

Good evening. It's wonderful to be together. And it's been such a great series to go through the book of Acts and see and be reminded of the work of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Lord Jesus and continuing his work of building and establishing his church. We come now to Acts chapter three, the opening section, verses one through 10. the word of our God. 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 had 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 no gold, but what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. 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 entering 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 that beautiful gate of the temple, asking for alms. and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Last week, we looked at the end of Acts chapter two, where we have a summary of the early church, of its commitments and its things that were important to it, as well as a description of the rapid growth of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we now open chapter three of the Book of Acts, the story continues of the spread of the gospel through the work of the Holy Spirit. There are several things that stand out to me here, and I like to just launch into them. First, we see that the Holy Spirit brings people together for gospel ministry. We read here, now Peter and John were going up to the temple. The Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus Christ by his spirit is able to bring people who are very different from one another. Different in temperament, different in background, in gifts, and in personality. And he's able to forge people who are very different together in the cause of the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And here we have Peter and John. Peter was one who was known for his boldness, his brashness. He was the one who often spoke for the disciples, oftentimes speaking very quickly and tripping up on his own words as well. And then there's John, John known for his kindness. understood for his focus on loving God and loving others, various gifts, various abilities and leadership personalities. Each one assisting and complimenting the other, encouraging in the exercise of the gifts that the Lord Jesus who ascended unto heaven there as he has taken man captive has given gifts to his people. And he is the one who is the king and the head of his church. who has given gifts that they may be exercised for his glory, for the building up of the body of Christ and the spread of the gospel of his grace. And this giving of gifts is true even down to our own day. When someone comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ and are brought, born anew into his kingdom, The Spirit indeed gives and use even the abilities given that one, gives a gift for spiritual use, for the building up of the body and the advance of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so there's a lesson for us to learn from the get-go in this passage. Now Peter and John were going up to the temple. God has brought us together as a congregation. In many respects, we might appear to be somewhat similar. Most of us in this room right now seem to be of the same national origin, I think. We speak the same language, even though we might be from different parts of our country or nation. But God, but we're also very different. God has given unique gifts to each of his own children for his glory. When we read, they were going up at the ninth hour,

which is the hour of prayer. The ninth hour was three in the afternoon. They were making their way to one of these three scheduled prayer times. This was really the evening prayer. because certain times of the year, it actually got dark quite early, even as early as 4.30. So this is a service of prayer. So we read and learn, first of all, how the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ brings God's people together for gospel ministry. Notice it isn't Peter on his own. John and his own, it's two together. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ called his disciples and sent them out at least two by two. We secondly learn in this passage of a needy, lame beggar. While we are not given his name, we read that he is lame from birth. This disability was a veritable death sentence in their own culture. At least it would lead to a lifetime of poverty, of economic drain upon the family. They were taken, as this man was, to public places to receive alms, gifts of mercy. And they lived more desperate lives, eking out one meal after another. And we read in another context that this man was over 40 years of age. Imagine a life, lame. brought by family or friends to the temple. Their begging shunned from the temple, spiritually excluded from the temple, seen morally as inferior. In this day, it was not uncommon that the worldview that's captured in John chapter nine, with a man born blind, who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind? And Jesus rebuked them and said that neither this man nor his parents caused his blindness, but that God's work might be displayed in the man. And certainly, all disease, all disability, ultimately have their origin, can be traced ultimately to the fall, to sin. And certainly some diseases carry and are related to more specific sins. But we find the situation here in Acts chapter three as tragic and urgent. The lame man cries out as Peter and John make their way in to the temple, pleading for help, help that he might survive. As he begged for alms, the faithful Jewish believers entering into worship had a stipulation even in the law that they might care for those who are needy. And as he asked for alms, we read in verses four and five of the deep compassion that Peter and John have on him. Instead of ignoring him, like many are just passing by on the other side, as Jesus made reference to in a parable, instead, they intently looked at him. They focused upon him. It says both Peter and John, directed his gaze at him, Peter, as did John. And because of their intentionality, this lame man from birth expected to receive something. Indeed, he did receive something. He didn't receive what he himself was expecting. What was shared with him was even a more beautiful gate, a more glorious and grand door than the beautiful gate into the temple. It was the door of life through the one who is the way, the truth, and the life, the one who is the door. We can so often expect very little from God. We can fail to see the depth of our own need, or fail to seek the legitimate solution to the state of our lives and our souls. This man thought that the best he could get is a little money for his next meal. But by the end of this passage, he learns that the Lord Jesus Christ gives more than he ever could have imagined. He's asking for alms, but instead he finds true life and forgiveness and healing inside as well as out. So often, we can fail to see that our deepest needs are not our physical needs, although we can have those and they can be real. It is our spiritual needs. We may ask God to change our circumstances instead of changing us. When I was in high school, a teacher gave me a little booklet by C.S. Lewis, The Eternal Weight of Glory. And even in high school, these words, they're pages four and five from that book, have meant a great deal to me. It's a little bit of an extended quote, but we have a few minutes, so I'm gonna share the entire quote. But I want you to listen very intently because C.S. Lewis speaks much gospel and biblical truth. If we consider the unblushing promises of

reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. God does not promise us prosperity, but he does promise and give his spirit and power over sin and over death. He doesn't promise wealth, but he does promise that we can have contentment in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive our daily bread, our needed provision. We may not be rich in this life, but he promises riches in heaven that do not fade. Jesus offers much more than we ever imagine. And that is what this lame man begins to understand. We learn in this passage of how the Holy Spirit uses his people, he's altogether sovereign, But he has chosen to work through his people, including the testimony of Peter and of John in this passage. And we also see the way in which this lame man has such a great spiritual need. But thirdly, we learn something of God's miraculous spiritual provision. God gives to him what he did not have. As the lame man cries out to Peter and to John, and as they call upon him to fix his gaze upon them. As he expects to receive something, Peter says, I have no silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm sorry, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Though Peter did not have silver or gold. Indeed, he had something of so much more value. The message of the gospel of life. The healing power of the cleansing of the Lord Jesus Christ and his lordship and triumph over disease even. Ultimately, even over death. The man himself is healed. And this healing is a demonstration of the gospel for the glory of God. The same type of work that the Lord Jesus did, now the apostles are doing, or Christ is doing through them by the power and work of the Holy Spirit. I believe it was mentioned in week one that miracles have a very specific purpose, that they're designed to bear witness, to get people's attention to a time where God is doing something of revelation related to the advance and spread of the gospel. We find this in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. And now in the early church, to demonstrate the singularity of what God was doing in establishing his church and the spread of the gospel, we find the working of these miracles. And while God is altogether sovereign and can work how he chooses, God has revealed himself to us fully And finally, through his son, but also in the word that has been given to us. I saw one of you reading a Christian book earlier today. And that book, I'm sure, is a very inspiring book. But this is the inspired book. God-breathed-out book. And so, we do not need miracles to attest to the veracity of what we find in the holy scriptures. Others have spoken more on this, and I'll let what they say stand. But it's very clear that miracles do exist. in the book of Acts are God's headlines. They grab our attention. They get people to listen to the message of God's word. They signify the authenticity of Jesus Christ, that he is that true and promised anointed Messiah, promised in the word of God. The miracles in this miracle points to the reality of the living Lord Jesus Christ. And God uses, just as he used this miracle, to bring glory to himself and to save those who are spiritually lost, those who do not know him, those who have not yet trusted in his son. After Peter gave the lame man the command to walk, the apostle took the initiative to help him up in full expectation that God indeed would bring the miracle to fruition and to show that something external had happened to the man as something internal had happened to the man. We now find that he is able to stand to walk, even to leap. For the first time, imagine 40 years of life, perhaps never being able to stand

and never walking, much less leaping. And he is standing and walking and leaping. We find him standing, walking and leaping and praising God in verse eight. And then in verse nine, all the people saw him walking. and praising God. You see, God used this miracle to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ and to establish the credibility of the apostolic ministry of the leaders of the early church. And notice, as he is healed, where do we find him going? What is the first place to which he goes? We find him going in to the very temple that he had been collecting alms from for the majority of his life. It was likely his little spot. He'd been there perhaps most every day. He'd never been inside. Leviticus chapter 21 verse eight refers to those who are prohibited from entering the temple because of their disabilities. But he now goes into the temple. And that's Leviticus 21 verse 18. Sorry about that. He enters the temple to show that he's completely restored and healed. This miracle occurs during the hour of prayer. And as he goes in, he demonstrates that the source of his healing is God himself. He is filled with joyful and grateful praise. The sense of joy and gladness, reverence and awe, a thrill for what God has done in his own heart, in his life, in his body. And this man is not alone, this lame man, former lame man, is not alone in his amazement. As soon as the people nearby see, they too have a sense of wonder and amazement. Their hearts are filled with a sense of the greatness of what had happened. Verse nine, and all the people saw him walking and praising God and recognized him. He was very much of a known entity 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. We find as a result of this miracle, people are drawn to the apostles, and more importantly, are drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostles looked for an occasion to speak of Christ. To share the gospel. There's a great lesson for us here, just on our final moments together as we reflect on these opening verses of Acts chapter three. How that Peter and John seized upon the opportunity to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ and to bear witness to him. Their focus was not upon themselves, not upon their abilities or skills, that they had some magical power of healing and restoration. Their focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ. And they, by the grace of God, turned a situation of a beggar, a lame beggar, asking for alms to bear witness to Christ. This should challenge us to be creative in our speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be bold. I think there are so many opportunities for us to witness with our family members, our neighbors, our coworkers, that so often we miss, we pass over, perhaps, We might be concerned. We might be afraid. What will happen to us? What will people think of us? One of the lessons in the book of Acts, and I'm jumping ahead a couple chapters, is they will notice that these men had been with Jesus. And when we're with Jesus, it brings a transformation to our own life, our own values of what's important, our own, almost disregard what people might think of us because we follow or love or speak for the Lord Jesus Christ. They did not allow this focus of the miracle to be upon the miracle itself. They drew their eyes upward to the God of the miracle, to the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name the miracle is done, for it spoke of his lordship. It also spoke of the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ for this man, just as Peter and John had compassion for him. And then it spoke as well of a call, a summons to come to Jesus. The preaching of God's word is to be a cry, an invitation, a call, a summons to trust and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But do you see how Peter and John are even using their conversation with others to call others, to look, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help us as we seek to bear witness in our own community in a dark place in so many respects as our nation seems to

increasingly turn against the scriptures, against the Lord himself. But there is great hope for us For the God we know and serve is the same God of Peter and of John. And though he doesn't work in miracles in the same way, he works in the miracle of the new birth. He's able to use his implanted word to bring about spiritual life. So may we have that love and boldness to speak freely of the greatness of our Savior and the wonder of His grace. So as we make our way together as His people in prayer, let's spend a few moments just extolling His name. Let's praise Him. I want us to think of many aspects of His attributes, of His character, of His being, and then of His works, of what He has done. throughout history and in our Savior. Let's spend a season of time that we might consider Him, that we might be caught up with Him and who He is. Let's pray aloud as one body together as we spell out His character and His goodness and love.