“What You Really Need” Acts 3:1-10

LEARN

Video: [What it means to pray in Jesus’ name] by Costi Hinn (3:05)

1. Read Acts 3:1-10 and review the big idea. What was most impactful to you?

2. What is significant and distinct about the miracles of the apostles?
    a. They were to prove divine authority as the authorized representative of/witness to Jesus Christ; the miracles drew the crowds in to hear the message of the gospel
    b. Leaders: See attachment for further reading

3. What was the apparent problem of the man begging at the Beautiful Gate, and what was his real need? What does this teach us about the condition of humanity apart from Christ?
    a. His problem was that he was lame from birth and dependent on others to carry him and provide for his daily needs, yet his real need was greater than financial assistance or temporary relief. He needed complete healing and restoration.
    b. The man serves as a picture of humanity in a state of sin:
        i. We are born in sin.
        ii. We are paralyzed and enslaved by sin.
        iii. We are unable to overcome sin and its power through human effort.
        iv. We often seek relief from the world rather than the restoration that only Christ can provide.
    c. Our greatest problem is often the one we least recognize, but our helplessness does not place us beyond Christ's power.

PRACTICE

1. Pastor Scott pointed out that we often seek temporary relief from the world rather than the total restoration that only Christ can provide. Where in your life are you settling for temporary relief instead of turning to Christ?
    a. Consider comforts, pleasures, relationships, financial security, entertainment, or other things you look to for satisfaction.

b. Do you find yourself repeatedly returning to things that provide temporary relief but never truly satisfy? Are you treating the symptoms of your struggles rather than addressing the underlying issue of sin and your need for Christ?
c. Are you more interested in the benefits of Christ than Christ Himself?
d. How might fully submitting to Christ change the way you respond to your present circumstances?

2. What are you looking to get from the church? Are you primarily coming for the benefits of being connected to a church, or because you recognize your need for Christ?
    a. The man approached Peter and John expecting to receive money. He was looking for something that would temporarily improve his circumstances. Instead, he received something much greater.
    b. We can approach the church with a similar mindset. We may primarily be looking for friendships, encouragement, assistance with our circumstances, help raising children, a spouse, or a sense of belonging.
    c. These can all be legitimate benefits of church life, but they are not the fundamental reason the church exists. The church exists to worship God, make and multiply disciples, proclaim Christ, and help people grow in their relationship with Him.
    d. The church's responsibility is not simply to make people's earthly circumstances more comfortable. It is to point people to Jesus Christ, who alone can address our greatest problem: sin and our separation from God.
    e. This should shape our participation in the Three W's of discipleship:
        i. Worship Christ: We gather corporately to worship God, hear His Word, participate in the ordinances, and be strengthened in our faith. Personally, we cultivate a life of worship and devotion to Christ.
        ii. Walk with Christ: We pursue spiritual growth through God's Word and prayer, while participating in discipleship relationships and the life of the church through Small Groups, Family Worship Groups, Micro Groups, and other opportunities.
        iii. Work for Christ: We serve together within the church body, demonstrating our love for the people of God. We also use our individual gifts and serve others in the unique circumstances and places where God has placed us.

3. The healed man immediately entered the temple, praising God. Can you share a time God did something miraculous for you and how you responded? Does your life reflect gratitude and praise for the healing God has brought you through Jesus Christ? Do the people around you know how God has blessed you by the way you speak about Him?
    a. Do you regularly express gratitude for what Christ has accomplished for you, or do you spend more time talking about what you wish God would change?
    b. Are you joyfully participating in corporate worship, or have you become passive and disconnected from the gathering of God's people?
    c. How can you use your words and actions to point others toward Christ?
    d. mercy. His response was to praise God publicly and enter into the worship of His people.
    e. Christians have received something infinitely greater than physical healing: forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, deliverance from the dominion of sin, and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ.
    f. Our gratitude should therefore be evident in more than occasional expressions of thankfulness. It should shape our priorities, attitudes, words, relationships, and willingness to serve.

CHANGE

1. Have you become so accustomed to living in a state of spiritual paralysis that you have stopped recognizing your need for Christ's help? What needs to change in how you view your sin and your dependence on Him?
    a. One of the dangers of sin is that we can become so accustomed to it that we no longer recognize its seriousness. Instead of viewing sin as something that needs to be confessed and put to death, we begin to excuse it, minimize it, or accept it as part of who we are.
    b. Just as the lame man could not restore himself physically, we cannot overcome the power of sin through our own strength. We need Christ to deliver us and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to grow in holiness.
    c. This requires a change in how we view sin:
        i. Stop treating sin merely as a weakness, personality trait, or unfortunate habit. Recognize it as an offense against a holy God.
        ii. Stop blaming circumstances or other people for sinful responses. Take responsibility for our own attitudes, desires, and actions.

iii. Stop assuming that greater self-discipline alone will solve our spiritual problems. Depend on God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.
iv. Stop becoming comfortable with patterns of disobedience. Pursue repentance, obedience, and growth in Christlikeness.

d. The gospel does not teach that Christians are saved by overcoming sin through their own efforts. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph 2:8–9). However, that same grace transforms us and produces a desire to walk in obedience (Eph 2:10; Tit 2:11–14).

2. Wonder and amazement are not necessarily the same as faith. Have there been times when you were stirred by God's Word or His work, but that conviction only lasted temporarily? What needs to change so that you are actually trusting and following Christ?
    a. The people who witnessed the healing were filled with wonder and amazement, but being impressed by a miracle was not the same thing as believing in Jesus Christ.
    b. It is possible to experience an emotional response to a sermon, worship service, biblical truth, or something God has done without actually responding with repentance, faith, and obedience.
    c. Genuine faith involves more than agreeing with biblical information or experiencing temporary spiritual enthusiasm. It involves trusting in Christ and submitting our lives to His Word.
    d. The difference becomes evident in how we respond to God's truth:
        i. A person can hear a sermon about forgiveness and feel convicted but continue holding onto bitterness rather than pursuing forgiveness.
        ii. A person can hear about the importance of Scripture and prayer but never establish a consistent pattern of personal devotion.
        iii. A person can be moved by teaching about serving others but continue living primarily for personal comfort and convenience.
        iv. A person can agree that Christian fellowship and discipleship are important but remain disconnected from meaningful relationships within the church.
    e. Spiritual maturity is not measured simply by how much biblical information we know or how often we experience emotional responses to God's Word. It is demonstrated through an ongoing pattern of trusting Jesus and growing in Christ-likeness.

C. The Purposes of Miracles

One purpose of miracles is certainly *to authenticate the message of the gospel*. This was evident in Jesus' ministry, as people like Nicodemus acknowledged: "We know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these *signs* that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). It also was evident as the gospel was proclaimed by those who heard Jesus, for as they preached, "God also bore witness by *signs and wonders and various miracles* and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Heb. 2:4). Whether this purpose was valid only when the gospel was first preached (before the New Testament was written) or it holds good throughout the church age depends on what we think the miracles are confirming: Are they confirming only the absolute truthfulness of the words of Scripture (as the very words of God), or are miracles given to confirm the truthfulness of the gospel generally, whenever it is preached? In other words, do miracles confirm Scripture or the gospel? As we shall see below, miracles were not limited to those who wrote Scripture or spoke with absolute apostolic authority.[11] This suggests that miracles given in confirmation of the gospel might be expected to continue throughout the church age. When miracles occur, they give evidence that God is truly at work in connection with the gospel of Christ, and so miracles serve to advance the gospel: the Samaritan woman proclaimed to her village, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did" (John 4:29), and many of the Samaritans believed in Christ. This was frequently true in Jesus' ministry, but it was also true in the early church: when Philip went to a city in Samaria,

> the crowds with one accord *paid attention to what was being said by Philip*, when they heard him and saw the *signs* that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city. (Acts 8:6–8)

When Aeneas the paralytic was healed, "all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and *they turned to the Lord*" (Acts 9:35). When Tabitha was raised from the dead, "it became known throughout all Joppa, and *many believed in the Lord*" (Acts 9:42). In all of these instances, miracles authenticated the message of the gospel. These verses and others like them repeatedly show the positive value of miracles in bringing people to faith.[12]

A second purpose of miracles in the New Testament is *to show that the kingdom of God has come* and has begun to expand its beneficial results into people's lives, for the results of Jesus' miracles show the characteristics of God's kingdom: Jesus said, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). His triumph over the destructive forces of Satan showed what

God's kingdom was like. In this way, every miracle of healing or deliverance from demonic oppression advanced the kingdom and helped fulfill Jesus' ministry, for he came with the Spirit of the Lord on him "to proclaim good news to the poor … to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

Similarly, Jesus gave his disciples "power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out *to proclaim the kingdom of God* and to heal" (Luke 9:1–2). He commanded them, "Proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (Matt. 10:7–8; cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Acts 8:6–7, 13).

A third purpose of miracles is *to help those who are in need*. The two blind men near Jericho cried out, "Have mercy on us," and Jesus "in pity" healed them (Matt. 20:30, 34). The miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 14:13–21) also falls in this category. Similarly, when Jesus saw a great crowd of people, "he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14; see also Luke 7:13). Here miracles give evidence of the compassion of Christ toward those in need.

A fourth purpose of miracles is *to remove hindrances to people's ministries*. As soon as Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law, "she rose and began to serve him" (Matt. 8:15). When God had mercy on Epaphroditus and restored his health (whether through miraculous means or not, Paul attributes it to God's mercy in Phil. 2:27), Epaphroditus was then able to minister to Paul and complete his function as a messenger returning to the Philippian church (Phil. 2:25–30). Although the text does not explicitly say that Tabitha (or Dorcas) resumed her "good works and acts of charity" (Acts 9:36) after the Lord through Peter raised her from the dead (Acts 9:40–41), by mentioning her good works and those who bore witness to her selfless care for the needs of others (Acts 9:39), it suggests that she would resume a similar ministry of mercy when she was raised from the dead. Related to this category would be the fact that Paul expects people to be edified (or "built up") when miraculous gifts are used in the church (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:4, 12, 26), and removing physical hindrances to people's ministries would certainly serve to build up the church.

Finally, a fifth purpose for miracles (and one to which all the others contribute) is *to bring glory to God*. After Jesus healed a paralytic, the crowds "were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men" (Matt. 9:8). Similarly, Jesus said that the man who had been blind from birth was blind "that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).

[11] See section D below, pp. 477–85.

[12] Some may object that when we say that miracles have value in bearing witness to the gospel this means that we think the gospel message by itself is weak and unable to bring people to faith (see especially James M. Boice, "A Better Way: The Power of

Word and Spirit," in *Power Religion*, ed. Michael Scott Horton [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992], 119–36). But this is not a valid objection, for Jesus and Paul did not reason that way—both performed miracles in conjunction with their preaching of the gospel, and Jesus commanded his disciples to do this as well (Matt. 10:7–8). We must remember that it is God himself who "bore witness" to the gospel "by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Heb. 2:4), and we cannot say that he has an inappropriate view of the power of the gospel message.

John's gospel is especially instructive in showing the value of miracles in encouraging people to believe in Christ (see John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:53–54; 6:2, 14; 7:31; 9:16; 11:48; 12:11; and, in summary, 20:30–31). This positive emphasis in John stands in contrast to the view of D. A. Carson in "The Purpose of Signs and Wonders in the New Testament," in Horton, *Power Religion*, 100–101, where he admits but minimizes the positive role of miracles in bringing people to faith in John's gospel. Surprisingly, he fails to discuss several of the positive passages mentioned above and sees a depreciation of miracles in passages where no such negative evaluation exists, such as John 2:23–25; 4:48; and 20:29–31. We should not think that when miracles accompany the gospel those who believe will have inferior faith (as Carson suggests, p. 101), for that would lead us to say that those who believed the preaching of Jesus, Peter, and Paul had inferior faith—a conclusion hardly advanced by the New Testament!

cf. compare

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 475–77.