

## **“Footloose”**

*Acts 3:1-26*

Dr. Jarrett Stephens | September 12, 2021

**Illus. Joni Eareckson Tada** – I have always appreciated the ministry of Joni Eareckson Tada. If you are not familiar with her, her story or her ministry, you really need to be.

She is the founder of Joni and Friends which is an organization whose mission statement is: “To glorify God as we communicate the Gospel and mobilize the global church to evangelize, disciple, and serve people living with disability.”

I don’t know of anyone that has done more for the sake of Christ in reaching those with disabilities and families of those with disabilities more than her and her ministry. In 2019 they celebrated 40 years of ministry around the world helping those in need.

Joni at the age of 17 dove into the Chesapeake Bay and not realizing how shallow the water was, she in an instant became a quadriplegic, paralyzed from her shoulders down. For the last 53 years she has lived in this way.

Early on, according to her own testimony she fought depression, anger and suicidal thoughts, but God was faithful to her even in the toughest of times. She learned how to paint and to write using her mouth. And talk about gifting and talent! Just look at some of these paintings!

She truly has an amazing story and is an incredible witness for Jesus. I read a quote from her that came across my social media this week. She said this speaking about one day in the future when she finishes her race here on earth and sees Jesus for the first time face to face:

**“The first thing I plan to do on resurrected legs is to drop on grateful, glorified knees.”**

I read that and thought what a sight that will be! I can’t imagine what it would be like to be paralyzed nearly your entire life and in a moment be able to stand again...walk again...run again!

And it hit me this week in studying Acts 3, what Joni is waiting for to take place once she gets to heaven actually happens to a man on this side of eternity in the passage we are looking at today...and we get to see his response!

It’s a beautiful passage of scripture. We’ll divide it into two sections. I’m calling the message today: **Footloose** (because I’m an 80’s kid and that’s the first thing that came to my mind when I read this passage!)

In this first section we will read about a miracle that takes place...this is (v. 1-10) and the second section is all about a message that is proclaimed (v. 11-26).

So, let’s go with the first section: **A Miracle Takes Place**

**Acts 3:1 - “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.”**

Now, remember where we left off last week...this was in their routine...this was in the rhythm of the early church.

**Acts 2:46a – “And day by day, attending the temple together...”**

Keep in mind this early church was still a distinctly Jewish church. And the Jews set aside three times a day to pray at the temple. They would meet together for prayer at: 9:00am, 12:00pm and 3:00pm. This “ninth hour” is the 3:00pm time of prayer.

**Illus. Wed. night, Sept. 15 at 6:45** - We could learn a lot from these corporate calls to prayer. I’ve told you, this is the heart behind our Night of Prayer we’re asking you to come to...we’re just calling the church to pray...and to pray together. We’re going to do this more and more and more in the days ahead!

As Peter and John we’re heading to pray. Look at what takes place:

**Acts 3:2 – “And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.”**

Now, just get the picture here. We have a man that has been lame since birth – (Acts 4:22 lets us in on the fact that he’s over 40 years old). So, we have a 40+ year old man that has to be carried anywhere he goes...and this is a daily routine for him.

Someone or a group of people pick him up in the morning and lay him at the gate of the temple where he begs for a handout. Notice, he’s outside the temple. He can’t go in because the Old Testament Law didn’t allow him to go in – no one who was lame or had a “defect” could enter the temple.

So, his friends...whoever it was that would put him there each day just dropped him off at one of the gates and there he would lay all day hoping for mercy and begging for alms from those that could actually go into the temple to pray and offer sacrifices.

Talk about hopelessness...imagine this being your lot EVERY DAY! Just think about the embarrassment...he can’t walk therefore he can’t work. He can’t do anything without someone’s help. And here he is day after day begging.

Can you feel the embarrassment...the neglect...the sense of rejection? Who knows? It might not even be his friends dropping him off, it could be someone dropping him off and taking advantage of him...charging him...skimming of the top of whatever measly means he makes that day.

This is no way to live, but this is that guy’s life! Don’t miss the description given to us in (v. 2) – this is DAILY. Like think about your week, this week...the days get long and repetitive. Well, at least your mobile...at least you can change the scenery in a long week – NOT this man!

He's sitting there begging for alms...just like he has done every single day for years! He has NO IDEA that his life is about to change forever.

**Acts 3:3-5 – “Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. <sup>4</sup> And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, (“directed his gaze” – it means to stare intently...this is not an ordinary, casual glance. It’s a stare...it’s like what my dad used to say to me, when we wanted to tell me something important and make sure he had my attention. He’d say, “Look at me eyeball to eyeball.” That’s the way Peter and John are looking at this man and that’s how he wants him looking at them.) and said, “Look at us.” <sup>5</sup> And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.”**

He's thinking, “Jackpot! These guys are about to give me the change I’m looking for...this kind of change!”

But the disciples don’t have that kind of change...they’ve been giving all that kind of change away (Acts 2:45). And Peter flat out tells him this!

**Acts 3:6 – “But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”**

Now, there is a WHOLE lot here! N.T Wright points out in his commentary that this is the exact same phrasing – “rise and walk” that Jesus used when he healed the paralytic that was dropped down through the roof.

Certainly, Peter was in the house that day and saw that miracle take place. Maybe when he was walking past that man laying by the temple, the Holy Spirit of God quickened his mind to remember that moment a couple of years earlier when Jesus healed that paralyzed man.

And so in faith, he reaches down to lift this man up and says exactly what he heard Jesus speak that day – “Rise and walk!” Only this time it’s not Jesus speaking, it’s Peter, and so Peter makes abundantly clear whose authority he is speaking under and he offers this clarifying statement to precede the command: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”

He's speaking in the name of Jesus...and let me tell you there is power when speaking in the name of Jesus! We’re going to see this amplification of the name of Jesus over and over again in Acts 3 and 4. We see it in:

**Acts 3:16 – “And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”**

Next week, we’ll see as Peter and John are interrogated by the elders and scribes for this miracle, Peter tells them:

**Acts 4:10,12 – “let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well...And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

Listen, there is POWER in the name of Jesus! But this power is not just in saying “the name” like repeating his name has some kind of magic, spiritual dust on it that will allow you to move faster than a locomotive or leap tall buildings!

When we pray in the name of Jesus or speak in the name of Jesus – his name represents the totality of being...it is speaking of his nature and character. It speaks of who he is AND what he has done!

When Peter speaks “in the name of Jesus” he is clearly articulating that what he is requesting to be done here is NOT in and of himself – it’s done by the authority and under the authority of Jesus – that’s why there is power in his name!

**Illus. Target Catalog** – Names in the day of the Bible means much more than they do today. I mean, we found Riley’s name in a Target catalog! True Story! The others are named because of how their name would sound coming out of loud speakers at a soccer, volleyball or basketball game! Great athletic names!

The name of Jesus though – it’s different! His name is wonderful! From the beginning we knew there was something about that name!

**Matt. 1:21 – “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”**

His very name means to save...to rescue! **Richard Longenecker** was a New Testament scholar. He just passed away in June. He wrote this as commentary concerning the name of Christ:

**“In Semitic thought, a name does not just identify or distinguish a person; it expresses the very nature of his being. Hence the power of the person is present and available in the name of the person. Peter, therefore, does not just ask the risen Jesus to heal, but pronounces over the crippled beggar the name of Jesus, thereby releasing the power of Jesus.”**

Listen, when we pray – it ought to be in the name of Jesus! When we sing, we ought to sing in the name of Jesus! When I preach, may I preach in the name of Jesus! When we give, we ought to give in the name of Jesus! When we work, we ought to work in the name of Jesus.

Everything we do, we do in his name, representing him! It’s wrapped under his authority and clothed in who he is and what he has done! This is what gives power to the name of Jesus. It’s NOT about us, it’s about him!

And so, when this man who hasn't walked and rises to his feet...and that's what happens! Here is the Miracle that takes place:

**Acts 3:7-10 – “And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. (In an instant!) <sup>8</sup> And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and 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 recognized him 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.”**

A miracle takes place! A man that has been an invalid his whole life who WAS laying OUTSIDE the temple (we'll get there in a minute). He is now, leaping, jumping, praising God INSIDE the temple!

This is not only a miracle we see taking place, this is a fulfillment of prophecy as well. The prophet Isaiah wrote of the time when the Messiah would come and that time would be marked according to:

**Is. 35:5-6 – “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy...”**

That's what is taking place! It's footloose, baby! The King has inaugurated his Kingdom, but it's not a Kingdom of this world and the King is no longer physically present to help build and advance it. So, who is going to help build and advance the Kingdom now that Jesus has ascended back to the Father?

It's the apostles and those early followers of Jesus! And this miracle and others we will see in Acts is just affirmation that the baton has been passed from Jesus to these men...and it's visual!

You can see it with your eyes – even though you may not believe it! This crowd saw it, but they were having a hard time reconciling what they saw with what they knew.

They had seen this man day after day at the gate OUTSIDE the temple begging for alms and now that same man is walking, running and dancing around INSIDE the temple. They are (v. 10) are filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened. They are blown away...they don't have a category for what they have just witnessed!

And this is where we move from the miracle takes place to our second section of this passage: **A Message Is Proclaimed**

**Acts 3:11 – “While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.”**

This is a pretty significant spot on the Temple grounds. Especially for the early church it seems...we will see them meeting at this same place in Acts 5. It was at Solomon's portico that Jesus taught in John 10 that “my sheep hear my voice...that I and the Father are one...” and they Jews gathered picked up stones to stone him!

This was a place on the temple grounds that was large enough for many people to gather and could have possibly been a meeting point for the early church to meet around. Here's a pic of what it would have looked like (**SHOW PIC**).

Again, the people can't believe what they are seeing and Peter observes this and just as we saw two weeks ago, he's given the opportunity to preach, he takes it! And just like in Acts 2, it contains what we said every message that is preached and proclaimed should contain.

- It's scripture-saturated – Peter pulls from the Old Testament Law and prophets to point them to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.
- It's Christ-centered – Peter makes sure to focus on the person and work of Christ. In fact, we'll take his message and pullout what he says about Jesus – who he is!
- It's Spirit-filled – Peter is not counting on eloquence or a three point sermon that is slick and smooth. He's not trying to impress, he just speaks FULL of the Holy Spirit.

And let me tell you something about this message he preaches, it's what we call in preacher terms “shucking the corn”...he's in modern day terms “preaching straight fire”. Let's listen in:

**Acts 3:12 – “And when Peter saw it (that people were utterly astounded at this and had gathered around – he had the object lesson of a lifetime here!) 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 have made him walk?”**

Notice, Peter takes no credit for this miracle. He's not about to touch what is rightfully God's! Also notice in this message all the ways he describes Jesus and points to Jesus. I'll point them out as we read:

**Acts 3:13-18 – “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified (#1.) his servant Jesus (surely a reference to Is. 53 – the suffering servant – this is who Jesus is – Mark 10:45, Phil. 2.), whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you denied (#2.) the Holy and Righteous One (Only God is holy and righteous and here Peter puts the deity of Christ on display – Jesus is God – he is Holy and Righteous), and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, (Remember Barabbas?) <sup>15</sup> and you killed (#3) the Author of life (Col. 1 – all things created for him and through him...), whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. (Again, giving all the glory to God)<sup>17</sup> “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that (#4) his Christ would suffer (Jesus is the prophesied Messiah), he thus fulfilled.”**

And then he does what all strong preaching should do – he calls for a response!

**Illus.** - If you are wondering why we do an invitation each week here at Champion Forest and ask people to come forward and make whatever decision they are making public, this is it! The word of God is proclaimed. Hopefully it has been:

- Scripture-saturated...
- Christ-centered...
- Holy Spirit-filled...

And we, like Peter here give you an action step...we ask for a response (NO ONE LEAVING! Don't leave, pray!). It's the most important time in our service! Here he gives them a challenge after hearing the message!

**Acts 3:19-21** – “**Repent therefore** (turn and if you're wondering what direction to now go...), **and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,** <sup>20</sup> **that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,** <sup>21</sup> **whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”**

You keep reading this message and it's more and more of making much of Jesus. Calls him the prophet of God (v. 22). Tells the crowd that Jesus is the prophet that Moses who they revered said would come and that they should listen to.

He states in (v. 24) that all the prophets that have ever come spoke of the days that they have seen fulfilled in the person of Jesus and keeps going to explain in (v. 25-26) that Jesus is the offspring of Abraham...and I think he would have kept going making much of Jesus and preaching Jesus from the Old Testament – the Law and the Prophets had he not gotten cut off and taken into custody!

We'll cover all that next week! So, you have to make sure you come back!

It's powerful. A miracle takes place. A message is proclaimed. And I look at this passage of scripture and ask, what can we learn from it? What is something we can take away from Acts 3 that can help us Monday through Saturday? Let me suggest three take-aways:

### **1. Pray for Divine Appointments**

You know what a divine appointment is, right? It's an appointment that is made that is probably not on your calendar...you may not even know the person you are going to encounter, but God wants you to know them and so he arranges and orchestrates that your paths cross.

Divine appointments usually happen when we are not looking for them...when we have things going on...when we have things to do!

This is Peter and John's day. They are heading to pray...they've got things going on...they are busy and yet God has this divine appointment set up for them this day with a lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful.

Now, we can learn from Peter and John in this. Hundreds had walked right past this man and didn't give it a second thought...probably avoided eye contact with him at all costs. But, NOT Peter and John. NOT this day...it was a divine appointment!

They slow down long enough to SEE this man. The man was looking for money, Peter and John gave them what they had – mercy! Notice again, they stopped what they were doing and gave this man their time.

I wonder how many divine appointments we are missing out on because we are just so busy, we never slow down to see the need all around us. We don't see people in need as appointments we see them as interruptions in our day!

We're running from one thing to the next...taking this kid to practice, taking this kid to dance, taking this kid to tutoring. We're racing from this work engagement to this social outing and we don't have time for divine appointments.

I'm challenging you today to begin praying and asking God to interrupt your day with some divine appointments. You can go looking for them!

**Illus. Life On Mission** - We have a class that meets tonight called "Life on Mission" – at 5:15 in the FLC. (explain). You can look for divine appointments in this way. And I want to encourage you to pray for them every day.

And let's not miss that this guy was OUTSIDE the temple! Most of our divine appointments are going to happen OUTSIDE the temple. We work with people and go to school with people every day who are just like this beggar...they are without hope! We're told that:

- 7 in 10 people struggle with depression...
- 14 in 100 suffer from oppressive fear or overwhelming anxiety...
- 60 out of 100 don't know Jesus and many have never heard a clear articulation of the gospel and what Jesus did for them!

The goal is to meet that person at their point of need who is OUTSIDE the temple, point them to Jesus that meets the need and then bring them INSIDE the temple so they can join us in praising God!

Pray for divine appointments and when God opens that door, don't be surprised. Just meet the need. And listen, we can't meet the need of everyone, but we can meet the need of someone and we should do for one what we would do for everyone if we had the capability to do it!

AND let me just say this: Meeting a need, might not cost you anything but your time! Meeting a need could just be a listening ear and a sympathetic heart that leads to a changed life.

Oh, and a reminder here, we marvel that this man could get up and walk – that is a miracle, but I would ask you what miracle is greater? Physical healing or Spiritual healing? Just something to think about...and this leads to second take away/challenge.

## 2. Pray for Miracles

Let's address the proverbial elephant in the room, right? Some look at this and we think, "Pastor Jarrett, if I saw a miracle like this, I'd believe too...I'd give my life to Jesus, but God doesn't do those type of miracles anymore. I've been praying and praying and praying for God to heal my dad's cancer, and he's not doing it."

Or you've been praying and praying for God to move in a certain situation and all you get is silence. Maybe you're looking at your life or a particular situation and wondering where is my miracle? Why doesn't God ACT like he did in Acts?

It's a good question. This miracle here is the This is the first of fourteen physical healings we read about in the book of Acts that are performed by the apostles. In 12 of the 28 chapters in Acts we read of someone being physically healed.

Remember, Luke who is the author of this book was a doctor and so I am sure he was extremely interested in documenting these cases.

What we see in the scriptures here...what we refer to as miracles...the Bible refers to them as "wonders and signs". And they are performed by the hands of the apostles...those who were eyewitnesses and specifically sent out by Jesus himself.

**Acts 2:43 – “And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”**

**Acts 5:12 – “Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles...”**

Now, these miracles and signs we read about in Acts have two main purposes. The first is that that they served to validate that the ministry of the apostles...that they were indeed sent by God. He had passed the baton of his ministry directly to them.

The second purpose of these signs and wonders was spread of the gospel. And that is exactly what we see taking place in this story. Any commentary you read on this passage will highlight the fact that this man's physical condition can be compared to every man's spiritual condition.

This man was lame physically. He was crippled physically. And it's true that every man that walks planet earth is lame spiritually. We are crippled by sin. If we don't read Acts 3 and see ourselves in the place of this beggar, we're reading it wrong!

Sin has crippled us and unless God shows us mercy we will lay OUTSIDE the temple forever.

Sickness...disease...death...it is all a result of sin. At Adam's fall the world and everything in it was thrown into chaos. And the Bible teaches that all will not be made right (v. 21 – “restoration of all things.”) until Christ physically and literally returns.

In the meantime, because we live in a fallen world, we live with the effects of sin every single day. And God by his grace and mercy may indeed choose to physically heal on this side of eternity.

God still can and does continue to heal and supernaturally restore individuals and there are a plethora of people that have that testimony.

As a church, I can tell you we believe...teach...and pray to a miracle working, all-powerful, healing God. NO QUESTION.

WHY he chooses to heal some physically in the here and now and others ultimately in heaven and at the resurrection is a mystery that I don't understand though and it's one that no one will ever be able to explain...it's a divine mystery!

**Is. 55:8-9** (it's not a copout verse, it brings me great comfort when confronted with this reality) –  
**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.**

**’ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**

God can heal...he is certainly able...and in some cases according to his sovereignty he is willing. I guarantee you the man in Acts 3 wasn't the only man laying at the gate that day...he was the only one physically healed.

Just remember, the greatest miracle that day was not the physical miracle...it was the spiritual miracle of this man's heart changing. Rise and walk was not just words for the physical, it was resurrection words for the spiritual.

So, do we pray for miracles? ABSOLUTELY. We throw ourselves on the mercy of God and trust him...AND don't miss this next step...this next take away because it may just be the most important of all.

1. Pray for Divine Appointments
2. Pray for Miracles
3. **Pray for the Jesus to be exalted.**

Spiritual maturity is being able to pray this right here. “Jesus, I want whatever exalts your name...makes much of your name...gets your name lifted up and praised...I want THAT more than anything else.

This miracle was for the exaltation of Christ's name. Peter's sermon was for the exaltation of Christ name.

May we live and long for this right here...that it becomes our focus in EVERYTHING! The name of Jesus exalted. If this is our focus, than we can rejoice in our physical healing if it comes – because we can say with confidence the name of Jesus is exalted!

OR if we don't get the physical healing we want...the miracle we were hoping for. We can still rejoice because our prayer for the name of Jesus to be exalted is still being answered even in sickness and worst-case scenario from an earthly standpoint – death.

I want to live, preach, and die praying for the name of Jesus to be exalted.

Would you pray with me?

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*Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.*