He did for the Israelites when they were in the wilderness, but He can also provide naturally by raining rain from heaven so that they can farm and produce fruits that they could eat.

And God deserves the credit for both. Whether you make the blind see by the miraculous power of God or make the blind see by doing cataract surgeries on people's eyes, using the knowledge that God has granted you in the means of healing that God has embedded in the principles of nature, you're both doing good work and you can do it for His glory.

To use a recent example that might be on your mind, God can protect you and heal you supernaturally from COVID. There's no question about that.

[45 : 37] but God can also protect you by using people that He has given knowledge and insight to in order to develop vaccines. There's nothing wrong with using these human means provided that the vaccines were not developed or procured through immoral means.

With all that said, we still need to ask ourselves where our ultimate trust lies. In our part of the world, it's easy to idolize science and human intelligence and put our faith in them.

The popular slogan, science will win, captures the sentiment. With all due respect, science does not win. Every doctor gets sick.

Every scientist will die. If not from COVID, from something else. It's Christ who wins in the end.

Life and death are ultimately in God's hands, not ours. And this is very important for us to remember. There is a difference between trusting God to provide through people and trusting people in the place of God.

[47 : 06] And lastly, we must remember the priority of proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ. Return with me to verse 16. Note that it's not our faith in and of itself that heals us, but it's the name of Jesus, His person, His power, His authority that heals us.

The sentence in the Greek is even more awkward than the way it is in English. It literally says, by faith in His name, has the name made strong this man whom you see and know.

It's almost like Peter's taking special care to not say that it's our faith that heals. Jesus heals. Jesus heals. We merely appropriate Jesus' power through faith.

That's why we can never boast of our faith and never take credit for healing with our faith. This is why Peter is careful to add at the end of verse 16, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Even faith in the end originates from Jesus. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. He's not only the object of our faith, He's also the origin, the source of our faith.

[48 : 21] So it's from beginning to the end, it's all of Him. The main point of this passage is not Peter's power or piety, nor is it the lame man's faith, nor is it the importance of signs and wonders in the ministry of the church.

The main point of this passage is the powerful name of Jesus. The healing is a sign that points to Jesus because He is the basis not only for our miraculous healings, but also our salvation and eternal life.

As I've said before, sin is a spiritual disease with a hundred percent fatality rate. Every single person, young and old, weak and strong, dies when infected by sin.

And sin is unsurpassed as an infectious disease. Once the disease spreads to multiple continents throughout the globe, it's declared a pandemic.

Sin is a perpetual pandemic that infects every single human being. And there is no human vaccine, no medicine, that avails against it.

[49 : 37] Every single one of us will die and perish forever apart from divine intervention. There's salvation in no one else but Jesus, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

If you had an unlimited supply of COVID vaccines, would you not give it out liberally? Would you not tell the whole world about it? the flow of the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from sin is limitless.

And we are the people whom God has sent to share this good news with the world. So let's go in the name of Jesus.

Command people not only to rise up and walk, but also tell them repent and be forgiven. Please take a moment to reflect on this message.

what is the Holy Spirit particularly pointing out to you from this passage? What is He convicting you of in your heart? Spend a few times on your own praying through that and then we'll respond by praying corporately out loud together.

[50 : 58] And don't come to this or ask who I am who are you' go s a