

# OpenTheo

## Acts 9:26 - 9:43



### Acts - Steve Gregg

In Acts 9:26-9:43, Steve Gregg explains the story of Saul's conversion and his struggles to join the disciples in Jerusalem. Barnabas played a key role in convincing the apostles of Saul's genuine conversion. Saul had to be sent to Tarsus for his safety due to disputes with Hellenistic Jews. The apostles eventually recognized Saul as a true apostle because of his miracles, including raising the dead and casting out demons.

### Transcript

Last time we were in Acts chapter 9, and Acts chapter 9, kind of inconveniently, has that section about the conversion of Paul and it goes back to Peter. It would be nice if the subject matter broke up with the chapter divisions, just so that we could say, okay, chapter 9 we covered Paul, chapter 10 and 11 we covered Peter, but it's not working out that way. So, Saul, we found, was converted to Christ.

He was converted on the road to Damascus in the early part of chapter 9. We also saw that that story is retold by Paul himself twice in the book of Acts, in chapter 22 before Ananias in Jerusalem, and in chapter 26 before King Agrippa. So, we get three accounts of Saul's conversion, which supplement one another, and we spent our last session looking at those. Now, he comes to Jerusalem after being lowered in a basket.

Verse 26, when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, and they were afraid of him. They did not believe he was a disciple. But the reason that the apostles didn't believe that Saul was a disciple, well, we don't even have to ask what the reason is.

They had every reason to be suspicious. He had disappeared from Jerusalem three years earlier. Rumors had come back to Jerusalem that this man was now a Christian, but he hadn't been back, so they couldn't test that theory.

And there were some who felt, no doubt, that he was faking or lying about his conversion. After all, the man was not the kind of man, when he left Jerusalem for Damascus, that one would think was very convertible, very easily ripe for conversion. And therefore, since his hostility was so extreme, the disciples in Jerusalem had every

reason to suspect he's still trying to undermine the church, to destroy the church.

And he's just decided to do so as a fifth columnist, or as flying as a false flag in the Christian movement, when he's really there to infiltrate and to destroy. And to learn, probably, where their secret meetings were, who the leaders were, and things like that, such as, frankly, as communist agents did with the underground church in the Soviet Union. Or as happens in many countries where Christians are persecuted, and they had been persecuted in Jerusalem by this very man.

So they were suspicious, they weren't going to make themselves vulnerable, very readily, until Barnabas steps in. Now, Barnabas has been mentioned only very briefly at the end of chapter 4. And nothing unusual is really said about him there, so you wonder, why is he even mentioned? Well, he's mentioned because he's going to be a key player here at this point, and Luke wants us to be aware that this is one of the men who has the confidence of the apostles. He, in fact, is the one who's going to set the minds of the apostles at ease about Saul's genuineness.

Now, back in chapter 4, back when Luke was describing the communal life of the early church, how nobody said the things they had were their own, if people had extra stuff, they were selling it to give it to people who were poor in the church, as needs arose. And in simply mentioning that general policy of the church, Luke goes off and tells about Barnabas and says he's one of those guys who did that. Now, from what Luke tells us, it seems that lots of people did that, but only Barnabas is singled out at the end of chapter 4, that he had a piece of land, he sold it, and he brought it to the apostles' feet.

Which, again, doesn't seem remarkable if that's what lots of people were doing, and we wonder why tell that story. But in one sense, the story of Barnabas sets up the reader for the story of Ananias and Sapphira by a way of contrast. Barnabas is one of those who sincerely gave everything that he got from the sailors' property, whereas Ananias and Sapphira, we find, pretended to.

And that was a dramatic story, and very much in contrast with the immediately preceding mention of Barnabas. But Barnabas comes up again here now, and he's going to be very significant later still. In fact, he's going to be the one who kind of brings Paul into the ministry, and even takes Paul on his first missionary journey.

The Holy Spirit eventually will send out Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas' name comes first initially on the first missionary journey, although eventually Saul, who in chapter 13 will for the first time be called Paul, he also becomes prominent, in fact more prominent than Barnabas it would appear, because whereas the journey begins with Barnabas and Saul, eventually it's Paul and Barnabas, or Paul and his companions. So Paul quickly rose to prominence in the team, but it was Barnabas who's, what should we say, a tendency to peacemaker.

He was a peacemaker. The disciples called him son of encouragement. Barnabas was not actually his name, his real name was Joseph, but he was nicknamed Barnabas, which the apostles nicknamed him that, because he was a conciliatory person, an encouraging person.

And we find that while the disciples in Jerusalem were suspicious of Paul, verse 27, Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem coming in and going out, and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and he disputed against the Hellenists, that's the Greek-speaking Jews, the very same ones that Stephen had argued with. If you go back to chapter 6, Stephen's problems began because he was in regular disputes with the Hellenistic Jews of the synagogue of the freedmen.

We find that Saul is walking in the footsteps of Stephen, and we pointed out earlier when Stephen was stoned that many parallels exist between Saul's Christian life and Stephen's short Christian testimony, and it almost makes you wonder whether God said, okay, you and your friends took Stephen out, I had work for him to do, you're going to fill that role now. Because both Stephen and Paul, we find, get stoned for their testimony. Paul survives his stoning, Stephen did not, but they're the only two men in the New Testament that we know of who were stoned.

And they both had conflicts with the Hellenists in Jerusalem. They both saw visions of Christ in heaven. They had a number of things about them that they did signs and wonders, both of them.

And so we see that he's disputing with the Hellenists, maybe the same ones that Stephen had disputed with there in Jerusalem. In fact, we remember that the synagogue of the freedmen where Stephen disputed with the Hellenists, among those that were in it were Cilicians. There were Alexandrians and some others and Cilicians in that synagogue, and Saul himself was a Cilician.

Saul himself was from Tarsus of Cilicia. And so we wonder whether Saul, prior to his conversion, even prior to his career as a persecutor, was in that synagogue disputing with Stephen. And now, if so, he may be going back to the same synagogue where he had stood against Stephen.

And now he's standing up for the message that Stephen taught. It's only speculation, but it's interesting that Luke would say it was the Hellenists in particular that Saul is having his conflicts with. Why not the Hebrews? Why not the Hebrew-speaking Jews? Why the Greek-speaking Jews? I mean, Jerusalem had more of the Hebrews than of the Hellenists.

But anyway, it may be told, and it may be that Saul did this in order to kind of duplicate the work or continue the work of Stephen as a replacement to him. And when the

brethren, it says, after he disputed with the Hellenists at the end of verse 29, that they attempted to kill him. This gets to be quite a refrain in the book of Acts.

Everywhere Paul goes, someone wants to kill him. And when the brethren found out, that is when the rest of the church knew that there was a plot against him, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. Now, in his own testimony, before the crowd in Acts 22, Paul tells them that on this particular occasion, and Galatians tells us this whole visit to Jerusalem by Paul was only 15 days.

Galatians 1, he says, he was only seeing them for 15 days, and the only apostles he saw was Peter and James, the Lord's brother, he said. So, you can't tell from reading Acts how long or how intensive his fellowship was with the church here, but obviously some of the apostles must have been out of town or ministering in different parts of town. And he only saw a couple of apostles in two weeks time there, and then he got run out of town.

But in Acts 22, when he's telling the story, he says that he was in the temple praying near the end of this visit here in Jerusalem, and Jesus appeared to him. So, he had another vision of Jesus. And Jesus said, Paul, I want you to go, or Saul, I want you to go out to the Gentiles, and you need to leave this place because they won't receive your testimony here.

And he said, he argued with Jesus, he said, but Lord, they know me, they know I was a persecutor, they'll listen to me. And Jesus said, no, hence, go hence from here and go to the Gentiles. And so, here we read the brethren in the church in Jerusalem heard about the plot against him, and they urged him to go.

Apparently, he wasn't eager to go, and even Jesus had to appear to him and tell him to go. He even argued with Jesus about it, but he did leave. And then he didn't return to Jerusalem, according to Galatians chapter 2, verse 1, until either 11 years or 14 years later.

The reason I say either 11 or 14 is because there's two intervals that Paul mentions in this period of his life in Galatians. He mentions the first three years, and then in Galatians 2, 1, he says, then after 14 years, I went again to Jerusalem. Now, after 14 years, we don't know if that's after the first three years, after his first visit, or if he's including the first three years.

And it's, you know, since after, like, 14 years after my conversion, I went there the first time three years after my conversion, and the second time was 14 years after my conversion. So, this could have been an 11-year gap. It's not important for the story, but it would be important in deciding dates of things, because sometimes we want to know what year was Paul converted, what year was he in this place, or whatever.

And I think most scholars, if I'm not mistaken, think it was really an 11-year interval. But

in any case, he was gone for more than a decade after this point. I just want to say something here.

We know that the apostles were convinced by Barnabas's recommendation to trust Saul. But there are still fringe Christian groups that still don't trust Paul. There are people, especially the Hebrew Roots type people, who have argued that Paul kind of corrupted the teaching of Jesus.

These are the people who feel like we're supposed to be keeping the, you know, the Torah. We're supposed to be keeping the ceremonial laws, the festivals, the Sabbath, those kind of things. And they say, yeah, the reason the church doesn't do it is because they followed Paul, but Paul was, you know, a corruptor.

And they say Jesus and Peter and those guys would have kept the Torah. Well, I don't have time to go into a full refutation of that, but suffice it to say that Peter and the other apostles recognized Paul. They recognized him as an apostle, in fact, although we don't ever find them, the apostles, referring to Paul as an apostle.

We know that in 2 Peter chapter 3, around verses 15 and 16, Peter speaks about Paul. He first speaks about all of Paul's epistles. He says, even as our beloved, he says, count that the longsuffering of our Lord is patience, even as our beloved brother Paul has written to you in all his letters, he speaks of these things, Peter says.

So he knows all of Paul's letters, and he certainly knows that in all of Paul's letters is Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ. So Peter is very well aware, and this is late in Peter's life, and probably even after Paul's death, he's writing 2 Peter. He knows certainly that Paul has everywhere he wrote called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, which would put him on the same level with Peter, which is something that Peter, if he had any doubts about, might resent.

But this persecutor of the church, now suddenly he's like one of the head leaders of the church, like me, Peter. You might think Peter would have trouble with that, but 2 Peter 3, when he mentions all of Paul's epistles, he says, even as our beloved brother Paul has written unto you, that's how Peter speaks of him. Now he doesn't say the apostle Paul, he doesn't have to, he knows that anyone who's familiar with Paul's letters is aware that Paul is everywhere calls himself an apostle.

Now Peter could take it one of two ways, he's either a beloved brother or he's a false apostle. He can't be both, he can't be our beloved brother Paul and a false apostle, a wolf in sheep's clothing. So Paul could hardly wish for a higher endorsement than that of Peter in the early church, and he got it, and a very glowing one.

But why? I mean, how did, is it just that Barnabas said, hey, I trust this guy, you should trust him too. Let's face it, there was a considerable danger to the early church in

trusting Saul if he was a fake. And just to say, I trust Barnabas, he thinks he's okay, so I guess Paul's cool.

That would be unusual, especially trusting Paul to be called an apostle and things like that. If you wonder why the apostles came to recognize him as they did, I want to give you really quickly three reasons that come up in the book of Acts. One of them, and they come up later, one of them is of course the miracles he did.

Paul could have been a fake Christian, but he couldn't fake those miracles very well. A man who decided, I'm going to pretend like I was converted and now I'm an apostle, well he might come and say things, but how's he going to raise the dead? How's he going to cast demons out from a distance by sending hankies across town to them in Ephesus? Even the demons acknowledged Paul. Remember, they said, Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you? They said the seven sons of Sceva.

I think that's quite flattering of Paul, that they put him in the same sentence with Jesus in that particular sentence. We know Jesus, we would come out if he told us to. We know Paul, we'd come out if he told us to.

We don't know you, so we're not coming out because you're telling us to. That's what they're saying. Paul's miracles were amazing.

I mean, he cast out demons, he healed all kinds of sickness, he raised the dead. He was characterized by this in his mystery. In 2 Corinthians 12-12, when Paul was defending his apostleship against those who were criticizing it, as some people today do.

He reminds the Corinthians, he says, surely the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all signs and wonders and mighty deeds. He's talking about his ministry. You saw the signs and wonders and mighty deeds, the signs of an apostle when I was with you.

And not only did the Corinthians see them, the whole church saw them. This was one of the things, no doubt, that convinced the other apostles that Paul wasn't just making up a story. You can make up a good story, but you can't raise the dead just because you made up a story about it, a fake story about being an apostle.

But remember that other people besides Christians worked wonders. Simon the sorcerer did mighty deeds also, so that he deceived the whole city of Samaria where Philip had preached. And so how did they know that Paul's signs and wonders weren't demonic? Well, first of all, we know that at least his story wasn't just fabricated.

He either had the power of God or the power of the devil, because he had great powers. But how did they know whether it was from the devil or from God? Well, a number of ways. The Bible several times gives us profiles of false teachers.

You'll find it in 2 Peter 2, when he says there will be false teachers among you, and they

shall do this and that and the other thing. And Jude also talks about false teachers. Paul talks about false elders in Acts chapter 20 when he's addressing the elders of Ephesus.

Jesus talked about false prophets. False prophets, false elders, false teachers, false apostles, they're all mentioned in Scripture. And when they are described, they're described as men of corrupt character.

Generally speaking, money is mentioned as one of their chief motivations. Through covetousness, they'll make merchandise of you, Peter says. And other places make that.

When Paul's talking to the elders of Ephesus, you notice I didn't covet any man's silver or gold. These hands of mine provided for my needs and the needs of my team, he said. He's pointing out I didn't do this for the money.

False teachers do. Sometimes even real teachers do. Sometimes even godly teachers charge money, but Paul didn't do that.

And false teachers always do. And then, of course, in Jude and in 2 Peter and other places, it often mentions the false teachers are motivated by sexual corruption. And they use their influence to corrupt silly women, as Paul calls them when he's writing to Timothy.

Who are laden with sins. They creep into houses. And their eyes, it says in 2 Peter 2, are full of adultery and cannot cease from sin.

Now, certainly you can't find any of that in Paul. Paul was not motivated by money. He was not motivated by women, certainly.

In fact, he not only was he single, but he didn't travel alone. He traveled with a team of men to keep him accountable. And also to help him.

But the point is, Paul did not conduct himself the way false teachers do. He was, in fact, such a good example. He could write to Timothy, who had traveled with him for years, and say, you know my manner of life.

Just do what I do. Just copy me. He could say to the Corinthians, be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

And no one laughed. A lot of Christians, even pastors, would not dare to say, imitate me as I imitate Christ. In fact, a pastor I sat under, a very godly man for many years, when he talked about that passage in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul says, I couldn't say that, don't imitate me, I'm not perfect, you know.

But, of course, Paul's not saying he's perfect. But he's saying that he's a good example. That he's following Christ faithfully enough that if you need a visual aid, look at him.

Now, a false teacher could never say that. Because a false teacher might have powers from the devil, but he doesn't have the character. He doesn't have the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as Paul did.

And then there's another thing. One other thing, I think, convinced them, and they mentioned this, when they write in the letter to the Gentile Christians after the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. They write a letter and they say, our beloved Paul and Barnabas will tell you these sayings.

These are men who have hazarded their lives. They've hazarded their lives for the gospel. And this is an important thing.

Paul's life was always hazarded for the gospel. False teachers don't usually do it selflessly. They do it for selfish motives.

But if Paul wanted to be selfish, he would not be an apostle. In fact, he said that in Galatians 1.10. He said, if I yet pleased men, I would not be a disciple of Jesus, I would be a servant of Christ. And Paul was in trouble, in danger, everywhere.

There's a list of the things he suffered in 2 Corinthians 10, I believe it is, or 11, where he gives a long list of his beatings, his imprisonments, his 39 lashes he received five times. He's beaten with rods three times. He's been overnight in the deep, shipwrecked several times.

And that was even before the shipwrecking of Acts. Now, we read about a shipwreck at the end of Acts. That was, when he wrote Corinthians, that was years earlier than that.

And he'd already been shipwrecked a number of times. Acts only tells him, you know, the smallest part of his story. Paul suffered a great deal.

And the other apostles noticed that. And they say, you know, I think he's sincere. What do you think? The guy's got supernatural powers like any other apostle.

He's got a Christian testimony to beat the band. You know, there's no one better as a Christian. And he's ready to put his life on the line.

He's ready to put his money where his mouth is. And the man was in all points convincing. And I would just say that people today, and I've run into them, who have their doubts about Paul or want to undermine Paul, it's not because there's any reason to really do so, except that they don't like something he said.

Lots of Christians don't like some of the things Paul taught, interestingly. And so they try to undermine him. But if there's anything to raise genuine suspicions about Paul's conversion, the early church had the motivation to see those things.

And yet they also had firsthand witness of the man to make an evaluation. Anyone in the



21st century says, you know, as I look at Paul, I don't think he's real. Well, you're not looking at Paul.

They looked at him. They saw him. They watched him.

And he was the real deal. So we find that they fully believed him, but he was in danger everywhere he went, including Jerusalem. And the church in Jerusalem didn't need extra trouble.

So they said, Paul, why don't you go somewhere? And so he did. And they sent him, they took him to Caesarea, which was a seaport, and he sailed off to Tarsus, which was his hometown in Cilicia. That's apparently where Barnabas found him, as we read in chapter 11, almost a decade later, maybe a decade later, Saul was laboring there.

In the meantime, there's more to say about Peter. Luke is going to concentrate far more on Paul than on Peter, especially from this point on. But he's not done telling us of Peter's activities, because most of what we've been told about Peter has had to do with him and the other apostles overseeing the church in Jerusalem.

But we found that when Philip became instrumental in a revival in Samaria, that Peter and John were called in to come and see what they thought about it, and to approve or disapprove. We see that they did approve. And then we see after they left there, that they, Peter and John, last we've heard of Peter at this point, had been preaching to other cities in Samaria.

But at this point, we're going to see that Peter made his way to some other specific places. We have two places in particular, three, actually, if you include chapter 10. And these are places where Philip had gone.

Remember that after Philip talked to the Ethiopian eunuch, the Bible says the spirit of the Lord caught him away, and he was found at Azotus, which is Ashdod, the city of Ashdod. Now, that's on the coast. It's one of the former Philistine cities on the coast of Palestine.

And it says that he worked his way north, preaching in every town to Caesarea. And Philip then remained in Caesarea, and that's where we find him in chapter 21, when he and his four daughters who prophesy, host Paul and his team in their home. So, last we heard of Philip, he got to Caesarea.

That's where he remains next time we hear from him at the end of the book of Acts 2. He apparently lived there the rest of his life. But in traveling from Ashdod, or Azotus, to Caesarea, he evangelized the towns in between. That would include Lydda and Joppa.

And then we find that Peter here is going to be at Lydda, and then he's going to be at Joppa, then he's going to be at Caesarea. So, he's kind of following Philip's trail. He had

first left Jerusalem, Paul did, or Peter.

Peter first left Jerusalem because of Philip's activities in Samaria. And he went to check on that work in Samaria. Now, I guess he's aware that Philip has been evangelizing cities along the coast.

And so, Peter seems to be following Philip's footsteps, examining the churches there, strengthening the churches. And a couple of stories, three actually, take place in cities where Philip has gone. Though in Lydda, we will see a healing of a man that takes place under Peter's ministry.

In Joppa, we will see a woman raised from the dead by Peter. And then in Caesarea, there is the encounter with Cornelius. And these are three cities where Philip had been.

In fact, Philip was still in Caesarea. It's interesting when Cornelius needs to hear the gospel, that an angel sends messengers down to Joppa, where Peter is, rather than across town to Philip. But again, it's not that Philip was deficient.

And I said this also when we wondered why Philip did not lay hands on and impart the Holy Spirit to his converts in Samaria, that Peter's, well, the apostolic imprimatur, the approval, the official approval of the apostles is pretty important with major steps, like when the Samaritans were first welcomed into the church. An unappointed missionary who had not even been sent. Philip, he had just gone because he's escaping persecution.

He wasn't even sent out. He can't really be the final word in deciding whether a whole new demographic like Samaritans are going to be added to the church, when up to this point, only Jews have been. The apostles have to see if that's okay.

And that's why Peter and John went there. And, you know, when it comes to Cornelius, well, he's a Gentile. That's crossing another boundary.

I think that Philip could have evangelized him, but Peter would still have to have come up to make sure that this was approved. You know, it was very controversial. Even Peter being the instrument through whom Cornelius was converted was controversial with the others in Jerusalem.

We'll find that he got called on the carpet by the other apostles because he had been accepting of the Gentiles. So I think that Philip, with his lesser status than that of an apostle, would not have been the man for the job in Cornelius house. But so we have three stories of Peter, one in Lydda, one in Joppa, one in Caesarea, all of which are, as I say, places where Philip had been.

In verse 32, it 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 at Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said

to him, Aeneas, Jesus, the Messiah 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 all of them, everyone in the town, turned to the Lord and became Christians. This is probably hyperbole, but it does suggest there was a tremendous influx of believers as a result of this notable miracle. Now Sharon is the coastal plain that runs north from Lydda.

So Peter was actually moving northward from Lydda to Joppa after this, but apparently people from Sharon, perhaps they came to Lydda for business or whatever, and people from Sharon, as well as Lydda, became aware of this miracle. The church grew rapidly or largely in one moment in this particular place. Perhaps the only thing to remark about this, Aeneas, is that when Peter spoke to him, he said, Aeneas, Jesus makes you well.

The Christ heals you. Making it very clear, I'm not healing you. It's not like Simon the Sorcerer who did mighty works and took the credit for himself so that people thought he was the great power of God, as it says.

But Peter's trying to distance himself a little bit from the credit for this, maybe considerably. This is Jesus healing you now. And he didn't even lay hands on him, as near as we can tell, right? He just told him, take up your bed and walk.

This is similar to what Jesus said to the man by the pool of Siloam in John chapter 5, you know, just take up your bed and walk. And Peter, therefore, imitating Jesus, and saying this is actually Jesus doing this, is an interesting way of wording it, because when he healed the man who was lame at the beautiful gate in Acts chapter 3, he didn't use that language. He said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

Now he says, Jesus Christ heals you. Same information, but just worded a different way, illustrating that when you do something in the name of Jesus, that's him doing it. In Colossians 3.17, Paul said, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And we are his agents, we're his body, we're his flesh and his bones. We are members of Christ. And as such, if we do something in Christ's name, if we're genuinely acting in his name, it's him doing it.

And this tells us something very important about in the name of Jesus. To say we do something in the name of Jesus, and perhaps most of us, what we do in the name of Jesus, most is pray. We pray in Jesus' name.

But Paul said we should do everything in the name of Jesus. But what does it mean to act in the name of somebody else, whether it's praying in his name or doing something else

in his name? It means you're doing it as his agent. It means that you're an extension of himself.

When you give somebody power of attorney to handle paperwork for you or to manage your finances or whatever, and they actually are given the authority to act in your place, with your staff, they're authorized to act as your agent. They're acting in your name. To say that we act in Jesus' name simply means that we are his agents, we are members of his body.

We possess his name because we're part of the same organism. In a sense, he's the head, we're the members. Or even as a wife takes on her husband's name.

That's why women do that when they get married. In Christian lands, they've always taken on their husband's name. Why? Because they become one flesh.

As Christ and the body are one. And this is a great mystery. It speaks of Christ and the church, Paul said in Ephesians 5. As Christ and the church are one, so husband and wife are one.

And when a wife becomes the wife of a man, she takes his name because that means she's become one with him. He's the head, as Paul said, the husband is the head of the wife. And so she's like the church is to Christ.

And she has his name. She's a full partner. She can act as an agent of him in his name.

Often they have joint bank accounts and things like that because they have the same authority over the same realm. And Christ has given his church the privilege of the use of his name. Now, using his name doesn't mean you say in the name of Jesus.

You might. Peter did in Acts 3. In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk. But in this case, he didn't say in the name of Jesus.

He just said Jesus heals you. But he was no less acting in the name of Jesus. Everything Peter did was in the name of Jesus.

He didn't have to use that formula. I've often said that when you pray and say in Jesus' name, in your prayers, well, we should pray in Jesus' name. That's what we're told to do.

But saying those words doesn't mean you are doing it. When you say we ask this in Jesus' name, well, we're claiming that our prayer is in his name. But is it? If it's a prayer that he wouldn't pray, if it's a prayer that's our own selfish prayer, and we're not acting as his agents, we're not praying his own prayers as he would.

We're not standing as his representative before God asking what he himself would ask as a person with the power of attorney would do. Well, then, to simply add the formula at the end of the prayer, that doesn't mean you really are praying his name. In the New

Testament, no prayer is found that ends with the words in the name of Jesus.

But I believe all the Christian prayers were offered in the name of Jesus. They don't have to say so for it to be so. Peter was acting in the name of Jesus here.

He didn't use that exact formula. He wasn't speaking it, but he acted in that name and could say as a result, it's Jesus who's healing you. And in the next story, his formula even changes a bit more.

It's kind of instructive. In verse 37, no, verse 36, at Joppa, which by the way is modern Jaffa in Israel, there was a certain disciple named Tabitha which is translated Dorcas. Dorcas is Greek and it's the equivalent of Tabitha, which is Aramaic.

It means a gazelle. And she apparently was known both by her Aramaic name and her Greek name. And this woman was full of good works and charitable deeds, which she did.

But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. And when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Now, usually they would anoint with oil, wrap the body of him and bury it right away.

In the Middle East in ancient times, they didn't leave bodies unburied for long. But they washed her body, put it in the upper room, apparently expecting something unusual to happen in this case. They had faith, apparently, that she might rise from the dead.

And they thought that because Peter was nearby, maybe he could come do that. It says, since Lydda was near Joppa, actually about 10 to 12 miles away, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Boy, a delay would not work out well at all because her body was uninvolved, you know, laying out in a hot, hot room.

They had to either bury it or raise it from the dead. And if Peter delayed, it would not be a good thing. So Peter arose and went with them.

And when he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out and knelt down and prayed and turned to the body and said, Tabitha, arise.

And she opened her eyes and when she saw Peter, she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up. And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

And it became known throughout all Joppa and many believed on the Lord. So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon a tanner. It was during those many days he

stayed in Joppa that he got messengers from all over the world.

Cornelius, as we'll see in the next chapter. Now, a couple of things. One is that this resembles so much Jesus raising Jairus' daughter.

In fact, interestingly, Jairus' daughter, when Jesus spoke to her, he said, Talitha kumi. Talitha means little girl or young girl. But Talitha is only one letter different in Aramaic than Tabitha, interestingly.

Now, it's just a coincidence of the language. But in Aramaic, Jesus would have said, Tabitha kumi. And it's only one letter different than when Jesus said, Talitha kumi.

Talitha just means little girl. Tabitha means gazelle. So it's an entirely different word, but only one letter different.

So there's some people think that's mighty coincidental. Peter's activities here are very much like Jesus at Jairus' house, putting everyone out, except the parents in that case, and three disciples. And then speaking to the body.

Now, it's interesting, this is how Jesus raised the dead, by speaking to dead people. Lazarus arise, young girl arise, young man arise, in the case of the widow of Nain's son. Jesus never prayed for the dead to rise.

He told them to rise. Actually, Jesus never prayed for the sick to be well. He told them to be well.

He never prayed for blind eyes to be open. He never prayed for blind eyes to go away. He told them to go away.

And the apostles acted in that authority too. Peter doesn't actually, it doesn't say he prayed for her to rise. He might have, he prayed something.

But when he was done praying, she was still dead. And he turned and said, Tabitha arise, and she arose. His command in the name of Christ.

He didn't say in the name of Jesus. That's the interesting thing. He didn't say in the name of Jesus, but certainly he was acting in the name of Jesus in her.

Just as it was Christ that raised Aeneas, when Peter said, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. So he didn't have to say anything out loud like that, because there's no one else in the room to hear it. God knew, and the dead body apparently knew, that Peter was acting in the name of Jesus.

And so he could just say what Jesus said. Acting in Jesus' name, you do what he would do. Well, Peter had been in the room with Jesus when he raised Jairus' daughter.

He said, well, how's this done? I mean, he raised him from the dead. And when you're called on to do something you've never done before, what do you do? Well, he prays. We don't read what he prayed.

I assume he was praying for guidance to know whether this is a case where God wanted to raise the dead. I mean, lots of people died. Nobody raised Stephen from the dead.

Nobody raised James from the dead when he died. Many Christians by this time probably had died and not been raised from the dead. You can't assume just because a Christian dies that God wants to raise them from the dead.

Of course, you begin to read this story, you think, I suspect this one's going to be one. But that's because it's recorded in the Bible how many unrecorded Christian deaths were not followed by them being raised. Peter had, I'm sure, ascertained the mind of the Lord.

You can't act in the name of Jesus if you're acting contrary to his wishes. And therefore, I think, getting a piece about that probably, getting a sense that God he assumed that Christ would raise her from the dead. So he just said, Tabitha arise, acting as an agent of Christ.

Didn't even have to mention the name of Jesus because that goes without saying. I'm acting in Christ's name no matter what I do, interestingly. Now, it says because of that many believed in the Lord.

And that happened, of course, at Lydda also because of the miracle there. So the Christian movement is growing rapidly in these places, largely due to apostolic miracles. And finally, it says that Peter stayed there for a while.

He stayed in the home of someone named Simon, a tanner. Now, a tanner is someone who deals with dead corpses of bodies, skinning them and tanning their hide, which made them unclean to the Jews. The tanner was an unclean profession.

Now, Peter was staying in the home of the tanner. He was not yet so open minded that he would go into the home of a Gentile. But he was at least broadening his mind, perhaps as a result of his things he'd seen happen in Samaria.

With the Samaritans, he began to see that there's times that we ought not to call unclean what Jesus calls clean. But Peter was broad minded enough to stay in the house of a man who had an unclean profession, but not yet broad minded enough to go to the house of Cornelius. And therefore, he needed a special vision for that, which we'll see next time in chapter 10.