

## Pictures of Power

### THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

When you read the book of Acts, you see God’s work and fingerprints on every page. Its helpful to understand three words that you will see in the Bible to describe the workings of God: *miracles, wonders, and signs*.

- “*Miracle*” refers to the nature of the event: it is a work of power.
- The word “*Wonder*” tells us about the appearance of the event: it is marvelous to behold.
- A “*Sign*” tells us about the purpose of the event: to reveal and communicate spiritual truth which has previously been hidden.

### POWER IN HEALING – 3:1-10

**Acts 3:1-10** <sup>1</sup> Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. <sup>2</sup> And a certain man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. <sup>3</sup> And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. <sup>4</sup> And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, “Look at us!” <sup>5</sup> And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” <sup>7</sup> And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. <sup>8</sup> And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup> And all the people saw him walking and praising God; <sup>10</sup> and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

- v. 1 – Peter and John are available.
- v. 2 – The man had a need.
- v. 3 – They were sensitive to the situation.
- v. 4 – They got his attention.
- v. 6 – They gave him the undiluted solution: the gospel of Jesus Christ!
- v. 7-8 – The healing was not dependent on the man’s faith.
- v. 7 – The result of evangelism: praise to God
- v. 9-10 – The response of the people:
  - They saw – v. 9
  - They took note – v. 10
  - They were filled with wonder – v. 10
  - They were filled with amazement – v. 10
  - They ran together – v. 11

### POWER IN PREACHING – 3:11-26

**Acts 3:11-26** <sup>11</sup> And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. <sup>12</sup> But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?” <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. <sup>14</sup> But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

<sup>17</sup> And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. <sup>18</sup> But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; <sup>20</sup> and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, <sup>21</sup> whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. <sup>22</sup> Moses said, 'The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you.' <sup>23</sup> 'And it shall be that every one who does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' <sup>24</sup> And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. <sup>25</sup> It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' <sup>26</sup> For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."

v. 11-26 – This message is very similar to Peter's first sermon in chapter two.

4:1-3 – They ran into persecution.

4:4 – The result: many believed.

## POWER IN PERSECUTION – 4:1-22

**Acts 4:1-22** <sup>1</sup> And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees, came upon them, <sup>2</sup> being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup> But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup> And it came about on the next day, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; <sup>6</sup> and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. <sup>7</sup> And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, <sup>9</sup> if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. <sup>11</sup> He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

<sup>13</sup> Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. <sup>15</sup> But when they had ordered them to go aside out of the Council, they began to confer with one another, <sup>16</sup> saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But in order that it may not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name." <sup>18</sup> And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; <sup>20</sup> for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard." <sup>21</sup> And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which they might punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; <sup>22</sup> for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

How should we respond to opposition?

1. Be filled with the Holy Spirit – v. 8
2. Be Respectful – v. 8
3. Witness to the power of Jesus Christ – v. 9-10
4. Point to the evidence of a transformed life – v. 9-10
5. Proclaim the gospel – v. 10-12
6. Quote Scripture – v. 11
7. Demonstrate an authentic quality of life – v. 13
8. Refuse to compromise your commission – v. 19-20

## POWER IN PRAYER – 4:23-31

**Acts 4:23-31** <sup>23</sup> And when they had been released, they went to their own companions, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, <sup>25</sup> who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? <sup>26</sup> ‘The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ.’ <sup>27</sup> For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, <sup>30</sup> while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

How to pray in the midst of persecution:

1. Pray with other Christians.
2. Claim the Sovereign power of God over the situation.

**Isaiah 40:15, 23-26** <sup>15</sup> Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. <sup>23</sup> He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. <sup>24</sup> Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble. <sup>25</sup> “To whom then will you liken Me that I should be his equal?” says the Holy One. <sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power not one of them is missing.

**Isaiah 41:10-11** <sup>10</sup> ‘Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ <sup>11</sup> Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing, and will perish.

**2 Chronicles 16:9** For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

**Jeremiah 32:17** Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Revisit the first picture of power we looked at today, the healing of the lame man. What would be going through your mind (thoughts and emotions) if you had been that lame person?
2. How do you think Peter and John knew God wanted to heal that lame man? Are you as certain as they were in knowing God’s will? Why or why not?
3. How would you summarize the victory the church achieved in chapter four through the power of the Holy Spirit? How was it strategically important for the continued growth of the church?
4. This morning we looked at the prayer life of the early church. How would you grade your prayer life? What needs improvement? How do you think this can be achieved?