

## Acts 9:32-43

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn in your Bibles to Acts 9. Acts 9, if you've got a Black Church Bible, it's page 918. Page 918. And we're going through the Book of Acts.

We're making pretty good progress. And all the time we need to keep remembering the theme of the Book of Acts, the plot line. And I think there's two threads that run right the way through the Book of Acts.

If you just flick back to Acts 1.1, we get one of the threads right at the start. So Luke is the author of the Book of Acts, and he says this.

In the first book, O Theophilus, so this is the second volume of a two-part work, I've dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day that he was taken up to heaven.

So the assumption is, we need to understand this is volume two, and in the first book, Jesus began to act. What's that saying about the second book? It's saying that Jesus continues to act.

[ 1 : 06 ] It's going to tell us what Jesus continued to do after he'd been taken up to heaven. So the deeds of Jesus and the works of the Lord Jesus are something that we need to keep in mind.

The second thread is the witness of Jesus. So if you look at Acts 1.8, Jesus says there to the apostles, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

So it will go out from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth. That's the plot line. That's the unfolding story of the book of Acts. That the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is unstoppable.

That's the end to which Jesus is working. Jesus' deeds and Jesus' end. Acts 9, it finishes, doesn't it, with such a boring detail.

Such a mundane detail. Peter is staying at the Airbnb of a tanner. Simon the tanner. What's a tanner?

[ 2 : 15 ] Well, it's somebody that works with unclean animals. They weren't kosher. And so that boring little detail at the end of Acts 9 is actually significant.

It's that Simon Peter, a Jew, the leading apostle at this point, is staying at the house of someone whose occupation shows that the gospel of Jesus Christ was penetrating into different cultures. That the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is unstoppable. And the story of Acts, and including this story, tells you and I that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a global gospel.

Let me tell you an up-to-date and true story to illustrate this. It's about a congregation in Toronto, in Canada. And the members of that congregation were pleased to welcome people from all over the world to their services.

There was one particular woman who came, but they were a little bit nonplussed, when she began doing the sermon speaking into her mobile phone. And this went on for a number of weeks.

[ 3 : 24 ] As the preacher was preaching, she would be speaking into her mobile phone. The minister's wife got a little bit fed up with this, and she thought she should do something about it. So she goes to this visiting woman.

She says, we are delighted that you're coming to church. We're really thrilled that you're here. We want you to feel welcome. But the sermons my husband preaches take a long time of prayer, and other people need to hear the message.

And people are finding you speaking into your phone a little bit distracting. Some people even think it's a bit disrespectful. The woman seemed a little bit nonplussed by this, and she explained that she wasn't wanting to be disrespectful at all to the minister.

She said that when the sermon begins, I dial my husband, who is in Baghdad, Iraq, and he listens to the message with me.

And I tried to answer some of his question. He's part of a secret Bible study of six people in Baghdad, and they are all inquirers. When the minister's wife went back and relayed that to the minister, he said, tell her next week to come and sit in the front seat, and with your mobile phone. [ 4 : 37 ] A few weeks later, he's preaching, and in the middle of the sermon, she cries out, saying, my husband wants to become a Christian. The minister stops the sermon, goes down to the front row, speaks to the man in Baghdad, prays with him, and he commits his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The minister goes back to the pulpit, finishes his sermon, they sing a hymn, he gives the benediction, and they all go home. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a global gospel. And this passage in Acts chapter 9 confirms that for us, that Jesus Christ is in heaven this morning, still at work, with his mighty deeds, even to the ends of the earth.

But what is it this morning that we can expect Jesus to do from heaven? Where is Jesus at work in our world today?

Two points, and then the two points of Acts. Jesus' deeds, and Jesus' ends. First of all, Jesus' deeds. When Reuben read to you this passage of Acts chapter 9, what did you think?

[ 5 : 51 ] Have you had that déjà vu feeling? You know, you go somewhere and you think, I've been here before. I've had this conversation before.

And when we read the end of Acts chapter 9, there should be, for those of us who know our Bibles, a déjà vu. Because instinctively, as we read what Peter does, we think, this is a Jesus-like deed. This is Jesus-like deeds. And so, of course, you've got the healing of Aeneas. And it should remind you of what?

It reminds you of the healing of the paralytic man. It almost feels like a re-record of the healing of the paralysed man. You can go back to Luke's volume 1, the Gospel of Luke in chapter 5.

And Jesus said in Luke chapter 5 to the paralysed man, you remember it, don't you? Get up, take your mat, and walk. And immediately, the man got up.

[ 6 : 55 ] Look what Peter says in Acts chapter 9 to the paralysed man. He says, get up. Take care of your mat.

And immediately, the man got up. It's exactly the same. It's exactly the same. The second incident is another déjà vu, isn't it? It's this resurrection, this resuscitation of the dead woman called Tabitha. Or Dorcas. Both names mean gazelle. I consulted the mighty Calvin about this. And he tells me that the name Dorcas originally meant goat. So let's stick with Tabitha, all right?

The raising of Tabitha. And as we read the raising of Tabitha, it's almost like a replica, isn't it, of the raising of Jairus' daughter. Do you remember that story from Luke chapter 8?

Jesus goes to the house of Jairus. Jairus' little girl, 12 years old. And she's lying there dead. And Jesus says, get up. Talitha coombe.

[ 8 : 03 ] Little girl, I tell you, get up. And she did. And in Acts chapter 9, Peter says, Tabitha, get up.

And she does. Peter is probably speaking Aramaic. The same language that Jesus used when he said, talitha coombe.

And can you see there's one letter of difference between Jesus' words and Peter's word? Over in Acts chapter 9, Peter says, tabitha coombe.

One letter of difference, Jesus said, talitha coombe. We're meant to see that, aren't we? These are Jesus-like deeds in Acts chapter 9. And we can go further and say these are Jesus' deeds done from heaven.

The text is quite clear, isn't it? That it is not Peter who did the deeds. It is not Peter who had the power. It is the power of Jesus Christ. And Jesus does these works from heaven.

[ 9 : 11 ] He is at work after he is raised up to God's right hand. So what do these deeds mean for us today? And that's a very important question. To try and answer that question correctly and biblically.

And those of you who know your Bibles and the Gospels will know that the deeds of Jesus are often referred to as signs. And when you move from the Gospels to the Acts, you can say that Jesus' deeds here are signs in two ways.

They're pointed to two things. First, they are signs of Christ's apostles. So Peter was an apostle with a capital A.

What's the mark of an apostle? How can you tell someone as an apostle? Well, 2 Corinthians 12 and verse 12 tells us that when Paul was speaking about his own credentials as an apostle, he

says, the things that mark an apostle out, what are the things that mark an apostle out? Signs, wonders, mighty works. And so can you see that Peter is in a different league altogether, isn't he, from the so-called faith healers of today?

[10:20] Peter and the other apostles that we find in Acts are quite unique. An apostle who is given, when Christ says so, powers to perform miracles only when Christ says so.

That's why there are no apostles with a capital A today. When Peter's going to Joppa, he doesn't know exactly what he's going to do. He doesn't exactly know what Jesus is going to do.

And that's why when he gets to the house and into the room, he ushers everyone out. He shuts the door, he gets down on his knees and he prays to God to show him what his will is and grant him the power to do the healing.

And so it happens. These miracles, these acts of Jesus are signs of Christ's apostles. So that you and I can trust Christ's apostles when we read them in the New Testament.

Peter, we know, had the marks of Christ's unique apostles with a capital A. Secondly, these signs point us to, and they are signs of God's salvation.

[11:33] As they were in the gospel. But there's additional clarity given to us. What is it that the risen, ascended Christ at the right hand of God is doing just now, at this point?

Well, Acts 5.31 gives us that clue. Peter himself says these words. He says, That is to say, Go back to the question.

And what can we expect Jesus Christ to do this morning? The word apostle means messenger.

And so I am not an apostle with a capital A.

No one alive today is. However, the word does mean messenger. And so as a messenger of Jesus Christ, I can say with conviction. That Jesus Christ today can cure you of your greatest need.

That Jesus Christ can heal you of your greatest need. That Jesus Christ can raise you to new life.

[12:59] And new levels of godliness and righteousness. I'm trying to read a bit more of Spurgeon. And I read a sermon of Spurgeon, the kind of great Baptist preacher, on this passage.

It was a sermon on the story of Aeneas. And Spurgeon begins his sermon with a half amusing, half serious story of a chaplain who's preaching in a local prison. He's preaching a sermon of salvation.

At the start he announces it's in two parts. And part number one on Sunday was setting forth the great need of salvation because of our sins. Part two was coming next Sunday, setting forth the wonderful provision of salvation.

So the preacher preaches part one, the need of salvation. But unfortunately on the Monday morning a number of the prisoners who've been listening to him were hanged from the gallows. And they never got to hear the good news.

And Spurgeon told that story to make the point that he wasn't going to make the same mistake.

That he was going to get right to the heart and the point of the passage of this story. And the point of the passage is Jesus Christ heals from sin.

[14:10] And raises you to new life. As the sermon progresses Spurgeon tells another story which again is half amusing and half serious. The minister had a dream.

And in his dream the minister found himself in hell and he was greatly distressed. And he cries out, is this the place that I am to live forever? I am a minister. And a grim voice replies, no it's a lot lower down for unfaithful ministers.

The preacher wakes up. And I feel increasingly the danger of being unfaithful to the gospel and unfaithful to you.

And I want to avoid that danger today by speaking really plainly to myself and to you. About the application of this story of the gospel to our hearts.

The gospel tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ can cure us from the guilt of sin. Let's go over the basics of the gospel so we're clear on it.

[15:19] Jesus Christ when he died on the cross of Calvary took the rap. Carried the can. Paid the price for us.

And him having done that, he can offer a full and free forgiveness and cleansing and new life to all who will come to him.

But we can only come with empty hands to receive this gift. It is all of grace. And he saves from the guilt of sin.

And having done so, he doesn't leave us in our sinful ways. Jesus raises us to new life. He gives us. He cures us from the power of sin.

And he lifts us to a new level of godliness and holiness and righteousness. Spurgeon, towards the beginning of the sermon, said this. Whatever your sin is, it has now become a disease to you.

[ 16 : 25 ] Whatever your sin is, it has now become a disease which is killing you. And Jesus Christ can cure you. And Jesus Christ can raise you to a new level.

And so what is the sin disease that may be paralyzing you? And deadening you? And maybe killing you this morning.

What is your disease? Is it the disease of a hot temper and anger?

And Jesus Christ can make you whole. Jesus Christ can give you a new self-control and a new gentleness and a new love?

Is your disease greed? That constant desire and lust for more and more and more? Never being satisfied.

[ 17 : 32 ] Never being content. And Jesus Christ can cue you of that. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ can bring you by his spirit a new level of contentedness and purity and victory over our self-centeredness.

Is the disease folly? Is it folly that constant hasty and impetuous rash and making bad decisions? And Jesus Christ can cue you and make you whole? He brings to us, doesn't he, the wisdom from above which is pure and peaceable and full of mercy and hope.

Is it pride? Is that the disease? Is that tragic disease which keeps so many people out of the kingdom of God?

And it stunts the growth of Christian believers. Is it the determination to be independent and self-sufficient? Not really needing to pray.

[ 18 : 38 ] And if we pray, not very much. Not as a priority. And Jesus Christ can cue you of that. Jesus Christ can make us meek and lowly in heart like himself by his life and by his spirit.

Is the disease worldliness? Is it, as the Bible says, a love for the world and the things of the world which really have got hold of you? And Jesus Christ can heal you and cue you and make you whole and give to us a spiritual mindedness.

Or satisfaction that can far outreach anything that the world can offer you. Religion can't cue you. Morality can't cue you.

I was in Ealing Broadway on Friday. Just by the Metro Bank. There was a man that gave out cards. He was giving out cards. This guy was called Mr. Omar. Anybody had a card from Mr. Omar?

Let me tell you what it says on the card. Mr. Omar is a naturally gifted from God African spiritual healer. Following a family history of over ten generations in healing. No matter how difficult your problem, is there a solution to it?

[ 19 : 52 ] Problem concerning black magic. Love. Voodoo. Sexual impotency. Business transaction. Exams and court cases. I can help you reunite with your loved ones.

Split unwanted relationships. For all your problems, Mr. Omar is the answer. No disappointment. Quick results guaranteed. Please don't remain in silence with your problem.

Seek help from Mr. Omar. I've got a number of cards if you want them afterwards. I know. I've had this from Mr. Omar a number of times. But we laugh at that, don't we?

I hope you laugh at that. So naive. Mr. Omar can't help you. Religion can't cure you. Morality can't cure you. And whatever your disease is this morning, and you know what it is.

The good news this morning is that Jesus Christ, from heaven, can cure you of your greatest disease. He makes the dead to live.

[ 21 : 02 ] New life the dead receive. Are you willing to accept that you're dead? It's a big ask, isn't it? Think of the illustration of flowers.

You buy someone flowers, but you're buying them dead flowers. They may look really beautiful, isn't it? And for a little while, they look really beautiful, but they're cut off from the source of life.

And in the end, they will die. That's your life and my life. And Jesus Christ, by his grace from heaven, can bring life to the dead.

Those who humbly turn to him and ask him for his salvation. That's the first thing, Jesus deeds. The second thing is Jesus ends. Again, we see the theme of the book of Acts, don't we?

It's reminding us this big theme that Jesus' witness is on its way to the end of the earth. Chapter 1 and verse 8. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth.

[ 22 : 06 ] And this story in Acts 9 tells us that the spread of the gospel we see in three ways. We see it first of all geographically, don't we? So chapter 1 to 5, Peter is in Jerusalem.

Chapter 6 to 8, he's in Samaria. But in chapter 9, he's traveling all over the country. We assume it's Judea. But at the end of chapter 9, he's outside the country of Judea and Samaria.

And he finds himself in Joppa at the seaside. Well, we all like to be beside the seaside. But the Jews didn't.

The Jews didn't like to be beside the seaside. Because for the Jews, the sea was dangerous. Powerful.

Out of control. The sea in Jewish thought was a place relating to the dangerous outside world. But here you find Peter in this place with the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

[ 23 : 09 ] Because the gospel is on its way to the ends of the earth. It spreads geographically. Secondly, it spreads culturally. Lydda and Joppa are in Philistia.

And Philistia is kind of semi-Gentile territory. So chapter 9 is preparing us for chapter 10. The great breakthrough into the culture of the Gentiles.

And the conversion of Cornelius. The gospel spreads geographically. The gospel spreads culturally. And most important of all, it spreads powerfully.

And look at verses 35 and verse 42. All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him. And they turned to the Lord. Verse 42.

It became known throughout all Joppa. And many believed in the Lord. So here is Jesus' ends. The end result of Jesus' witness as it spreads geographically and culturally.

[ 24 : 12 ] Is that many people turn and believe in the Lord. What's the application of these ends to us this morning? Well, if this is the word of God.

Then I say we can expect the same ends to be reached in our world today. We can expect, we can expect Jesus' witness of the gospel to penetrate geographically.

Culturally. And powerfully. I'm told that 168,000 people become Christians every day.

There is, isn't there, astonishing growth of Christianity in South America. In parts of Africa. In parts of Asia. In India and China.

Today, the witness of Jesus Christ is penetrating new cultures in our world powerfully. And the question is this.

[ 25 : 17 ] Will these ends be achieved again in our culture? There are, aren't there, many cultures of unreached groups.

Let me take you on the bus routes. Do you ever catch the E11? It's not the most direct bus, the E11. And all of life is on the E11. You can get it on the Uxbridge Road.

You know the one with all the Persian restaurants and takeaways. Which some of us so love. Goes through West Ealing. Turns up towards Waitrose. All the developments that are coming by the new station.

Goes around by Drayton Green. Cuts up through Copley Close. Into Hanwell and then Greenford. All these different communities. Or what about the E2?

Never get the E2. You're on there for hours. Northfields. West Ealing. Pitsanger Lane. Scotch Common. Greenford. Think of all those different communities.

[ 26 : 24 ] All the different people groups. Can the gospel penetrate those cultures? What about the people that hang around outside betting shops?

You know those people? Can they be reached with the gospel? What about those who are in the culture and in the grip of addiction? Of alcohol and drugs?

Is it possible that the gospel witness of Jesus Christ can penetrate even those cultures? Think about your school children and young people.

Can the gospel penetrate your school? I was sent this week. This book, *What God Can Do With a Little Oil*.

There's a village right at the top of the Welsh Valleys called Abersechen. And a minister went to a church there ten years ago. There were six people on his first Sunday.

[ 27 : 29 ] And God has done a remarkable work in these ten years. Let me read you just a couple of things from it. North for Church has grown exponentially over the last decade in the most desperate of places.

They're on the kind of fourth generation of unemployment. He says of the church, we are now the biggest employer in the valley. And have over 60 DBS volunteer staff.

Today we serve hundreds of people a week. And we're still growing. We've seen many conversions, particularly among young men. The least likely have been transformed.

We have seen those from a Roman Catholic background, born again. And dozens from the LGBTQ plus community repent and follow Jesus. Militant atheists have come to know the truth alongside former Jehovah Witnesses.

Those battling with vice have become clean and employable. We've even seen a witch become a Christian. The home page of our website reads, where else do you see an asylum seeker, a teacher, an Elvis impersonator, a boxer, a single mother, a scientist, a bouncer, a baby, a chef, a traveller, a recovering alcoholic, a teenager and an OAP walk into a building for an hour to meet.

[ 28 : 45 ] Nowhere but not for church. What about this place? What about here?

Can we expect in the years to come the preaching of the gospel to penetrate the hearts and the minds of visitors who come in here?

And so as I finish, let me tell you what my struggle is and what your struggle is. I'm not really sure we believe this gospel.

I'm not sure we really believe this gospel and the lordship of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. And that's where I think the challenge lies. The deeds of Jesus and the ends of Jesus. What is God's word for us this morning?

[ 29 : 41 ] Verse 35, can you see it? Repent. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord. Repent.

Turn to the Lord wholeheartedly. In verse 42, and it became known throughout all Joppa and many believed in the Lord.

Believe in the Lord. For some of you, it may be that you need to do that for the very first time. It may be that God has been calling you and the Lord Jesus Christ has been speaking to you from heaven through his word by his spirit.

And you need to turn to the Lord. And believe on the Lord this morning. You can do it. You can talk to the Lord now. If you want to speak with one of us afterwards, we'd be glad to do it.

Don't walk away from it. Don't harden your heart. But for many of us this morning, maybe we need to come again afresh to the Lord.

[ 30 : 50 ] To a wholehearted entrusting of ourselves and commitment of our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe this morning that you've lost your way spiritually.

That's possible, isn't it? It's all too possible. But it doesn't have to stay that way. You can turn to the Lord this morning and believe the Lord.

If you want to come and speak to me afterwards or we can meet this week. We can pray together and we can share together. And we can seek the Lord's grace in our lives together. All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord.

And it became known throughout all Joppa. And many believed in the Lord. May that, by God's grace, be the testimony of this church.

In the days and weeks and the months to come. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray. Let's pray.