

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Power with a Purpose

Acts 9:32–43

Well if you haven't already, go ahead and turn in your Bible to Acts 9:32–43. The title of the message today is “Power with a Purpose.” It's an amazing thing when you stop and think for a moment how God has empowered us as his followers. We have the Holy Spirit inside of us. That's amazing. We have the gifts of the Spirit. Awesome! We have the title, “Ambassadors for Christ.” That's tremendous. We are made in the image of God and we have the power of God coursing through our veins. That's remarkable. But that power is not purposeless.

Some of you are familiar with the famous adage from Spiderman, “With great power comes great responsibility.” That dates back to the earliest days of Spiderman in the 1960s. But the expression is not unique to Stan Lee or the Spiderman franchise. Way back in the early 1900s Winston Churchill said similarly of the British Empire, “Where there is great power there is great responsibility.”¹ And that's true.

One of the things that we see in the NT is that power is given to the apostles and the early church disciples. But that power is never used indiscriminately or arbitrarily. People get healed. Demons get exercised. Miracles happen. But these are always signs pointing to some greater reality.² That was true even in the days of Jesus. Jesus healed people, exercised demons, and performed miracles. But it wasn't for the sake of miracles or for the sake of healing. He did those things as signs pointing to a greater reality. For example, physical healing pointed to a true and better spiritual healing. That's what Jesus used his power to demonstrate.

And then, amazingly, he gave some of that power to his followers (see John 14:12–14). And of all Christ's followers, who of them had more of that power than the Apostle Peter? In this passage today, Peter's going to show us the great purpose of that power.³

To see that, look with me at Acts 9:32.⁴ Luke writes,

³² Now as Peter went here and there⁵ among them all,⁶ he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

¹ The full quotation is witty and quintessential Churchill: “Where there is great power there is great responsibility...where there is no power there can, I think, be no responsibility. 1906, 28 FEBRUARY.” Taken from Richard M. Langworth, *Churchill by Himself: In His Own Words*, (RosettaBooks, 2008), 90.

² CHRYSOSTOM: “Some of the miracles were performed to draw people to faith, and others to comfort the believers.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 115.

³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 375: “Peter has done miracles earlier, so the question is, Why have more miracles here? The answer seems to be that Luke is setting up the next event, where Cornelius is the first full Gentile to come to the Lord.”

⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 246: “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.”

⁵ CHRYSOSTOM: “Like a general [Peter] went around inspecting the ranks—which part was well-trained, which in good order and which needed his presence. See how on all occasions he goes about first. When an apostle had to be chosen, he was first; when the Jews had to be told that these were not drunk, he was first; when the lame man had to be healed, he was first; when the crowd had to be addressed, he was before the rest; when the rulers had to be addressed, he was the man; when Ananias had to be addressed, when healings were worked by the shadow, still it was he.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 114–5.

Before this, Luke was writing about Saul and his great conversion story (9:1–30). But now, he pivots back to Peter. Peter has been the most prominent character in the book of **Acts** thus far. But of course, he’s not the main character. **The Holy Spirit is the primary actor in this book. And Peter, Saul, Philip, and Stephen are supporting actors.** And so, Luke moves off of Saul and returns to the Apostle Peter.

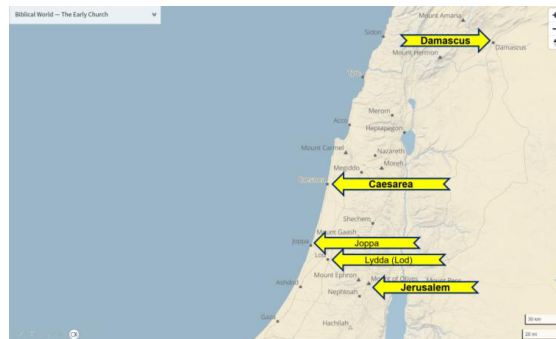
And when we find Peter in **verse 32**, keep in mind, this is at least three years after Jesus’s death and resurrection. Probably it’s closer to five years after Jesus’s resurrection. And during that time, the church has grown rapidly. The church has spread throughout the regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (see **Acts 9:31**).⁷ And Peter, as a good apostle and shepherd of God’s church, is out and about supervising the growth of the churches.

When we last saw Peter, he and John travelled to Samaria to authenticate the gospel movement in that region. If you remember, Philip went up to Samaria, people got saved in droves, and then Peter and John went up there to make sure everything was kosher as far as the gospel was concerned. And while they were there the Holy Spirit came down on the Samaritans, and it was a kind of “Samaritan Pentecost,” if you will.

Take a look at **Acts 8:25** with me, and we can read the last statement about Peter. After the “Samaritan Pentecost,” Luke tells us that Peter and John “returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.” This is the beginning of Peter’s itinerant ministry as a missionary/apostle. Peter doesn’t stay inside the confines of Jerusalem; **he takes his show on the road.** And God leads Peter to the new churches in Judea and Samaria to authenticate them, strengthen them, and encourage them.

And so, Peter was going out here and there among the churches, and “he came down to the saints who lived at Lydda.” Two questions: **1) Where is Lydda?** and **2) Who are “the saints?”**

You can see on the map below that Lydda (OT “Lod”) is just a short distance from Jerusalem.⁸ It’s twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem and close to the Mediterranean Sea.⁹ In the next few passages Peter will move from Lydda to Joppa and then to Caesarea right along the Mediterranean coast. Lydda was on the outskirts of the region of Judea, but it was a mixed town of Jews and Gentiles. But Peter’s going to focus his ministry on the Jewish people in this town.¹⁰



Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea¹¹

⁶ The ESV translation makes it sound like Peter went to “all” the churches. Or perhaps he went to “all” the believers. The Greek is ambiguous, but a better understand would see Peter traveling through “all” the regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (see 9:31).

⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 467: “The connection between v. 32 and v. 31 suggests that the consolidation and the numerical growth of the church was due, apart from the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (v. 31), to the work of Peter (v. 32a).”

⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 376: “The city of Lydda (= OT Lod, 1 Chron. 8:12; 1 Macc. 11:34) is on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa, about a day’s journey by foot from Joppa and twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem... It was a predominantly Jewish town of mixed population.”

⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 467: “The town of Lydda (Λύδδα, Hebr. לוד) was located 44 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem in the northern Shephelah, the foothills between the coastal plain and the central highlands, on the edge of the Plain of Sharon. It was the capital of one of the eleven toparchies of Judea; Josephus describes it as ‘a village that was in size not inferior to a city,’ which means that Lydda did not have city rights.”

¹⁰ I would specify “Jewish Christians” here, but as we’ll see, some of the Jewish unbelievers will turn to the Lord (i.e., get saved) in 9:35. The same is true of the “many” in Joppa in 9:42. My assumption is that these are many “Jews.” Although a case could be made that these are Jews and Gentiles and Luke is slowly moving us to the Gentile mission that gets accelerated with Cornelius in Acts 10.

¹¹ Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), June 7, 2025. Some geographical points added by author.

The second question is this: “Who are “the saints?” Luke says that Peter came down to “the saints who lived at Lydda.” Who are they? Well, I’ll tell you this—saints are not super-spiritual Christians that people make statues out of in order to venerate! Not according to the Bible anyway! Are we clear on that?

“Saints” are believers, pure and simple. They are people who have been saved by the blood of Jesus. **You’re a saint. I’m a saint. I know it’s hard to believe, but it’s true. If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, then you are, biblically speaking, a saint. By the way, the proper response to that is this, “By the blood of Jesus, you’re right, I’m a saint.”**¹²

So Peter came down to “the saints” (i.e., the believers or the church folk) in Lydda. Probably these are believers who were saved through the ministry of Philip.¹³ In **Acts 8:40**, Luke tells us, “Philip found himself at Azotus.” This is after he baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch in Gaza. And “as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.” Probably one of the towns where he preached the gospel was this town, Lydda.¹⁴

Moving on, look at **verse 33**. What does Peter do among the saints in Lydda?

³³ There [at Lydda] [Peter] found a man named Aeneas,¹⁵ bedridden for eight years,¹⁶ who was paralyzed.¹⁷

Now, just imagine this guy Aeneas. This is a guy who has been paralyzed for eight years. He’s been bedridden for eight years! And keep in mind this is the first century world in a small town. **There were no wheelchairs at this time. There were no motorized vehicles for paraplegics. There was no handicap-accessibility. There was no Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or anything like that.** To be paralyzed in this society meant to be literally bedridden. You were immobilized in your bed, and you were at the mercy of your friends and family to go somewhere or travel anywhere.

You might remember the paralytic who was lowered to Jesus on his mat by his friends (**Matt 9:1–8**). The only way this paralytic was going anywhere was if his friends carried him.

But look what Peter does in **verse 34**.

³⁴ And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals¹⁸ you; rise and make your bed.”

Not “**Jesus Christ can heal you.**” Not “**Jesus Christ will heal you.**” This is a present tense verb.¹⁹ “Jesus Christ *heals* you.”

Peter just goes up to this guy, Aeneas, and heals him.²⁰ Aeneas was one of the saints in Lydda; he’s a believer. And Peter says succinctly, “Jesus Christ heals you.” Not, “**I heal you by the power of the Apostles.**” Not, “**Rise and walk in the name of Peter.**” In order to make it absolutely, unambiguously clear that the power to heal comes from God, Peter says “Jesus Christ heals you.” And then almost unceremoniously he adds, “Rise and make your bed.” **Off you go. Chop-chop!**

¹² Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 309: “*Hagios* (lit., ‘holy person’; one of Paul’s, though not Luke’s, favorite words for Christians) appears three times in chapter 9 (four times total in Acts to mean ‘saints’: 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10). The New Testament always uses the word for a group rather than for an individual believer.”

¹³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 245.

¹⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 222: “By the time Peter arrived, there were saints that dwelled at Lydda, showing that the city already had a congregation. This may be due to the previous dispersion of believers from Jerusalem during the third persecution in Acts 8:4; no doubt some of them came to Lydda. However, others may have become believers as a result of Philip’s ministry through the same territory in Acts 8:40.”

¹⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 376: “Luke introduces us to Aeneas with little detail other than his malady. Is he a believer? We are not told, but it is likely that if he were not, then the healing might well have led to a remark about his conversion.”

¹⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 245n55: “The Greek could also be rendered ‘bedridden from the age of eight.’”

¹⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 467: “The reference to the fact that he was bedridden since ‘eight years’ suggests that he had a stroke which paralyzed him, or he had suffered a fall from which he had not recovered.”

¹⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 468n2186: “This use of the present tense is called ‘aoristic present’ which denotes a ‘punctiliar act taking place at the moment of speaking’ (BDF §320); Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 517–18, calls this an ‘instantaneous present.’”

¹⁹ It’s also in the indicative in Greek. It’s not subjunctive (“Jesus can heal you”). It’s not in the future (“Jesus will heal you”). It’s not optative (“may Jesus heal you”), which was common for prayer in the NT. It’s not imperative either (“Be healed in Jesus’s name”) which is surprising.

²⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 377: “To mediate healing is an ability Peter received during Jesus’s ministry (Luke 9:1, 6; 10:9).”

Literally Peter says, “rise and [spread yourself]!” The word “bed” has been supplied by the ESV, because they see this as an idiom for making one’s bed. But I wonder about that. If Peter was saying, “rise and [spread yourself],” maybe that’s a reference to his limbs not his bed. **“Stretch your limbs, man. You’re not paralyzed anymore!”**

And look what happens at the end of **verse 34**.

And immediately he rose.

How happy do you think this guy was when he got healed? How do you think he responded? **“Hallelujah! Jesus is Lord. He has the power to save. He has the power to heal. Jesus is awesome!”** That’s what I’d be saying if I was him.

And how do you think this community responded when they saw this? I’m sure the believers were encouraged and strengthened. But look what happens to the unbelievers in this community. This is the real payoff of this miracle. This is the endgame of this miracle in **verse 35**.

³⁵ *And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon [Sharon is a plain just outside of Lydda... so this involves people from the neighboring community] saw him, and they turned²¹ to the Lord.*

In other words, they got saved. They saw Aeneas. They knew he was a paralytic. They had seen him lying in his bed, incapacitated. And now he’s walking around healed. And what did they do in response. They “turned to the Lord.”

Look, this wasn’t some hocus-pocus, abracadabra, “look at me, I’m healing people” nonsense. Peter wasn’t some carnival-barking televangelist who was manufacturing signs and wonders. This wasn’t a fake miracle generating fake news. This was legit. This was a supernatural work of God. This was an authentic healing in the name of Jesus Christ. This was—I would argue—an extension of Christ’s own healing ministry that paved the way for salvation. Jesus healed people, not as an end in itself, but in order to pave a way for people to get saved.

And similarly, Jesus empowered Peter as a supernatural healer to *affirm* the gospel message, *authenticate* the gospel messenger, and *accelerate* gospel witness (**Acts 9:32–43**).

Write this down as a first exposition point for our message today. We’re going to see two episodes in the life of Peter. But they accomplish the same thing. First of all,

1) Peter’s **healing** of Aeneas guided hearts to Jesus (9:32–35)

Aeneas gets healed. Praise the Lord! But I want you to see that that’s not the central point of this message. That’s not even the main purpose of Peter’s actions. Healing in the Bible is never an end in itself. The purpose of this physical healing, the point of all physical healing in the Bible, is to point to Jesus as the author of spiritual healing. And that’s why the climax of the healing story happens in **verse 35**.

³⁵ *And all²² the residents of Lydda and Sharon²³ saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*

This is really important for us to bear in mind because we have some preachers, evangelists, and televangelists in our day who view healing as an end in itself. And also they view healing as something that is guaranteed by God. They’ll say, “God wants you healthy. God wants you wealthy. God wants you happy. And God wants you healed.” And all you have to do is name-it and claim-it, blab-it and grab-it, and it’s done. If you just have enough faith, you can make it happen. And they’ll use passages like this to substantiate that thinking.

The problem with that whole line of reasoning is this—Aeneas eventually got sick and died. Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (John 11:38–44), eventually got sick and died. Jairus’s

²¹ MacArthur, *Acts 1–11*, MNTC, 282: “The phrase turned to the Lord employs the verb *epistrepho*, ‘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 chance of life direction.”

²² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 468: “The term ‘all’ (πάντες) is hyperbolic, implying that a large number of people were converted.” Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 223 sees it differently: “The phrase ‘all that dwelled’ means ‘all the Jews’ because Peter had not yet used the keys of the kingdom to open the door to the Gentiles.”

²³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 468: “Towns along the road that ran through the Plain of Sharon between Lydda and Caesarea include Antipatris (Aphék/Pegae), Kefar Kesem, Kapparetaia, Galgulis, Kephâr Saba, Beth Ther, Theraspis, Tibetha, Zoran, and Khirbet Zalafa.”

daughter (see **Matt 9:18–26**) eventually got sick and died. Peter himself was (probably) crucified upside down. And you might say, “Peter, you healed Aeneas. Heal yourself! Raise yourself from the dead if you have to.” Why didn’t he? Why couldn’t he?

Paul also did some incredible miracles. He healed people. He was an apostle. Yet the Bible says he had a thorn in the flesh he couldn’t remove (see **2 Cor 12:7–9**). Paul had a good friend who was sick named Epaphroditus (**Phil 2:19–30**), whom he couldn’t heal. When Paul’s protégé Timothy was sick, he told him to take some wine for medicinal purposes (see **1 Tim 5:23**). “Why didn’t you just heal Timothy, Paul? Just heal him!” Why didn’t he? Why couldn’t he?

The reason is this. Healing is God’s prerogative. And God’s endgame is not our own physical healing or our personal comfort. That’s not God’s highest goal on planet earth. His highest goal is his own glory. And subordinate to that is the salvation of souls who embrace Christ for spiritual, not physical, healing. And he’ll use physical healing to attain those greater goals. But he’s not obligated to heal. In fact, there are times when a lack of healing is used for his God’s greater purposes.

Now should we pray for healing? Absolutely. And there’s even a provision for that in Scripture. **James 5:14** says, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” I have some oil right here. There’s nothing super-special about this oil. It hasn’t been blessed by the Pope or anything silly like that. The oil is symbolic of cleanness and purity. And it’s symbolic of God the Holy Spirit whom we acknowledge has the power to heal. At any time at the end of our service when we make our elders available for prayer, we are happy to anoint you with oil and pray in faith that God will heal you.

But we don’t present that to the Lord as an ultimatum. We don’t think that if we just have enough faith you’ll be healed. We believe that God can heal. We call on him to do that in light of his Word. And then we pray, “not our will, but yours, be done Lord.”²⁴

Now let’s go back to the narrative. Because we’re going to see another astonishing, supernatural event happen during Peter’s ministry. And the purpose behind this miracle is not unlike the previous one. Watch for the rinse/repeat sequence of events here.

Look at **verse 36**.

³⁶ Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.

Again, let’s ask a couple questions: **1**) Where’s Joppa? and **2**) Who was Tabitha? Well, Joppa (or “Jaffa” as it is known today) was a city on the Mediterranean coast in between Lydda and Caesarea (see map below).²⁵ Joppa was on the outskirts of Judea and was the main port city of Judea.²⁶ Joppa was the ancient city that Jonah escaped to and boarded a ship headed for Tarsus (see **Jon 1:3**).

²⁴ JOHANNES BRENTZ: “Because Luke writes that Peter healed this paralytic in the name of Christ, it should not be thought that this means that in the name of Christ all paralytics must be healed physically or that those who are not physically healed in the name of Christ are godless... “For we know,” Paul says, “that for those who love God all things serve for the best, for those called according to his purpose.” Therefore we, who have been called through the preaching of the gospel, so that we could become his people, should rest in the highest hope in all afflictions and in strong confidence that all our afflictions will aid and help us to attain true salvation through Jesus Christ who [lives and reigns] with [God the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.] Amen.” Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 130.

²⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 468: “The city of Joppe (Ἰόππη; Hebr. יָפוֹ, Japho/Jaffa), situated 18 kilometers northwest of Lydda, was an old Canaanite and Philistine town. It was the port of entry for the timber imported from Lebanon, which was used in the construction of the first and the second temple. In the Hellenistic period, Greeks settled in the city. In 146 BC, the Hasmonean ruler Jonathan conquered Joppe and transformed it into a Jewish harbor. After Judea had become a Roman province in AD 6, Joppe seems to have been the capital of one of the toparchies of Judea. The population seems to have been predominantly Jewish.”

²⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 247.



Joppa was about thirty-seven miles northwest of Jerusalem, and about twelve miles northwest of Lydda.²⁷ And if you took the coastal road up from Joppa, you would eventually end up in Caesarea about thirty-two miles due north. **So if Jerusalem were San Antonio, then Joppa would be Boerne. And Caesarea would be Kerrville. That's not a perfect parallel, but it's close. And of course, there was no I-10 at 80mph to get you there.**

And Joppa was a good mix of both Jews and Gentiles. So we're encroaching now on Gentile territory. Keep that in mind because that'll be important in the pages to follow in **Acts**.

Now concerning this lady, Tabitha, Luke calls her a “disciple” in **verse 36**. Everyone see that? “Disciples”... “saints”... “believers”... “those who call on the name of the Lord”... these terms are used interchangeably in the NT for Christians.

But this occurrence of “disciple” is unique. This is the only occurrence of the female form of the word “disciple” in the NT. It's the word μαθήτρια. The masculine form of this is μαθητής, which is extremely common in the NT. And the verbal form of that is μαθητεύω (“to make disciples”). But just to show that female disciples are disciples too, Luke gives us this great word here in **Acts 9**—μαθήτρια.²⁸ **If you are sitting next to a female disciple of Jesus right now, turn to them and say, “You are a μαθήτρια.”**

And this μαθήτρια in **Acts 9** was named Tabitha. That name is derived from the Aramaic word for “gazelle.” Dorcas is the Greek word for “gazelle.” Solomon and his bride use this term “gazelle” affectionately for one another in **Song of Solomon**.²⁹ So this was a Biblical name, and also a term of endearment.

And Luke tells us in **verse 36** that Tabitha...
was full of good works and acts of charity.³⁰

She was a good woman. She was a godly woman. She was a disciple in the truest sense of that word.³¹ She was a growing believer who lived out her faith with good works and acts of charity. Maybe she was led to Christ by Philip several months before this.³²

²⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 377: “Joppa (v. 36) is about twelve miles from Lydda and on the coast... Joppa was a far more Gentile city than Lydda (Barrett 1994: 482) and was involved in battles during the Maccabean war.” Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 468n2196: “During the Jewish Revolt, Joppa was an important center of the rebellion—when Roman troops conquered the city, 8,400 people were killed; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.507–509; 3.414–426. Schürer, *History*, 2:144, calls Joppe as ‘a Greek city proper,’ which, however, cannot be deduced from Josephus, *J.W.* 3.56.”

²⁸ JOHN CALVIN: “Several times already he has used the word *disciple* for a Christian man, and in case we might think that it is suitable for men only, he applies the same word to a woman.” Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 130.

²⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 377: “‘Gazelle’ was the metaphor for ‘beloved’ in Song 2:9 and 8:14... In this case, the name fits her character.” Hebrew and Aramaic words sometimes correlate. In this case, you can see similarities between Aramaic ܩܕܝܫܐ and Hebrew צִבְיָה (“buck gazelle”) or ܩܕܝܫܐ (“doe gazelle”). King Josiah’s mother was ܩܕܝܫܐ (Zibiah; “doe gazelle”) according to 2 Chronicles 24:1.

³⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 247 rightfully comments that Tabitha’s good works describe here enhance “the pathos of her death.”

³¹ MacArthur, *Acts 1–11*, MNTC, 283: “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).” For more on the Proverbs 31 woman see Tony Caffey, “The Heroic Wife,” 12-15-24: <https://www.vbv.org/the-heroic-wife-proverbs-lesson-39>.

So that's the good news about Tabitha. But here's some bad news. Look at **verse 37**.

³⁷ *In those days [meaning in the days that Peter was travelling about Lydda and elsewhere] she became ill and died,*

By the way, just a *nota bene* here. Every day in our world, good Christians become ill and die. And they don't become sick and die because they lack faith. And they don't become sick and die because they have sinned in some grievous way. Good Christians become ill and die because this world is not our home.³³ And even if we could live forever in this world, who would want that? ... a world of viruses spreading and bombs exploding and nations raging and terrorists terrorizing. God has promised to remake this world and remove evil from it. And he has promised to give us bodies that don't get sick or injured or corrupt in any way. So if this was the end for Tabitha, then so be it. She's in a better place, and there's no reason to mourn like those who have no hope.³⁴

Okay, back to the narrative.

³⁷ *In those days³⁵ [Tabitha] became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.*

Now this is extremely sad. But it's not that uncommon. People got sick and died all the time in that culture. Practically every day that would happen in the ancient world. So that's not that surprising.

And they washed her body. That was customary for a dead body in Jewish culture. That's not surprising at all. What's surprising is what they do next with her body... They lay her in an upper room! That's not normal.³⁶

In Jewish society, there was a race against time to get a body into the ground. You would typically bury a person on the same day, or at the most within three days. You don't put a stinky, decomposing dead body in the upper room of a house; not for very long anyway. There was no formaldehyde in that culture to help preserve a dead body.

If you remember Ananias and Saphirra, when they died, they rushed them to the cemetery post-haste. In cultures without an embalming process there was a sense of urgency to get the body into the ground ASAP. I'm sure you can imagine why. But with Tabitha, they laid her... not in the ground... not in a tomb... they laid her in an upper room. What are they doing?

Now here's what Luke is doing here. And I'm not so sure that the Christians in Joppa didn't have this in mind. There are some very important OT and NT passages that speak of bodies placed in an upper room. In **1 Kings 17**, Elijah took a dead widow's son up to an upper room. In **2 Kings 4**, another woman took her dead son up to Elisha's room. Those are well-known resuscitation stories in the OT.³⁷

Also we have similar stories in the NT when Jesus raises the widow's son at Nain (**Luke 7:11–17**), and when Jesus raises Jairus's daughter (**Luke 8:49–56**). It's as if Luke is correlating those stories. It's even as if the people in Joppa are trying to reconstruct what has happened in the past with bodies raised from the dead.

³² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 468: "This description probably implies that Tabitha was a prosperous woman and an indispensable pillar of the congregation. Since no husband is mentioned, she may have been a widow."

³³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 472: "We should not forget that many leaders, such as Stephen and (later) James, died untimely deaths without being brought back to life, and, more importantly still, that as a result of Jesus' victory, death has lost its sting (1 Cor 15:54–55) and believers look forward to depart from this earth to "be with Christ" (Phil 1:23)."

³⁴ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 313: "Perhaps a word should be said about the possibility of raising the dead today. There have been reports of this happening in different parts of the world today. I met a missionary working with a tribal group in India who told me that among this group in the past few years, there have been seven cases of bringing dead people back to life. When someone among them dies, the believers pray for about three-and-one-half hours after his or her death. After that, if the person has not come back to life, the elders give the signal to prepare the corpse for burial."

³⁵ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 469: "Tabitha died 'at that time,' i.e., during the time when the church in Judea had peace (v. 31) and when Peter was involved in missionary and pastoral ministry in the towns of Judea (v. 32)."

³⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 378: "The placing of her body in an upper room is unusual. This action may well express the faith and hope that she can be raised from the dead, as usually burial took place before sunset in Judaism... When a body was kept, it was kept for three days because there was the belief that after three days the soul had departed (John 11:17; *m. Yebam.* 16.3; Lev. Rabbah 18.1; Eccles. Rabbah 12.6)."

³⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 378n2: "There is significant parallel wording between this account and 1 Kings 17:17–24 and 2 Kings 4:19–37."

In other words, there are some indications here that maybe, just maybe, God wants to extend Tabitha's life on planet earth. Here's some additional evidence to that fact. Look at **verse 38**.

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."

"Yeah, you better hurry, Peter." Joppa was about twelve miles from Lydda. So for these messengers to travel to Lydda, find Peter, and bring Peter back to Joppa, it would have taken at least a day. It probably took closer to two days.³⁸ And time is of the essence, because this body is starting to putrefy in the upper room.

But look at **verse 39**.

³⁹ So Peter [without hesitation, I might add] rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing³⁹ tunics and other garments⁴⁰ that Dorcas made while she was with them.⁴¹

This is a really tender moment here. I can only imagine the grief that these widows were feeling now that Tabitha had passed away. Widows had it rough in the first-century world.⁴² We've talked about that already in **Acts**. And widows depended on the generosity of others within the community for their survival. And so, they must have been heartbroken (and fearful too) that their benefactor, Dorcas, was taken from them. This was a woman of generosity and acts of charity. And I can totally envision this scene as Peter comes into the room and the women are showing him the clothes that Dorcas made for them.

Let me just take a moment here to ask you a hard question. Hear me on this. When your day comes and you go home to glory, are people going to mourn your passing and celebrate the good works that you have done for those in need? Will the people who eulogize at your funeral celebrate your faith that has produced good works?⁴³ Or will they have to look hard to find positive content for your funeral?

We just had a memorial service a few days ago for a woman who was intimately involved in the lives of some of you here at church. And it wasn't hard at all for her friends, her family, her kids, and her grandkids to produce wonderful statements about how faithful and good a Christian woman she was.

Now I don't want you to go out there and start doing good works so that people will eulogize you positively when you die. There's better motivation than that. I hope that you will strive to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" **(Matt 5:16). My hope is that you will** "do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" **(Gal 6:10). And by the way, the Bible says that** "Faith apart from works is dead" **(Jas 2:26).**⁴⁴ **Good**

³⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 469n2198: "The journey from Lydda to Joppe would have taken half a day, i.e., Peter would have arrived on the following day after Tabitha's death."

³⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 378: "The middle voice ἐπίδεικνύμεναι (*epideiknymenai*) perhaps indicates that what is shown is what they are wearing."

⁴⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 224: "The word 'coats' [ESV: 'tunics'] refers to tunics (inner garments), while the term 'garments' refers to outer garments."

⁴¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 247: "[Tabitha's] 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)."

⁴² MacArthur, *Acts 1-11*, MNTC, 284: "Employment opportunities for women were severely limited, and widows without family to care for them were often left destitute (cf. Mark 12:41-44; Luke 7:11-15). The loss of Dorcas, therefore, was a serious blow to these widows."

⁴³ CHRYSOSTOM: "If you want to be remembered and are anxious for true repute, imitate her, and build edifices like that, not going to expense on lifeless matter but displaying great generosity in regard to your fellow human beings. This is the remembrance that is worth admiring and brings great benefit." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 116.

⁴⁴ MARTIN LUTHER: "Faith eradicates sin and makes a person pleasing and righteous [before God]. Now once the person has become pleasing and righteous, then the Holy Spirit and his love is given to him, so that he might do good joyously. The way of the law is that it seizes the person and demands such good works from him, and it will not quit until it gets them. Thus, the person is unable to do such works without the Spirit and love. In this way through the law they are forced to admit what they lack.... This is said for this reason, so that we would recognize the true nature and characteristics of the law, faith and love, and then each person will correctly and appropriately understand the nature and sayings of Scripture. Namely, that faith makes righteous but still does not fulfill the law; love does not make righteous, but indeed does fulfill the law." Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 131.

works don't save you, but saved people inevitably produce good works. Like Tabitha here in **Acts 9**.⁴⁵ These ladies are devastated after Tabitha is taken from them. Poor Peter. He's got to console these women.

Look what he does. Look at **verse 40**.

⁴⁰ But Peter put them all⁴⁶ outside,

I can just see Peter saying, **“Ladies, I can't deal with you right now. Please go outside.”**⁴⁷ Jesus did something similar when he healed Jairus's daughter. He sent the mourners outside (**Mark 5:40; Luke 8:51**). And Peter was there for that healing. He was one of only three people (James and John were the other two) who saw Jesus raise that girl back to life.⁴⁸

and [Peter] knelt down⁴⁹ and prayed;

Notice again, Peter doesn't heal by his own power. He doesn't do miracles in the name of Peter. He prays! And then...

turning to the body he said, *“Tabitha, arise.”*

When Jesus raised Jairus's daughter from the dead, he said, *“Talitha cumi,”* which means, in Aramaic, “Little girl, I say to you, arise” (**Mark 5:41**). When Peter raised Tabitha from the dead here he said, *“Tabitha cumi.”* It's almost the exact verbiage that Jesus used. That can't be coincidental.⁵⁰ Peter knelt to pray and used almost the same exact wording that Jesus used, as if to say if this thing happens, it's only because Jesus Christ is going to make it happen. *“Talitha cumi.” “Tabitha cumi.”*

And [this faithful, godly woman] opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

Tabitha could have said, **“What are you doing here? In fact, what am I doing here? I was in the presence of the Lord. I was home. I was in glory. And now I'm back here.”**

Peter's like, **“Well, Tabitha, God's got more work for you to do before he takes you home for good.”**

Look at **verse 41**.

⁴¹ And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows,⁵¹ he presented⁵² her alive.⁵³

Now let me be clear about something. Tabitha's new lease on life was not, strictly speaking, a resurrection. I want to reserve the use of that word “resurrection” for Jesus's resurrection and for our future resurrection when we will receive new incorruptible bodies. What happened with Tabitha here was not a resurrection in that sense, it was a resuscitation.

⁴⁵ JOHN CALVIN: “The fruits of good works afterwards spring forth from faith. Now I take good works to mean the voluntary acts of love by which our neighbors are helped, and Luke instances a particular example of this, in almsgiving. Well-doing is highly commended, because, according to the witness of the Holy Spirit, it contains in itself the whole of a godly and perfect life.” Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 130.

⁴⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 469: “The masculine form of ‘all’ (πάντας) indicates that besides the widows, there were also men in the upstairs room.”

⁴⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 471: “Before he prays for Tabitha's resuscitation, he clears the room of all who were present (while contemporary faith healers ‘perform’ on a stage and in front of television cameras!).”

⁴⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 378: “The mood of the passage [Acts 9:38–40] is much like Luke 8:54–55. The parallel is no accident. Peter's ministry shows that Jesus is still at work.”

⁴⁹ Prayer is common in the book of Acts. But kneeling isn't always accompanied with it. But there are other references to kneeling in Acts and elsewhere in the Scriptures (see 7:60; 20:36; 21:5; see also Ps 95:6; 1 Kgs 8:54; Dan 6:10; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Eph 3:14).

⁵⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 248: “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.’ 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.”

⁵¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 248: “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.”

⁵² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 248: “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.”

⁵³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 470: “The present participle ‘alive’ (ζῶσαν) underlines the fact that Tabitha has been fully restored to life.”

Some people use the word revivification. Tabitha was resuscitated or revived by Peter. But she would go on to later get sick and die. Are we clear on that? God had more work for her to do on planet earth. God wanted to extend her life another, I don't know, five years or ten years or however she lived. God did that for his purposes and for his glory.⁵⁴

But here's the more important reason why God extended her life. There's purpose in this use of power. God wanted to use this miracle to accelerate the gospel message. Because look at **verse 42**. This is absolutely crucial to understanding what God was doing here. And it's just like what happened earlier with Aeneas.

⁴²And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

Aeneas was healed and people turned to the Lord (**9:35**). Tabitha was brought back to life and many believed in the Lord (**9:42**).

Write this down as a second exposition point for our message today. Peter's healing of Aeneas guided hearts to Jesus (9:32–35). And...

2) Peter's **raising** of Tabitha guided hearts to Jesus (9:36–43)

Notice that in both episodes, people don't turn to Peter.⁵⁵ They turn to Jesus! God used both of these miracles to prove that Jesus Christ has power over spiritual death.⁵⁶ Jesus Christ has power over sickness. He's got power over paralysis. He even has power over physical death! But more importantly, Jesus has power over spiritual sickness, he's got power over spiritual paralysis, and he's got power over spiritual death.⁵⁷

And here's how Luke closes this section. Look at **verse 43**.

⁴³And [Peter] stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.⁵⁸

I'll say more about that last statement in just a second.

Okay, let's move to application. What do we take away from this passage in Acts 9? How does God want us to be doers of God's Word and not hearers only? Let me give you three things. And I'm going to frame these as three ways that we should imitate Peter as followers of Jesus Christ.

Paul would say "imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). And so, there's a biblical precedent for following the godly example of others. And there are three things that Peter does in this passage that I believe we should imitate. Here's the first.

1) Be **available** to minister to hurting people

Verse 32 says that Peter "went here and there among them all." He was involved in the life of the church. He went about encouraging, building up, and strengthening the church. He didn't just sit around

⁵⁴ Sproul, *Acts*, 177: "This was only a foretaste of heaven, for Dorcas would die again. It was a downpayment of the apostolic truth that everyone who is in Christ will be presented to the Bridegroom alive to live forever with no more tears and no more sin and no more death. This taste of heaven that Peter manifested to the people in this town spread abroad throughout the whole region, and multitudes were converted."

⁵⁵ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 310: "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)."

⁵⁶ I'm not saying here that God will always use miracles to show his power or that God will always precede conversions with miracles. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 471 offers a helpful caution here: "Miracles do not automatically lead to conversions and church growth (see Paul's experience in Lystra, 14:8–18, and 19), and the lack of miracles does not hinder or prevent conversions and church growth (see Paul's experience in Pisidian Antioch, 13:14–49). Miracles are caused by Jesus' power, and conversions are caused by Jesus' power. Sometimes Jesus chooses to heal miraculously; sometimes he does not heal despite the believers' prayers and their faith in the Lord. Tabitha is brought back to life not because she was devoted to good works, but because this was the will of the Lord."

⁵⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 471: "The focus of Luke's narrative, which reports the healing of Aeneas, a lame man, and the resuscitation of Tabitha, a dead woman, is entirely on Jesus, the risen Messiah, who is active as the Lord."

⁵⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 379: "The role of hospitality in Acts receives little attention. Wherever Peter, and later Paul, went, people were ready to host them, an important ministry to those who serve the Lord on the road." Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 470: "The profession of the tanner has been described as follows: 'The process began by removing the animal fat from the skin by stone scrapers or metal knives. The hair was removed by scraping, soaking in urine or rubbing with lime. The skin was then either dressed by smoking or by being rubbed with an oil, or tanned with suitable wood, bark or leaves. If the hair or fur was not removed, the skin was dressed with alum which was obtained from the Dead Sea or Egypt, sun-dried and then oil-dressed to alleviate the stiffness' (D. J. Wiseman, NBD, 89)."

in Jerusalem leading the church from an ivory tower. Peter was in the trenches. Peter went out among the churches and he blessed them with his spiritual gifts. Peter was an edifier of the church.

John MacArthur says this about Peter, “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 ministry to His busiest saints.”⁵⁹ **Have you ever heard the expression, “if you want to get a task done, give it to a busy person”? It’s counterintuitive I know, but it’s true. And Peter, as he labors for Christ in and among God’s people, gets more and more opportunities to use his gifts and bless the church.**

And let me say a few things about Tabitha here too. Let me elevate her as an example for you to follow as well as Peter. Let’s not forget her acts of mercy in Acts 9. She was a godly, selfless person like Peter. She ministered to hurting people too.

One of the things you’ll see if you read through the books of Luke and Acts in the NT is a lot of women whom Luke describes as faithful servants of the Lord. Luke highlights their role in the church: 1) Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), 2) The women who financially supported Jesus (Luke 8:1-3), 3) Mary Magdalene and the other women who saw Jesus’s resurrected body first (Luke 24:1-12), Mary the Mother of Jesus and the other women (Acts 1:14), 4) Priscilla (Acts 18:1-28), 5) Lydia (Acts 16:12-40), 6) Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:9), and there’s also 7) Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43).

Now none of these women served as apostles or elders in the church.⁶⁰ God has reserved those roles for men. But that doesn’t mean that the ministries of women are marginalized in any way. Women had ample opportunities to serve the Lord. And I believe that God has uniquely gifted women to minister and bless the church in ways that men cannot.

So let me just encourage you, ladies of VBVF, bless the church with your gifts. Serve the body of Christ with the unique feminine qualities that God has given you so that you, like Tabitha, can be commended as a woman of good works and acts of charity.

Here’s a second application from this text and a way for us to imitate Peter.

2) Be **selfless** and smell like the sheep

If I could, let me just brag on our elders and deacons for a moment. One of the things that I love about our elders and our deacons here at VBVF is that they are in the trenches every week with our people. We don’t do “figurehead leadership” here at church. Our elders and deacons are active in the life of the church. They lead small groups. They do hospital visits. They work in hospitality and ushering. They meet with people. They host people in their homes.

One of the things that I’ve said with pride about our elders is this—“They smell like the sheep.” That might not sound like a compliment, but it is. They’re shepherds, yes, but they are also sheep. They smell like the sheep. They spend time with the sheep. They don’t stand at a distance and lord their authority over people. And that sets a good example for everyone else.

And I see that with Peter in this passage.⁶¹ Just consider this for a moment. Two guys came to Lydda to meet with Peter. They tell him they need him to come right away. They need him to travel twelve miles by foot to Joppa. And, oh by the way, the person they want him to meet is already dead.

Peter could very easily say in response to that, “Do you know who I am? Do you know how busy I am? I don’t have time for this! Do you know how hard it is to be an apostle? People are constantly asking for me to come minister to them?”

⁵⁹ MacArthur, *Acts 1-11*, MNTC, 281.

⁶⁰ MacArthur, *Acts 1-11*, MNTC, 284: “Many believe that to deny women leadership roles in the churches 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.”

⁶¹ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 315: “Peter is a model for us here. When he heard about the death of a church member, he dropped everything and rushed ten miles on foot (!) in order to bring healing to this woman. Then he stayed in the home of a tanner for a number of days. He certainly seemed to be freed from the celebrity syndrome! He had learned his lifestyle from the servant Jesus, who, on his way to the parallel event in Jairus’s home, stopped and sought out the woman who had touched the hem of his garment in the midst of a milling crowd (Mark 5:21-34). We are first and foremost servants of the people.”

But that wasn't Peter's heart, at all. He had seen his Lord be seriously inconvenienced for the benefit of a young believer or some impressionable person. And just like Jesus made himself available for the individual needs of his disciples, Peter made himself available as well.⁶²

You know Peter had preached to crowds of thousands. He had a phenomenally successful evangelistic ministry in Jerusalem. Yet he still took advantage of opportunities to minister to people on a personal level.

Even as I read Peter's epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, which he wrote later in life, I see in those two books of the Bible a pastor's heart. That was Peter. He wasn't self-inflated or intoxicated with his own fame or notoriety. He was a humble faithful servant-leader in the church.

Peter also displayed selflessness in **verse 43**. I skipped this, but let me come back to it. Luke tells us that Peter stayed in Joppa with Simon, the tanner.⁶³ Do you see that in **verse 43**? That seemingly innocuous verse is actually quite telling because a tanner was despised in some Jewish circles.⁶⁴ A tanner, if you don't know, worked with dead animal skins.⁶⁵ That made his profession not only undesirable, because he was constantly surrounded by the stench of dead animals, but also unclean in Jewish circles.⁶⁶ There was this stigma attached to tanners that would have kept them from regular worship in the local synagogues.⁶⁷

Well, Peter doesn't care about that.⁶⁸ Christ has come to establish a new standard of cleanness vs. uncleanness and it's got nothing to do with a person's profession.

Now Peter still has some prejudices that are going to be challenged in the next passage as he ministers to a fully-blooded Gentile named Cornelius.⁶⁹ Peter's a work in progress too. And God's going to work on him and steer him in the right direction. We'll see more on that next week.⁷⁰

And finally, that leads right into my third point.

3) Be **Christ-exalting** in all that you do

Peter's actions in this passage were Christ-exalting. He healed Aeneas in the name of Christ. He knelt down before the Lord before raising Tabitha from the dead.

⁶² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 472: "While Peter was committed to devoting his time to prayer and to preaching and teaching the Word (6:2–4), we see him here visiting a paralyzed man and traveling to another town in order to help believers in a situation where somebody had died. There is a lesson here for all pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. While we may (and in the West usually we do) have specialized callings and ministries, the primary devotion to Jesus Christ and a love for his people will prompt us to help people in need."

⁶³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 248: "Luke often mentioned the names of hosts or the particular trade of persons.⁶² He had an eye for human-interest detail."

⁶⁴ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 310: "In the Babylonian Talmud appears the statement: 'Woe to him who is a tanner by trade.'"

⁶⁵ CHRYSOSTOM: "'And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.' Look at Peter's unassuming conduct, look at his moderation, how he does not stay with this lady or with someone of prominence but with a tanner. By all his actions he leads people to humility." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 117.

⁶⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 379: "That Peter would house himself in such an unclean place shows that some in the church's leadership are not overly sensitive about all aspects of Jewish purity laws."

⁶⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 225: "According to Jewish law, the tanning of hides was considered to be an unclean occupation. This law was based on Leviticus 11:39–40, which declares, 'And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die; he that touches the carcass thereof shall be unclean until the even. And he that eats of the carcass of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that bears the carcass of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.' ... The fact that Peter would stay with a tanner meant he had already abandoned some of his Judaistic prejudices; he would have to drop some more in chapter ten."

⁶⁸ RUDOLF GWALTHER: "Peter's modesty is displayed here. He did not disdain such a resting place, while today kings' palaces are scarcely good enough for his counterfeit successor. Let us immitate [*sic*] the modesty of the apostle, believing in and serving Jesus Christ." Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 131.

⁶⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 249: "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."

⁷⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 374: "This section of Acts [9:32–12:25] transitions from Peter to Paul, from Jerusalem to Antioch, from outreach to Jews to Gentile inclusion." Bock includes 9:32–43 in that broader section which he entitles "The Gospel to the Gentiles and More Persecution in Jerusalem." But that might be a bit premature. Peter, in my opinion, is still clearly ministering to Jews and Jewish Christians in Lydda and Joppa. The real paradigm shift takes place in Acts 10 with Cornelius and his family.

Even Peter's actions imitated his Lord. Jesus sent the weepy mourners out of the room before he healed Jairus's daughter. Peter did the same thing before he healed Tabitha. Jesus said "*Talitha cumi!*" Peter said "*Tabitha cumi!*"

And notice when these miracles happen, nobody runs to Peter and says, "Man, you're awesome." Instead—and I have to think that Peter was directing this—everyone ran to Jesus and believed in him as their Lord. Peter's ministry was Christ-exalting.

I don't know what your gifts are. I don't know in what ways God has uniquely gifted you to bless the church and build his kingdom. But whatever your gift is let me challenge you to use it to serve the church in a Christ-exalting way. As you serve him, make sure you deflect attention from self! Make sure you repel self-exaltation. And instead direct people's attention to Christ. Because Jesus is awesome, and we are not. And if God has given us power to serve him, and he has, then that power was given for the purpose of Christ-exaltation.