

## “Faith In Jesus’ Name”

28 February 2021 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

### Welcome & Call To Worship

Hymn of Preparation: Behold Our God

### Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Reading: Acts 3

### Sermon:

Everything was idyllic in the Church - people were being saved, service was given, fellowship was sweet. Everything was going well. However, as we all know, the life of the church is often fraught with difficulty; we are about to see this reality of opposition from without and sin within as Satan attacks. If we are to survive and hold out for Jesus, we must understand the reality of spiritual attack or warfare and its source. We have already heard this in Paul's letter to the Ephesian church, which we studied before Christmas. *“Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 6:11-12).

If you have been struggling with people in church this week, then Satan is at work. We need to employ the armour of God and fight that sinful tendency, stand against such attitudes and then walk in a different direction. We need to pray as the early church did. A friend sent me a quote from **Dixon Edward Hoste** (one of the Cambridge Seven and successor to Hudson Taylor with the China Inland Mission): *“Unless we are constantly and faithfully wrestling in the heavenlies against the powers of darkness, there is a real danger of us becoming involved in wrestling with our colleagues.”* As the story of the early church unfolds in the next chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, we see Satan’s opposition in its various guises.

The second thing to say is that church is all about Jesus. As we observe the life of the Apostles and the Church, we observe the continuing work of Jesus (1:1). This period in church history is marked by signs and wonders done by the apostles as a sign of their authenticity as followers of Jesus, as those commanded to continue the ministry of Jesus (2:43). As Paul tells the Church in Corinth, *“The things that mark an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles - were done among you with great perseverance”* (2 Cor 12:12).

Chapter 3 opens with the story of a miracle of physical healing. Luke’s purpose for telling the story is not that we would emulate the miracle, but that we would learn about the One who enabled it to happen. It is the starting point for an explanation of the person and work of Jesus. Luke encourages the first people who witnessed the healing to listen and learn about Jesus, and Peter grabs the opportunity to encourage everyone to repent and turn to God in faith in the name of Jesus (v.6,16).

#### I. The miracle of physical healing (v.1-10)

This healing was a miracle, unusual, outside the normal. The man suffered from a congenital condition from birth, present for over 40 years (4:22). It was profoundly serious; he could not walk and had to be carried. (I wonder if he might have been born with a very severe club foot condition.) It was not a vague, psychosomatic illness. The healing was by a direct word of command (v.6): *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* Peter did give him a hand

up as he had seen Jesus do with Jairus's daughter, but there is no mention of prayer, faith, anointing with oil or the laying on of hands. The healing was instantaneous (v.7): he walked, leapt and, in some sense, danced in praise of God (v.8-9). His ankles and feet grew strong immediately. It was a complete and permanent healing (v.16) and it was publicly acknowledged to be a miracle even by the authorities (Ch. 4). It was a miracle - unusual, jaw dropping, amazing, staggering.

There are some lovely personal details of the interaction between Peter, John and the man, (v.4-5) as they looked at each other and as he held on to them (v.11) when they left the gate area to go into the space offered by Solomon's Colonnade. Peter takes the opportunity to explain what has just happened and why.

This was a miracle, beyond dispute, and it is important we see what Peter does next, the direction he takes the crowd, because without a doubt he had their attention. He takes us to the heart of the matter, that is, the person and work of Jesus and our response to Jesus.

## **II. Jesus-centred explanation (v.11-16)**

"Why are you surprised?" Peter asks! Is he disingenuous? Not really, because he is genuinely not surprised, it appears. He knows it wasn't him or John. He is not a faith healer. It is God and it happened through faith in Jesus' name. He had seen Jesus do this in His ministry and that was a sign of the power and authority of Jesus, namely Jesus' name.

Peter goes on: this is your God, the Jewish God, the God of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one who glorified His servant, Jesus, the one Isaiah spoke of as the suffering servant. He is the Holy and Righteous one, a Messianic title, and the author of life. He was the same Jesus of Nazareth (a place despised by you) whom you handed over to the Roman authorities, whom you disowned and killed! But God glorified Him by raising Him from the dead. (v.13,15) and we are witnesses of this.

*"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see" (v.16).*

- It has nothing to do with me or John.
- It is not magic.
- It has *everything* to do with Jesus.
- I proclaim Jesus as God's servant, the Messiah, God Himself, who died and rose again, who was vindicated and glorified by God.
- He is the one you handed over to the Roman authorities, disowned and killed.
- The proclamation is of the power of Jesus to miraculously heal this man.
- That power is appropriated by faith in Jesus and in His name.

Now, you are there in Solomon's Colonnade under its cedar roof, perhaps leaning against one of the marble columns and looking at a man whom you have seen every day at the gate called Beautiful as you went to worship God. You are amazed that the one who was once severely crippled is jumping up and down with excitement. You see his feet and ankles and are simply shocked at what you see - the change from the useless, disfigured, stumps he used to have is clear. The person who is credited with healing him, of performing this miracle, is telling you that *Jesus* healed him, the Jesus who was recently crucified and whose followers claim He has risen from the dead. You have heard those rumours and maybe even discussed the possible reality. Perhaps you were even part of the crowd that put Him on the cross. His disciple Peter is telling you, a God-fearing Jew, that Jesus is Abraham's God, the Messiah and that because He rose from the dead, He was vindicated by

God. He is a witness of this! You see before you clear evidence of the healing and the testimony of this Apostle that Jesus did this.

But more than that, this guy Peter is saying you (we) are guilty of and responsible for Jesus' death. You have the sign of the miracle, the testimony about Jesus and the knowledge that you are guilty of handing Jesus over to the Roman authorities, to Pilate, of disowning Him and therefore you (we) are responsible for His death. You (we) are guilty of the death of Jesus, the one who healed this man. Our action against Jesus is ultimately an evil act, wicked (v.26).

### III. Jesus and the offer of forgiveness (v.17-21)

Peter is not content to produce guilt; he desires to offer hope, to tell them of the offer of forgiveness, refreshment and restoration. Peter is an evangelist; he loves his people and wants them to have faith in Jesus. He longs for them to believe. For the Jew, there was no forgiveness if the sin was wilful. Peter reassures them theirs was not wilful. Failing to recognise Jesus as the Messiah is not a wilful sin, but one committed in ignorance.

One of the biggest sticking points for the Jews was the fact that Jesus died on a cross. His death was problematic because death on a cross meant Jesus was cursed; it didn't make any sense to their view of the Messiah as an all-conquering hero. It stopped them from seriously considering Jesus as the Messiah. Peter knows this and wants them to understand that "*all the prophets*" had spoken of the Messiah suffering (e.g. Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 11:19; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 22, 69). He reassures them that it was true - Jesus (the Messiah) would suffer (v.18).

So the case builds: the miracle of the healed man, the person of Jesus, the testimony of Peter the Apostle, our guilt, and the testimony of the prophets about the suffering Messiah. What to do? Peter says, "**Repent and turn to God**".

- A. **Repentance:** Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31; 11:18 2 Tim 2:25). As Calvin said, "*Repentance follows faith and is produced by it.*" It means turning around, recognising your sin, looking towards Jesus and turning to God; admitting you are wrong, accepting God's word on a subject, sensing deep conviction about the evidence you have heard. The effect of repentance, of turning to God, is a beautiful picture of wiping out sin. At that time, the ink used on papyrus contained no acid and so it could be washed away like our non-permanent markers on a white board. There is no trace of past wrongs committed; our sin towards God is forgiven and we stand looking at God without the barrier of sin in our relationship.
- B. **Refreshing:** "times of refreshing" is a unique phrase and appears to point to the positive experience of life, possibly meaning the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- C. **Restoration:** Verses 20-21 speak of the time of Jesus' second coming and the restoration of all that has been destroyed by sin - our bodies, this earth, the consummation of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the offer made in the name of Jesus through faith is our sins forgiven, refreshment from God by the Holy Spirit and the promise in time of a complete restoration of everything when Jesus returns.

#### **IV. 'Listen to Jesus' say the prophets (v.22-26)**

We remember this is the early church experience and its leaders are following Jesus' instruction of continuing His ministry. They are starting in Jerusalem and speaking to Jews and God-fearing followers of Judaism. It is interesting to see the thinking they have done on the person of Jesus in v.12-15, which we looked at earlier, and here in v.22-26 on their understanding of the prophets and what they said about Jesus.

Moses tells the Israelites God will raise up a prophet like him, a second Moses and they are to listen to him (v.22). Literally, *whom God will raise up* - the Apostles see that as Jesus for the obvious reason of His resurrection and urge their fellow Jews to listen to Him (Jesus) as Moses warned, because otherwise they will be cut off, judged, disinherited. They further explain that "*all the prophets*" have spoken of these days. Samuel is representative of them as he anointed David, to whom was promised an eternal Kingdom through his future descendant, who is Jesus (as argued in Ch.2).

The desire of Peter, the heart of Jesus, is our blessing by turning from sin and our wicked ways to God in Jesus by faith (v.26). We must listen to everything He tells us to receive God's blessing, specifically repentance (forgiveness of sins), refreshment (the giving of the Holy Spirit), and restoration (the final coming of the Kingdom of God, the glory of a new heaven and earth enjoyed with a new resurrection body eternally).

The miracle of the healing of the man with a severe congenital deformity of his feet was a sign of the authenticity of the person of Jesus and the message of His work through the cross delivered by the Apostles. We have been brought through the word of God to Jerusalem and we are faced with the evidence of this miracle as we gaze on the healed man and hear the testimony of all who saw him. We have heard the words of Peter explain to us that this happened by faith in Jesus' name, through the same power that raised Him from the dead and we are urged, indeed warned, to respond by turning from our wicked ways in repentance and faith in Jesus' name.

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you - even Jesus" (v.19-20).

**Praise:** Tis So Sweet To Trust In Jesus

**Prayers for Others**

**Announcements**

**Closing Hymn:** Across The Lands

**Benediction:** May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all evermore. Amen.

**Discussion & Application:** It's all about Jesus (not about the miracle)

What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? Who is He?

Discuss what it means to have faith in Jesus' name.

What is promised through faith in Jesus' name?