

**Acts 9: 32-35; “Peter’s Service to Christ”, Sermon # 43 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
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As we look at the setting in which this miracle took place, we see that the apostle Peter was in the process of traveling around to visit the churches which were in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. And, it says here, he also came down to visit the saints who were dwelling in Lydda. The reason that he was doing this was to inquire after the spiritual well-being of God’s people. He no doubt wanted to help them in the installation of pastors over their congregations, and to confirm to them, that the gospel which they had believed, was indeed the true gospel. He did this by his performing certain selective miracles which Christ Himself would have him to perform. Actually, our text says, it was Jesus Christ who did the miracles.

But this morning I want you to consider with me how Peter ministered for His Lord in this particular situation. Peter’s greatest desire, on this journey to see the churches, was to be of service to Christ. Christ would use Peter’s desire, and his actions, to do what He Himself would have done had He still been here upon the earth at that time, and in that place. And I believe that this text is showing us that He can use us, as well to minister to others around us, if we have the same kind of desires in our ministering to others, that Peter had. It is my goal in showing you Peter’s greatest desires in relation to his ministry, that each of us will learn to serve Christ better. If we will consider how the apostle Peter served Christ in his ministry, in that situation, it may help us to better minister to others, here in our situation, and in our generation. So, 1st of all – I want to point out to you Peter’s great desire, which was to do good to the saints by His Christian ministry. 2nd – I want us to think about Peter’s great desire that the glory of Christ would be promoted in the healing of this man. 3rd – Let us see that Peter had a great desire that others would come to know Christ.

1st of all – I want to point out to you Peter’s great desire, to do good to the saints, by His Christian ministry.

Verse 32 says – “Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda.” “There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed.” The Christians at Lydda are called “saints” here. A saint is not a Christian who is holier than other Christians. A saint is a person who has believed in Jesus Christ for salvation. A saint is not one who has been canonized by the Roman Catholic church, but they are a person who has been justified because of Jesus Christ’s work on their behalf. It is because of His perfect work in keeping God’s law, that God sees you as righteous, dear Christian. It is because you were sanctified by God on the basis of Jesus’ having perfectly done the will of God, keeping all of God’s commandments, that God sees you as holy. You believe in what Jesus has done in living and dying for you, and God sees you as one of His own dear people. I hope that you see this truth my friends because there is a lot of confusion over this subject. Being a saint is not something that you attain to; it is something that you are, by faith in Jesus Christ.

Oh, yes, it is true that your progressive sanctification takes time; it will take all the rest of your life to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, but I want you to grasp the fact that even though you are presently imperfect in your obedience to God, that God accepts you in Christ, and He sees you in Christ Jesus, the Perfect One. This is why God can call you His saints even though there is very much work remaining to be done in you, to perfect you in holiness; very much work remaining to be done by yourself in cleansing yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Well, it was while Peter was visiting the saints that he found a certain man Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was

paralyzed. And he wanted to do this man good. Peter realized that in order to glorify His Master in this situation, he would need to show him the grace and the power of Christ to heal him. Being an apostle of our Lord, he knew by the Spirit's work in his own heart and mind that it was the Lord's will that this dear man be healed. Peter did not have a healing ministry, as some people think it is necessary to have in our day. Peter knew that if this man was going to be healed, it would be because Christ wanted to demonstrate His mercy, His goodness, and His power to this particular man.

Aeneas was evidently one of the saints, and yet we find that he had laid in this bed for eight years paralyzed. I wonder if you have come to realize that it is sometimes according to God's purpose that some of His saints go through experiences just like this dear man did. Some of God's dear people may lie on beds of pain or paralysis, or both, and not all of them are healed by God immediately; sometimes they live for the rest of their lives in this difficult way. What we need to understand, and accept, is that this is oftentimes, in our day, God's will for their life. They may never be healed in this life, but they will most certainly be healed, both at their death, when their spirit will be made perfectly holy and righteous, and at the resurrection of the dead, when Christ returns a second time. To do good, in ministering to such people, in such situations, does not mean that we tell them that if they have the faith to be healed, that they will be healed. To do good does not mean that they need to believe in the words of the one telling that God can heal them. Certainly God can heal them at any time. The real question is, how can we do good to people who are in such situations of weakness? We tell them, we declare to them the strength and power of Christ to save them from their sins, and that by His grace they will be sustained by Him, even if they are never dramatically and immediately healed.

I want you to see from these verses that there are times when God is glorified in our dependence. I am trying to show you that there is a truth here which we should understand; that God is not glorified in our independence from Him; that is, when we do not think that we need His help and wisdom and grace to do what is right. But often it is the case that we do not realize that there are also things which God would teach us about our independence from Him in our bodily strength. I wonder if you realize just how dependent you are, each and every day, for your bodily strength? God, I am saying, is always glorified in your seeing how much you need Him, in order to be successful in anything that you do with your body, as well as He is concerned about your mind and heart. You are dependent upon His upholding you day by day, and certainly He can weaken you or strengthen you, bodily, whenever He pleases. We need the grace of Christ to receive this truth, so that we might be bowing our will and our understanding to His holy purposes for our lives, at every stage of our life .

This passage teaches us that sometimes we will find Christians, perhaps even ourselves, it having been ordained by God for them, they may find themselves in situations of near helplessness, where they must greatly depend on other people. They may not being able to hardly to care for themselves. That was the case with this man. And the Bible teaches us that he most certainly did have something to learn from God. God would be teaching this man in his helplessness. He would will build his faith in this unusual way. And furthermore, God also had something that He would teach the rest of the saints and others around him. And that was that they should consider his weakness, and trust that God would show them how they could help him. This is what Peter was doing, and this is what we should be doing as well. This should show us that those who are observing those who are needy and helpless also need to learn; that is, they need to learn how to truly help those who are in such difficult situations.

Now 2nd – I want us to think about Peter's great desire that the glory of Christ would be promoted in the healing of this man.

Verse 34 says – “And Peter said to him ‘Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you.’ “Arise and make your bed.” “Then he arose immediately.” “So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him

and turned to the Lord.” Now, you will notice that Peter, in ministering to this paralyzed man, wanted all the glory for what was done to go to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to himself, for this healing. This was only right, for the power for Peter to heal this man did not come from himself; it came from God. And so this, Peter declares to him – Jesus Christ heals you. Let us understand that all power in heaven and earth belongs to our Lord Jesus; it was given to Him by His Father, to confer upon Him as the God-man, for His overcoming sin and death, and accomplishing redemption in accordance with the purposes of the eternal covenant. By Divine right, because He is the Son of God who has done all things well as a Man, this authority was bestowed upon Him. And He shall reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

This is a truth that we ought to glory in more. To glory is to boast. Therefore our boast ought always to be in the Lord; in what He has done for us through Jesus Christ, what He is doing through Jesus Christ, and what He will do through our Lord Jesus Christ yet in the future. Let us boast in our Lord Jesus Christ who is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. Let us glory in His Person, for His preeminence in the sight of the Father; that He is the only One recognized by Father to be Lord of all. “For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is only one God, the Father of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” We live spiritually through His grace in regeneration, and we live physically to learn the ways of God and to walk in them by His strength. This dear man Aeneas was about to come to know the reality of all this, in a very profound way. And it was not only to affect him directly, but it would affect many in Lydda and Sharon as well; changing them forever.

For Peter’s words were spoken with power to him. “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you.” “Arise and make your bed.” “Then he rose immediately.” If you would do good to people, true and lasting good, you will have to point them beyond yourself to Jesus. You cannot be caught up with the spiritual gift that the Lord has given you, so much so that it is your hope and highest aim to be popular among men. Are you a person who is always expecting to receive attention from others because of your human strength, wisdom, knowledge, or abilities; as though you are somebody great? No, no, the Lord is not pleased with this, and truly, you will come to understand if you do not already, that you must deny yourself and pick up your cross at this very point. No, Jesus is the only One who is truly great, and if He feels that He can entrust you with a ministry of service to Him, He will give it to you. The apostle Paul said in 1st Timothy 1: 12 – “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

You see, there was nothing mentioned there that Paul could boast in, concerning himself. And so, when you take up any ministry of service to Christ, you should realize that your first and greatest object of focus is to do all that you do, to the glory of God; and that you will look outside of yourself to see what good you can do for other people, in the body of Christ. Your boast is not in your gift. Your boast is not in your earthly knowledge. Your boast is not in your earthly wisdom or experience in earthly things. It is not even in your insight into the word of God, for God through Jesus Christ was the One who gave all these things to you. I am saying that there is a temptation that comes to every person to be proud of what they have been given spiritually, or what has been revealed to them in terms of their knowledge of the word. And each of us must make sure that we are humble in relation to the greatest abilities that we have, and the greatest things that we are able to do; either physically or spiritually, so that when we are given opportunity to help others in the body of Christ, that they are able to see Christ working through us to truly help them.

1st Corinthians 4: 7 says – “For who make you differ from another?” The implied answer is – It is God who has made me to differ. “And what do you have that you did not receive?” And the

implied answer is – I have received everything that I have both spiritually and physically from Christ. Without Him I can do nothing of spiritual lasting value, and I will not truly be able to help others, even with their physical needs, unless Christ supplies me with resources and grace. “Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory (why do you boast) as if you not received it?” The implied answer is – I should not glory, I should not boast as if it was inherently in me to do things without Christ’s grace and help and strength. Those who have been given much, from them much shall be required.

Turn with me over to 2nd Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1. “It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast.” “I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven.” “And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which is not lawful for a man to utter.” “Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.” “For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth.” “But I forbear, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.” “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.” “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’” “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.” “For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Now, you can see here in these verses that the Lord knew that He would have to teach Paul several important things about how he could serve Him better. Paul was already serving the Lord, and in relation to his work of being an apostle, and his future writing of the Scriptures. In relation to this he had receive revelations. He relates for here, in general terms, the greatest experience of God’s revealing Himself to him, that he ever had. It was so great that Paul speaks of it in verses 1-5 in the third person: “I know a man.” The man is himself, but he does not want to think of himself as that man while he describes what that man, who is himself, had to learn. He was, in this experience, caught up to the third heaven; that is, to the place where God and Christ dwell. It was while he was in this place that he says that he heard inexpressible words, which it was not lawful for a man to utter. He said, “Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.” He means – This was the man that he used to be before his infirmities were given to him by God. He glorified in the fact that he (Paul) had been given these revelations. Christ knew that this would affect Paul’s service to Him

It was God who gave Paul this thorn in the flesh. It was a bad enough bodily condition that Paul called it – “A messenger of Satan to buffet him”. Paul evidently felt that because of his having this condition that Satan would often be accusing him and mocking him in terms of his being able to do what he was called to do; as if Satan was saying to him – “You will never be successful in your ministry with this thorn in your life.” “People will never listen to you, when they see that you have this great weakness in your eyes.” “If you have the power to heal, why don’t you heal yourself.” But let us understand that God gave this thorn to Paul out of love for His soul and to establish him in his ministry of service to Himself He gave it to him because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations. The revelations were so great that God knew that there would be a temptation for him to think that he would think himself a great man for having received them. To check this, God gave Him this thorn. And Paul did not like it. He thought that he could serve God much better without it. It may have been that the strength of his eyesight was weakened. This thorn must have been some bodily weakness and infirmity. For Paul pleaded 3 times that it would be removed from him; that it might depart from him. But

Christ answered and said to him – “My grace is sufficient for you for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul therefore concluded this: “I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Now this is a hard lesson for any Christian to learn; that Christ’s power will be made perfect in their weakness. But Paul knew that it was true and so he received this principle of truth as the one that he would work from. It is by faith that he says: “Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ sake.” “For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Dear Christian, can you say that this is the principle by which you will serve our Lord Jesus Christ? If you do receive this principle and work according to it, you will have the very means of being able to do battle with disappointment and discouragement. You will realize that when you are weak, when you have infirmities and needs, when you have reproaches and distresses for Christ’s sake, then this is the very time when Christ’s power is being perfected in your life. Christ is going to work with you; He will perfect you in and through your weakness, so that you will be strong in bearing up under trials.

This is also what Peter had to learn, the hard way, in his life. Before Christ’s death and resurrection, Peter had worked from the principle that he loved Christ more than the other disciples. He was trusting in his own strength and ability to do what Christ was commanding him to do. The Lord told him that He was going up to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Peter said, “Even though all may fall away, I will not fall away.” Jesus told him to watch and pray with Him for one hour, and Peter could not do it; he fell asleep. Peter wanted to defend his Lord in the Garden, but only succeeded in cutting off the high-priest servant’s ear, and hearing his Lord’s reproof: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” Peter wanted to follow His Lord, and suffer with him, and die with him, but he instead he denied his Lord three times before the cock crowed. What was the reason that Peter did all this? It was because he did not understand this important principle of truth: That if you would do service for Jesus, you must learn to do that service, not simply in power of your own determination (this is what I am going to do), but you will go about to do it in faith; relying on His strength, not your own strength.

We also need to believe in the great reality of what these verses convey to us, that (glory to God), sometimes it is His will to heal a person who has been unable to help themselves physically for some time. Truly, this is a glorious truth and we need to believe in it; the fact that God still heals today. I love the language of the 34th verse of Acts 9 – “And Peter said to him ‘Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you.’” “Arise and make your bed.” “Then he arose immediately.” Peter’s service to Christ in this matter was very good. He declares that it was Christ who was doing this for him, the paralyzed man, and to show him how definite and sure he was about it, he tells him to arise and make his bed. And he arose immediately. Let us know and understand that Christ is able to raise us up from the most dread disease or condition that we can possibly imagine. Let us not be unbelieving, but believing in this regard.

3rd – Let us see Peter’s great desire that others would know Christ.

Verse 35 says – “So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him (that is, Aeneas who was healed) and turned to the Lord.” Here we see that the vast majority of the people in this region, this area of the country, people who knew Aeneas, who knew of his being paralyzed and bedridden, when they saw what was done in the name of Jesus, they were disposed in their hearts to turn to Lord for their own being saved. To turn to the Lord means that they were converted to Christ; they received Him as their Messiah, their Savior and Lord. They came to see the Lord Jesus as the “Rose of Sharon”, the “Lilly of the valleys”, as it says in Song of Solomon 2: 1. Peter’s service for Christ, and his ministry in this place, was to show them the mercy, the goodness, the love, and the power of Christ. This He did by healing this man of his

paralysis. This act, which was actually the act of God through him was the means of drawing these people to consider their need of Christ for themselves.

Jesus, at one point in his ministry came to Cana in Galilee. And when he arrived, a certain nobleman came to Him and told Him that his son sick and at the point of death. Could he come heal him? And it says in John 4: 48 that Jesus responded by saying – “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” The nobleman said to Him – “Sir, come down before my child dies!” And Jesus said to him – “Go your way; your son lives.” “So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.” The text there states – “And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told, him, saying, ‘Your son lives!’” “Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better.” “And they said to him, ‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’” “So the father knew that was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives.’” “And he himself believed and all of his household.”

Let us remember that in order for a person to believe in Jesus for their salvation that they must indeed have the faith of miracles; that Jesus can and He does heal people of their physical ailments, sicknesses, and infirmities. But that by itself will not be enough to save any person from their sins. They must also believe in Jesus’s word, the words of the Bible, the words of the promise of eternal life in Christ, as they are set forth by Christ and His apostles. When you hear the words of promise, Jesus Christ heals you, you should not think so much about the physical healing that He can do, (although He can do that if He chooses), but rather think about your need to be spiritually healed. Believe that you yourself need a miracle of grace; of having your heart changed in regeneration. Once you come to see your need, you must also come to believe only Jesus Christ can heal your sin-sick soul. Only Jesus can bear the burden of your sins. changing your life can take place in you also, even as you hear the gospel of Christ. Only He can give you spiritual life to live the Christian life.

Peter had the earnest desire to see sinners come to Christ. He was quite content to be the Lord’s servant in going about to do good; to heal the sick, and even raise the dead. He wanted Christ to have all the glory for this, but it did not diminish his zeal for evangelism. It rather increased it. I pray that this is the way it will be with everyone in our church here; that we will go about doing good, with the earnest desire that many people will see the miracles of change that have been wrought in our hearts, and they will turn to the Lord.