

“How Can It Be?”

(Missional Miracles... & Me)

Acts 9:32-43

May 31, 2015

INTRO:

How much do you think you NEED Jesus? (No, really...)

When was the last time you KNEW you were:

- Helpless... without Jesus
- Hopeless... without Jesus
- Heartless... without Jesus

REVIEW: We're walking through the Book of Acts (verse by verse)

- Promise
- Power
- Proclamation
- Persecution
- Passion & Perseverance

Acts 9:31

*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord **and** in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, **it/they multiplied**.*

PREVIEW:

Today we are going to look at miracles...

WHOSE they are...

WHAT they are...

WHERE & WHEN they are...

WHY they are...

HOW they are...

We will see that ALL miracles are missional...

And they come in (3) categories:

- A. Good
- B. Better
- C. BEST

TIMELESS TRUTH:

***We are ALL messes in need of a Messiah...
and
ALL Miracles are Missional!***

Remember CONTEXT:

Acts 9:31

*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord **and** in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, **it/they multiplied**.*

“Fear... + Comfort... + Multiplication = MIRACLE!”

MISSION & MISSIONARIES

³² *Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.*

1. “Peter was traveling...” = MISSIONARY
2. “through ALL those regions” = Great Commission
3. “...also to the saints” = Pastoral/Unified

VIDEO: *“No Man Is An Island”*

GOOD Miracles

- ³³ *There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.*
- ³⁴ *Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.*
- ³⁵ *And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*

Good miracles are for the HELPLESS...

BETTER Miracles

- ³⁶ *Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.*
- ³⁷ *And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.*
- ³⁸ *Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."*
- ³⁹ *So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside*

him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

⁴⁰ *But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.*

⁴¹ *And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.*

⁴² *It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.*

Better miracles are for the HOPELESS

VIDEO: *“How Can It Be?”*

BEST Miracles

⁴³ *And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.*

Best miracles are for the HEARTLESS...

VIDEO: *“Forever”*

**Acts 1:8... All of Acts... ALL of Christianity
points to the Amazing Grace of Almighty God!**

Peter's Witness in the Coastal Towns

INTRO:

[9:32–43](#)

With Paul home in Tarsus, the narrative focuses once more on Peter. He last appeared in connection with the Samaritan mission (8:14–25). Now he participated in the greater Judean mission, evangelizing the coastal cities. Finally, he would witness to a Gentile, a key incident in establishing the mission “to the ends of the earth” ([10:1–11:18](#)). This small section on Peter's witness to the coastal towns consists of two miracle stories: the healing of Aeneas (vv. [32–35](#)) and the raising of Dorcas (vv. [36–43](#)).

EXEGESIS:

(1) The Healing of Aeneas

[9:32–35](#)

9:32–35 Peter is described as “traveling about,” evidently indicating a preaching tour. He stopped in Lydda to visit the “saints” there. Just how the Christian community began there we are not told. Perhaps it was the product of Philip’s ministry, since he would have passed through Lydda on his journey northward from Azotus to Caesarea (8:40).

At Lydda, presumably in the Christian community, **Peter found a paralytic by the name of Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years. Peter took the initiative to heal Aeneas without any request, much as Jesus did on occasion (cf. [Luke 7:13–15](#); [13:12](#)).**

The healing was accomplished by a healing word, **calling on the name of Jesus**. Peter then told Aeneas to rise and “prepare [his] couch” (“take care of your mat,” NIV). The expression is thoroughly ambiguous. It could be taken in the sense of his folding up his mat, just as Jesus commanded another paralytic to rise and take up his ([Mark 2:11](#); [Luke 5:24](#)). The same wording, however, is used for preparing a couch for dining, the Jewish custom being to dine while reclining on a couch. If Peter’s directions are taken in this sense, the reference would be to the man’s thorough recovery and taking of sustenance for further strength (cf. [Luke 8:55](#); [Acts 9:19](#)). In either case, Aeneas’s ability to rise to his feet and prepare the mat is certain evidence that his paralysis had been cured.

Lydda was located in the fertile coastal plain of Sharon, which extends north from Joppa to Mt. Carmel. **Luke said the people of the region turned to the Lord as a result of Aeneas’s healing.** One recalls how the news of Jesus’ miracles also spread to the surrounding neighborhood and attracted crowds to him. As we have seen before, the miracles in Acts are signs of the power of Jesus and often serve

as the initial basis that leads to ultimate commitment. They are never, however, a substitute for faith (cf. 3:9f. with 3:19f.).

An interesting linkage exists between the two healing stories in 9:32–43.

For one, the person healed is designated by name, which was usually not the case in early miracle stories and perhaps reflects vivid community reminiscence. Second, the Christians are referred to as “saints” in both accounts (vv. 34, 41), a point the NIV obscures by using “believers” in v. 41. “Saints” is a rather rare designation for believers in Acts. Finally, the command to “rise” (*anastēthi*) is central to both healings, Aeneas from his paralysis (v. 34), Dorcas from death (v. 40). These close relationships could indicate that these two stories of Peter’s healing in the Plain of Sharon were bound inseparably in the tradition Luke followed.

(2) The Raising of Dorcas 9:36–43

The story of Dorcas is reminiscent of earlier raisings of the dead, such as:

Elijah’s raising the son of the widow of Zarephath
(1 Kgs 17:17–24)

and the raising of the Shunammite woman’s son by Elisha (2 Kgs 4:32–37),

both of which are in turn echoed in the story of the widow's son, who was raised by Jesus (Luke 7:11–17).

The closest correspondence of all, however, is to be found in Jesus' raising of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:49–56; Mark 5:35–43).

9:36 **The story takes place in Joppa, the main port city of Judea, located on the Philistine coast some ten or eleven miles northwest of Lydda.**

In Joppa was a **“female disciple” named Tabitha**. Luke provided the **translation “Dorcas” for his Greek readers**.

Both terms mean *gazelle* in English.

She is described as “always doing good and helping the poor,”

...which enhances the pathos of her death.

9:37–38 **While Peter was still in Lydda, Tabitha became sick and died.**

According to custom, her body was washed for burial.

It was then placed in an upper room, which was not particularly the custom.

Perhaps this was the most available room. It could also be that the Christians of Joppa were performing, as it were, a symbolic act, indicating their faith that she would rise.

In any event, **knowing that Peter was close by—a distance of three hours journey by foot—they sent two men to Lydda to urge Peter to hasten to Joppa without delay.**

9:39 When Peter arrived at Joppa, he was taken to the upper room and there greeted by a group of widows who were in mourning. [Acts 6:1–6](#) already evidenced numerous Jewish Christian widows.

In the later Pauline churches a special order of “senior” widows looked after the other widows in the congregations (1 Tim 5:9f.). Though such a degree of organization probably had not developed in the churches of Dorcas’s day, **her charity to the widows would qualify her as a genuine precursor of those women who helped widows so that the church would not be burdened (1 Tim 5:16).**

The helplessness of these widows further heightens the pathos of the story. Their neediness is exemplified in their showing Peter the tunics and robes Dorcas had made, which they probably were wearing.

9:40 Peter requested that they leave him alone in the room with the body, just as Jesus had sent everyone from the room except the girl’s parents and his three most trusted disciples when he raised Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:40).

Falling to his knees before the body, Peter prayed, turned to the body, and said, “Tabitha, arise.”

*** Peter addressed her by the Aramaic form of her name, and Luke was careful to preserve the distinction. He had used the Greek form Dorcas in his narrative (v. 39).

But Luke was perhaps aware of more than a linguistic nicety. Jesus' words to Jairus's daughter were, "Little girl, arise," which Mark preserved in the original Aramaic form, "Talitha koum" (Mark 5:41). In Aramaic, Peter's words would have been almost identical, "Tabitha koum" — only a single consonant's difference.

In the Aramaic churches who cherished the story of Tabitha, the similarity would not be missed.

In the footsteps of his Master, and through the power of his Master (the *prayer* shows that), Peter worked the same miracle of "resurrection."

QUOTE: "As with Jairus's daughter, the widow's son at Nain, Lazarus, and Dorcas, it was not a matter of resurrection but of resuscitation, of temporary restoration of life. But all the miracles of raising from the dead are in a real sense "signs," pointers to the one who has power even over death and is himself the resurrection and the life for all who believe and trust in him.

9:41–42 **The story concludes with Peter presenting Dorcas alive to “the believers and the widows.”** That the widows are separated from the believers does not indicate the widows were not Christians but serves to single them out as the group who served to benefit most from her restoration to life.

The description that Peter “presented” her to them reminds one of the similar expression of how Elijah “gave” her son back to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:23) and how Jesus “gave” her son back to the widow of Nain (Luke 7:15). In these two instances the restoration of an only son to a destitute widow was indeed a gift, and Peter’s presentation of Dorcas alive was no less a gift to the widows of Joppa.

As with the healing of Aeneas, so with the raising of Dorcas, the news spread quickly in Sharon’s Plain; and many believed in the Lord, in the *risen* Lord.

9:43 Peter remained in Joppa, residing with a tanner who shared with him the name of Simon. **Luke often mentioned the names of hosts or the particular trade of persons. He had an eye for human-interest detail.** This particular tanner lived by the sea. This location may be due to the fact that tanners used sea water in their trade, but the ultimate significance of the “address” would be to help Cornelius’s messengers find Peter in the story that follows.

In a real sense, **Peter had been moved by God ever closer to Caesarea, where the greatest demonstration of God’s leading would take place when Peter was urged to witness there to the Gentile Cornelius.**

INTRO:

No matter how large their ministries may have been, God's noblest servants have always taken the time to minister to individuals. Moses nearly wore himself out doing that, until his father-in-law rebuked him for mismanaging his time and told him to delegate ([Ex. 18:14ff.](#)).

Despite the crowds that thronged Him constantly, the Lord Jesus Christ always had concern and time for individuals (cf. [Matt. 9:19-22](#)). Stephen had been engaged in the personal care of widows ([Acts 6:1-6](#)). Paul, though consumed with reaching cities and nations, endeared himself to people whose names are all through his letters. The great apostle shared his life and labor with them (cf. [Rom. 16](#)). The busy Reformers Luther and Calvin did not neglect their pastoral duties.

QUOTE: The idea of a man of God who ministers only to the large crowds is foreign to Scripture. God expects all Christians, leaders included, to pour their lives into others (2 Tim. 2:2).

The apostle Peter knew what it was to preach to the masses. From the day of Pentecost on he spoke to huge crowds in Jerusalem. He also preached twice before the Sanhedrin ([Acts 4, 5](#)).

This passage reveals the other side of Peter's ministry, his personal service to individuals.

Six elements of that service are implied, not from Peter's direct teaching but indirectly from his actions. Peter was effective with individuals because he was:

1. **Involved**
2. **Christ-exalting**
3. **Available**
4. **Powerful**
5. **Fruitful**
6. **Free from prejudice**

CONTEXT:

“We need not FEAR the *‘fear of the Lord.’* What we NEED to fear is a lack of *‘the fear of the Lord.’*” - JDP

The scene shifts from Paul back to Peter, who will again be the central figure in the narrative for the next three chapters. Paul has been converted and has boldly proclaimed his newfound faith both in Damascus and Jerusalem. His preaching so aggravated his opponents that first in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, they sought to kill him. He has by now fled Jerusalem for his home city of Tarsus. Several years later, as recorded in [chapter 13](#), Paul's ministry will dominate the rest of the record of Acts.

Lydda, known in the Old Testament as Lod, was located about ten miles southeast of the seacoast city of Joppa. It was an important place, since the roads from Egypt to Syria and from Joppa to Jerusalem passed through it. **Today it is the location of Israel's international airport.**

Peter Was Involved

Now it came about that as Peter was traveling through all those parts, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. ([9:32-33](#))

GREAT QUOTE:

The continued expansion of the church outside Jerusalem (assisted by the persecution noted in [Acts 8:1-2](#)) required movement on Peter's part. The statement it came about that as Peter was traveling shows the ceaseless itinerant character of Peter's ministry at that time. On one of his trips, he came down to visit the saints who lived at Lydda. Peter was not set in some hierarchical office but was moving, which made it easy for God to direct him. Those actively involved in ministry are usually the ones to whom God grants the most ministry opportunities. God has always seemed to entrust His richest ministries to His busiest saints. Just being

wholeheartedly active in ministry places one in strategic opportunities.

When Peter arrived there, **he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.**

The use of the term a certain man to describe him, when contrasted with the description of Dorcas as "a certain disciple," suggests he was not a believer.

There are no examples in the New Testament of believers being healed (though Lazarus, Dorcas, and Eutychus were raised from the dead).

KEY Point:

Peter's availability, because he was involved, gave him an open door for ministry.

The miracle, besides its obvious impact in the life of Aeneas, was to be used by God to bring large numbers of people in the surrounding region to faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter Was Christ-Exalting

And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise, and make your bed." And immediately he

arose. And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. (9:34-35)

Those who would minister effectively for Jesus Christ must seek to exalt Him, not promote themselves. Peter understood his role perfectly (cf. Acts 10:25-26). Coming to Aeneas, Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ (not Peter) heals you" (cf. Acts 3:6). Peter's selfless humility stands in sharp contrast to the many in the ministry today who seek their own fame (and fortune), instead of seeking to exalt the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter took our Lord's words, spoken in John 15:4-5, to heart: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." In his first epistle, he echoed those words:

"Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11).

Then Peter commanding Aeneas to respond to the healing said, **arise, and make your bed.** Aeneas **immediately arose**, with no paralysis.

Since Aeneas's cure was complete, and he would no longer be confined to it, Peter commanded him to **make his bed**.

As noted in the discussion of Acts 3:8 in chapter 8, the healings performed by Jesus Christ and the apostles were instantaneous and total. The New Testament knows nothing of "progressive healings," where someone has been "healed," and is now gradually getting better.

Not only in Aeneas's home city of **Lydda**, but also in the surrounding plain of Sharon, **the people came to faith in the Lord**.

Peter's willingness to be involved with people and his desire to glorify his Lord made him a useful instrument by which the Lord could gather a rich harvest for His kingdom.

The phrase **turned to the Lord** employs the verb *epistrephō*, "to turn around" (cf. its use in Acts 3:19; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20, and in 2 Cor. 3:16 and 1 Thess. 1:9), which describes salvation as more than a change of mind; indeed it is a change of life direction. Conversion is an about-face from one belief and behavior to a completely opposite commitment. (a.k.a. "Repentance")

Peter Was Available

Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. And it came about at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, "Do not delay to come to us." And Peter arose and went with them. And when he had come, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. ([9:36-39](#))

Peter's availability led to an even more astounding opportunity. Aeneas was healed, but Dorcas was raised from the dead.

While Peter was at Lydda, tragedy struck the church at nearby Joppa. One of the most beloved members was a certain disciple named Tabitha (more commonly known by her Greek name of Dorcas; both names mean "gazelle"). The epitaph on this lovely lady was that this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did. Specifically, as [verse 39](#) shows, she made clothes for the poor and needy.

In contrast to Aeneas, she is specifically called a disciple. *Mathētria* (disciple), the feminine form of *mathētēs* ("disciple"), appears only here in the New Testament.

Dorcas was certainly an appropriate model for what a Christian woman should be.

She fulfilled her calling as a disciple, as described by Paul in [Ephesians 2:10](#): "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"; and

[Colossians 1:10](#), "That you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

She was a New Testament example of a [Proverbs 31](#) woman, one who "extends her hand to the poor; and... stretches out her hands to the needy" ([Prov. 31:20](#)).

NOTE: Many believe that to deny women leadership roles in the church is to deny them the opportunity to minister. Nothing could be further from the truth. Dorcas neither preached nor led the newly born church, yet her ministry in the Joppa church was so crucial as to endear her to all.

Peter Was Prayerful

But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and

raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ([9:40-41](#))

As he had seen the Lord do when He raised Jairus's daughter ([Mark 5:40](#)), Peter sent them all out of the room where Dorcas's body lay.

He would not put on a display before the crowd that would draw all attention to him, and wanted a quiet place to pray.

Some might think that Peter, who had been involved in countless healings (cf. Acts 5:12-16), should have simply commanded Dorcas to rise. He knew, however, the source of his power and presumed nothing about the will of God. Accordingly, he knelt down and prayed.

Essential to all successful ministry, prayer acknowledges dependence on God.

Peter had learned the importance of prayer from His Lord, having seen and heard Him many times in communion with His Father (cf. [Matt. 14:23](#); [Luke 6:12-13](#)).

GREAT Historical ILLUSTRATION:

Many years ago five young college students made their way to London to hear Charles Haddon Spurgeon preach. Arriving early at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, they found the doors still locked. While they waited on the steps, a man approached them. "Would you like to see the heating apparatus of this

church?" he asked. That was not what they had come for, but they agreed to go with him. He led them into the building, down a long flight of stairs, and into a hallway. At the end of the hallway he opened a door into a large room filled with seven hundred people on their knees praying. "That," said their guide (who was none other than Spurgeon himself), "is the heating apparatus of this church."

Having finished praying, Peter turned to Dorcas's **body** and said, "**Tabitha, arise.**"

And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

[NOTE: see the unfolding of Peter's: Prayer, Practicality, & Presentation - JDP]

For those who loved her the joy must have been inexpressible. **That God did not raise her solely for their benefit, however, will soon become evident.**

Peter Was Fruitful

And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. (9:42)

God's greater purpose for raising Dorcas now became clear as word of her return to life **became known all over Joppa.**

As noted earlier, **God used miracles as confirming signs that the gospel is true.**

He also used them to authenticate the apostles as His messengers.

God used the raising of Dorcas as the spark for the salvation throughout the city.

As with the healing of Aeneas, **Peter's ministry bore much fruit.**

Because of Dorcas's resurrection, many in Joppa **believed in the Lord.**

It may be affirmed that “turning to the Lord” (v. 35), a phrase commonly used in Acts, is synonymous with believing in the Lord (cf. Acts 11:21).

There is no saving faith without conversion, no true belief without repentance and transformation.

Again **Peter's God-empowered ministry, both in Lydda and Joppa, caused many souls to be added to the kingdom.**

Peter Was Free from Prejudice

And it came about that he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain tanner, Simon. (9:43)

This footnote serves as a bridge between this passage and the following account of Cornelius's conversion.

Peter decided to remain **in Joppa** and **stayed many days with a certain tanner** named **Simon**.

These were challenging days for Peter, as the walls of his lifelong prejudices tumbled down. First came the conversion and Spirit-filling of the Samaritans, with whom no self-respecting Jew had any dealings. Yet Peter had been forced to welcome them as brothers in Christ. Soon will come an even greater shock, as Gentiles enter the church.

In this seemingly insignificant footnote, yet another wall comes down, as Peter stays with a **tanner**.

Tanners were despised in first-century Jewish society, since they dealt with the skins of dead animals.

Tanning was thus considered an unclean occupation, and Simon would have been shunned by the local synagogue.

Prejudice is devastating to any ministry. In far too many Christian circles, those who do not fit the mold are rejected. **Any bigotry is a blight on the cause of God, who "is not one to show partiality" (Acts 10:34).**

There is no place in an effective personal ministry for prejudice.

The zealous Jewish nationalist Paul learned that lesson. To the Corinthians he wrote:

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”

(- [1 Cor. 9:19-22](#))

Peter knew the principles for an effective personal ministry, and lived them out. Because of that, the Lord blessed his ministry to individuals as much as his ministry before the huge crowds. In fact, one led to the other.

And it would be through his ministry to another individual, Cornelius, that the final barrier would be thrown down, and Gentiles would be admitted to the church.

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

ORIGINAL MEANING:

QUOTE: PETER'S VISIT TO "the saints" (*hagioi*) around Palestine indicates that he had a pastoral role throughout the church (v. 32). We can imagine him teaching, encouraging, correcting, and counseling the believers and leaders on these visits.

NOTE: In this whole passage there is no record of any preaching, though it must have been done. **The focus is on service.** In the next chapter Luke will refer to Cornelius's acts of charity (10:2).

With both healings Peter clearly places the emphasis on Christ as the healer. The first time he says, "Jesus Christ heals you" (v. 34); the second time, before speaking, "he got down on his knees and prayed" (v. 40). After Aeneas's healing we are told that "all those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" (v. 35). After Tabitha's healing Luke says that "many people believed in

the Lord" (v. 42). We do not know whether Aeneas was a Christian, but Tabitha certainly was; this fact indicates that miracles in the church were performed not only on unbelievers but also on believers.

A body was normally buried before sundown on the day of death.

Peter stayed on in Joppa in the house of Simon the tanner (9:43).

In the Babylonian Talmud appears the statement: "Woe to him who is a tanner by trade." It was a demeaning trade in Jewish eyes, for strictly speaking, tanners were ceremonially unclean since they handled dead animals.

BRIDGING CONTEXT:

1. *Miraculous Healing*

It is also interesting that though there would have been Christian leaders and people of prayer in Joppa, the believers asked for Peter to come a distance of at least ten miles and pray for Tabitha. In this time of emergency the church looked for help from the person with the special gift of healing. There was nothing wrong in this, which suggests that today too we can go for prayer in times of crisis to those with special gifts in our area of need.

James outlines the proper procedure in his letter, which leaves us with no doubt that in times of sickness we can call specially gifted people to pray for the need: "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over

him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14-15).

In this instance in Acts 9, a dead believer is miraculously raised. This is probably what happened later when Paul raised Eutychus (20:7-12). Can this happen today too? Jesus did it, the apostles did it, and there is no prohibition to Christians in later ages praying for the dead. We must, of course, remember that death is God's gateway to ultimate triumph, and many wonderful Christians, like Stephen and James in Acts, were not spared "untimely" deaths. Therefore, we must have considerable discernment and sensitivity before praying for the raising of the dead. But submission to Scripture prohibits me from saying that we should never pray in this way.

2. Serving the Needy

Luke gives special emphasis to the acts of kindness of Tabitha by mentioning them twice in this passage (vv. 36, 39). Presumably Tabitha had the spiritual gifts of service and acts of mercy (Rom. 12:7-8). But kindness is a quality that all Christians should have (1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22).

Considering Luke's special mention of Tabitha's kindness, we can conclude that she is a model for all Christians. **This**

passage reminds us that, however important evangelism may be, kind deeds for the needy must never be overlooked. The urgency of this is well expressed in the sudden ten-mile journey that Peter took to pray for Tabitha. The top leaders of the church also seem to have distinguished themselves in the art of servanthood!

Various passages of the New Testament contain instructions about a special concern for the needy... (cf. James 1:27)

3. *Hospitality to Preachers.*

Verse 43 records the second of the four types of hospitality described in Acts: having traveling servants of the Lord over to stay in the homes of believers. Peter's stay in the home of Simon the tanner is one of many instances of this type of hospitality in Acts. This was a standard practice in the early church, partly because inns were morally unsuited for Christians.

- NIV Application Commentary

God uses great preachers like Peter and Paul, but he also uses those who have gifts of kindness like Tabitha.

Rather than wishing you had other gifts, make good use of the gifts God has given you.

- Life Application Study Bible.

ARTICLE:

God's greatness compels us to go, Platt tells new missionaries

(05/14/15)

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—Monica Morley* grew up in a Muslim home. She had many spiritual questions as a child and young teen. For a time she attended a mosque, seeking answers from the religious leaders.

“I wanted to know God and was curious about how sin can be forgiven,” Morley said. “I did not find the answers I was looking for.”

Because education in her language was outlawed in her country at the time, Morley attended high school in secret and later began studying law at a local university. War ended her studies, however, and took her and her family to Europe, where they lived as refugees.

There, Morley said, “I was befriended by a Christian girl who cared for me and my family.” When she returned to her country after the war, Morley met a group of international Christian workers, including D’Angelo,* who would eventually become her husband. “D’Angelo shared the gospel with me and helped me read and understand the Bible,” Morley said.

On May 13 at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, the Morleys were two of 34 candidates appointed as missionaries by IMB trustees.

“Because D’Angelo came to my country, I had the opportunity to hear the gospel and believe in Jesus,” Morley told the congregation. Together, the couple will share the gospel in Central Asia.

“Why are they doing this?” an impassioned IMB President David Platt asked the congregation. He asked another new missionary couple, “Why are you taking seven kids to Zimbabwe?” He asked others, “Why are you going to this area or that area?”

“Because we have an incomprehensibly glorious God,” Platt said.

Preaching from Isaiah 6, Platt offered four reasons why every Christian must say, “I will pray whatever You want me to pray; I will give whatever You want me to give; I will go wherever You want me to go:” Because we have an incomprehensibly glorious God, because we are a sinfully lost people, because we have a scandalously merciful Savior willing to die in our place and because we have an indescribably urgent mission.

With nearly 2 billion people without access to the gospel, Platt stressed the urgency of taking the gospel to unreached people in hard places, regardless of the cost.

Based on this urgency and with support of IMB trustees, Platt plans to open new pathways to send more missionaries to unreached people and places around the world. On May 13 IMB trustees approved streamlined guidelines for appointing new missionary personnel through the 170-year-old organization.

“When you hear ‘pathway,’ think ‘possibilities’ — all the possible ways that people in the pews of Southern Baptist churches might serve overseas: as doctors, teachers, accountants, lawyers, fitness instructors, rickshaw drivers, students, retirees,” Platt told trustees during their meeting.

The group of 34 new missionaries appointed May 13 included pastors and worship leaders as well as nurses, teachers, an actor, a farmer, an engineer and a software consultant. Ten previously served with IMB as journeymen or through International Service Corps. Many first sensed God's call to missions as children or teens. Through short-term trips, many already understand the cost of missionary service but are convinced the cost is worth it.

Phil Metcalf was on a summer missions trip to Southeast Asia through his university's Baptist Collegiate Ministry when he first sensed God calling him to full-time missionary service.

"We lived in tents and did a lot of evangelism and in-home Bible studies in remote villages," Metcalf said. "An IMB missionary taught me about God's heart for the nations and what it looks like to be committed to God's global purpose."

Metcalf's wife, Laura, was 8 years old when missionaries spoke at her church. "I remember thinking 'I would like to help like that one day,'" she recalled. Over the years, God continued to refine her call.

"Instead of thinking, 'I want to help people,' (God) has shown me that His desire is for the salvation of the nations ..." the young woman said.

"My desire is to see Him glorified and to see others worship Him."

Platt asked the congregation, "Is there anything greater to give your life to than this: Declaring the glory of this God among the nations?"

"This gospel beckons us to abandon plans and dreams and possessions and priorities and treasures and pleasures in this world," Platt declared, challenging members of the congregation, regardless of their age or stage in life, to "rise before this God and say, 'Here am I, send me.'"

"This is basic, elemental Christianity," Platt said.

"This is what it means to follow Christ."

Verses: 32 & 43 = “missional”

- A. Coming v.32
- B. Going v.43

ILLUSTRATION: contrast blowing apart a dandy-lion vs. collecting/spreading buckets of water (all from the same source). Dandy-lions scatter individually but water (in the form of drops) stick together... (ie. filling of a water balloon).

Verses: 33 – 42 = “miracles” (see “Miracles in the Mirror”)

- A. Good - Aeneas - Helpless/Sin
 - ~ See Acts 3/jumping for joy
 - ~ See Lazarus/so they tried to kill him
 - ~ See 4 friends/roof
- B. Better - Tabitha/Dorcas - Hopeless/Saints
- C. Best - Simon & Cornelius - Heartless/Savior

Note: Luke, the medical-expert is giving account of the Supernatural-experience (= heightened credibility)

CRITICAL Concept:

SIN has stained the world and now...
We ALL need miracles!

See Isaiah 53:3-5... God promised us Jesus as the Answer

(VIDEO: Platt – “God Hates & Loves Sinners”)

See Revelation 21:4... Jesus’ guaranteed finale to our faith

CRUX of the TEXT:

Jesus lives! Our Messiah is still ministering...

(The Gospels record Jesus has having healed at least 27 people... and now, in the Book of Acts, after His crucifixion, resurrection, & ascension, we see Him continuing to miraculously minister through the power of His Spirit & the passion of His Saints – 14 times in the Book of Acts we see Jesus miraculously healing again and again...in 12 of the 28 chapters).

Jesus lives... (and so/thus...) so do we!

Expand the power and point/perseverance of PRAYER!

Friend... WHY do you think God has demonstrated His miraculous mercy & grace... His miraculous POWER in your life?

ANSWER:

So that His GLORY will have an eternal affect THRU your life!

Key Excerpts:

1. “here and there”
2. “saints”
 - a. “Saints” comes from the root word of “Holy”
 - b. Plural – no lone ranger Christians
 - c. True Christians... to believe is to belong!
3. “turned to the Lord”

- a. "turned" = REPENTENCE!
4. Tabitha was "always" doing... (perpetual tense)
5. Peter put them out of the room (parallels Jesus in Mark 5)
6. Kneeling down = solemn prayer & like Tax Collector vs Pharisee...
- 7.

CLOSE: Pattern in Acts:

1. Promise
2. Power
3. Proclamation/Preaching
4. Persecution
5. Passion & Perseverance

Link Miracles (good, better, best) to:

1. BC @ AD
2. mMm
3. Stickman Gospel
4. LIFE Cycle

"A high view of God and a humble view of the Gospel... inevitably leads to an urgent view of missions"

- David Platt

