

Jesus' Name Made This Man Strong

by John Piper

The sermon explores the relationship between the wonder of Jesus' healing power and the word of God, highlighting the importance of faith in Jesus' name for healing and the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 31:47

Scripture: Isaiah 52:13, Matthew 27:20, Acts 2:36, Acts 3:13, Acts 3:15-16, Acts 4:29-30

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the content of a miracle and the accompanying sermon. He examines the healing of a lame beggar by Peter at the gate called Beautiful. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding how the healing occurred and what spiritual transaction took place. He then delves into the content of Peter's sermon, which includes five exaltations of Jesus Christ and two indictments of the listeners. The sermon concludes with a call to exalt Jesus and repent of their denial and rejection of Him.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.desiringgod.org. Acts chapter 3 will begin in verse 1. 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 that gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of those who entered the temple.

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him with John and said, Look at us. And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, I have no silver or gold, but I give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, 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 walked and entered 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 for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's, astounded. 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 had made him walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up 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 killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. 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 which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. There's a wonder and there's a word, a miracle and a sermon in this text.

And what I want to do in the few minutes we have left now is to do three things. Look at the content of the word, the content of the wonder and the relationship between the two. So let's go at it.

First, the content of the word. Now, this is not the whole sermon. We'll be on it for several weeks to come.

It ends at the end of the chapter. But this section of it, beginning in verse 13, is very powerful. And we want to see what's in there.

The crowd gathers together because of this wonder. In verse 12, Peter begins by explaining what the wonder does not mean. And then he launches in to his message, which is basically and most essentially the exaltation of Jesus Christ, just like it was in chapter two, and then subordinately an indictment of his listeners, five exaltations, four horrible indictments.

Let's read looking for the exaltation and then come back and look at the indictment. Starting at verse 13, five exaltations of the Lord Jesus, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your God, in other words, glorified his servant, Jesus. Now there are two exalted statements about the Lord there.

One, he's the servant of the Lord. Isaiah 52, 13, the long awaited servant, my servant shall come and he will be highly exalted. That's Jesus.

Secondly, God glorified him. Philippians two, he gave him a name which is above every name, put him at his right hand. Every knee will bow.

He is glorious. He's installed at the glorious right hand of God. So those two things he begins with, he's gloriously exalted.

He is the long awaited servant of the Lord. Verse 14, but you, you denied the holy and righteous one. So there's exaltation number three.

He is the holy and righteous one. He embodies holiness. He embodies righteousness.

There is nobody more holy or more righteous in the universe. Verse 15, you kill the author of life. So there's the fourth exaltation.

He is the author of life from him together with God, the father, all life has come. He has written every life, every physical life and every spiritual life comes from the Lord Jesus. He's the fountain of life.

All life begins with him. You had life. You got it from Jesus.

If it's physical came from Jesus. If it's spiritual, it came from Jesus. And finally, number five, whom God raised from the dead.

God raised him. Let's just list the five now. Jesus is the long awaited servant of the Lord.

Jesus is glorified by God. Jesus is the holy and righteous one. Jesus is the author of life.

Jesus was raised from the dead by God. Preaching is fundamentally the exaltation of Jesus. Your testimony for the Lord is fundamentally an effort to just show Jesus, show Jesus, make Jesus known for who he is.

And I just urge you right now at this point in the message, stock your praise vocabulary with these five things. Because we so often get into ruts of vocabulary and say in our prayers the same things over and over. Let now five new attributes.

They're not new, of course, to many of you, but maybe you haven't used them for a long time. When was the last time you lifted your voice and said, I praise you as the author of all life. That helps to have new truth shed on our mind.

So stock them away. Now, here's the downside of the sermon. Preaching is not just the exaltation of Jesus.

Preaching is the indictment of the human conscience when it does not exalt Jesus. So let's look at how Peter did that. He did it in four ways and they are awesomely indicting.

The first two are in verse 13. The God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus, whom number one, you delivered up. You handed him over.

You got him arrested. You wanted to get him out of your society. So you handed him over to pilot.

That's number one indictment. Number two. And you denied him in the presence of pilot when he this pagan person wanted to release him.

You went way beyond the wicked ruler who was willing to let him go. And you said, no, no, you don't realize how bad he is. Keep him, keep him and don't release him.

You see what kind of indictment this is? Those are the first two. The third comes in verse 14. But you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

In other words, your values are totally inside out, upside down, twisted, perverted, corrupted so that here stands the absolute eternal embodiment of righteousness and holiness. Here stands the essence of wickedness in this murder of Barabbas. And you look at the two and say, we vote for Barabbas to hell with Jesus.

That's an indictment. There's one more verse 15. And you killed the author of life.

Now, I can almost hear Peter's voice break here because this is suicide, is it not? This is suicide. We want murderers to walk our streets and handle our children. We want the life giver to be killed.

Insanity. Peter is just bending over backwards here to say the rejection of Jesus is insanely suicidal. Give us murderers, take life givers, kill us.

That's that's what Peter feels inside. The rejection of Jesus is the end of life. The rejection of Jesus is to say, I'm done for send me murderers at night, not the sweet life giver.

This is an awesome indictment here. So if you if you think preaching should not contain indictments, you've really got to come to terms with the preaching of Peter here. But now.

It's in a sense, sad that my text ends at verse 16, and I'm not going to let it in verse 16. I'm going to go ahead and jump to verse 19, because there are people in this room who are insanely suicidal right now in their opposition of the worth of Jesus. And I want you to hear verse 19, friend.

Repent, therefore, turn again that your sins may be blotted out and that times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord. If you think Peter got strong in his indictment, is it not astonishing that two or three verses later, he could look at the murderers of God and say, if you will now turn. He will not only take away all the sin of the murder of the son of God, he will also pour down refreshment upon you.

He'll refresh you. He'll make you feel fresh when you walk out of this room this morning. Fresh, fresh, fresh, new.

So that's not today's sermon. That's next time or the next time. But I want you to hear that because it could happen for some today.

Feeling yourself indicted that, yes, I have rejected the Lord. Yes, I've been insanely suicidal. Yes, I've killed the author of life, as it were.

But, oh, I'm ready for verse 19 today. So the sum of the content of the word is praise the Lord Jesus as the servant of the Lord, glorified, holy and righteous, author of life raised from the dead, exalt Jesus and the downside of the sermon. They delivered him up.

They denied him. They traded him for Barabbas and they killed him. Repent now the content of the wonder.

What I have in mind here is not simply to point out that a man was healed, but I want to know how he was healed. I want to know what happened in the transaction with Peter there at the gate. Beautiful that got this man.

Well, send him leaping and jumping and praising God through the temple and wound up in verse four of chapter four with 2000 people converted. I want to know what happened. You want to know what happened? I want to know how this came about.

All right. Verse three says that there's this beggar and he's lame from birth and he's asking for alms. And in verse four, Peter looks at him strong Greek word for fix the gaze upon.

He looks at it. And when I read that, I said, what happened? What happened there? What went on? What was Peter thinking? What was the spiritual transaction going on here? We'll come back to that because I think I know now what happened. I found it later on in the text.

But in verse six, this is what Peter says. I have no silver and gold, but what I have. Give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Walk and takes him by the hand. This man who's never walked, boom, pulls him up on his feet and he walks. He's well and he leaps.

Now, what happened? Verse 12 tells us what did not happen. And this is incredibly important today. I read on the plane going down to Chicago a couple of weeks ago in the Northwestern Plane magazine, an article about Qi Gong, Chinese healing has absolutely nothing to do with God.

It's simply a kind of faith healing that focuses brain energies on a part of the body and works. So we're talking here now in a whole area where to see somebody healed proves in itself nothing. OK, that's why we've said so many times healing is never the goal of the Christian life.

And yet here it is. And instead of God, we're going to find out and therefore it's crucial that we get into the dynamics of the real thing so that as the multiplication of strange things happen in our age, probably we will be able to sort things out. Verse 12, I think what Peter is doing is basically saying it wasn't witchcraft, it wasn't magic, it wasn't sorcery, it wasn't mind over matter.

That's my interpretation of why do you stare at us as though by our power or piety we had made him? Well, the power that went out to heal this man does not reside in me. I'm not a wizard. I'm not a sorcerer.

I'm not exercising mind over matter. All such things are an abomination to God Almighty in America today. And they were then.

When he says it's not my piety, I think that's saying it's not religiousness, not the quality of my religious life here. So he's saying first what it's not. Then he gives us a little sermon.

Then he comes back in verse 16. Let's drop down to verse 16. Now, this sentence is very complex in Greek and in English, and some of the versions shuffle the words around to make it a little more readable.

So yours might not look like mine and that may give you some problem. But the RSV and the NSV are pretty close here and they're pretty literal. It says his name.

That's the subject of the sentence. The NIV doesn't get it quite right. His name by faith in his name.

That's what's awkward. His name by faith in his name has made this man strong whom you see and know. And the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Now, I want you to notice first something at the end of the verse, namely the phrase the faith which is through Jesus. See what that means? The faith which is through Jesus. That does not mean faith in Jesus.

That means Jesus gave the faith. The faith came through Jesus. Jesus gave faith.

That's what healed the man. The last half of the verse says faith which is through Jesus has given this man perfect health. Now, that, I believe, is the key to verse four and what happened when Peter was gazing at him.

Here's what I think happened. The reason I think this is because this man, according to verse two, had been laid there every day for years daily. They laid him there.

We know that the Christians met in this portico of Solomon all the time. We know that Peter, therefore, passed this man again and again and again and again and again and again, and likely Jesus passed him again and again, and he was never healed. Why? He gazed at him.

And according to the second half of verse 16, I believe Jesus gave him the faith to heal. The faith suddenly for this moment, this time, and this man came through Jesus, the faith which is through Jesus healed this man. The last part of verse 16, the faith which is through Jesus has given him perfect health.

Jesus gave the faith to heal. Peter acted on it. The man was healed.

But now notice something in the first part of the verse. Literally, it does not say the faith healed him. It says Jesus name by faith in his name made this man strong.

See that that's different. The last half of the verse says the faith made him. Well, the first half of the verse says the name made him well, and the connection is the name comma by faith in his name made him.

Well, that's real important. The NIV shouldn't shuffle the words around the way they do there to try to make it more readable. This is important to see it just like it stands.

The name. Subject of the sentence verb made him well insertion by faith in the name. How does the name become active? How does the name work with power? It becomes energized and active when faith in the name is given by the Lord Jesus.

Call it the gift of faith if you want from first Corinthians twelve nine. So if we take the two statements together at the end, the faith healed him, the first the name healed him. We can connect them by saying that faith taps into the power of the name when Jesus gives the faith.

I think when Peter said in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk, he meant something like I'm speaking the words, but Jesus is now healing you because he's given me faith to trust his name. And as I pronounce his name, he is now becoming active. Now I'm going to confirm that engagement of Jesus here by jumping over to the next chapter.

But before I do that, let me point out verse eight. Verse eight pictures this man leaping up. He stood, walked, entered the temple with him, walking and leaping and praising whom? Tell me, God.

Now, why? It's the faith that healed him. It's the name that healed him. God hasn't even been mentioned here.

Is he wrong to praise God? No. Now go with me to chapter four. When this sermon is over, they get arrested.

In fact, the sermon is cut off. So he doesn't get to end the way he did in chapter two. They cut him off.

They take him arrest, Peter and John, and they try them and they can't do anything with them. So they release them and they go to a prayer meeting and they pray this magnificent prayer in chapter four and they come to the end of the prayer. And I would paraphrase the end of the prayer, something like this.

Oh, Lord God, we've seen you twice now. Do a wonder, gather a crowd, preach a sermon, save 3000, save 2000. Do it again.

Do it again. That's my paraphrase of verse twenty nine and thirty. So let's read what the Bible says.

And now, Lord, look upon their threats. Sounds like Daniel. Look upon their threats and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness while thou.

Now, who is that? That's God, the father, because we'll see the reference to a servant in a minute while thou stretches out by hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant, Jesus. So no, it wasn't wrong for that man to leap and run through the temple saying, God, God, praise God. I'm well, because this text shows very plainly that it goes like this.

God is in heaven with his equal and perfectly divine son. And just like when Jesus on the earth, they agree with each other about everything they do. And the father is the source of all good things.

And he says to the son, how about today for the man by the gate? And Jesus says, anything you say is good with me. It always is good with me. And so Jesus says, we'll do it through Peter.

And he gives Peter the faith. He just says, let there be faith to heal that man. And Peter is watching the man.

He's passed him dozens of times. He looks at him and something happens. This is the day.

This is the appointed hour for this man. We don't believe everybody gets healed. A lot of people died as lame people in Israel without Jesus or the apostles healing them.

But this was the day for this man. And when the faith was given and the confidence that God meant to work here, he with tremendous confidence looked him in the face and said in the name of Jesus, who has now affirmed in my life that he intends to do a work here. What? And he walks.

And God gets the praise. Abundant, leaping, exuberant praise. That's the content of the wonder.

Now, just very quickly, what's the relationship between the wonder and the word? This is such an important question today. I have so much work to do on this question. It's one of the biggest questions resting on my heart right now.

What's the relation between the wonder and the word? I got home last night from the men's repeat. I plopped open the new issue of Christianity today that was lying there on the table right there in the third page was a big article. Stop looking for miracles.

And at the bottom, signed by man and his book title from which he was speaking was wonder and the word wonders and the word. What's the relationship? I come out of a reformed tradition that loves the word of God, keeps the word of God absolutely central banks, everything in my ministry on the infallibility and the power of the word of God. Nothing I intend to compromise that.

But the word itself commends to me that there's a relationship here between wonders and the word. So I got to come to terms because of the word that alongside the word, there's a wonder. Now, what's the relationship? Well, we're going to we'll talk about this because we're going to find this pattern all the way through the book of Acts.

Wonder word, wonder word, wonder word. Now, how do they relate here? It's real simple. Number one, the wonder attracts a crowd for the word.

Verse 11. You see that they all ran together. He got his thousands because of the wonder.

That's not the most important thing. The second thing seems to be most important. The wonder not only attracted a crowd, but the wonder attested to the living truth of the exalted Jesus.

Now, I get that by simply noticing the connection between verses 15 and 16. Verse 15 closes by saying you killed the author of life, but God raised him up and then as though to bring in confirmatory evidence. And it is his name by faith in his name that that man right there leaping around this temple is well, that's Jesus.

That's evidence. That's power. Listen to me now when I preach.

I think that's the function. I do not think healing proves Jesus. I think it points to Jesus.

It points to the truth of the word. It softens, it opens, but it's the word preached that saves the gospel is the power of God and the salvation. To all who believe.

I want to close now by suggesting that. This pattern does have a place today. Namely, that God might be pleased in the life of the church here and not just in the third world where it's safe.

To do wonders in order to attract a crowd for his word and to attest his reality. What what form would that take at Bethlehem? Well, I'll tell you the form where I think God might be pleased to do this kind of thing, namely in the prayer ministry. And here's the way I think the Lord may be pleased to do it.

I think that the form this takes in a non apostolic day where there aren't any apostles around is in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And they're listed in first Corinthians 12, 9 and 10 as gift of faith, gift of healings, gift of miracles. Those three are given right side by side.

In other words, now and then God will gift somebody to have the sense that Peter had here. This is the time. This is the place God intends to do something in faith rises up to a level of effectiveness.

This is not a moral thing, by the way, not to have the gift of faith is not to be evil. I say that right. I might not say I got my negatives not to have the gift of faith is OK.

All right. It's not an immoral thing not to have a gift of teaching. All right.

You feel guilty for not having gift of teaching. If you don't, you shouldn't. Nor should you feel guilty if you don't have a gift of faith.

A gift of miracles or a gift of healings. That's not a moral issue. It's just that it may be that from time to time the Lord would grant to somebody this rising faith, this confidence for a miracle, this healing ability, and somebody would get well and it would be done in a way that God would get more glory and people would praise him more.

Now, what we're doing at Bethlehem is simply equipping a lot of people just to pray for people if God might be pleased to do what he wants to do. And at the end of this service and the end of every service, it was so great to see people just lined up here praying at the end of the last service with all the teams. So there'll be probably four prayer teams right here and see what time it is.

They'll be here probably for another 10 minutes. And anybody in this room, I've prayed that as I'm preaching, the Lord might be just causing to rise in your heart. I wonder if today might be a day when this thing I'm dealing with somebody would pray for and God might take it away.

And please, I've said it so many times, I'll just keep on saying it. We don't assume that everyone gets healed. We don't assume that to be healed means you're more moral.

This man did not even know what was going on. When Peter looked at him, he said, oh, they're going to give me money. That's all he thought.

And Peter took him by the hand, said walk, boom, and he's up. And that's when his praise started. Peter had the faith and not to have that kind of faith again is not to be a bad or an immoral or an immature person.

This is God's sovereign doing. All we're doing is putting ourself in the way where he might be pleased to work. And so at the end of the service, as we'll do just from now on, Lord willing, is have some teams of people here.

Anything at all you want to pray about could be a physical thing like this man was dealing with or spiritual or your readiness to receive the Lord or emotional, relational. We haven't left them a lot of time, but they'll be here to pray for a few minutes. Let's just begin to make ourselves available for prayer and for being prayed for.

Let me close with you in prayer now. Almighty God and Father, Lord Jesus, righteous and holy one. Author of life.

Glorified, risen. We praise you. We bless you for your sovereignty in the disposing of gifts when and where you please for the glory of your name and the glory of your father.

And we just lay ourselves open for whatever you would be pleased to do from time to time in our church, not as an end in itself, Lord, but all for the sake of a word going forth in converting edifying power that faith might be built, that love might be stronger, that love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, self-control would abound in our people. And the light would shine in this city so brightly that people would know Jesus lives. Thank you so much for the people committed to pray and for those who've been touched to ask for prayer now.

And all the people said, Amen. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others, but please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission.

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