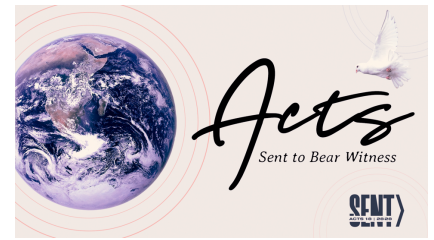


When God Shows Up – Acts 9:32-43

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



As a pastor, I know that I am supposed to trust God with the little stuff as much as the big stuff. But, can I make a confession? I struggle with that. What I mean is that I forget to trust God with the little things or the things that I deem as insignificant to him. Things that I know if I just focus a little harder or take a break from or just plow through, I can get them done and fixed on my own. However, this effort on my part belies a core theological conviction that we hold as Christians. In other words, it betrays a key truth about the person and nature of God. That is, that he not only is able to intervene in my life (big or small) but that he actually wants to! And not just in the big things, but in everything and in every area of my life. See, I once knew a man who looked for God to help in every area, and he would often tell stories about God helping in what seemed like insignificant things in his life. Yet, the depth of trust and faith this man had, specifically when things got tough, was no doubt cultivated in trusting and looking for God to show up in the small things. This morning, we are going to read a passage where two healing miracles occur. We will be tempted to ask, “Why doesn’t God show up like that anymore?” Yet, this question betrays our core belief that God does show up. Maybe we need to grow in looking for Him. And when we see Him, we should grow in our belief. Why? **Because belief is the right response when we see God at work.**

1. Jesus has the power to heal. (v.34, 40)

- a. In this section, we see two healings that happen in the name of Jesus. As we have seen in the book of Acts, Jesus’ name has power because he has power.
- b. **V. 34 – Healing in Lydda.**
 - i. Peter is traveling through the region, **apparently on a church preaching and visitation tour. He visits the saints at Lydda.**
 - ii. The city of Lydda is on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa, **about a day’s journey by foot from Joppa and twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem .**
 - iii. It was the center of a toparchy, one of ten administrative districts in Judea.
 - 1. It was a predominantly Jewish town of mixed population. Commerce revolved around pottery making, wine, figs, and linen

work. The origin of the church here is not discussed, **but Barrett suggests that it might be the result of Philip's ministry.**¹

2. While Peter is there, he heals a paralyzed man named Aeneas.

c. **V. 40 – Healing Tabitha (restoring her to life).**

- i. These two healings, unlike the one which occurred in chapter 3, seem to have provoked no controversy. Nobody started an inquisition against Peter because he had used the name of Jesus and had once again discovered its great power. But then, he wasn't standing beside the **Temple**. Things had moved on. These healings are signs of hope, bringing people to **faith**.²

d. **Healing reveals the character of God.**

- i. First, God is concerned for man. (I.e., He is immanent and personal.)
- ii. Second, he is majestic and sovereign. (I.e., He is transcendent.)

e. **God's chief purpose is to be glorified.**

- i. Why is God worthy of glory? Because he is sovereign and majestic.

f. **Let's consider Job's conversation with God:**

- i. The purpose of Job:
 - 1. Job has trials, but he is not on trial.
 - 2. The book of Job is not primarily about Job; it is primarily about God.
 - 3. The book is more about the reasons for righteousness than about the reasons for suffering.³
- ii. **Recap:** Job is a God-fearing man who lived at the same time as Abraham. He is wealthy and experiences physical and emotional afflictions that put his faith on trial. In the end, his faith is steadied in the Lord.
 - 1. Note: Doubt and searching is not the enemy of an honest and life-defining faith and following of Jesus.
 - 2. God can handle our biggest questions, fiercest accusations, and most frank rebuttals.
 - 3. What Job models for us is the need to keep leaning into the Lord and good voices (like Elihu) through our doubts and struggles.
 - a. If Job would have listened to his wife or his other friends, he would not have made it through.
 - b. Their advice ranges from "curse God and die" (2:9) to "you are wicked, so stop pretending.(8:1ff)"
- iii. God reminds Job of His glory → A divine theophany. (Chap 38 -42)
 - 1. 5 chapters / 137 verses of Q& A with God! → Wowzers!

38:1-7: Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

² **"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?**

¹ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 376.

² Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 154.

³ John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III, [How to Read Job](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 13.

³ Dress for action like a man;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

2. However, the conversation doesn’t simply end with a divine spanking or verbal beatdown. It ends far more softly than that. Why? Because God’s greatest desire is to be known.

iv. **God’s greatest desire is to be known.**

1. God does not engage with Job simply to make his glory apparent or visible to Job. He interacts with Job so that Job would know him in a deeper way than he did before.

42:1-6 - Then Job answered the LORD and said:

² “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³ ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

⁴ ‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.’

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;

⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

2. Job experiences the spiritual growth the conversation was intended to provide.⁴
 - a. I.e., Job knows God in a deeper and more life-defining way.
 - b. Caution – Job is not in a pit of despair when he says he “despises” himself. Instead, he has come to a proper alignment on his position and God’s position.

g. **What *healing* have I experienced?**

- i. Here is a different way of asking this, “How and when have I seen God show up?”

1. Do I really believe that God cares for me and is able to lead me to a life of flourishing?
2. **Jesus seems to think so: Consider the birds...**

⁴ Francis I. Andersen, [*Job: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 315.

- a. ²⁶ **Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"** (Matt. 6:26)
 - ii. We can get distracted by the "big" miracles in the book of Acts, yet, they point us to a larger truth about who God is; he is present and powerful.
 - 1. **He cares about you and is capable of helping you.**
 - iii. Take some time this week to write down all of the big and little ways that God has shown up in your life.
- h. **What *healing* am I overlooking?**
 - i. Ancients looked for the divine in everything.
 - 1. I.e., God-centered.
 - ii. Moderns dismiss the divine in everything.
 - 1. I.e., Man centered.
 - 2. If you are a Christian and cannot put your finger on a time when God showed up, then may I encourage you to go back and reevaluate your experiences through the lens of God's immanence?
 - iii. **The big picture of the two healings in this passage is a reaffirmation of God's willingness to directly intervene in our lives.**
 - 1. What situation or circumstance did you recently attribute to luck or good fortune?
 - a. Perhaps God was at work?
 - 2. What favorable turn of events have you recently attributed to your creativity or persistence?
 - a. Perhaps God gave you clarity?
 - 3. What moment seemed insignificant yet blessed you greatly?
 - a. Perhaps God was being gracious to you?

2. God's intervention should lead to belief. (v. 35, 42)

- a. **The importance of a personal encounter with Jesus.**
 - i. Non-believers come to saving faith. ... A regular pattern we've seen in Acts.
 - ii. Believers are strengthened in their belief.
 - 1. Consider Ps. 40:1-5,8

¹ I waited patiently for the LORD;

he inclined to me and heard my cry.

² He drew me up from the pit of destruction,

out of the miry bog,

and set my feet upon a rock,

making my steps secure.

³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.

⁴ Blessed is the man who makes
the LORD his trust,
who does not turn to the proud,

<p>to those who go astray after a lie!</p> <p>⁵ You have multiplied, O LORD my God,</p> <p>I will proclaim and tell of them,</p> <p>yet they are more than can be told.</p>	<p>your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;</p> <p>none can compare with you!</p> <p>⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God;</p> <p>your law is within my heart.</p>
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b. **Belief is not “blind faith.”**

- i. God never asks us to go on or to believe in “blind faith.”
 1. Remember, we believe that God is immanent, close, personal.
- ii. Instead, what we have seen over and over again, is the direct intervention by God first and foremost.
 1. **Our belief is a response to his first action.**
 2. This is also why we can hope for things we do not see! (Heb 11:1)
 - a. **“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”**
 - b. **The storyline of Hebrews:** Faith is predicated on the appearing of Jesus as our forerunner. Not one a blind wish.
- iii. Consider Nicodemus in John 3.
 1. Jn. 3:1-3 – **“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”**
 - a. The reason Nicodemus is confident that something is different and divine about Jesus is that he has seen the signs!
 2. Jesus responds – v. 11 – **“¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.”**
 - a. He calls Nicodemus out for his lack of belief because he has seen the Son of Man!
- iv. **In both healings, the lost come to believe!**
 1. Again, **Belief is the right response when we see God at work.**
 2. Lydda and Sharon respond, and those who dwell there are said “to turn” to the Lord.⁵
 3. On Tabitha’s healing: Her healing **becomes well known** in Joppa and leads many “to believe in the Lord” (Acts 11:17), just as the healing of Aeneas caused many “to turn to the Lord” in Lydda and Sharon (9:35).⁶

c. **Belief acknowledges my humble position and God’s exalted position.**

- i. This truth is central to what happens in this passage. **The one who is exalted is Jesus.**

⁵ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 377.

⁶ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 378–379.

1. **Not Peter, not Aeneas, and not Tabitha. → Yes, amazing things happen around them, but Jesus is at center stage.**
- ii. There also continues to build this anticipation and reality that salvation is for all.
 1. Joppa and Lydda have Jewish elements, but they are also Gentile cities.
 2. As more and more Gentiles believe, it is becoming apparent that salvation is not about being from the right *ethne* (people group) or the moral works of religious obedience.
 - a. Next week we will encounter Peter's "all people" vision, and then in Acts 15, this tension will boil over.
- iii. Belief affirms the reality that I need God, and without him and his intervention in my life, I would be lost.
 1. God will show up; our responsibility is to keep an eye out for him.
- iv. **Belief builds with confidence.**
 1. Confidence is built by looking for God to show up.
 2. Again, am I too quick to dismiss the intervention and aid of God in my life?
 3. **Example:** Jackie Hill Perry's iPhone charger story via IG.
 - a. She was lost in Dallas, and her phone was dead.
 - i. Asked God for help and found a T-Mobile store and bought a charger.
 - b. **"The way I look at it, trusting God with the insignificant stuff builds faith for the consequential stuff."**
- v. **Am I willing to look for God in the insignificant things?**
 1. Am I willing to admit that maybe I'm not in control of my life as much as I thought?
 2. Am I willing to step into a posture of humility that praise requires?
 - a. There is a depth to joy and contentment that happens in us when we do this, particularly in the little things.