

Acts 9 (Part 3): 32-43 • The Ministry of Peter

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Open your Bibles to Acts, chapter 9. I got to thinking, as I was just thinking about today and what we're going to talk about. And it's typical if, even in years past, when we come to resurrection Sunday. Well, we come to Palm Sunday, we come to Good Friday, and then Resurrection Sunday. And it's very typical to come up with a message that is geared specifically to those events and so forth.

But as I was thinking through our study here in the Book of Acts that we've been doing, and for those of you that aren't with us normally, we study through the Bible here at Calvary chapel, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse. Here on Sunday morning, we go through the New Testament, and on Wednesday night, we go through the Old Testament.

And right now we're in the Book of Acts and we're in chapter 9. And as I was reading through the text of what we're going to be dealing with here, I thought, we're just going to bring this in. Because the resurrection is so powerful and so evident in really everything that the believers were saying and doing particularly, in that first century, and it permeated their messages as well.

It wasn't that long ago when we were in Acts chapter 2 and we went through that message. We studied that message that Peter preached on Pentecost, the day of Pentecost when he got up and began to address the people. And it's in Acts chapter 2. Let me show you this on the screen. He wrote, he said,

Acts 2:22-24 (ESV)

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

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definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, (there it is) loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."

We're going to leave that passage up because I want you to notice that last word, which is an interesting word. It's the, it. He says that the pangs of death were not possible to hold Him. That's the, it, that he's referring to there.

But he's not talking about death in the general sense as we would talk about the conclusion of life. It isn't death as a result of natural aging or because of an accident, some tragic thing, or act of men. He's talking here about death as a penalty. Okay. He's talking about death as something that is required for all mankind because of sin.

Let me remind you of what Paul went on to write in Romans chapter 6, verse 23. On the screen.

Romans 6:23 (ESV)

...the wages of sin is death...

...the wages of sin is death... (he said)

In other words, the required payment of sin is death. And that means that every person who's ever been born upon the earth, save that of Jesus Himself, owes a debt, and that debt is death. I mean, there's... Isn't that some great news here on your Easter Sunday morning.

We are literally born owing a debt of death and because Jesus owed no debt of His own, because He did not sin and never sinned, He came willingly to take our debt upon Himself. I want to show you a quote that I found from G. Campbell Morgan. He wrote this. He said,

As the lamb of God, [Jesus] made Himself responsible for the sin of the world and the [consequence] of that responsibility was death. He took sin, and because there was no place for death in His life, by dying He exhausted the penalty due to us. In the mystery of the cross, all the penalty of [our] sin has been borne.
— **G. Campbell Morgan**

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there was no place for death in His life, by dying He exhausted the penalty due to us. In the mystery of the cross, all the penalty of [our] sin has been borne.

Isn't that amazing? By the way, that quote from G. Campbell Morgan, I'm sure some of you are aware of who G. Campbell Morgan is. Think he came, born in England, I think he came to the United States around 1900 or something like that. But this was in a book that I just received like last week I think it was. Somebody sent me this book by G. Campbell Morgan, I don't know who it was. So if that was you, thank you. But I started looking through and it was pretty good.

But I love the fact that this day, we get to celebrate the resurrection because the resurrection is the confirmation. It's that stamp of God, if you will, upon the sacrifice of Jesus having been accepted on our behalf.

Now, as we continue our study in the Book of Acts here in chapter 9, we get a little bit of a picture of Peter who is living out that resurrection life; that power of the resurrection.

We're picking it up in verse 32 so if you have your Bible there, it's Acts 9:32. It says, *"Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda."* (ESV) I know it looks like Lidda but it's actually pronounced, Lu-da. You have to..., there's a little accent there, which I can't do, but it was just a small town north of the road from Jerusalem to Joppa.

And we're told that, ³³ *There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed.* ³⁴ *And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed."* And immediately he rose. (and it says) ³⁵ *And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*

Obviously the paralysis or the condition of..., Aeneas's paralysis was well known in that area; those two areas of Lydda and Sharon. And so when they heard and saw that he had been healed miraculously of that particular paralysis, they responded by putting their faith in the Lord Jesus, in the work that He had done on the cross.

And then we're told in verse 36, he says, *"Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, (and that means translated into the Greek, which is what the New Testament is written in) means Dorcas."* And of course that doesn't mean a thing to you because you probably don't speak Greek. But Tabitha, which is Aramaic, and Dorcas, which is Greek, both mean gazelle,

interestingly enough. I don't know, maybe that means that in her young days she was fleet of foot or something like that. But we're told here in the middle of verse 36 that this “...was (a woman) *full of good works and acts of charity.*” She was a godly woman and she did lots of wonderful things for people who were down and out.

In verse 37, it says, “*In those days (and that refers to the days when Peter was in the area) she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.*”³⁸ *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.”*”

Let me show you on a map what we're talking about. I've circled this area here where you can see. I think Lydda, which is a little more inland, and then Joppa, which is on the coast there of the Mediterranean. And perhaps you can see Jerusalem down to the to the Southeast of those two areas.



Peter's making this trip, which is a distance of about 11 miles, so it's not a tough trip. But it says in verse 39, *"So Peter rose and went with them. 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."*

Verse 40, *"But Peter put them all outside, 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. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, (and you can well imagine that to be the case, and again,) and many believed in the Lord. (and it says here) ⁴³ And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner."* And we'll talk a little bit about that next week, Lord willing.

What are we seeing here in this last section of Acts, chapter 9? Well, we're just kind of seeing the body of Christ here in the person of the apostle Peter. It could have been any one of the apostles, but we're seeing just the movement of the faith that is being brought to these areas. And the power of the cross, and the power of the resurrection that is being recognized and expressed by these individuals. And again, in this situation, it is particularly, the apostle Peter.

But I got to tell you, I thought about this. I thought, I really love this because this fits so beautifully into our thoughts about Resurrection Sunday and what we ought to be pondering. And more than pondering, what we ought to be living.

Because what Peter and all the other believers were doing is they were daily walking in the recognition that Jesus Christ had been raised from the grave. That He had conquered death. Again, they were walking in that reality. We know that reality. I mean, here we are, we've been singing about it. We've got all these things splashed on the screen, He has risen, and so we know these things, we understand these things.

But the question is, are we living these things? Are we living the reality of the resurrection in our daily lives, in the way we live, in the way we treat people, in the way we speak to people. In our hope, in our faith, is it really truly there, or is it just all locked as head knowledge.

I mean, sure, we might pass a test. Did Jesus rise from the dead? Yes, He did. True or false? Yes, true. It's true, but the biggest question is, are you living the reality of the resurrection? Because what we're seeing here again, in the end of Acts chapter 9, are the believers living the resurrection.

Peter who walks into a group of believers, they're in Lydda and he sees this man who's paralyzed and he says, "*Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you;*" get up. And he gets up, and they all rejoice, and people get saved.

And then he's called over to Joppa and he sees this lovely woman, who's been taken in death and it's interesting isn't it, that he puts all of the ladies who are there in mourning, he puts them all out of the room. I think that's interesting. And then he..., it's kind of weird to talk to a corpse. But it says, he looks down at this woman, and he calls her by name, Tabitha, wake up! And she opens her eyes.

Can you imagine what it was like when Peter brought her down to the ladies? Oh, by the way, I have someone here that like to come back into the realm of

the living, are you good with that? And then they all..., I'm sure they freaked out and a lot of people came to the Lord and it was amazing.

But this was a reality for them, you see, that's the point. This was a reality for them. And I have to tell you, I believe that it is something that has been lost to us today in our modern expression of our faith in Jesus Christ and our daily way of walking out, and living out that faith.

I feel as if something has been lost and I'm reminded that in his letter to the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul, he was talking to them in the first chapter. It's quite interesting. I've been going over that first chapter of Ephesus in my own kind of Bible reading lately. And just hanging out there and there's a place in that chapter where Paul reveals how he prayed for them.

And I have to believe this is probably how he prayed for pretty much any church or group of believers and in that sense, I think it's very applicable for us today. But when we read that prayer, that's what was happening, as I was reading that prayer, I recognized a marked difference between how the apostle Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus back in that first century and how we pray today.

I mean, there's a difference, and I think you'll see, because I'm going to show you this in a moment, but I think you'll see that. I mean, forgive me if I'm wrong, but it just seems like we've lost something of the expectation that they had in the first century that was connected to the resurrection and the power of the resurrection in their lives. Because the resurrection to them wasn't something that just happened to Jesus. The resurrection was a power that had now been given to them, you see, to carry out, to walk out, to live out. Again, the resurrection wasn't a doctrine people. It is that, but it wasn't just a doctrine. You can pick up a systematic theology book and you can turn to the area where it says the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the doctrines connected to it, and it's wonderful. And you can read through it and it's all great, but when it becomes to us, just a doctrine that we say, yeah, that, that happened. Yeah, Jesus was raised from the dead. Yeah, good, I got that one right. Yeah.

But it is no more than a doctrine than our faith and the expression of our faith becomes empty. Because we know it in our head, but we're not living it out in the reality of our lives.

And so I'm going to share with you this prayer that that Paul shared with them. And again, I think it's very connected to us. So on the screen here's what Paul writes. He says,

Ephesians 1:15-21 (ESV)

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (and he begins to talk about how he prays) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you (first of all) the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,

But why? Here's what he goes on to say,

Ephesians 1:15-21 (ESV)

...that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

...that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, (just like we sang today, above all powers, above all kingdoms, and so on, and so forth) not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Isn't that amazing? Do you hear people praying like that these days? Because I don't. I don't. He's basically saying, if we were going to turn this into a little bit more of our more common vernacular, it's like, I'm just praying for you guys that your eyes will be opened to everything that's yours through Christ. The hope that's ours, the inheritance that is ours, and lastly, the power that is ours.

What power is that, apostle Paul? He says, oh, I'll tell you about it. Let me tell you, it's the power of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. That's yours.

You see, that's not just something, a power that raised Jesus from the grave. It's a power that's been given to you as believers.

Are you living it? Are you walking it out? Is it a reality to you in your daily life, in the way that you pray, in the faith that you put forth, in the difficulty of circumstances and challenges that come your way? Are you seeing this as a reality of your life?

I think if most of us are going to be honest with ourselves, we're going to say, well, not so much, not so much. But I think I probably speak for all of us here when I say that when we see passages like this in the Bible, I mean, don't you kind of get jazzed? Doesn't it resonate in your heart as a reality, as a truth that you can lay hold of? Something that can actually change your life and change the way you think.

And I'm not talking about changing your life in a way that, the weird wacky, word faith, got to have it, blab it, and grab it people, try to interpret all of this power and stuff like that, because we're not going there. Okay. We're not..., this is not all about you and getting the things that you want and treating God, like your big cosmic Santa Claus.

This is about living the surrendered life to Jesus Christ and following His will and His purpose. And seeing the work of his hand unfold in this dark world in which we live.

And so again, it's not about Him fulfilling you, your will. It's you walking in His. But when you do that and when you surrender to that, and when you recognize that there's a power that attends that, I tell you, things begin to change. And we read books about great men of the past or great women of the past who have walked in the reality of the resurrection life.

And we read them and we admire them and we think, wow, that is incredible. That's just amazing. But we know nothing of it in personal experience and that needs to change. But it changes by faith.

I mean, like I said, we have that head knowledge, but is the faith there to say, I want to see, and I'm ready to see the power that raised Jesus from the grave working in my life and through me, into the lives of others.

Because one of the things we see here in both of these events that we've read here in Acts chapter 9, the result of each of those events. It wasn't about Peter, Peter, he happened to be in Lydda and then he made his way to Joppa. And he..., and the resurrection power of Jesus just came with him.

But what was the result of that? It says people in that area came to faith in Jesus Christ. They got saved, and that's the point. It's not so that we can feel good about ourselves or so that we can say, woohoo! God loves me. He's working through me.

No, it's that people are getting saved. People are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. So I'm going to take this passage we read here in Ephesians. We're going to distill it down and highlight just this area that we're going to focus on, okay?

Ephesians 1:15-21 (ESV)

...that you may know...what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead...

...that you may know...(and I'm praying for you, Paul says, I'm praying for you guys, that you may know) what is the immeasurable greatness of his power (did you catch that? It's not measurable, it's immeasurable, okay? That immeasurable greatness of his power) toward us who believe, (that's just we Christians, we followers of Jesus, it says) according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead...

Wow. The power of the resurrection, working in you, working in me, changing this world one life at a time. I'm not sure, people ask me from time to time, pastor Paul, do you think we're going to see a revival again in our day before the Lord comes? I don't know. I don't have a looking glass and I'm a horrible guesser. Just ask my wife.

I lost my wallet yesterday and I could not find it. It was in my back pocket. She promised she wasn't going to tell anybody. She said, if you tell people, that's okay. But I won't tell anybody. I said, thank you. I couldn't even guess where it was. It was in my pocket. I'm looking all over, but anyway, that's beside the point.

I don't know if there's going to be another revival. I don't know, but I'll tell you, I'll tell you something. There are individual revivals going on. There may be some revival again, that becomes regional or large. But I am seeing revival of individual hearts happening.

People are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. People are coming back to the truth. People are coming back. People who knew Him and walked with Him before are coming back to Him and they're going, man, am I tired of living my life for myself. I am sick to death of living for my own pleasures and they're coming back to Jesus.

And it's happening and if you're okay with that. I mean, I appreciate those of you that are praying for revival. God bless you. If the Lord's laying that on your heart, keep praying, but don't stop looking and finding those individual revivals that are happening in homes, and businesses, and places like that. Because people's hearts are being changed and it's exciting to see. And I want to see more of it.

And I think we can see more of it if we Christians would just get ahold of the fact that the power of the resurrection lives within us now. And that power attends us wherever we go. And if we will embrace it, and walk it out, live it out, that we're going to see some incredible things happening. Amen?

Well, then let's stand and pray about that, shall we? If you personally need prayer, we'll have some folks down front here. We're just going to pray right now for all of us, we're just going to pray that we would all just open our hearts to the power of the resurrection, that power that raised Jesus from the grave.

Father, God, we open our hearts to You and we thank You and praise You for Your incredible goodness to us.

Lord, You are so good and we don't deserve it. And You have given Your life for us and we don't deserve it. You have given us new life and we don't deserve it. And we did nothing to earn it.

And now, Father God, we just want to open our lives. We want to open our expectations to the resurrection of life operating through us today.

Changing the way we live. Changing the way we see this world. Changing the way we see others.

Lord, transform our understanding that we might have a faith expectation of what You're going to do and what You desire to do through a people who humbly come to You and say, I can't do this, but You can. And I surrender myself to You that You might do a work in me, and through me to reach others.

And I thank You, Father for calling my name and giving me life. A life that I don't deserve, and I accept it, and I praise You for it.

And we worship You today as a people, as your children, as the body of Christ. And we lay all of these things at Your feet in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

And all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you.

Have a good rest of your Resurrection Sunday.