

12a ACTS

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study in Acts chapter 3 this evening to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and ensure that we are susceptible to the ministry of God's Spirit. Shall we pray? Father, you are the source of our strength. You are the reason for which we live.

You have given us our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for our salvation. We thank you for the meaning and direction and purpose that you have infused into our lives.

We thank you that we have a bright hope and we have a confident expectation of the Lord Jesus' return for us so that we can move into the eternal future and into the eternal realms. We pray that our study tonight will prepare us for that advance and that promotion. We pray that we will be able to remember and apply the things we see in your word so that our time here on earth is a valuable training and preparation for what is to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well as I said tonight we resume in Acts chapter 3. What is going on in Acts? Let's just step back and make sure we know where we are.

I will never forget, as long as I live, and I've mentioned it a number of times over the years, but back in the presidential election where Ross Perot was running and Admiral Stockdale was his running mate and they had a televised debate. All the different candidates had a chance to speak and of course the major party candidates did their thing and then Ross Perot and so Admiral Stockdale was sort of last and most people didn't know who he was. Some of you may not know who he was.

I knew of him because he had come and spoken to us at the Naval Academy. He was a prisoner of war. He was held for a long time in Hanoi and was severely beaten.

He received the Medal of Honor for his heroic resistance all during the time he was in the Hanoi Hilton. Anyway, he was chosen by Ross Perot to be a running mate. A very worthy, admirable man.

But most Americans didn't know much more than his name and maybe that he had been a POW. So all the cameras zoomed in on him. They got up close and personal, silver-haired man.

He looks right into the camera and says, Who am I? Why am I here? It just stuck in my mind. What a great way to introduce oneself. Who am I? Why am I here? We ask ourselves this question.

Who am I and why am I here? What is the goal and purpose and meaning of my life? Well, Acts is the book that answers that question for the church because the church has

its birth in these first chapters and it is a new thing. The church is not Israel and don't let anyone or any denomination tell you that we are just an outgrowth and an expansion of God's church of the ages or God's people that used to be Israel and now we are the new Israel or any such nonsense. We are a new and separate thing.

We have our origin in Israel and in the law of Moses just like Eve had her origin in Adam. God reached into Adam's side and pulled some structural material out and created the woman, manufactured the woman, Asah. Well, is she part and parcel of Adam? Adam says, Look, I'm going to call you Ish.

I'm going to call you Ishah, which is just the feminine form of Ish. You put A-H on a Hebrew noun and most times it turns into a feminine form. I'm Ish, you're Ishah because you're bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

But if you walked up in the garden to Eve, you would notice that there was a substantial and remarkable and very happy difference between her in her unclothed perfection and Adam in his unclothed perfection. You could walk up to Eve and you would say, That is not Adam. That is something entirely new and different, much more beautiful, equipped for functions that Adam could never hope to accomplish in terms of bearing children and nursing children and all of that.

You are in the presence of something that's new and different even though it had its origin in something and the church is the same way. So here we are. That's why we're studying these first chapters of Acts so closely because this is how everything got started.

Now, in the same way, when you go to the Old Testament, you go to the first few chapters, you've got an ideal. You have perfection in the Garden of Eden in the early days, but it doesn't stay that way. There are changes.

There's the fall. There's the expulsion from the garden. There is life with Cain and Abel and then you have a murder and everything changes and you move into other dispensations.

As people multiply in number, God begins to deal with them corporately rather than individually. In the days of the patriarchs, the patriarchs are the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God dealt with them individually. He doesn't come to the nation of Chaldea.

He doesn't go to the city of Ur and say, All of you, what do you call people in Ur? Urbites? All of you Urites? All of you Urens? All you Urens get thee up and come and I'll make a people of you. He didn't do that to the group, did he? He picked one man. He chose one individual and he said, You, Abraham, you get thee up from your kindred and out from your father's household and go to the land.

He worked individually with Isaac. He worked individually with Jacob. It isn't until Jacob's

twelve sons come down into the land of Canaan that God begins to form a nation and from the time that nation comes out of Egypt, as we are studying in our Exodus travels on Sunday, the nation is in view.

Now, when you look at Israel, it is always the nation that is in view. That is important to understand here in the early chapters of Acts. Why? Well, because.

That's what my dad used to tell me. That should suffice. Because.

Why is it important here? Who are the first Christians? Who are the first members of the new entity? When God reached into Adam's side and pulled out the rib, that was Adam and now it's something else, but it's the side, it's the structural member. Well, you have some Jews, you have some Old Testament saints who are going to come over bodily and form the nucleus of the new church. These are your apostles and your first disciples and this crowd to whom Peter preaches his first sermon in Jerusalem, they say, they're cut to the heart and they say, what must we do? And Peter says, repent, be baptized, get a lock on the fact that you have relief and deliverance from sin that has never been possible before.

We were always looking forward. We were always living in hope God was making provision and dealing in shadows and picturing and symbolizing things for us. Now, I don't know about you, but if I had a choice between living right now, the life that we live or going back and wandering around in the desert and slaying animals and sacrificing them and splashing their blood hither and yon and burning this part and waving that part and taking the best out of my flock and killing it month after month, year after year, which would you rather have? Do you want the shadows or do you want the reality? The sad thing is a lot of times we get neither.

We don't go back and study the shadows to understand what God is really up to because that's his flannel graph. The Old Testament is God's flannel board and he puts up the characters and he says, look, let me show you the nation of Israel and how I deal with them. This is my object lesson for you.

It tells us all these things were written for our instruction upon whom the purposes and the goals and the ends of the ages have come. We are living in the age of fulfillment. We are living in the age of let's get it done.

God is looking for people who will live their life to get it done. All of the rest of this has been set down and recorded and preserved for thousands of years so that we will see it and go forth. It reminds me of when I was a lieutenant in Quantico, Virginia.

You take the Marine lieutenants. All lieutenants go through basic training for officers just like recruits go through boot camp in San Diego or Parris Island or wherever. They take all of them and we go to Quantico.

You sit in classrooms and back then it was not air conditioned and flies were buzzing around and guys were falling asleep. There is some captain droning on in the front. This is pre-technology.

We didn't have computers. He's up there and he's got paper charts and a long stick with a black rubber tip and he's saying well here's your hill and here's your unit and here's your platoon with your three fire teams. You want to deploy interlocking fields of fire.

You want to deploy your machine guns here. You want to take your rocket launchers here. Put your grenades here.

You're going to go this way. If you get fire, you look for the flank and he goes on and on. You're just fighting to stay awake and thinking now how important and real is this going to be.

We're not in a war at the moment. I'm probably going to get sent to recruiting duty someplace. Is this meaningful? You remind yourself.

You say you never know when a war is going to break out. You never know when you're going to find yourself overseas. You never know when suddenly you're going to be depending for your life and for the life of your men on knowing this information.

You have to put yourself forward into the time when you will need it. Maybe you don't need it right now. Maybe it seems meaningless and dull right now, but I promise you if you let it go by and you just drowse away and you get a 71 on the test and pass and remember just enough to get by and then flush it, there is going to come a time.

It happened to me. I found myself in situations where I had to deploy security. I had to operate a security team.

I found myself when we left the classroom and they try to do this. They try to say, look, let us impress on you the reality of this. They take all the lieutenants and they say, now you're a platoon and Lieutenant Hall, you're the platoon commander.

Oh, great. I was. I was the first one out of our group.

We went to the field. We had our C rations. They said, first of all, we're going to show you how troops ought to move through open ground.

You learn things in practice that you could never learn in the classroom. In the classroom, it's lines and diagrams and X's and O's and arrows and it all looks great. When you go out in the field, they say, okay, the first thing is we're here in the edge of this tree line and we've got to cross this open space and it's under observation by the enemy.

So you've got to get from here to there. Well, think about it. You're out in the field.

You've got to have all of your stuff. So you've got your, back then it was a steel pots before we had Kevlar. You've got your flak jackets.

You've got your 782 gear, your web belt with two canteens full of water, two or three magazines at that time full of blanks. You've got your M16. You've got all the rest of this gear that you cart around.

Plus you've got your food for a couple of days. Well, in those days, just making me feel old even thinking about it. In those, back in the old days, we didn't have any dissolvable meals.

They came in cans and we loved it. We opened them with our teeth. But it was C rations and it came in cans.

And so I thought, well, I want to have these with me. So I took them out of their box and stuck them in my pockets. You've seen the camouflage utilities that Marines and Army guys wear.

They've got those pouch pockets on the side. And I thought, I've got to get some of this weight off my shoulders. This pack is cutting into my circulation up here and making my brain go dead.

So I'm going to put some of this weight further down, distribute it. So I put it in those pouch pockets. Well, then we go to the edge of the, there is a point to this story, by the way, we go to the edge of the tree line and we cross the open field.

Well, it's, you know, tuck and roll, tuck and roll, advance. And you go and roll and you'd go and roll and you zig and you zag. And by the time I got to the other side, my little cans of C rations were perfectly intact because they were real strong cans.

But my thighs were just black and blue. And when I got back and for about a week and a half after that, my legs looked like somebody had been after me with baseball bats. Well, see, you don't learn that in the classroom.

There are things about practical life that you only get in your field test. Well, how much better for you should you find yourself at some time in the future going to the field with cans in your pockets to say, I remember old hall talking about, it's not a good idea to have those in your pockets because you'll whack your legs all black and blue. Well, this is what the old Testament does for us.

God delivers the principles in the law. And then he shows the nation of Israel living them out and how they left the cans in their pockets and bruised themselves. And we observe this and we try to learn and benefit and not go and make those same mistakes.

We want to be creative and original and make new and different mistakes that nobody

ever thought of if we're going to make mistakes at all. That's why we're studying this. And it's the same thing in the church.

In the early days of the church, we have this new body that is developing this new assembly that is forming. And so it starts with the old and the original audiences are all Jewish. They're all Israelites.

And so it's easy because you can draw on what they know from their Old Testament understanding. So we find ourselves now in chapter three, Acts chapter three. And we saw last time that Peter and John are still doing their Old Testament kind of worship.

How many of us are seven-day Adventists? None of us. As far as I know, none of us go try to go to church on Saturday. Well, we're now in the age of the church, but these people still worship on Saturday.

They go to synagogue on the Sabbath. And daily, there is a sacrifice down at the temple. They have a morning sacrifice and an evening sacrifice.

Morning sacrifice goes about nine o'clock in the morning. Evening sacrifice goes at about three p.m. Well, in those days, they started their hour numbering from six in the morning. So when it tells us that it was about the ninth hour in Acts chapter three, verse one, what time was it? What's nine hours after six a.m.? Three p.m., right? Six hours gets you to twelve, three hours gets you to three p.m. It's about three in the afternoon.

So try to picture it. It's a dusty afternoon in Jerusalem. You've got the hubbub of the city, people coming and going, caravans, camels, the bazaar, things being hawked and sold, and the kids running and so on.

Peter and John have been somewhere where they dwell, and they said, it's getting close to the ninth hour. Let's go down for the hour of prayer. They're going to go down to the temple.

So they're walking through the streets. They're approaching. They come to the gate that is called Beautiful.

Now, we don't know for sure. Josephus and all the rest of the ancient historians have not designated, have not said which gate was the gate Beautiful. However, there was one gate called the Nicanor Gate, and it was on the east side.

And this would make sense because Solomon's porch, where some other things were going to happen, also runs the length of the east side of the temple, the outer core of the temple. So this gate was on the east side, and it was different than the other gates. The other gates were embellished with a little bit of silver and gold.

This one was covered in fine bronze, and so it would glow. Now, in the morning, when

the sunlight would strike it, it would just be gleaming and brilliant. But this is the afternoon.

Where is the sun at 3 p.m.? It's going to be south and west, mostly west. And so you're going to have this soft glow coming off of this gate. And as they approach this gate, which is called Beautiful because of its decor and the detail with which it was, the artisans and the workmanship of it, this gate Beautiful, there's a man who sits there every day.

He knows that at the hour of prayer, big crowds come in. If you're a panhandler, where do you go? Where the people are. You go to Skillman and LBJ and stand on the median and wait for someone to stop at the light.

You go where the people are. So he goes to the gate Beautiful to beg alms of those who are entering the temple. He sees Peter and John, verse 3, about to go into the temple, and he began asking to receive alms.

Buddy, brother, can you spare a dime, type of thing, like they used to do in the depression? Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him. Now, I didn't point this out last time, but I want to point it out this time. Look at verse 4. Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him.

Now, this is not what I tend to do when somebody is panhandling and trying to get their hand in my pocket. I tend to pretend they're not there. Guy standing on the median.

Sometimes I just won't even look at him. I just pretend he's invisible and that I'm deaf. And I just, I look through him, I look past him.

I'm not interested in engaging in any sort of eye contact that is going to encourage him to come over and start palavering through my window at me, trying to get my money. But this is different. Peter looks right at him.

Most of the people just blow right on by. Eh, go away, you bother me. They look right at him.

And he says, look back at me. I'm looking at you. You look at me.

What does this do? It establishes a personal connection. I think that this was the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Peter, it doesn't say Peter looked every beggar he ever saw in the eye.

But this particular beggar, for whatever reason, I think it was just the witness of God's Spirit, the operation of God's Spirit in Peter's mind on this particular day, at this particular time, this particular beggar, Peter was motivated to stop and look the guy right in the eyes. And he says, look at us. And, well, the man is looking at them, sort of,

but he's looking at them as a mark.

He's looking at them as a potential source of lunch money, right? Peter says, look at us. And the idea is, get your mind into a little bit higher frame than are you going to give me a shekel. Look at us.

And the idea is, there is something there to be seen. And what I suspect is, Peter and John, they are tradesmen. They're fishermen.

They're not dressed in robes with fine gold and purple. They're not your Pharisee. They're not your rich man coming down to make a show, going to the church.

And the guy, you know, he's not discriminating. He's just saying, hey, you got some money? Can you spare something? Look at me. I'm crippled.

I can't walk. Have pity. Have mercy, you know.

And he looks at them and he says, hey, have mercy. And he's probably fixing to look somewhere else. And Peter says, hey, look at me.

And so the man stops and looks. What's he going to see? He's going to see two men who have lived their lives as itinerant missionaries for the Lord Jesus for the last few years. And before that, they were professional fishermen up in Galilee.

They have the accent that comes from the country. In Israel, if you came from Galilee, it would be like today having an accent from Georgia or Alabama or Louisiana. People could tell by the way you spoke that you were from Galilee.

And they considered Galilee to be the hinterlands, the farmlands, the hillbillies live up in Galilee. That's why they said, can any good thing come out of Galilee? You know, are you telling me the Messiah is going to come out of Galilee? Is the Messiah going to come down here speaking with a twang? I don't think so. That's one of the reasons the Pharisees had a hard time.

Their expectations were wrong. So he says, look at me. So the man began to give them his attention.

He's now looking and listening and he's out of his panhandling mode. He's expecting to receive something from them. But this is an unusual encounter.

Most people just throw money at him and go on. They're saying, look, we have a communication connection here. Peter says, I do not possess silver and gold.

And you get the idea. He says, look at me. You think I'm made of money? I don't have silver and gold.

But what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk. Now, put yourself, try.

Let's try to put ourselves in the position of this man. He's been crippled since he was born. He has never taken a step.

His legs are twisted. They're atrophied. They are withered.

They're useless. And people help him and carry him down there and plop him down and say, I'll be back when the sun starts going down and I'll pick you up. And so he's sitting there in the dust.

And this man, who looks like your average visitor to Jerusalem, says, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk. What would the normal reaction to this be? Buddy, not only are you poor, but you're crazy. What do you mean walk? Are you blind? What do you see down below my knees here? It is not walking equipment.

However, Peter got his attention and then he clearly says, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk. Rise up and walk. Well, that name means something in Jerusalem.

That name means something in Israel. There has been nearly four years of missionary activity all through the land. Jesus has done many miracles.

As I said last time, you would expect those who had some sort of physical disability, the word would have spread like wildfire. There's a man in Israel who can heal. Well, his name has just been spoken.

And I feel confident that this man at the Gate Beautiful knew that name and knew the reputation behind it and had come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the real deal. He was probably just cursing his luck, so to speak, that he had never been in a crowd near him or never been fortunate enough to get to him and get healed. And then he heard that he was crucified.

And then maybe he kind of wondered, well, if he really was all that, then how did he get crucified and die? Well, now here's a man that says, I'm going to give you something in the name of Christ. Rise up and walk. He's at a decision point.

It seems impossible. It seems unlikely. But there is the potential here for something to happen.

And he just literally steps out on faith. He says, give me a hand. I'll give her a shot.

So he steps out. So Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up. And immediately, as we saw last time, he's healed.

He leaps. He goes into the temple leaping and praising God. Well, we have a hard time.

You know, we read the miracles and we say, well, of course, miracles in the Bible. It doesn't hit us with the impact like it did the people who saw this and who had seen this man at the Gate Beautiful. He had a reputation.

People went down there to pray all the time. He was well-known. This would be like Ray Charles coming on TV, whipping off the glasses and saying, I can see.

I mean, people would say, what? Ray, we've been watching you on TV since the 50s, man. You're blind. No, I'm not.

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and now I can see. Well, this man was that well-known in Jerusalem, and now he can walk. So all the people saw him walking and praising God, and they knew he was the one who used to sit begging alms at the beautiful gate of the temple first night, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

It's unfortunate that we have lost our sense of wonder and amazement at what God can do. He does miraculous things, and he does them for a purpose. Verse 11, as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, you would think, well, maybe he's kind of having trouble navigating or keeping his balance or something.

But this word held on to is the word in Greek that they use when they arrest someone, you know, when they when they seize you. It basically says he arrested Peter and John. He had him by the arm, and he says, you're in my custody.

I'm not letting you go. You are the best thing that has ever happened to me in my entire life. You have brought me the power of Christ.

I want to praise God. I want you to teach me how to praise God. I want you to tell me more about Jesus Christ.

And he just flat wouldn't let him go. He's got his left hand clamped on John and his right hand clamped on Peter, and he's not turning loose. And so they're like a they're like a, you know, three man team here that goes everywhere together.

So all the people ran together to them in the porch, which is called Solomon's. And this helps us know where the gate is, because this is this long thing that runs the length of the outer court of the temple on the eastern side. When Peter saw this crowd, he responded to the people.

Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Why do you look so intently at us as though by our own power or our own godliness, we had made this man walk? Don't get the idea that we're the amazing Kreskin or we're some magician team and that we can just do

this anytime we feel like it at our own behest. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now, this is critically important to establish in a Jewish mind, the legitimacy of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

You have to ground it in the Bible. Anyone who's going to believe is going to believe it because it matches their scriptures. And so he says, look, this is not some weird mystical thing.

This is not some power that came when a meteor struck a nearby hillside and we walked through the glow and suddenly gained healing power. This is the God that you have always known. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers.

What is he appealing to them to do? These are people who have known about God all their lives, but they've got to think about their God in a new way because the God who did not send any prophets, who did not accomplish any miracles, who did nothing in particular special for hundreds of years from the time they came back from captivity until the arrival of Jesus Christ. No miracles, no prophecy, nothing special. They've got to adjust themselves to the fact that their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is back in the active mode.

He is doing something and he's doing it in their time and they need to wake up and recognize it and respond to it. So he says, this is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers. He has glorified his servant Jesus.

And what did you do? God went into active mode, sent the Lord Jesus. You promptly grabbed a hold of him and killed him. I mean, you can't get much worse than this.

God is ready to drop blessing and provision and the kingdom and all of the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises on you. He wraps that all up and puts it in one man, his servant, Jesus Christ, and you in your infinite wisdom killed him. This is worse than killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

This is killing the Son of God. This is killing the Lord of glory. He says, this is what you did.

You delivered him up. You denied him in the presence of Pilate when he determined to let him go. You denied the Holy One and the just.

Look at these names for Jesus. He is called God's servant. He is called the Holy One.

He is called the just one. These are Old Testament terms that were used for God. And Peter is saying this Jesus that you so casually wrote off and denied and dismissed and rejected and saw to it that he got crucified by the Romans.

These are the titles that apply to him. He is the just one. He is the Holy One.

He is the servant of God, the suffering servant that was predicted in Isaiah. All of this language, it just sounds like words to us. It sounds like nice titles.

But to the Jewish mind, these are like quotes from Scripture. And they are saying, you mean he is the one that Isaiah foretold? You mean he is the one that Moses talked about? You mean he is the one that was predicted in the Davidic covenant and in Ezekiel and in these other prophetic passages of the Old Testament? That is what Peter is doing here in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He is using this vocabulary.

And instead of accepting him, you denied the Holy One and the just and you asked for a murderer to be granted to you and you killed the Prince of Life. Well, you asked for a murderer to be granted to you. Who remembers who that was? Barabbas.

If you go to the text of Matthew, and there is a little textual problem there, but the scholars who are the professionals designed to figure such things out, Bruce Metzger has written a whole book on nothing but how the committee that put together the Greek text made their decisions about textual problems. And in his article over in Matthew, I believe it is chapter 23, where it talks about Barabbas, you know what his full name is? Jesus Barabbas is his name. Matthew gives his name as Jesus Barabbas.

Do you remember when we talked about this back at Easter time in April, what does Barabbas mean? Bar in Aramaic means son of. It means the same thing as Ben. We have Ben Hur, Charlton Heston, son of Hur, H-U-R.

Well, Bar in Aramaic means the same thing as Ben, son of. And what is Abba? Father. Jesus, son of the Father is the name of this crook.

And you have Jesus, capital S, son of the capital F, Father. You have this choice that they have to make. Do you want Jesus Barabbas or do you want Jesus Bar Abba? And they chose the wrong one.

They took the crook and the robber. You know what is interesting? Most of the things, you pick any story in the Bible, other than the actual crucifixion of Jesus, but you don't typically find it, but maybe in one or two of the Gospels. Sometimes you'll find it in three, like it might be in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but it won't be in John.

Something will be in Luke, but not in Matthew and Mark. But the choice of Barabbas is in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all mention Barabbas.

I get the idea whenever God repeats something four times that it's pretty cotton-picking important. And now here's the fifth time because Peter mentions it here in Acts. You chose a murderer to be granted to you and you killed the prince of life.

The word prince here is archagos. Let me make sure I'm pronouncing this correctly. I'll look in my Greek text here.

Archagon is the accusative form here, but A-R-C-H-E-G-O-S, archagos. The first part of that is arche, and that comes over in our language. An archive is where you put the originals of things.

The archetype is the first of something. The arch rival is your head rival, your top rival, the chief rival that you have. Well, the archagos, you can translate it two ways.

Either the originator of something, the author of something, or the prince. Because the guy who is the leader is usually the one that takes the initiatives and starts things. So sometimes this is translated the prince of life, sometimes it is the author of life.

To get an idea of this, you can look at some of the parallel passages where it is found. Over in Hebrews, he is called the author and finisher of our faith. Remember that? Well, that's archagos, the same word.

When it says author and finisher, that's the same word that's used here. He is the author of life. He is the originator of life.

He is the one through whom life comes. Therefore, he is the prince of life. Whom God raised from the dead, of which we, and he's talking about himself and John, are witnesses.

And his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Now, verse 16 is the most important verse in this whole sermon. His name, specifically faith in his name, is what made this man strong, whom you see and you know.

You know this man, you know he was crippled, you've seen the actual power of God in action. And then he says, yes, the faith which comes through him has given this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. So what's he saying? Faith in Jesus Christ is what released this power.

Power unlike anything on earth. Now, what did we say about the Old Testament stories and the Old Testament histories that we have? It's written down for us to learn from, for us to make application from, right? Same thing with this story here. So why does God give us this account, this true record of events? What are we supposed to draw from it? Is it no longer true that faith in Jesus' name unleashes the power of God? Creative power, transforming power, healing power, restoring power? It is absolutely true, isn't it? Do we have the same God yesterday, today and forever? Is it the same Lord and Savior Jesus Christ seated at his right hand? Are we the people of God? Are we called by his name? Have we been baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we pray in the name of Jesus Christ? This is why it's so important to understand prayer.

We pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. Why? Because there is no other name under heaven given among men that delivers us. There is no other name under heaven

that unleashes this kind of power.

It is the name of Jesus Christ. It is his person. It is his work.

It's who he is and what he has done and where he stands before God that is the avenue, the conduit, the pipe through which grace and power comes. Now, let me ask you this. How many of us need help? How many of us need transforming power? How many of us have some area in our soul or in our life where our feet are twisted and withered and not working for us? All of us.

All of us. There is not a one of us that in some area either visible or invisible doesn't need the power of God to heal, to restore, to reach down and lift us by the hand, stand us on our feet and enable us not only to stagger, not only to stumble, but to walk, to leap, to jump and to praise God in the process just like this man. This story is here to teach us all something.

We have things that are discouraging. I do and I know each of you does. In some cases I know exactly what they are.

You don't always know what mine are, but a lot of times I know what yours are. But the thing that is encouraging to me and ought to be encouraging to all of us in this story is it is the same God. It is the same Holy Spirit.

It is the same name and it is the same power. God gave us this account and he says, what are you going to do about this? What is the key for this power to go into effect? It is faith and by extension it is obedience that is a result of faith. The man didn't say, if you want to see me walk, you better put me on your shoulders because these feet ain't walking.

He had to go into the unknown. He had to do something he had never done before. He had to take the hand and had to believe that by the time he got raised to eye level with Peter and John, his feet would somehow be there to walk.

And they were because it's the power of God and it's the promise of God. And faith in the promise is what unleashes the power of God. Now it's either a fact or it isn't.

It's either in the Bible or it's not. It either applies to us or it doesn't. And that's the decision that we have to make.

We can't be like all of the other people at the Pool of Bethesda that Jesus did not heal. We want to be the man that did get the healing because he had the faith. A lot of people Jesus never healed.

They either never came to him or they didn't step out in faith. I keep thinking about all of those cripples around the Pool of Bethesda. Only one man got healed that day and the

Lord of Glory was standing there with healing power for all.

But there was only one that had the faith. Faith does not heal us, but faith qualifies us for healing. But it's got to be unconditional.

It's got to be focused on the promise of God and the word of God. And that's what we all need. We need to pause and take a break.

When we come back, we're going to finish up Peter's sermon and move forward and see what happened on Solomon's porch.