



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 9:32–43

“Our Needs and Christ’s Power”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Acts chapter 9, verse 32 through 43, is our Scripture reading, as we continue our study of this marvelous history of the early church. And if there is one thing that stands out in this history, it’s that the apostles preach the gospel and sought to bring men to a decision concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that in the beginning of this particular book, Luke describes the commission that was given by our Lord to the early church. And in Acts chapter 1 in verse 8, the Lord’s words to the early church were, “You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” And we are at that point in the book of Acts in which the message of the gospel and witnessing to our Lord is moving out beyond Jerusalem and will, ultimately, reach the uttermost part of the earth.

Now, I had my Bible open to Luke, and I hope I didn’t tell you to turn to Luke chapter 9, but if I did, we are in Acts chapter 9, verse 32 through verse 43. Acts chapter 9 in verse 32, and Paul’s conversion has just been recorded. But now we have an interlude and a description is given of Peter’s ministry to the west of the city of Jerusalem.

“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints, which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years,

and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron, that’s the Plain of Sharon, saw him, and turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds, which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ And she opened her eyes and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.”

May the Lord bless this reading from his inspired Word. Let’s bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the Word of God and we thank Thee for this marvelous history, in which Luke gives us the details of the spread of the Gospel through the faithfulness of the apostles and the early disciples. And we pray that we, too, may serve our own generation in a faithful way. We give Thee thanks for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which has come to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. And we thank Thee, Lord, for the way in which Thou hast given us enlightenment and caused us in Thy grace to rest upon our Lord in his finished work of giving his life for us forever. We are grateful, Lord, for the salvation that we possess, forgiveness of

sins, justification of life, the right to approach Thee as a priest, to bring our petitions to Thee, our worship, our praise. We thank Thee for the union that we enjoy with Thee. We surely, Lord, have been marvelously blessed and we give Thee thanks today. We ask if there should be someone in this audience who does not yet know Thee that they may have the assurance of forgiveness and justification and all of the other blessings that are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the daily care exercised over us by the Triune God. We ask Thy blessing upon the sick, especially, those mentioned in our Calendar of Concern; we bring them all before Thee and we pray that Thou wilt bless them richly and in these days, minister to them in physical and spiritual ways that will glorify Thy Name.

We pray for the whole church, the body of Christ, for its ministry, for its service. We pray, O God that Thy hand may be upon it for good. We thank Thee for all that Thou hast done and we recognize, Lord, the many who belong to Thee who are not of this communion but, nevertheless, are in communion with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We ask Thy blessing upon all of us, and bring us into a closer conformity to the teaching of the Word of God. We pray for our elders, we thank Thee for them. For the deacons, we thank Thee for them; and for others who serve and work as unto the Lord in this assembly of believers, O God, bless them richly. Bless their family and their friends and their ministry. We pray for our country; we ask Thy blessing upon our president, for the government under which we serve as individual citizens. And then, Lord, now we pray in our meeting that we may truly offer praise and thanksgiving from redeemed hearts, to the glory of Thy Name.

We pray, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Message] As most of you know, who have been attending Believers Chapel for any length of time, I grew up in a Christian church in which the gospel was occasionally preached but not very regularly. And, also, in which it was regarded by the ministers as a rule and by others that if you were

there that was evidence that you were already a Christian. In fact, we were taught in that way. We were regarded as if we were Christians.

Now, one can understand this because it was the requirement of the church that as infants we be sprinkled in water and then when we, supposedly, had come to a decision to receive Christ as Savior, we were received into the membership of the church by confession of faith. Unfortunately, many in our churches, I speak particularly of two in which I grew up, many of them were not really believers. And though they had traveled the way in which you were supposed to travel by early infant baptism and then by a profession of faith as a young person they, nevertheless, did not have any real knowledge of the Lord Jesus as Savior. Joining the church became largely joining the church, not primarily a confession of personal faith in our Lord, but simply a confession of the fact that you were ready to join the church. The result was that over a period of time, over a number of generations, the people who attended the church were people who had professed faith in Christ but did not really know what it was to have a personal experience of redemption through the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross. That is one of the dangers that faces any church, as the generations continue to develop, that we rely upon the experiences of those who have gone before us. You can trace in the Presbyterian church in which I grew up, the generations back to the days in which in this country, and in other countries as well, the people who sat in the church on Sunday morning, such as you are sitting, were individuals who had a personal relationship with the Lord. They had known what it was to be lost. They had heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by the grace of God, through the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit, they had come to faith in Christ, and they were rejoicing in the redemption that they had experienced. And so the churches were alive and there were individuals to whom you preached the Word of God and you could tell that they had had a deep experience of the grace of God.

Now, when I grew up in that environment, I really thought that I was a Christian, too, until finally having heard the gospel a number of times as an adult, I realized that I really did not have a personal relationship with our Lord. Or, if I was a Christian, my relationship was not very personal.

And so by God’s grace, at a particular time in my life, the Holy Spirit led me to make certain that I did have that experience.

I want to speak to you this morning from the passage that we have read, as individuals who are, many of you I know are, genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, but among whom there also may be some who are just as I was at age twenty-five, had grown up in the church, had known what it was to be a member of the church ever since I could remember anything, but, yet, did not have a personal faith in our Lord. Do you know that the Lord Jesus Christ stands ready to completely satisfy your innermost needs and to surprise you by the goodness of his grace today as you sit in this audience?

We have read in our Scripture reading of three remarkable miracles. Two of them performed through the Apostle Peter and the other one concerning the apostle himself. We have, for example, the healing of Aeneas, a manifestation of the grace and the healing power of God to those who are helpless. One thinks, for example, of passages of Scripture like Psalm 103, verse 2 and verse 3, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” And Aeneas was healed in a remarkable demonstration of the power of God through Peter.

And then there was Dorcas. That was a manifestation of the love of the Lord God and of the life-giving power of God, again, through Peter toward the hopeless. Hopeless, those who were Dorcas’ friends and who had received her ministries and others who knew and loved her. And that Psalm continues with words that apply to her, also. “Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

And then, the miracle that concerned the Apostle Peter, himself, because Peter tarries for many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. We may miss the point of that today because we don’t have experiences, most of us, with what is represented here in this experience of Peter, living for many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. A tanner was an individual who had daily contact with

dead animals. And, as such, he was defiled, according to Mosaic Law. So Jewish people did not think it very good to have any contact whatsoever with a tanner. In fact, according to Rabbinic Law, it was justifiable for a woman to divorce her husband, if she found out after marriage that he was a tanner because in the very nature of his business, he was unclean. And, yet, Peter the apostle is now tarrying many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

The age of physical miracles is an age that has largely passed today. We do not deny, I say, I do not deny, I think many of you feel the same way, we do not deny that physical miracles do not take place today. We feel that Scripture gives justification for believing that God does heal physically today. There is a difference, however, between God healing physically today and giving the gift of performing such acts of healing today. As far as I can tell from the study of the Scriptures, God heals in response to concern and prayer. But, so far as the gift of healing given to certain men that, so far as I can tell from Scripture as well as experience, has largely passed. The reason for that is very simple, I think. It was necessary in the early days of the church because the church was struggling with impregnable prejudices and fearful odds against them, and they needed some indication that the divine credentials existed with this new movement.

And so God, through the Lord Jesus performed mighty miracles. Through the apostles he performed mighty miracles. Paul says, “The signs of an apostle I have wrought in your midst.” And in the early days of the church, the miracles took place in order to give authentication to the movement. Once those needed credentials have been given and the Christian movement has been well established, God in history, and history confirms this, has taken away the gift of healings, not giving it to individuals.

And so for hundreds of years, there is no indication that anyone was ever given the gift of healing. That, in itself, is a testimony to the intention of God because being a sovereign God, if he intended that this gift should be given down through the centuries, He would have seen that it would have been given. That is just as plain as I think anything can be in the study of Holy Scripture. But it

was necessary in these days, and Peter performed miracles because Jewish people needed to be convinced at this time that God was with this new movement.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of this very plainly in the second chapter of his book, when in verse 3 and verse 4, he says, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness.” He’s talking about the past. “Bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?” And so the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in his generation, a generation removed from the apostles, speaks about the fact that the gifts were given in authentication of the divine message. They were discontinued since they were liable to abuse. And today, in the twentieth century, we have much abuse of so-called miraculous gifts.

And, further, let us never forget it is sometimes done, nevertheless, that the greatest of all works is the doing of miraculous things in the spiritual sphere. It is a far greater work and far more wonderful to renew a dead spirit than to resuscitate a dead body. After all, to give new life to a human spirit, to make it new in Christ, is the greatest of all miracles. And, ultimately, shall be followed by the resurrection of the body. It’s much more blessed to impart eternal life than it is to prolong physical life. There is no greater testimony to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus than a new person who has been made new by the saving work of the Lord God in Christ.

Some years ago, I was traveling from St. Louis back to Dallas and a young man got on the plane with me, a little younger than I, and spoke to me and said that he not only knew me, but he had heard me preach. And we sat down together and riding back from St. Louis to Dallas, we talked together. And he went on to tell me about his conversion. He said when he was much younger he had had a friend by the name of Hal Lindsey. And he said, “Hal and I were in the Coast Guard together and we lived, I was single at the time,” he said, “We lived a very interesting, un-Christian life.” He said, “We would take off from our bases, in different places, and live it up in places like New York City, New Orleans, and other places,” and he said, “Then I married and settled down to

my present life. My wife is a Christian.” He said, “Hal continued in his particular life and finally became a riverboat captain on the Mississippi River, below New Orleans.”

And then, my friend said to me, he said, “You know that kind of life is about as low as you can get. And one night,” he said, “I was in Dallas and my wife and I attended a Bible class. And we listened to the Bible teacher teach and I wasn’t getting anything out of it. In the midst of this discussion that followed, someone mentioned the name of Hal Lindsey, and I was tremendously interested and I went over to the person and I said, ‘You mentioned a fellow by the name of Hal Lindsey, was he ever in New Orleans? And was he ever in the Coast Guard? Was he ever a riverboat captain?’ and all of the other questions,” to seek to identify this person as the person that he had known. Because he said, “I just could not believe that the things they said about this Hal Lindsey could be true of the Hal Lindsey that I knew and that I had companied with for a long time in the Coast Guard and in other places.” Well, of course, it turned out to be the same Hal Lindsey. And he said he spoke to himself when it finally became clear it was the same Hal, “Well, if the Lord can save a person like Hal Lindsey and change him so, then he can do anything.” [Laughter] “And it wasn’t long after that, that I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, too.” That man, incidentally, lives in Houston today and he comes and visits in Believers Chapel. In fact, attended Believers Chapel for a time when they were living in Dallas and now comes back several times a year, he and his wife, and attend our meetings. You see, the greatest of all possible miracles is the miracle of the new birth; and let us never forget that.

Now, Peter is fulfilling his ministry. Remember, he had been told by the Lord, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” And then, according to the last chapter of the Gospel of John, Peter had been told three times by the Lord Jesus, “Feed my sheep!” And that is what Peter is doing. He is fulfilling the commission that is given to him. And now, he is the instrumentality in the remarkable healing of Aeneas, which illustrates his power to the helpless.

The saints at Lydda were probably converted through the preaching of Philip the evangelist, though we are not specifically told that. We are told in verse 40 of chapter 8, “Philip was found at

Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.” So we assume that these saints in this area are the products of Philip’s ministry. But we are not absolutely certain.

There was a man there by the name of Aeneas. He might have already been a Christian. We are not told. But he may not have been a Christian. He had a classic name. What more classical name could you have than Aeneas? Anyone who ever had to read Virgil’s “Aeneid” in the Latin, as I did going through high school, will recognize the name Aeneas. But when we turn to the Bible, we don’t hear Virgil singing of arms and the man, but we hear Luke speaking of the man Aeneas and his Savior, the Lord Jesus.

Aeneas was afflicted with the palsy. He was helpless. The tremulous quivers that characterized his body and the growing weakness of his body form a platform for the manifestation of the power of God in Christ. For eight years, he had been paralyzed. And so, no doubt, he was disheartened, discouraged, as the years had past and his bed had grown hard as a stone. But it really doesn’t make any difference to the Lord God, whether a person is in his sickness or illness, his spiritual sickness or illness, for five years or fifty years; he is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Peter finding this man, Aeneas, on his bed, said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” I would gather from this that Aeneas must have had some comprehension of the Lord Jesus Christ. An intelligent response must be based on some comprehension of the significance of the name, Jesus Christ. “Aeneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee, maketh thee whole.” So he must have had some comprehension of the Lord Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, the one who laid aside his most divine array, the insignia of his majesty, his glory, who came and dwelt among us, who opened his chest to the lance of justice and shed his blood on Calvary’s cross, for men’s sin, and healed spiritual palsy through the redemption of his blood.

I speak to you this morning and I ask you the personal question, do you know what it is to have spiritual palsy and to be healed of that spiritual palsy from the weakness of no fellowship with God? And do you know what it is to be brought into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ? Isn’t it

amazing that we can think of the manifestation of the Word of God in our presence through the preaching of it and individuals can hear the Word of God and still remain in their sins?

Some years ago, G. Campbell Morgan said that he was preaching in an audience and during the week he had a letter from a friend, a friend who had heard him speak. He didn’t know the individual but, nevertheless, he said, he regarded him as his friend. And he describes the way in which the man wrote him and how he responded to this man’s letter.

The man wrote him something like this. He said, “I heard you speaking Sunday morning about the friend that ‘sticketh closer than a brother’ and what I would like to ask you is this, why is it that when the Lord manifests himself to some individual, he does not manifest himself to all? Why is he not just in saving all? You have spoken about the friend that ‘sticketh closer than a brother’ in whom you, by the grace of God, have been brought to know. But why not to all?”

And Mr. Morgan replied by saying something like this. He said, “My text tonight is the answer to the friend who has written me.” And his text that night was Romans chapter 5 in verse 8, where the apostle says, “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That is the manifestation of the concern of God for the sins of sinners. “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That is what God has done for sinners and if we are not responsive to that, then we are not responsive to the message of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.” And that, Mr. Morgan suggested was the answer to the question that the friend had raised. “God does commend his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” This is the manifestation of the love of God, going out for sinners. If by the grace of God you have been brought to the knowledge of the fact that you are a sinner, then the work of Christ is for you and God appeals to you to respond to that message.

Aeneas responded. He responded, “I would presume, by faith in Christ.” And so when Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed.” He arose immediately. And I presume he made his bed. He did something that he was unable to do for eight years before because the Lord God had brought that power back to this weak man.

Incidentally, notice how Peter addresses Aeneas. He doesn’t say, “Now, Aeneas as head of the church by the power delegated to me as the vicar of Christ on the earth, I say, arise and make your bed.” He doesn’t say anything like that. He doesn’t even tell him to take any courses at the health club. First of all, Aeneas, what you need to do is join the president’s health club. And if you join the president’s health club, and take the course, workout constantly, perhaps it will be not too long before you’ll be able to move. And if that doesn’t work then you might try yoga, isometrics, or the various other kinds of things that are available to you. But, it’s simply, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” This was something miraculous. This was something that only God could do. And this man, who had not made his bed for eight years, arose immediately. You know, the Scriptures speak very strongly of the fact that men are unable to respond to God of themselves. Many people misunderstand preachers when they say that men are naturally unable to respond to God. And so they go out and say things like, “But we know we have a will and we are to respond.”

Well, of course, the Scriptures say very plainly that “no man can come to God, except the Father, which hath sent the Son should draw him.” We are unable to come to the Lord God of ourselves. But we are able to come to the Lord God through the help of the enabling efficacious power of God in Christ. The Bible does not say that men cannot come to God; the Bible says men cannot come to God of themselves. But when they respond to the message, just as Aeneas did, the message of the Word of God, God enables them to respond. And so I say to you, you are unable of yourself to come. “No man can come to me,” Jesus said, “Except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” But if by the grace of God you turn to the Lord God and say, “Lord, enable me to come,” He will enable you to come and to respond to the gospel message and you shall have life.

Now, Aeneas was healed. He arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda, and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. Not surprisingly, this man’s healing was a magnificent miracle. And if this does not happen in the spiritual sphere today when the Gospel is preached and men respond to it, then we are to burn our Bibles and close our churches and banish our preachers because it’s all a fantasy and untrue. But we who are believers in Christ, we know it’s not untrue. We know it is not

fantasy. We know that when men respond to the gospel message eternal life is given by the Lord God.

Recently, I’ve spoken once or twice about Mr. Spurgeon’s conversion, I mentioned the fact that he was converted in a little primitive Methodist chapel largely because the weather was so bad that he had to turn into it. And he turned into it and though he had grown up in a family with a grandfather, a fine preacher, and a father who was a preacher, he was lost. And he said that when he went in, the man who was preaching didn’t have a whole lot of education. And so, consequently, he didn’t have much to say and, therefore, he had to keep repeating the text. And he said, “Well, that was good because it was the text through which I was converted.” And he kept saying, “Look unto me all the ends of the earth and be saved, for I am God and there is no one else.”

There’s another thing that I overlooked pointing out. Mr. Spurgeon when he went into that little building, he sat up in the back of the building and the preacher, once, during the message, fixed his eyes on Mr. Spurgeon and said, “I see that young man over there, and he looks miserable.” And then he said, speaking directly to him, “Look, look, and be saved!” And Mr. Spurgeon said, “I looked and I was saved. And I went out and I was as happy,” Mr. Spurgeon said, “as a bird that had been freed from its cage.” God does stand behind his promises, and those promises are fulfilled in the lives of those who by the grace of God come to him.

I often receive letters from individuals who say to me, “I’ve tried the Gospel message, and it doesn’t work.” I received a letter of six pages, just about two weeks ago, from an individual who blamed his lack of salvation on the Lord God and on Calvinism and various other things, but insisted that he still had no assurance of salvation. And no certain possession of the knowledge of the Lord, though he was a graduate of a Bible college. Oh, there were so many things in the letter that were contrary to the Word of God, but the one fundamental difficulty was the failure to believe the Word of God. You see, the Word of God speaks very plainly, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved.” And if we believe we shall be saved. If that does not happen then we shouldn’t have a Believers Chapel, we shouldn’t have a Presbyterian church or a Baptist church, and we shouldn’t

have any Christian church at all. We shouldn’t have preachers. We shouldn’t have a Bible and treat it as if it were the Word of God. We should banish all of that and rely on our human wisdom to get us through this life with no hope, whatsoever.

I’m so thankful that the history of the Christian church reveals the truthfulness of the teaching of the Word of God, but we don’t even have to have that. We have the assurance through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, that the Word of God is the Word of God. So Aeneas receives his healing; he arises, he makes his bed and the people at Lydda and Sharon are astonished. And when they see the evidence of the power of God and turn to the Lord.

Now, at Joppa, just a little ways away, there was a disciple there, a female disciple, by the name of Tabitha, which by interpretation or translation is Dorcas. Dorcas means gazelle. This woman was full of good works and alms, deeds, which she did; obviously, an unusual Christian who served the Lord with a full and true heart.

Now, this is an evidence of Christ’s power toward the hopeless. She was full of good works. Someone has said that she had a consecrated needle. She did her beautiful deeds by herself, too. She didn’t have to join the Dorcas Society of the church, and there are many such societies. But she did it out of a simple devotion to the Lord God. Well, she became sick and she died. And as the custom was, they washed her body, preparing her body for burial, took the body, put the body in the upper room. Perhaps they heard that Peter was nearby and hoped that somehow word might come to him and one of those remarkable works that the apostles were doing might be done on her. And they did get in touch with Peter and Peter came to Joppa. And then, when he got there, he went into the home. They brought him up into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood by him weeping and showing the coats and garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Whether this meant that she had a room with all of the things laid out on the tables that she had made or whether they just looked at the things that they had on, which Dorcas had made for them, the Scriptures do not

show. But one thing is sure, they would love to have had Dorcas back with them. They felt, of course, she should be in heaven since she had died, but they would like to have her back.

That’s a tremendous testimony to Dorcas’ faithful and loving service, isn’t it? Many of us know Christians that we think should be in heaven, when they die. But after they have died, we may put on a pious face and say, “The Lord took him,” or “He’s gone to be with the Lord.” But if it came right down to it and you could look into our hearts, we would probably say, “I’m kind of glad he’s with the Lord and not back with us.” [Laughter] There are some of us Christians you know like that.

But Dorcas was evidently different. She was one who not only should be with the Lord; but they really, also, wanted her back. Now, Peter, in a remarkable way, following, evidently, our Lord’s pattern, caused them all to go out. Because, remember, when he healed Jarius’ daughter, that’s precisely what he did. The Lord sent them out. So Peter sends them out. He knelt by the side of Dorcas’ body and he prayed. And then he turned to the body and he said, “Tabitha or Dorcas arise.” Very much like he said to Jarius’ daughter. In fact, the name is so similar to the Aramaic term for a little girl, we have Tabitha and we have in the other case *talitha quwm*, or rise. “And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand.” Our Lord, remember, had taken the hand of Jarius’ daughter, before he raised her up, and then taking her hand, Peter lifted her up. “And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.”

Now, one can imagine this was not an altogether happy occasion for Dorcas because, after all, Dorcas was in the presence of the Lord. How would you like to be in the presence of the Lord and enjoying the fellowship with the saints and listening to a Bible study with the Apostle Paul instead of in a Bible study by S. L. Johnson. And suppose that an angel should come up and tap you on the shoulder and say, “Look, the Lord has further work for you down there?” I think you’d want to look around and say, “Well, get John to go.” [Laughter] “Get someone else to go.” But Dorcas must return like Lazarus. I imagine they have lots of experiences, if these people could, to talk about.

But, anyway, Dorcas must come back from the presence of the Lord. And I assume that all of her experience of communion with the Lord is wiped out as she returns to life, for she lived out

her life and died. She was not resurrected. She was resuscitated. She was restored to life. Let us never forget that only one person has been resurrected to the present day. As Paul says, “Christ, the first fruits; then those that are Christ’s at his coming.”

When resurrection is spoken of in the Bible, we speak of the resurrection of the body and the gift of a glorified body. Only the Lord Jesus has been resurrected to this very moment. So Lazarus and others are restored to their old life, and they live out their lives and they die again. It was a magnificent picture of the power of God with reference to the hopeless, in the case of Dorcas’ resuscitation to life.

Now, the last verse says, “And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.” Now, I think, that this is just about as big a miracle as the other miracles that are referred to here; because in the case of Peter staying with Simon the tanner, this is a remarkable exhibition of the overcoming of prejudice. The victory over the palsy in Aeneas’ case is remarkable. The victory over the death of Dorcas was a supernatural work of which Peter is the instrumentality. But the victory over the prejudice of a Jewish man with regard to the tanner is well nigh incredible. A tanner. A Jewess, I say, could sue for divorce if she discovered that her husband was a tanner. But Peter has no scruples in the house, on the housetop, in the tanner’s house about eating food considered unclean.

The lodging with the tanner was a step on the road of eating with Gentiles, and therefore, we are beginning to see the movement of the gospel to the Gentiles. But I say, this is a remarkable miracle, victory over prejudice. Think of the prejudices that we have. Prejudice with regard to the church; so many of us feel that salvation comes through joining the church. One of the things you must learn, when you begin to read the Bible, is that salvation comes through Christ, not through the church.

Or prejudice concerning religion; some people think if you just get religion, surely, that’s satisfying to the Lord God in heaven. Not realizing that religion is not the product of God. Religion is often the product of man and Satan. As some one, one of my friends has said, and I think I have

repeated this statement not long ago, “The Christian religion is the devil’s masterpiece.” Because, if we think of Christianity, we think of that which is pleasing to God. But if we think of religion, we think of the falsification of the Christian truth found in the Word of God or, the Law of Moses? How many people, even in Christian churches, think that the way you get to heaven is by what you do? Keeping the Ten Commandments or trying to keep the Ten Commandments or doing the best that you can. Surely, God will accept such a person. When the Word of God says so plainly, “For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Christianity is not opposed to works. Works are the issue of salvation, not the ground of salvation. The ground of salvation is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what our Lord has done in dying for sinners and the merits that he has gained by what he has done are imputed, are reckoned, are put to the account of those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The ground of our salvation is the work of Christ. The issue of our salvation is properly good works just as Dorcas illustrated with her own life. And Paul goes on to say, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared, that we should walk in them.”

Let me close by just pointing out some remarkable and significant differences and, yet, likenesses between our Lord’s miracle in the case of Jarius’ daughter and Peter’s miracle in the cases of Aeneas and Dorcas.

Peter, when he stands before Aeneas does not say, “I say unto thee, Aeneas, arise.” But, “Jesus Christ heals thee.” And, as a result, Aeneas rises. Now, that is all the difference in the world from our Lord’s statement who stands by the side of the man who is on the pallet brought by the four men, and says, “In order that you may know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins on earth, I say unto thee, arise, take up your bed and walk.” In other words, our Lord acts as the sovereign and supreme dispenser of eternal life and proves it by what he does.

Peter says, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” He doesn’t speak in his own name. He doesn’t speak in the name of the church. He doesn’t speak as the vicar of Christ. He speaks

simply as a servant and an apostle of the Lord Jesus, and he says, “Aenas, it is Jesus Christ who heals thee.”

In the case of Jarius’ daughter, the Lord Jesus gave her his hand and having brought her to life. In the case of Peter, Peter takes her hand. In the one case, we have the individual helping; in the other case, the other communicates life. In the case of Dorcas, Peter gets down by the side of the bed and prays that God may respond to his prayers. The Lord Jesus does not offer any prayer. In fact, it’s a striking thing, isn’t it? The Lord Jesus we are told, by so many modern theologians, is simply a man, a little better man than the rest of us but, nevertheless, just a man. How many times have you ever heard the Lord Jesus calling upon the apostles to pray for him? You will never find it. He never called upon the apostles to pray for him. The apostles asked for prayer for themselves. Others asked for prayer for themselves. Our Lord Jesus never asks for prayer for himself. He never says, “Let’s have a prayer meeting and together let’s pray to God that he will meet our needs.” He never does that. He prays in the presence of the disciples. But they don’t pray for him. In fact, he never calls upon them to do that.

So Peter prays by the side of the bed. The Lord Jesus simply takes Jarius’ daughter’s hand and communicates to her eternal life by virtue of his sovereign and supreme authority as the eternal Son.

One of the things that you notice as a likeness is that Peter’s actions are very similar to our Lord’s. And perhaps the lesson that lies back of this is the closer we get to the Lord, the closer we catch the manner that our Lord has in the exercise of his work. We read in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 in verse 18, that the Apostle Paul says, “But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.” So the individual who has fellowship with the Lord Jesus and continues to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus becomes more and more like him. That’s one of the most marvelous promises in the Word of God. Think of it! We are being changed constantly as we behold him in the Word. And those apostles having lived with our Lord, it’s not surprising that their manner should be very similar

to our Lord’s manners. I imagine that if you looked at them, you would see the clear evidence of the life of our Lord in their lives.

Peter also acts as if he thinks the Lord Jesus is still working. He doesn’t know that the Lord has died and has gone on to his reward, as one might say. He thinks that Jesus Christ is still alive. He says to Aeneas, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee.” Now, in the original text, that verb *iaomai*” which means “to heal” is in the present tense here. “Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole.” “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you.” He acts as if the Lord Jesus is still active, even though he has died.

Well, that is the truth of the Word of God. That’s the whole point of the book of Acts. Luke tells us what Jesus began both to do and to teach. Acts tells us what he continues to do and teach. And, my dear friend, sitting in the audience, the Lord Jesus is just as truly with us and just as truly active in our midst as he was in that room in which the Apostle Peter stood by the side of the pallet of Aeneas. He is here. “Aeneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee.”

John! Judy! Charles! Whatever your name may be! Jesus Christ is the healer of sin-sick-souls. And he is able to heal you in this meeting today. That’s the message of the book of Acts, and that’s the message of the Word of God. To the diseased, spiritually; to the helpless, spiritually; to the hopeless, spiritually; to the incurable, so far as men are concerned, spiritually; the Lord Jesus is the healer of spiritual sickness. And then of the audacity of Peter’s faith that the Lord Jesus was in that dirty, stuffy little room, where Aeneas had lived for eight years, as a cripple.

May God give us the audacity to respond as Aeneas did. Arise! Make your bed! And enjoy the forgiveness of sins, through the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have been a member of a Christian church for years and years, perhaps it’s true of you. You don’t really know what it is to have a personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God says simply and plainly and directly, believe! Rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done and you shall be saved. He’s offered the atoning sacrifice. He has shed his blood. And if God, by his grace, should so move in your heart that you appeal to him, confessing your sin, and rest in what Christ has done, you’ll know the experience of eternal life.

May God help you to have that experience? May God help everyone in this room, a member of a Christian church, never, never to trust in the fact that you’ve been in and among Christians in Christian churches and not in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful and thankful for these marvelous incidents, recorded by Luke the historian, for they remind us so much of the experiences that we who live in the twentieth century are still having so close to divine things and yet stranger to them. O God, if there should be someone in this audience who has never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, may at this very moment, they turn to him, who is able to save to the uttermost.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.