A Miracle and a Message

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[0:00] Acts chapter 3 and the whole chapter verses 1 through 26.

! I pray 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 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 entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.
[1:13] And all the people saw him walking and praising God 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.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 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 power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over 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 you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.
And his name, by faith in his name, 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.
[2:20] And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Repent, therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive, until the time for restoring all things, about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.
Moses said, The Lord will rise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you, and it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.
And all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and those who came after him also proclaim these days, You are the sons of the prophet and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. Okay, I remember, oh, some time ago I heard a story about a pastor who was the pastor of a college ministry in his church.
[3:43] And so when school was in session, they had about three times the number that they usually had, but they would take up an offering, and even though their attendance was about three times as much as it normally was, it only increased by about $17 a week.

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And you guys remember, some of you have been in college, or you've had college students, when you're in college you don't have a whole lot. But he told the story about one time they got the offering plates back, and in it was an egg and cheese biscuit from McDonald's.
And on the wrapper it said, silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. And so that's a funny story, but this section of Scripture is no joke.
The full passage occupies a lot of space, again reaching actually beyond what we read, from beyond verse 26 to chapter 4 and verse 31, with the events described covering more than one day. It covered a few days, and it ends with threats and a powerful prayer meeting, if you remember, and we'll get there eventually. Here we see the apostles continuing Jesus' ministry in word and deed.
[4:52] The healing of a lame man is a deed that leads to a sermon, a word. After hearing that sermon, more people are converted to faith in Jesus, and the Jewish religious authorities were enraged by that.

And this passage breaks down in two easy parts. It's the first, which is what we'll cover tonight, is the miracle. And then a while from now, I'm not sure when with all the breaks that we have, will be the message.
That's the next part. So first we'll focus on the miracle, verses 1 through 10. If you remember, the three foundations of the Jewish faith included the Torah and worship and showing kindness, which was their giving of alms.
And so this lame man who was a beggar was visible for all to see. He was laid at the beautiful gate, which was the gate that connected the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women.
So if you remember seeing the temple, you know that outer court was for the Gentiles. And then the next inner court was for the women and then for the Jewish men and then for the priests at the very foot of the Holy of Holies itself.
[6:01] And so this is where he was at, this beautiful gate. And he would go there every day and he would beg for money. And not only was this man broke, but we see that he was broken physically.

He lived his entire life from the moment he was born, crippled. And so day by day, he would sit outside this gate and beg for money.
And so people knew him. They would have seen him on a regular basis. Now I want you to think, you know what that would do to a person? You know, here he is.
I don't think it mentions how old he is, but we assume that he has been doing this for a long time. Every day. He sits outside this gate and he begs. And I think it would make a man feel worthless after a certain point of time because he was completely reliant upon the charity of others.
He couldn't work for his own living. And so he couldn't provide for himself. And so this man was not only broken when it came to his physical body, but I think his spirit as well.
[7:08] And also, obviously, he was poor as well. So he was broke in many ways. And so this broke man asked Peter and John for alms, but instead he receives something much better instead.

And the Bible says, the disciples directed their gaze at him. They got his attention. And as a result of this encounter, this man experienced a renewed life. It's interesting that phrase there, gaze upon him, is the same word that is used in the Greek in chapter 1 of verse 10 of Acts, which is used to describe how the disciples were gazing upon Jesus as he was ascending into heaven.
And so this is a word that describes an intense looking upon of something. And so the disciples were intently looking at this man.
And so, again, I imagine that this man had grown used to people walking by him as if he didn't exist. You know, you get to a point where people are probably going to the temple on a daily basis, if not a very regular basis.
And they knew this guy, and they knew that every time they come by, he was going to ask for charity. And you have probably done this before. You get to the point where you just pretend as if that person doesn't exist anymore.
[8:27] And so you've got to imagine that this man is probably used to people just walking by him, asking for charity, and used to people pretending like he doesn't even exist. So you can imagine what that must do to a person.

But we see from the Scripture that his healing was instantaneous. And it included not just his ability to walk, but also the coordination and balance that came with trying to learn how to walk that many of us have to experience young in our life, right?

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We don't just pop up one day as children and take off walking and then sprinting. I mean, we've got to learn balance. We've got to learn coordination. And so it's amazing in this miracle that not only had he the ability now to walk, but he could.
He had that coordination. We see that he's leaping and he's dancing for joy. And so this was a complete healing. Could you imagine then the joy that this man must have felt that after being lame from birth, now he was able to do things that he had never been able to do or experience before. He was completely transformed. And as a result of this, those who were looking at him were filled with wonder. And I tried to think for myself, what might this feel like? You know, because I couldn't imagine.
[9:39] And so the only thing I could think of is when I was learning how to ride my bicycle as a kid. And I had training wheels on the back of my bicycles like most kids do, right? Nobody really starts off just on two wheels unless there's some kind of freak of nature.

I don't know. But what was happening was that my training wheels began to be wobbly. So one would be up in the air and I just had one on the ground. And I was riding like that for about a month or so.
And so really, I was a lot more prepared to have them off than I think anybody in my family realized. And so when my dad took them off of my bike, when I finally convinced him, I think he was ready to push me down the driveway and do the thing that dads do, you know, kind of make sure I didn't fall. But man, I just took off. I was ready to go. I took off and I went down the street and I went up around our cul-de-sac and came back down and I'd never felt free like that before. And so I imagine, you know, as great as that made me feel on that day, that's just a small example of what this man must have been feeling or what this man must have been enjoying that day when he was healed in this way.
And so there's three quick points of application that I want us to see. The first one is the application of the story is the need that exists for us to care for hurting people around us today.
[11:01] And so again, this is a sobering reminder to us that it is possible to attend religious functions, to pray for others, but then completely ignore the needs of those who are around us, those who we see every single day.

So the first application is a reminder for us to be aware of those who are around us and those who are in need. Another point of application here involves the apostles care for just one person.
If you remember, we saw in the previous passage that Pentecost has happened, that Peter preached, and as a result of that, 3,000 came to salvation in Jesus Christ.
3,000, we would say that that's a megachurch today, right? But so here are Peter and John, now megachurch pastors, so to speak, but yet they care even about just one guy who had nothing that he could give to them who was seeking something from him, but they cared about him.
So that's important for us as teachers and leaders in the church, as people in the church, that we care for the group, but we also care about each individual.
[12:13] And we care about the individuals that are not saved, that are not yet a part of a church that we would hope to be used by God to bring them to salvation. So it shows us the importance of caring for every single one.

And then the third application is about healing. There are lots of self-proclaimed healers in our world today, and there are many false teachers, and there are many con artists who claim to be able to heal, but are truly just scheming and taking advantage of people.
And so we're going to get into that a little bit deeper here in a moment, but before we do that, John MacArthur presents four aspects of this miracle that provide a checklist for us to be able to screen all alleged miraculous healings.
So if you're watching TV, you see a lot of these healing services take place. Usually it's like 3 o'clock in the morning if you're up that late, you know, but they're on at a certain point of time for a certain reason.
They're appealing to a certain crowd. And so when you see these things, how do you know that what is happening there is true or false? Well, the first indicator is it's happening at 3 in the morning, right?
[13:23] So that would be one thing for you. But the first thing we see here that John MacArthur points out is that this healing was unexpected. It was unexpected. We don't have any indication from Scripture that Peter and John were going to the temple with any kind of plan that they were going to seek this man out.

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They were going to worship. They were going to to do their thing. And it just so happened that they saw this man. The Holy Spirit directed their gaze upon him and gave them the faith to perform this miracle that happened.
And this man was completely unexpected of it as well. The second aspect is that it was done in the name of Jesus Christ. That's incredibly important.
This this miracle was done in Jesus name and it was done to give glory to Jesus Christ. And so if ever you're watching any of these things or you've heard of any of these things you wonder who got the glory from this and if it's not Jesus Christ then that would definitely be a red flag.
And not only for that but the healer would also direct the focus to Christ as we see Peter did. He said you know why are you looking at us as if I have the power to have done this or as if it was my piety my godliness that resulted in this.
[14:38] It wasn't any of that. It was Jesus who's done this and he directed all of their focus to him.
Thirdly it was instantaneous. As we see he was completely healed.

There was no slow process and we've seen in scripture that God Jesus healed in different ways. Sometimes he would spit in the dirt and he would you know he made eyes for the man from that and rubbed it on his face.
Sometimes he didn't even have to be there. It was just by his word and miles and miles away that person would be healed at that very moment. But we see in all those cases that those healings were instantaneous and such was the case with this man.
And then fourthly which goes into that is that it was complete. There's nothing left to be done. He was healed and there was no regression. He was good to go. And we believe that he continued on as normal for the rest of his life.
That he did not experience again any kind of regression from that healing. And so this is the question that I'm sure many of us maybe you're even thinking it right now is this.
[15:47] Why don't we observe miracles of this proportion today? And so that's what I want us to spend most of our time talking about. Why don't we experience miracles like this?

Have we even seen them through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and again in Acts? Why don't we see miracles of that proportion today? And so before I get into that I want to let you know again I have a lot of notes here.
And I always take a lot of notes whenever I'm going to do Bible study or especially when I'm going to preach on Sunday morning. And here's the reason why. Because my memory is not very good. That's one reason why. But the main reason is that James 3.1 says, Not many of you should become teachers my brothers for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. And so I take that seriously that one day I'm going to stand before the Lord and he is going to in a way have all of these things that I've ever taught about him almost in front of me and I want to make sure that whatever I say is the truth.
Right? And so I want to make sure that I have notes so that I don't say something that I don't mean to say because I have a tendency to do that. All right? So, most reformed Protestants believe that such gifts have ceased.
[17:07] However, there is a small group of reformed Protestants who believe that such gifts haven't, that they continue on. And so they're in two different crowds.

The first is I've given you a brief definition is the cessationism crowd. And this is the view that miracle gifts, the gifts of tongues, the gifts of healing, have ceased.
That the end of the apostolic age brought about a cessation of the miracles associated with that age. Most cessationists believe that while God can still and does perform miracles today, the Holy Spirit no longer uses individuals to perform those same miraculous signs that the apostles did back during this apostolic age.
So that's the first group. The second group is the continuationism crowd or group. In this view, they say that all of the spiritual gifts, including healings, including speaking in tongues, including these profound miracles, are still in operation today, just as they were back in the early days of the church.
A continuationist believes that the spiritual gifts have continued unabated since the day of Pentecost and that the demonstration of signs, wonders, and miracles in 2 Corinthians 12, 2 was witnessed in the apostolic era and should be a hallmark of the church today.
[18:35] So they say that all of these things that we see in Acts happening back then, speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, that these things should be taking place in the church today.

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And if you talk to some of them, they would say that no, no true church lacks these things. And some of them take it to the extreme actually to say that you are not saved unless you first demonstrate that you have spoken in tongues because they take that as evidence that you have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
So, who is right? Debate centers around this argument and it surrounds this. Have the spiritual sign gifts of miracles, healings, and tongues, again, that are mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, have they ceased or do they continue today in the church?
And so that's what I want to talk to you about tonight. And this is important because both groups are out there and we want to know what is the truth, right? We want to know as a church, we want to make sure that we are doing all that we're supposed to be doing, that we are in accordance with what God's word says.
And if we're lacking in anything, we want to know that too, right? So we can pray and so that we can challenge one another and spear one another on to experience that change.
[19:57] But it's important to note that neither group denies that such gifts were given by the Spirit. The disagreement is whether the Spirit continues to give these gifts today. A few years ago, back at my previous church, we had a baptism and the parents there of the of the girl who was baptized, their parents were there.

So this girl's grandparents were there. And at that particular time in our church, we had about seven or eight people who had cancer of some sort of another.
We had a woman who was battling breast cancer. We had a gentleman who had throat cancer. We had another guy who had bouts with colon cancer. And there is just all different things going on. And so it never been like that before. But I remember on that one Sunday, we had a long list of prayer requests and a lot of them had to deal with people in our church who were battling cancer. And so I do remember praying for all of them. But it was about a week or two later, I got a letter from this woman and she was expressing a she was upset that we were not or more specifically that I was not praying in a different way.
[21:16] She thought that I should have been naming cancer and calling it out and pronouncing victory over it for these people. And so she was upset with me that I that I wasn't praying in the way that she thought that I ought to pray as if I had the power or we had the ability right to be able to pray in such a way that we could back God into a corner and force him to heal these people in the way that she thought that they should be.

So I'll never forget that because when you get a letter like that and I'm not sure that you probably have not. But, you know, you you know what you believe, but it makes you do a little bit of praying, a little bit of thinking, though.
I was pretty sure that this woman was in the wrong and I was not. But let's let's look. Let's analyze this. Scripture takes priority priority over experience.
Let's not forget that Scripture takes priority over our experiences and the experiences of others. Why is that? Because Scripture is the final authority.
Scripture is the final authority. Scripture must also correlate with our lives, with what we do experience. And it should provoke us to reexamine afresh what we've read in the Bible and make sure that we've read it correctly.
[22:36] Christians must turn and return to Scripture repeatedly to ensure we've read them faithfully. So we want to make sure that we are reading Scripture right the way that it's been intended by God to be read by us, because, again, it has authority and its authority supersedes our personal thoughts, opinions or experiences.

So we've got to understand that if we're going to understand what is right about cessationism versus continuationism. The Bible records, the Bible record, excuse me, shows that miracles occurred during the particular periods, during particular periods for the specific purpose of authenticating a message from God.
So why did these miracles happen? Because they were authenticating that this message was from God. Do you remember Moses? Moses was about to go to Pharaoh.
Pharaoh and Moses job was to be the deliverer of God's people. And so God gave him the ability to perform miracles so that Pharaoh would believe that he was sent from God.
And not only that, so that the people of Israel would believe that Moses was the one whom God had sent to be their deliverer. So those miracles were given to authenticate his ministry.

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[23:56] They were given to him by God. Elijah as well was given miracles to authenticate his ministry before King Ahab in 1 Kings chapter 17 verse 1 and chapter 18 verse 24.

The apostles were given miracles as well to authenticate their ministry before Israel and to the unbelieving world. And you can look up Acts chapter 4 verse 10 and verse 16 to see that also. These signs, these miracles served a purpose and that purpose was to authenticate the fact that these men were messengers who had been sent from God.
So there was a purpose in these miracles that they performed. Jesus as well. If you remember, Jesus' ministry was marked by many miracles, which the apostle John calls signs in John chapter 2 verse 11.
John's point was that the miracles again served as proof for the authenticity of who Jesus said that he was. Jesus said what?
[24:57] I am the son of God. And he did things miraculously that only God could do. And so those miracles attested to the fact, they proved the fact that Jesus was who in fact he said that he was.

Paul says in Ephesians 2 20 that the church is built or was built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. I believe that the teachings of the apostles and prophets that are now contained in the Bibles that we have in Scripture give us all that we need to know that is necessary for salvation and for our sanctification.
Now that God has spoken in the last days through his son, as Hebrews 1 2 says, we don't need any further words from him to explain that or what Jesus has accomplished in his ministry, in his death, in his resurrection.
The Bible is complete. We've got it. Thank God. We are instead called, as Jude 3 says, to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once and for all.
The apostles and the prophets were the messengers by which God, through his spirit, has delivered this message that we are now called to contend for. So we have the Bible.
[26:11] It's complete. It's complete. And it's our job now to contend for it, right? To defend it and to proclaim it. That's our God given responsibility in this age.

We don't have men today doing what the apostles were called by God to do back then. There are many great men in ministry today. There are many, many great men and women in ministry today, but we don't have anything like the apostles Peter or Paul or John.
We don't have men like that today. Well, why is that? Because we don't need men like that today. I mean, it would be great to have men like that today. You know what I mean? But their work was completed.
God had given them a task to lay the foundation for the church and they completed their work. And so the apostolic work of those men is completed and it's not something that continues on any longer.
They've laid the foundation for the church, which included their God given teachings, which the church continues to live by today. And this instruction is all we need until Jesus returns.
[27:16] We're building on that foundation, but the foundation has been laid. Right. Wouldn't make sense after we've we've been building right to go back and relay another foundation. Foundation is good. The foundation is secure.

Those men's mission has been fulfilled and completed. Thank God. And first Corinthians chapter 15, verse eight, Paul says that he is the last apostle.
In fact, he says that he is the last one. And when James, the brother of John, dies in Acts chapter 12, verse two, he wasn't replaced. They didn't they didn't do what they'd done before.
Right. Before the Holy Spirit came, they didn't draw lots or anything like that. James had died and they didn't try to find another apostle to replace them because they understood that these men's office was special and was a one time only thing to be an apostle in the technical sense.
One had to see the risen Lord and then not only that, but receive a commission from him to hold such an office. And in all the cases of the apostles, that's exactly what happened.
[28:23] They witnessed the risen Lord. Right. And they were commissioned. They were called by him for a specific purpose, which they carried out. No one's no one since those apostolic times fits such a criteria.

This hasn't stopped, though, some people from claiming to be apostles today. But upon closer examination, it should be clear that they are speaking falsely. In fact, the Bible warns us that such people will come to the church as wolves in sheep clothing.

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So turn in your Bibles to second Peter chapter two, verses one through twenty one chapter two, verses one through twenty one. Second Peter. All right.
Second Peter, chapter two, verses one through twenty one. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. So we have this warning to be looking out for this. You will seek who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.
And many will follow their sensuality. And because of them, the way of the truth will be blasphemed. I think we see that in many cases today and in their greed, they will exploit you. We definitely see that in many cases today.
[29:37] They will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep. For God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.

If he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, he condemned them to extinction, making them example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.
And if he rescued righteous lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.
Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. And especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.
Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones. Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.
[30:46] But these like irrational animals, creatures of instinct born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction.

Suffering as the wage for their wrongdoing, they count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin.
They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children forsaking the right way. They have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgressions.
A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrain the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved for speaking loud boasts of folly.
They entice by sensual passions of the flesh, those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption for whatever overcomes a person to that he is enslaved.
[31:56] For if that after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them overcome. The last state has become worse for them than the first for it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

So we see a strong and stern warning, don't we? From Peter, who is an apostle to beware of people like this who come as if they are like pseudo apostles who are not.
And also a strong condemnation and warning to those who are doing it that their destruction is sure and it's going to be terrible. So we must understand that such people existed.
Such people still exist today. And we must take care that we are not following them or being deceived by them. Again, another scripture I want to read is Revelations chapter 22 verses 18 and 19.
It says, I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of his prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

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[33:19] So the apostles were uniquely called by the Lord to receive his word. And not only that, by doing so, they established established orthodox doctrines for the church to have, to believe and to follow.

And so now that we have the completed revelation of God's word, we have no no other need for apostles to do what has already been done for us by God through the apostles that he called long ago.
And we have the completed revelation of God's word. Now, I know that this is that verse I read is the end of the letter of Revelations. But you've got to understand as we believe God and his sovereignty, as he's giving his word over time, he knows what the last few verses of the Bible is going to be, doesn't he?
And so it's there for a purpose to give us warning, not to listen to any of the foolishness that we hear from other people, these other holy scriptures that people claim are out there, not to listen to them and also against those who add or try to add or write other books that they claim being from God, that there is a steep punishment for those who do that.
Since the foundation then has been laid by the apostles and the prophets and the gift of apostolism has ended, it is reasonable to believe that other gifts may cease as well.
[34:35] Before I continue on with that, there was a guy, I can't remember what he called himself. I may have shared this story already, but I think he called himself the Apostle Anthony or something like that. But he was on late at night and his his stick was that he had these green prayer towels and he had rented some cheap gym and some cheap stage and some cheap cameras.

And there were people just going wild and crazy, hoping that he would throw one of these rags out to him as he was praying is wiping his sweat with him and throwing him. And he was claiming that these these rags, these prayer towels, that if you called the one eight hundred number and gave a donation, he would send one to you and then you would place it over whatever ailment or thing you needed to receive a miracle from.
And he, you know, basically guaranteed that you would receive such healing. And, you know, obviously, if that was the case, we would have heard more about the Apostle Anthony.
But I don't think I've seen him on TV. It's probably been about 10 years since since he did. So his ministry must not be doing very well today. Again, since the foundation has been laid by the apostles and the prophets, it's reasonable to believe that since their work has ceased, that other gifts have ceased as well, such as the gift of speaking in tongues.
Tongues were given, as we see in Scripture, as a sign to unbelieving Israel at Pentecost, that God's salvation was now available to other nature nations.
[36:10] Those hearing the tongues and acts understood what was being said to them. Remember, we weren't there all that long ago when the disciples were speaking in languages.

That's what tongues means in the Greek. It's just languages. They were speaking in different languages and people understood that they were speaking in their own languages. So this wasn't gibberish, jabber.
It was actual languages that were understood by those who were there listening and hearing it. So we've got to understand that that's what we're talking about, not just some kind of gibberish talk.
Tongues were unique in the history of the church. History indicates that tongues have ceased, however. Tongues are not mentioned at all by any of the post-apostolic fathers, right?
Any of our early church fathers after the apostles died and went to be with the Lord, Justin Martyr, for example, Origen, Augustine, and there are many others. And they all considered that tongues was something that had ceased, that had stopped, that it had fulfilled its purpose and it was no longer necessary or a gift that was given for the church.
[37:20] If the gift were still available today, then there wouldn't be need for missionaries to attend language school, would there? You know, we spend a lot of money and missionaries spend a lot of time studying other languages so that when they go to the mission field, they can not only communicate the gospel to them, but if they don't have God's word in their own written language, they can write it for them.

And so, man, what a wonderful gift. I know some friends who have been missionaries, who are our missionaries, and they've had to go through language classes and all the things. Wouldn't it be great if they could just poof?

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You got it, right? You got the gift of tongues. But we see that that doesn't happen today like it did back then. So what about those who claim to speak in tongues today?
Then what about the ones who who you probably know? I know people who have conversations with people and they claim that they do have this ability. So what is going on there?
Here's the question. Are they doing or claiming to experience things that contradict Scripture or are their experiences taking priority over Scripture's authority?
[38:32] That's the question we need to ask. So when did all of this start? Because we see that there was a time here in Acts where it was happening for a purpose and it was to communicate the fact that salvation was made possible for the Gentiles and it was a sign for them to be able to communicate the gospel, right, in Pentecost.

And so what happened? We saw in the early church, as I explained, all these early church fathers say nothing of it taking place, that it had ended. Well, in about 1906, somewhere in Los Angeles, I think it was out of a Methodist church or some kind of ministry there, people started claiming to be able to have the ability to speak in tongues and that all of these old gifts that we believe had ceased, all of a sudden they were saying that they were experiencing them.
And it was really in the 1960s. Some of you may remember that when the charismatic movement really started to gain ground. And it still is today. In fact, there are a lot of places over in Europe where the charismatic movement is thriving and doing well.
And I sadly believe that's still the case for our country also. So the question then becomes, is the charismatic movement scriptural? We know again that since the creation of mankind, Satan's plan has been to put a veil between God's children and God's word.
We see that in Genesis chapter three, don't we? In the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, the serpent asked Eve what? Did God truly say?
[40:04] And Satan still does the same thing with us today. He's still seeking to raise doubts. He's still seeking to cause us to doubt the authority of God's word or the authenticity of God's word.

Without question, we know that Satan has stepped up the pace of his strategy, as we saw again in 2 Peter and in 1 Peter 5, 8. This is what Satan tries to do.
Cause us to doubt God's word. Cause us to doubt the authority and the authenticity of God's word. Today, we are witnessing a growing menace of demonic activity in the realm of the miraculous. Where Satan does not succeed in taking the Bible from us, he works hard at taking us from the Bible. He does this simply by getting Christians to focus their attention on the claims of men and women to whom some claim supernatural experiences.
As a result, those who seek after the experiences of others have neither time nor interest in searching the scripture for God's truth. People are drawn to what is strange and what they don't understand.
[41:09] And so when people hear these things or see these things happening, there is something about human beings that we like to go with the herd. We like to go with the crowd. We want to experience these things, same things as well.

And so people are drawn to these things. And as they are being drawn to these things, they are neglecting God's word and what God's word has to say about these things that we're talking about. So are these people who speak in tongues today under the influence of Satan? That's the question. Maybe. Maybe. The Bible definitely says that that could very well be the case and is often the case in definitely in certain situations.
Or as J.I. Packer says that he thinks that many of them are just using it as some kind of psychological relaxation that for whatever reason they get into these groups, they get into these crowds and something about talking that gibberish talk relaxes them and it's all a psychological thing.
But again, it doesn't excuse the behavior. It doesn't excuse the behavior. First Corinthians chapter four, verses 20 through 25 says, brothers, do not be children in your thinking, be infants in evil, but in your thinking, be mature in the law.
[42:19] It is written by people of strange tongues and by lips of foreigners. Will I speak to this people and even they will not listen to me, says the Lord. Thus tongues are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers.

That's important. Tongues are a sign for not for believers, but for unbelievers. If therefore the whole church comes together as they were doing and all speak in tongues and outsiders are unbelievers

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enter, Paul saying, will they not say that you are all out of your minds?
But if all prophesy and again in the Greek, that's not used for speaking of the future, but publicly proclaiming the word of God. And so Paul saying, if that's happening and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is called to account by all.
The secrets of his heart are disclosed. And so falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. And again, he continues on in first Corinthians chapter 14, verse 33. For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Because our worship reflects God's character, doesn't it? And so when people come into our Sunday morning services, they see order.
[43:28] Why is that? Because God is a God of order and all of that order is directed towards our worship of him, but they don't and shouldn't see a bunch of wild people acting crazy with complete disorder because that doesn't reflect on who God is and God wouldn't want it that way.

And again, talking about Leviticus, we see a God of order, a God who has a order to our worship of him. And so it's important that we don't lose sight of that as we're talking about these things.
And again, it's important that we understand that we understand. It's important that we understand the context of what is going on in this Corinthian church, because a lot of these converted Christians were coming from pagan religions where they would do these things, where they would in their worship services and their times of worship of their gods, they would talk in this gibberish way.
And it was a lot of chaos. And we even saw that even with the prophets of Baal in the Old Testament, where they're cutting themselves and doing all kinds of crazy things in order to get their God's attention. And so this is what they were used to.
And a good translation of your Bible will separate and differentiate the two what Paul is talking about. He's talking about tongues, plural and tongue, singular languages and language.
[44:50] And when he's talking about languages, plural, he's he's referring to the spiritual gift. But when he's talking about languages in a singular way, he's talking about this gibberish talk that was that was going on.

And so what he's doing is he's saying, hey, listen, you guys are claiming to be followers of Christ. You're getting together and you're you're wanting to have this gift of speaking in tongues and you're sounding crazy and you're sounding out of your minds and people are coming in and they're watching you worship and they're thinking that you guys are nuts.
And so they're leaving. And so he's saying, what's better that you guys talk in this gibberish way that causes people to be repulsed or repelled by the church or that they hear you prophesying, speaking the truth of the gospel, sharing scripture, singing hymns.
And they see that you guys are in your right minds and they're able to hear this language and the Holy Spirit is able to use that to to speak to them. And then as a result of that, he's explaining people will be convicted by those words that they can understand.
But if they can't understand it, they're going to leave thinking that you guys have lost your minds and that this whole religion of Christianity is a bunch of nonsense. So this is really important that we understand.
[46:05] OK, however, this is a far cry from the miraculous supernatural. Oh, let me let me let me go ahead. So, OK, so now we're coming full circle. So now we've talked about how different things have ceased.

We've talked about tongues. So now we're getting to miracles and healings. And this is the question. Does God still heal people today in miraculous ways? Yes, he does.
Yes, he does. God may choose and sometimes will heal today in response to the prayers of his children when they are made in accordance with his will. I've experienced that.
I've prayed for people in this way and I've experienced them being healed like that as well. However, this is a far cry from the miraculous supernatural healing ability that was given to the apostles on behalf of non-believers.
And what's interesting as well as we go through the book of Acts, we see that most of the people who were healed in these miraculous ways, even when we go back and look at Jesus, they were people who were not saved, especially in the case with Christ.
[47:11] But especially we see even more so in Acts that the people who are receiving these healings, they are not a part of the flock of Jesus Christ. They are unbelievers. So these healings were foundational to the church, these miraculous healings.

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But they passed from the scene eventually with the passing of the age of the apostles. Never has there been a time in this history of the church where such healing power was exhibited as the time of Christ's earthly ministry and that also of his apostles.
There has never been a time before where such miraculous healings took place. And there's never been a time since. This was a special time in which these things were taking place.
It was rare before the ministry of Jesus, and it is equally as rare to see these things today as we experience. I wish that we could heal people today.
I wish that I could heal those people with cancer as that lady thought that I should have had more part of that than I did. But but that's not up to I don't have that ability. I don't have that power.
[48:16] And that's not up to me to be able to do. And here's the thing that bothers me as well. Isn't it enough for us that we are one day going to be permanently healed forever?

And we have that truth. Isn't that enough for us? What more could we want? What more do we need? We know that one day we're going to be with the Lord forever. We're going to be in glorified, resurrected bodies that will not age, that will not know any sin.
Right. We will be perfect and in peace. What more could we want than that? Right. As even Paul himself said, and we are there right now on Sunday mornings for me to live as Christ and to die as gain.
We're trying to create heaven on earth. But heaven is heaven for a reason. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't seek for our brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for us as we do.
That's very important. I think it's great as a church. Whenever like Diane, when we had you, when Tom had you come up and we prayed for you, those are things that we must do and should do as a church.
[49:15] But we've got to understand that this is a different age and time than those days back then. God will heal, but only in accordance to his will.

We've got to understand that. I think we should pray for healing again. I think we should hope that God's will is to heal the person that we are praying for. But again, we must understand as mature Christians that God is sovereign and that all things work according to his will.
I'm going past time, but this is important. I want to get down to this last part. OK, the gift was never given with the intention to make every Christian well, but to authenticate the apostles ministries.
Again, let's look. Remember the boy who fell asleep while Paul was preaching and he fell out of the window and he died. And Paul ran down and he was used by the spirit to bring that dead boy back to life.
But then we'll see in Ephesians with Epaphroditus that he's sick and he's ailing. But Paul doesn't do anything to provide any kind of healing for him. In that case, Paul himself mentions that Timothy when he's writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy, that Timothy was sick, but he doesn't say anything about trying to heal Timothy in any kind of miraculous way.
[50:27] He gives him some advice on some things to do. And even Paul himself suffered from some physical ailments. But he doesn't he doesn't perform if he had that power to zap himself and make himself completely well either.

I think you probably have an understanding of where I am on this issue of cessationism or continuationism. And again, I would just say to you, you look for yourself.
You read the Bible and you see what what you see and experience what you experience. Do you see things happening today like they were happening back then? And I would say that you don't. Why? Because they served a purpose for that time. And we have another purpose that we are to carry out, which is to continue to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.
I want to close with close with a quote by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who is one of my favorite theologians of all time. And he said this. Every Christian should always be seeking the best and the highest.
[51:26] We should never be content with anything less than what is described as possible to the Christian in the New Testament. And so should we pray for healing? Absolutely.

Will we see people who we pray for experience that kind of healing? We will. Sometimes we will when it's according to God's will. But if it doesn't happen, does it mean that there's something wrong with the pastor?
No. Right. Everybody said no. This guy can't heal us. Get us out of here. Bring us somebody else. Right. But sometimes it will. And in that we rejoice in our sufferings and when God takes us

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suffering away until that day when he takes all suffering away.
Amen. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for a tough lesson. Your word is deep. But God, it's true. And it provides us with instruction that we desperately need today.
God, we live in a time where people are misrepresenting you and they are pretending to do things in your name that, according to your word, we know that it's just not it's not something to be done today.
[52:30] And so, God, we pray that you would give us discernment as we make sure that we are listening to what your word says to us instead of what we may be hearing or seeing taking place in men who have put their experience experiences over what your word says.

And so, God, we pray that we would be committed to what your word says. We pray that we would help others to be committed to what your word says as well. And, Lord, we pray for those in our church who are in need of healing.
And, God, we know that you heal in many ways today. We thank you for doctors and nurses that you have prepared with gifts to be able to understand the human body and medications and surgeries that can heal it.
But, God, again, we know that you are almighty and that you are omnipotent and that nothing is too great for you. And so, Lord, we know that we can come to you and we can pray for our sick, knowing that you hear, but knowing that you have a will that is going to result with all of our good.
And, Lord, we look forward to the day when every single one of us who has known you as Lord and Savior will experience that healing that is ultimate, that is complete and that is perfect.
[53:42] And we thank you that you've made that available to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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