

# OpenTheo

## More Than He Bargained For - Part 2

November 28, 2021



### **The Bible for Today with John Stott - Premier**

John Stott explains why the healing of the lame man in Acts 3 was recorded, what Luke wanted his readers to learn from it and what lessons it has for us today.

### **Transcript**

[Music] Christian Ministers ought to be ready always to subject any report of miraculous healing to objective, rigorous, and scientifically responsible testing. Christian Ministers must remember that ministerial credibility is not measured by the sincerity of the credulous. Credulity rises from a deep desire that something is true.

[Music] Welcome to the Bible for today with John Stott. There's perhaps been no one who has raised the standard of biblical teaching in the 20th century as John Stott. From his home church of all souls Langham Place in central London, he preached over 600 sermons.

And during this his centenary, we're bringing you some of his very best teaching from nearly 60 years of ministry.

[Music] In last week's message on miraculous healing, John Stott looked at the example presented in Acts chapter 3. He showed us why this healing was recorded for us and explored whether we should expect such things to happen today. This week John Stott continues his message by carefully analysing the event as described in Scripture.

So you'll find it helpful to have your Bible open to the book of Acts chapter 3. Let us be very careful to understand what Luke Axliid describes as having happened. Would you be good enough to notice three things with me? A. the man's condition. He was not suffering from stress symptoms which could be relieved by psychosomatic means.

On the contrary he had a very serious orthopedic condition. As we've already seen for 40 years and more he had never walked. He couldn't even hobble about with the aid of a stick.

So totally handicapped was he that he was utterly dependent on other people to be carried everywhere. It was a very serious orthopedic disorder. Notice that A. his condition.

B. notice his healing. It was by word only. Without any medical means.

No orthopedic surgeon. No physiotherapist was called in. Did you ever notice this? There was not even an anointing with oil.

All a laying on a fence. There was not even a prayer. There was an apostolic command.

Get up and walk. Without any means at all but the bare word of apostolic authority. We're told that instantaneously and completely he was miraculously healed.

So let's be clear about that. The man's condition and the healing. And then see, notice the outcome.

Not only was the crowd we read filled with wonder and amazement, but the authorities, who were hostile to the gospel, themselves conceded, these are their words, a notable sign has been performed among us and we cannot deny it. Now I'm very struck by those three things. The ABC.

He had a very serious orthopedic condition. It wasn't a hysterical stress psychosomatic condition. It was an organic condition.

B, there were no gradual improvements through medical procedures. There was a healing without any medical means at all. Third, there were no unsubstantiated claims on the contrary, even the enemies of the gospel knew that it had taken place.

Now I think if we're looking for miraculous healings today, we must be very clear about those three things that what we're looking for is exactly the same thing. Same conditions, same kind of healing, same kind of recognition, even by the press, the television, the medical authorities, the enemies of the gospel, if you like. And in fact those who claim miraculous healings today should neither fear nor resist an open investigation of their claims.

I wonder if you know that at Lord, the famous Roman Catholic Healing Center, a medical bureau was established as long ago as 1878. And when claims of healing, miraculous healing of Lord have passed an initial screening by the medical bureau, they are referred to an international medical committee. So the claims to healing are taken very seriously by the Roman Catholic Church and a full empirical investigation is made.

Why don't evangelicals who claim the same thing, that is who claim miraculous healings? Why are they not willing for an impartial investigation to be made? I was very glad a few years ago that 12 scholars of full theological seminary in Pasadena, California, who were

charged to investigate the signs and wonders course at their School of World Mission wrote in their report these sensible words. Christian ministers ought to be ready always to subject any report of miraculous healing to objective, rigorous and scientifically responsible testing. Christian ministers must remember that ministerial credibility is not measured by the sincerity of the credulous.

Credulity rises from a deep desire that something is true, credibility on the other hand is earned by reliable and trustworthy testing. So you see, it's absolutely right for us to gather for prayer on Tuesday night for healing, because all healing is divine healing, but most of it is through the marvelous process is that God is built into the human body and through the marvelous medical and surgical and psychiatric means that are available to us today. This is divine healing, but it is through means.

And we must be very cautious before we claim miraculous healing without means. I have had made that distinction clear. Now we move on to the second point.

Are we to regard this as an example of quote, development? Peter called his healing a good deed, which the new international version translates an act of kindness to the man who was a cripple from birth. Now notice what form that act of kindness took. The cripple asked for money.

The apostle gave him his health. Money would only have supported the cripple in his handicap. Healing delivered him from his handicap and enabled him to support himself.

Now that's the principle of development, and we must still, although we must still respond to emergencies, of course with relief and aid, we are very concerned, more concerned to look beyond the immediate to the ultimate development, which may help a community to become self-supporting. Thus to give you some examples, it is good to feed the starving. It's even better to teach sound agricultural methods so that a whole village can learn to feed itself.

Again it's good to support unemployed young people, but it's better to teach them a trade so that they can support themselves. Again it's good to care for the blind and the deaf and other handicap people, but it's better to teach them skills so that they can learn to care for themselves. In each case you see long-term development is better than short-term aid.

Solving the problem is better than tinkering with it. And giving people the dignity of independence by which they support themselves is better than perpetuating their dependence and so demeaning them. Peter and John saw this in their healing of the cripple.

Now that he'd been healed he was sitting well again. He now could give up his begging. He could earn his own living.

With his health came independence and with independence came dignity. That is the principle of development and it seems to me clearly taught in this passage. Now come to the third thing.

We move on from the example of miraculous healing and of development to an example or picture of salvation. There is no doubt that the cripple was physically healed. His ankles were turned and his feet were made strong.

He actually got up physically. He walked. He ran.

He jumped into the temple. And Peter said the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob has glorified his servant Jesus whom you crucified whom he raised from the dead. And his name, the name of Jesus, has through faith in his name, has made this man strong, physically strong and given him perfect health.

Now that's all clear. But I wonder if you have ever noticed this. When the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin, the leading Jewish council, Peter said to them, "If we are being examined today about a kind deed that was done to this cripple by what means he has been saved." Did you ever notice, chapter 4, verse 9? Peter moves.

So he's healing to his salvation. Then the end known to you that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, he stands before you well. He goes back to healing.

Next verse 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved." How is it then that Peter slipped quite naturally from healing to salvation, back to healing again, on to salvation again? You ever ask yourself that question. It's not because salvation means healing. It doesn't.

Salvation and healing are two quite different things. It's not because salvation includes healing. So that if we've been saved, we can claim to be healed as well.

We cannot. Salvation is a promise to anybody who believes, but healing is not. So it isn't that salvation means healing, and it isn't that salvation includes healing.

It is that salvation is illustrated by healing. So the healing of the body is a readily recognizable picture of the salvation of the soul. And the biblical word for this idea is that healing is a semion, a sign.

I don't know if you started these two chapters, but the word comes twice. Verse 16, chapter 4. "A notable sign has been performed among us." In verse 22, "The man on whom this sign of healing," twice his healing is called a sign. It had significance.

And the very same word is used to the miracles of Jesus, particularly in the gospel of John. And John, by using this reference of the signs of Jesus, his miracles being significant, was anxious to show that they were not so much demonstrations of power as

illustrations of truth. They had theological significance.

So when Jesus had fed the hungry with loaves and fishes, he said, "I am the bread of life." He who comes to me will never hunger. That's not the hunger of the body but the soul. And he who believes in me will never thirst.

Again he opened the eyes of a man born blind and said in the same context, "I am the light of the world." He who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life. Then he resuscitated Lazarus, bringing him back to this life and in the same context, "I am the resurrection and the life." "He who believes in me shall never die." "He who lives and believes in me will be raised after death." Now this is not a spiritualized, the miracles. The miracles actually took place on a physical realm.

They were physical phenomena but they were also acted parables. They had theological significance. They indicated who Jesus was and what he was able to do in terms of our salvation.

Charles Wesley rightly says, calling upon people around him, "Hear him, you death. His praise, you dumb, your loosened tongues employ. You blind, now see your Savior come and leap you lame for joy." So then I have been saying that there is a great need for caution in biblical interpretation.

We cannot immediately assume that what Peter and John did, we can do partly because they were apostles and the miracles they did were the signs of the true apostle as they themselves claimed. And partly because we live in a different era and it is not an era or a new, a fresh epoch of revelation that needs to be authenticated with signs and miracles. So then in our need for caution we look in the text itself for some hint or indication as to how it is meant to be interpreted.

And we find it here as Peter moves naturally from healing to salvation and this look deliberately calls the healing a sign, a significant event. Now let me conclude. You will I think have noticed in these chapters the repeated emphasis on the name of Jesus.

In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk, his name through faith in his name has made this man well, etc. Now I want just to meditate as we conclude for another few moments on the name of Jesus. Firstly, the name of Jesus is a strong name.

The name of Jesus is who Jesus is in his divine human person and saving work. The name of Jesus is strong because he is able to save sinners. Some of us were thinking last Sunday night from his exalted throne at the right hand of the Father.

He is able to give salvation, to give the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. So strong is his name. The strong name of Jesus can set us free from guilt, from condemnation, from the bondage of our self-centeredness and from our fears.

The strong name of Jesus. It is a saving name. And then secondly, the strong saving name of Jesus is unique.

There is no other name like it. God has given him a name above every name, unique among all other names. And there is salvation, Peter says, in nobody else than through the strong name of Jesus.

There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved. And the reason for that is clear. Only Jesus is the God-man.

Only Jesus is simultaneously divine and human. There is nobody else but he who is the God-man. Only he has died for our sins on the cross, substituting himself for us and bearing the condemnation that we deserve.

Nobody else has done it. Only he has been raised from the dead and exalted to the Father's right hand, and only he occupies their possession of supreme authority, power and honor in the universe today. So only he is competent to save.

There is no other but Jesus. There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved. So there may be some people in church tonight who know that they are spiritual cripples, unable to stand upright.

Jesus Christ is able to cause you to stand upright. Again, there is maybe some here who know that they are spiritually blind. They see no beauty in Jesus, that they should want him.

They do not see the truth as it is in Jesus. They are blind, but he can open their eyes to see the truth as it is in him. There may be some who are spiritually dead, deaf to the voice of God, deaf to the call of God, deaf to the music of heaven.

And only he can open our ears to hear that to which otherwise we would be deaf. And there may be some here who know they are spiritually dead, dead to the reality of God. Reality to you is material things around you.

There is no ultimate reality, no transcendent reality of which you are aware because you are spiritually dead. And he can give you life. So Luke's story and Peter Sermon both bear witness to the name of Jesus, the strong name, the saving name, the unique and matchless name of Jesus Christ.

So why don't we call on the name of the Lord? You know that phrase, how often it comes in both the Old and the New Testament. Do you know what it means to call on the name of the Lord? It's to call on him to be who he says he is and what he said he'd come into the world to do. It is calling upon him to be true to his name, his name that says I am the God man who died for your sins and was raised from the dead and the men thrown at the right hand and unable to save you.

To call on the name of the Lord is to beg him to be these things to us and to be our savior and to have mercy upon us. We'll have a moment of silence in which to call silently on the name of the Lord. But we read he or she who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

We cry to Jesus to be who he says he is, to do what he said he'd come into the world to do. We call upon him to be our savior. Oh Jesus Christ we desire to call upon your name.

We ask you graciously to be who you are, do in our lives what you can to do. Act according to the perfection of your name. Be our savior, set us free from the guilt and the power of sin we pray.

As we thank you for this story on which we've reflected tonight and the riches of the lessons it has to teach us. Hear our prayers, receive our thanksgivings for the glory of your great name. Jesus Christ offers spiritual healing to anyone who turns to him for salvation.

You've been listening to the conclusion of the message by John Stott on the miraculous healing, recording in Acts chapter 3. The book of Acts indeed, the Acts of the Apostles many of which were supernatural acts. It's a dramatic book of the Bible, we're worth studying. And you can do so with the help of John Stott's commentary entitled The Message of Acts.

Part of the Bible Speak Today commentary series. You'll see too it's our book recommendation for this week when you visit our website, [premierchristenradio.com/JohnStott](http://premierchristenradio.com/JohnStott). The legacy of John Stott lives on and is growing, touching every level of society across the world. Today Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastor training and resources in their own countries, thanks to the vision of John Stott, who donated all his book world is to support this ministry through Langham Partnership.

To find out about this and other ministries, John Stott founded, go to [premier.org.uk/JohnStott](http://premier.org.uk/JohnStott). Join us at the same time next week for more from The Bible for Today with John Stott.

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