

10/02/22 - Acts 9:31-43 - "God of Miracles"

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[0 : 00] The reading this morning is in Acts chapter 9, verse 32 through 43. Actually, let's take it back one verse to verse 31.

And 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 multiplied. Verse 32 picks up.

Now, as Peter went here and there among them, among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived in Lydda. There he found a man named Anais, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed.

And Peter said to him, Anais, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed. And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord.

[1 : 16] Now, there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which translated means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.

In those days she became ill and died. And when they had washed her, they laid her in the upper room. Since Lydia was near Joppa, the disciples hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him urging him, Please come to us without delay.

So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the windows, or all the windows, all the widows, excuse me, stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

But Peter put them all aside 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. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

[2 : 36] And it became known throughout all Joppa. And many believed in the Lord. And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

This is God's Word. There are many occasions in Scripture where God reminds us of who He is. He reminds us of who He is. He reminds us of who He is. He reminds us of who He is. He reminds us that He is not bound to the confines of natural law. He reminds us He is not bound to time. He reminds us often, even in unanswered prayer, that He is not bound to our requests. He is not bound to all these constructs that are found within this world and in this life, that are finite, that are temporal in this life.

Within these times, it's as if God makes exceptions and invades life, our lives in ways that are most unfathomable in any natural or normal sense of our day-to-day.

[4 : 01] It reminds us that He is God and we are not. The passage today includes two of these exceptions that have been authorized through the hands of the apostolic body.

And we have a message title for us today, God of Miracles. And when we say this, we're going to ask in this passage today of why.

We receive great detail of names, which is significant. Not even just names, but also nicknames. We receive insight into even the legacy that those names hold.

And those who become beneficiaries of God's exceptions and interventions in this life. But, church, why? We have to be reminded that Luke's second volume, being the book of Acts, is a testimony of the movement of God's promises that are fulfilled and unfolding through the church and through the spread from Jerusalem to all Judea to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1.8. And with that contextual feature, we are given the boundaries of which Scripture has defined by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 36] What is the purpose of miracles? What is the purpose and the message of miracles? How do we present ourselves from falsely worshiping the miracles of God while rejecting the God of miracles?

All of this is found in Acts 9, as we just read. And I'm going to lay out the narrative at the front end and then unpack things on the back end.

I had to do more than one section, but honestly, if we want to be true, the passage today has one section. But I split it up between the passage and the application of the message.

And what we're going to see today, from the beginning to the end of our time today, we are going to see that God never wastes a miracle to declare a message of hope found upon the gospel of Jesus Christ from beginning to the end.

His word will prove that to us today. So let's pray as we dive in. And I'd like to call upon the Lord and the Holy Spirit to bring clarity and bring power and humility to myself and humble hearts to us all.

[6 : 55] Let's pray. Father, we come to you at this time asking you for help. We need a helper as we approach the text that you have inspired.

Help us to draw from the well of your word the treasures that you have left for us. And for all days, until we meet you face to face, let us draw from the well today.

We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So the first section, we'll say the only section, is God's authorization of exceptions.

And so we see the first exception. We see the healing of the disabled in verse 32. Now, as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived near Lydda.

And there he found a man named Anais, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, Anais, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed.

[8 : 07] And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. And so we see the first miracle demonstrates God's authorization of Peter to reveal Christ's power over disease.

The first instance here. We see in verse 32, a lot is going on here. Peter was traveling among them, found himself 27 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

That's like basically from Youngstown, from our place right here, to Grove City, PA. He found himself traveling. That's a miracle of the book of Acts in and of itself.

From Jerusalem to Lydda. And here, in his traveling, he stumbled upon a situation. A situation. His name was Anais.

And he's an eight-year-suffering Christian. Can you imagine, for a moment, not just eight years of not being able to make our beds.

[9 : 25] I think that would be a blessing. Right? Eight years of being unable to move your legs, so dependent and bound to the help of another.

If anyone in here is without a car, you know how annoying that is. And for eight years, being solely dependent on the care of others. Solely unable to stick your feet in the Mediterranean coastline, at that area, and just enjoy the things that we often take for granted in this life.

So Peter, prompted, we can say, by the Holy Spirit, says to this man, Jesus heals you.

Rise and make your bed. Even to make his own bed would be a blessing to this man.

Imagine that. This is important, because we live in a culture today, and I don't want to get into it all at this point in the sermon.

[10 : 43] But Peter simply says, rise. Jesus Christ heals you. This world today is filled with all these things you have to say, and pray, and bind, and loose, and declare, and name it, and claim it.

And if you speak it, it will come. Word of faith. Nonsense. Peter rests in the power that belongs to God.

That he has given authorization to use. And God's power works through Peter. Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed.

There's a funny meme out there of things that Jesus never said to pray that I couldn't find, but you can tag me in it later on social media if you want. What Peter set out to do is made clear.

Look at what's happening in the book of Acts if we stand back for a moment. Peter's here and there. The church is spreading, and guess who's visiting?

[11 : 53] Guess who's stopping by? An apostle. Which should indicate something here in such a miraculous miracle of Peter strengthening his legs, that Peter was similarly, emblematically, strengthening these churches.

The source of the strength of these churches was by Peter's involvement within. And so what Peter set out to do is made clear.

He's out to strengthen the church. We see a miracle here of strengthening legs, but what he's intending to do is bringing all to a sure faith. They turned to the Lord, not only just in that local region in Lydah, but it says, Sharon.

This is a northern coastal plain of the Mediterranean. This is huge. What a strengthening endeavor from Peter, emblematically found in this healing of a single man.

So what did God authorize here? Well, number one, He authorized the church to spread. The churches reached the water, which is profound, as for so long, it was bound to temple worship with a couple exceptions, like Moses with the burning bush and various Christophanies and theophanies.

[13:17] But we also see that He authorized the church to be strengthened through the hands of the apostles. Why did God make this exception, though? Because the residents around all that local region to the west coastal plains in Sharon would see this man's life changed by Jesus Christ, the source and the foundation of this miracle and exception, and they would all see His testimony and turn themselves and praise the Lord.

You see, the testimony of God's life-changing intervention simply changes others. It strengthens others.

So we see the other exception here. The raising of the dead. Verse 36 says, Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which translated means Dorcas.

She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days, she became ill and died. And when they had washed her, they laid her in the upper room.

And since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, please come to us without delay.

[14:46] We meet Tabitha here. But, it's almost as if the word was spreading that Peter's in the house. Peter's coming by.

Better put your house in order. Right? Peter's 11 miles northwest of Lydda. This is about from Youngstown to Warren, from our location here.

We hear Peter's in Warren. He's visiting the churches. He's here. He just healed someone. Word spread. He was summoned with possibly a hope of there being anything that could happen for this matron saint of Joppa.

Imagine this woman's epitaph. We meet a legacy of quite a woman here. This is significant. This is the first disciple, female disciple, ever mentioned by name.

And it's almost like her name was given meaning by her legacy, her epitaph, like on her gravestone if she reached that point, which she did eventually, but not at this time.

[15:55] It wasn't her time. Look who she was. Tabitha was full of good works. Charity.

I wouldn't want to compare her to Mother Teresa, but in the sense of the illustration, she would be the Mother Teresa of Joppa. Sounds like a Star Wars location, doesn't it?

And so, Peter arose. After hearing about the situation, they said, come without delay. Peter rose and went with them in verse 39. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room.

All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. Peter acts quickly.

This is the same Peter who denied Christ three times. This is the same Peter who was standing outside at the trial of Christ, blending in with the rulers of that day.

[17:05] This is Peter. He rose. Holy Spirit has changed him and that's marveling in and of itself. But imagine the humanity of this scenario.

Imagine with each footsteps that Peter makes towards this time. Imagine the thoughts going through his head. You ever have those moments where it's as if your heart is actually noticeably beating out of your chest and you're like, everyone, I gotta cover up because this is pretty embarrassing.

My chest is probably going like this. And you're just uncontrollably, like, not necessarily nervous, but in great adrenaline and anticipation of what is to come with each step that Peter makes towards this house.

I could imagine that being so. With every step up those stairs to the upper room, I could imagine that being so. And I could imagine him standing there among all this room with weeping, crying,

holding out these tunics that Dorcas has made, mourning her legacy, mourning her life. And imagine Peter standing there. Whoa, what are we going to do with this? Well, Peter put them all outside and he knelt down and prayed.

[18 : 37] It's almost like in this sort of same tradition of Elijah and Elijah and even Jesus Christ himself, Peter sends everyone out of the room and he shows up to the call to bring the dead to life.

He's left alone with just the corpse. You can imagine him saying, well, this worked for Jesus, this worked for Elijah and Elijah. All right, we'll start there.

Everyone out. I mean, if you could imagine the weeping at this time when these people would die, culturally speaking, they would hire professional mourners and weepers.

I mean, this was probably a loud room. We could imagine every sense of the natural reason to get everyone out of the room. But regardless, everyone leaves the room and it's just Peter and a dead, lifeless corpse.

Can you picture that? A hospital room, you, and a dead person. And turning to the body, after being knelt down and praying, Peter says, Tabitha, arise.

[19 : 51] That's it. 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. Are you there in that room right now? You see, this second miracle demonstrates God's authorization of Peter to reveal Christ's power over death.

We see mourning. It was Paul who would one day tell the church in Thessalonica, give them a proper perspective of grief, isn't it?

1 Thessalonians 4.13, But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep. You may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

[21 : 01] hope. Here, God demonstrates why we do have hope. Here, the hope was made known throughout the region.

And the message of the miracle became the origin of the faith of many. Not the miracle, but the message of the miracle. That Jesus Christ is greater than death.

And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord, and he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner. We receive a little bit of insight with a tanner being an unclean, ritually Jewish person who deals with leather and dead animals.

We'll get into Peter's vision in verse 9 of chapter 10 later. A little foresight into something God is doing new at this very time.

But the hope in all of it, in Christ alone, death has no hold over us for those who belong to him.

Though the death of, though through the grip of death is great, Christ's grip is greater.

[22 : 22] What a reminder that regardless of our good works in this life, our legacies, our grand masterpiece epitaphs.

You ever go down to the grave sites? Maybe I might be the only one. But you see these giant tombs of people. These giant remembrances of stones, of brick, and mortar, of how great people are, leaving legacies usually of finances.

You've got to have a little bit of money to have that. But regardless of our good works, of our legacies, we leave upon this earth. We count everything in this life as loss as compared to the unsurpassable worth and riches of Jesus Christ.

Christ. And when we are found in Him, we are brought into that. This is the hope of the Gospel. This is true for Aaronis and then Tabitha and also certainly true for Peter.

While God made exceptions and worked miraculously, the glory was not accredited to the miracles of God but the God of miracles. miracles. So, why?

[23 : 43] Why these miracles? Well, we can't forget the contextual footing where we're at here in this series. Last week, as we just read in verse 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 multiplied. These summary statements act as kind of like that knot between one thing and another thing and they are tied together by those summary statements as well.

And we saw that summary statement. It described the peace, the fear of the Lord among all Christians and even for the Tanner.

who hosts the Apostle Peter. You see, in Jesus Christ, when we're talking about why the miracles, there is hope for the diseased.

Specifically, those diseased and corrupted by sin. Those who are gripped by death and even for the Tanner discriminated against.

[25 : 00] God authorized these exceptions to occur for the sake of the message of hope that reaches even our generation and the pew in our church today.

And so, if I can just commend you a second section. we see something here of the apostolic foundations with the divine message.

And we'll be wrapped up here. And I want us to really focus in on this and the importance of this as well. By studying how God has interacted in the world over the course of the Bible, this is something that you can pick up on patterns and trends within biblical theology, how God has interacted with us in this world, we see that miracles have always served a specific purpose.

They've always served a specific purpose. Historically speaking, miracles are a sign of authorization to authenticate ministry.

We see that with Moses before Pharaoh back in Exodus 4. We see that with Elijah before Ahab, 1 Kings 17 and 18.

[26 : 23] And even Jesus before the rulers who rejected the signs. And similarly here, the apostles before Israel. We saw that developing even in Acts chapter 4.

God has authorized a foundation to be installed that our belief is built upon. And this is important because in other words, we are given a reason to believe.

We're given a reason to believe. One commentator mentions out of Ephesians 2.19, God is building a home. He's using us all, irrespective of how we got here and what He is building.

He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now He's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together.

We see it taking shape day after day, a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

[27 : 34] another commentator says, better than seeking after a new miracle, better than seeking after a new miracle is taking God at His word.

Simple faith is more pleasing to the Lord than a reliance on dazzling sensory experience. As John 20 tells us, Jesus told Him, because you have seen Me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed. Let's think about this for a moment, church. church. If you went down to Manhattan to the one trade tower and you started using the same tools that were used to lay that foundation or you mess with that foundation, the foundation was never meant to be messed with.

You lay a foundation once and for all. if you don't believe it, try your own house. You can stay with me after you ruin it. After all, I mean, you use the same tools, right?

You have the same bulldozer that was used to lay that foundation. You have the same everything, but was the foundation ever meant to be messed with?

[29 : 02] And it's frightening today how Christians have picked up on habits that are much more cultural and actually sinful habits that Jesus never instructed us to even pray like we just said or do just as we see in our world today.

To, I mean, bind and loose. Satan, we bind you. I mean, what is that? Right? If you keep constantly trying to bind Satan, who keeps loosing him?

Right? This is nonsense. What is that? Jesus says, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your will be done. God has bound us to the foundation.

And that foundation is where we have our faith, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. So let's talk about pendulums here. I believe that this is a helpful way of thinking about this as we look at, I would just say, theology of miracles.

[30 : 17] We don't want to swing on the one end of the pendulum of being deceived. Because many will seek those signs and the wonders.

Because they want confirmation of the truth of God. They want what Moses had. They want what Gideon got.

Some will seek signs and wonders because they do not believe the signs and wonders that have already been performed. Like Pharisees. Some will seek signs and wonders because they seek an occasion to excuse their unbelief.

Like Elijah calling down fire. Some will seek signs and wonders because some will seek them because they're curious. They're thrill seekers. Because reading a couple pages and being rested upon Tabitha raising from the dead isn't good enough.

They want to experience that as well. And if they don't experience that, their faith becomes a folly looking to be entertained similar to the crowds following Jesus Christ. And some will seek signs and wonders because they hope to get something for themselves.

[31 : 36] Just like the 5,000 who Jesus fed. And this is huge, churches. We're on this side of the pendulum right now. Miracles are always subjective at best.

miracles are always subjective at best. Because Satan is in the business of mimicking miracles. Could you imagine the crowds that could be brought away from Jesus Christ on behalf of one miracle?

And everybody's chasing the miracle. Maybe that's what Matthew 7 means of there will come a day where many will see, say, I've done this in your name.

I've done that in your name. I've healed the sick. I've raised the dead in your name. And Jesus will say to them, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Behold, I never knew you. What did God do for his church? He doesn't just entertain us with subjectivity. He gives us something objective.

[32 : 43] Something so sure, steady, and anchoring of our faith, similar to that of a foundation for a building. He has given us his word, objective truth, absolute truth, so sure, so steady, and preserved the message.

Just as God preserved the movement and the spread from Jerusalem to Samaria as Peter came and rebuked Simon the sorcerer who was trying to manipulate the promise of God for himself and his own selfish gain.

And so I'm going to say that that's the other side of the pendulum. Don't be duped for all this subjectivity. But the pendulum swings over here too, and I believe that most of us in this room might be prone to this side.

Don't be mistaken of this side and the dangers of that. dismiss all realm of possibility that God is a God of miracles.

And we as a church should desire God to still work miraculously today. But not on the basis of proving the gospel worthy of our belief.

[34 : 05] That's already been done through the word. It's objective. Our desire instead is to steadfastly be grounded upon contentment of a hope not found on this earth.

It's the message within every miraculous intervention of God in the Bible. You see, may our faith not be rooted in miracles, but the message we find in the word.

That's what makes faith, faith. Right? Right? Belief without seeing comes from Christ himself. And if you want to take it deeper, there will come a time when the truth has already been proven.

You can search all you want. You can try this other church that has the flags and they go around and it's really cool and everybody's, you know, there's stuff happening. It's amazing.

And you can go to that church, but there's going to come a time where it's time to believe. It's time to have faith. So we as a church are word bound.

[35 : 18] God has built a church to be word bound. God intended that. This is not to be mistaken for some pharisaical category of Christians.

That's often the Pentecostals will say, oh, the Baptists, they're so rigid with their doctrine and they stifle the Holy Spirit from moving in the miracles and the wonders.

Right? I've heard all. Let's not be mistaken of what the Pharisees' problem was. The Pharisees were guilty of adding to the word.

Faith plus. And I won't say any more about the matter. In that we must be careful never to employ or impose our desires upon God's decrees.

As if we're, because we're saying it, God has to obey us. Word of faith theology. Or that we have to stiff arm God in order to do something like praying for the people of Sodom to be spared.

[36 : 27] Right? We as a New Testament church are people of the word and people of the Spirit. And those two items are not mutually exclusive.

What if they were two and one? And they are. If we take this to the deepest level, why is a changed heart never good enough for us?

That when someone hears the gospel, why is the change in the work that God does in somebody's heart not good enough for us?

Did you know that if you're walking into this room as an unbeliever, God does the most miraculous work within the stillness of a sinner's heart?

This is the greatest miracle that God continually proves to His church. And it testifies that God surely is not dead and God is a God of miracles even today.

[37 : 45] This is the greatest exception that God makes. Romans 5, 8-11 God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What a miracle! Verse 9, Since therefore we have been justified by His blood, a miracle, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.

What a miracle! Verse 10, For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.

A miracle! Verse 11, More than that! But wait, there's more! Eager-seeking Christians, looking for something, it's right here!

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. this church.

[38 : 50] What a miracle! I don't care what kind of flags you got going on, there's nothing that can steadfastly root our Christian's faith deeper and more firmly than that.

God never wastes a miracle to declare a message of hope found upon Jesus Christ. that's what this passage is all about.

This is great news for you if you are in Jesus Christ, that He has healed your disease of sin, like Irenaeus, and one day you will be raised to life again, just as Tabitha.

So you want something tangible to cling on? read your Bible. We must deny our fleshly obsession to seek miracles of God and seek instead the God of miracles.

There we will find hope. There we will find peace. There we will find the fear of the Lord.

[40 : 17] Let us remember, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Let's pray. Bible themale thought have just you out, they could know them and there they may hear that they will be