

Truth or Fiction: Biblical Answers for Skeptics & the Gullible

Acts 9:32-43

By Phillip G. Kayser

The title of today's sermon is "Truth or Fiction: Biblical Answers for Skeptics and the Gullible." TruthorFiction.com is one of several sites that I use to verify stories that circulate on the web. And the reason I have had to do this in the past is that I have had relatives and friends forwarding me emails about some supposed crisis, and they have wanted me to take action on by calling my Senator, or writing to the FCC or some other agency. I got egg on my face a couple times because I didn't check out the story. And I needed to tell friends to check out the stories to see if they were urban legends. The websites have been a wonderful tool.

I think most of you have learned that you can't believe everything that Aunt Matilda forwards to you. Wasn't it P. T. Barnum who said, "There's a sucker in every crowd"? Based on the silly emails that get forwarded to me, I think it's more than *a* sucker in every crowd. It seems like there's lots of suckers who get taken in routinely. And the line they sometimes give to me is, "But the email says it was well documented, and they gave a number that you could even call." And I ask them, "Well, did you check the documentation or call the number?" "No." "Well, These scam artists know that most people don't bother."

And the same is true in the area of the miraculous. If we wanted to start our own truthorfictionformiracles.com, we could probably come up with a list of fake miracles as long as truthorfiction.com's list of urban legends. BB Warfield came up with quite a long list, and many have come up with urban legends in the areas of miracles since then. You can think of W. V. Grant who would pull the shoe down to make it look like a leg was being lengthened, or Marjo, the boy healer in the 50's who renounced it all when he grew up claiming that all the healings were staged (and he explained in detail how it was done). Then there is Peter Popov who received supposed "Words of Knowledge" – but we found out that they were not from God. They were coming from his wife through a transistor radio in his ear. And there are so many scams out there that it is easy to become totally skeptical of any claim to the miraculous. And some have indeed written off all miraculous stories as hoaxes.

In his book, *Miracles and the Modern Mind*, Norman Geisler seeks to argue against both naturalism on the one hand and naïveté on the other. I don't agree with all that he says, but I think this paragraph from his book is an interesting summary of the problem we face. He says,

"The Biblical record is replete with miraculous stories. ... [And then he goes on to list numerous Biblical miracles. He then says] This is the world of the Bible. It is a world of unusual and miraculous events-and a world almost totally foreign to the modern mind. The modern scientific world, by contrast, is a natural one. It is a world in which solid metal objects heavier than water sink, as do people who step into water. It is a world in which water flows to its own level but does not form vertical walls. It is a world where the dead remain in the grave and where winemakers cannot fill their wine barrels from the water faucet; they must wait for slow natural processes to produce wine from grapes. Indeed, the biblical world and the modern world are worlds apart. The one seems mythical and the other real. The one seems superstitious and the other scientific." (*Miracles and the Modern Mind*; Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI; 1992, p.13)

And some evangelicals who react against crazies like Benny Hinn are so immersed in the naturalistic worldview of modern science, that the arguments they use against modern miracles sound just like the arguments liberals use against Biblical miracles. And that's a scary position to be in. And my caution is that we don't buy into that false dichotomy. We must not be driven by a scientific naturalism in any area of life. On the other hand, we don't want to believe every claim that Aunt Matilda sends us. And I think the Scripture gives the balance between the two in almost every passage that deals with the miraculous. Let's ask this text a number of questions that are being asked today.

I. Are miracles staged? (vv. 36-43)

The first question is, "Are miracles staged?" Another way of asking this is, "Are miracles fake?" Well, I think we would have to admit that a lot of so-called miracles today are staged. It is a very carefully controlled environment. For example, we have documentation that one modern faith-healers crusades are very carefully choreographed and controlled. Those who come to the event who aren't susceptible psychologically (and are called a healing risk) are not permitted access to him. And I think if we compare this passage to what happens in some of the more far-out healing crusades today, you will see many differences. These can be tests by which you can be your own truthorfiction.com; you can test the claims to miracles. No one test is adequate by itself, but when taken together they provide a body of evidence one way or another.

A. Peter did the miracle on their own turf, rather than in a carefully controlled environment (v. 34; 39)

The first test is to examine whether the claimed miracle takes place in a carefully controlled environment, sort of like what magicians set up. In this passage we see that Peter went to them; he went onto their turf, into their

homes, rather than making people come into a stadium with a carefully controlled lights, sound, scripts and environment. Now this doesn't rule out people actually being healed in stadiums. Even some of Benny Hinn's worst critics admit that there are genuine healings that sometimes happen. Marjo, who said that his crusades were carefully crafted and choreographed events, admitted that while most of the miracles were faked, people did get genuinely healed every now and then. When you have 20,000 people praying for someone's healing, it isn't surprising that God sometimes answers, even in strange contexts like Marjo's. And so, this test by itself is not an adequate test. It's still possible to have illusion in that kind of a setting, *but it's much more difficult*. It would also preclude the mass hysteria that sometimes happens. In these two healings, none of the onlookers were strangers to each other, like they are in the big crusades. And people say, "Well, what about Jesus? Didn't He have mass crusades?" But if you look at the Gospels, you will find that His healings were all done one on one – even when the crowds came to him.

B. Peter heals actual individuals, not simply "someone in the audience who has just been healed."

The second difference that I notice is that Peter healed actual individuals. And Luke names them. Everyone knows that Peter is dealing with a paralytic in verse 34 and with a dead person in verse 40. And they know these people. It's much harder to hide a failure in that situation than it is when the healer tells people in the audience, "Someone has just been healed of xyz." Let me give you an actual transcript of one healer who describes healings taking place anonymously, in order to raise people's faith. He said,

A muscle condition has been healed. I give you the praise. Just now lift your hands and call upon His precious name, dear Jesus, dear Jesus, dear Jesus. Sinuses have just been healed, I give you praise. A neck injury has been healed, I give you the praise. In the audience God is touching people right now right here, the Lord is touching many of you in this audience right here in this studio, I give you praise Jesus. In your homes, many of you are being healed.

Someone's shoulders have just been released from pain, someone with a shoulder problem has just been healed, I give you praise Jesus.

Well, how in the world do you verify that? Peter dealt with individuals. None of these tests by themselves are conclusive, but I think when you take them all together, they form a great test for what is truth and what is fiction. And there are true healings that go on today that can pass all of these tests.

C. The healing is immediate (vv. 34,40-41)

Notice thirdly that the healing was immediate. Verse 34 says, **And Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.’ Then he arose immediately.** The same was true of Dorcas in verses 40-41. Contrast that with statements made when healers are confronted with a healing that did not happen, but which he said had happened. The claim is made that healing has begun in seed form, but you need to bring it to maturity. You are admonished, “Don’t doubt that healing has happened!” This has been one of the ways in which thank offerings are coaxed out of people.

D. It is a healing, not just a “positive confession” of what is hoped for. “I am healed” is said because people don’t want lack faith.

Fourth, notice that the people were actually healed, not that they just said they were healed. What frequently happens in Word of Faith movement healing services is that people are coached to have a positive confession, such as “I am healed. I can see.” They don’t dare say otherwise because that would be to make a negative confession, and God only hears and answers positive confessions of faith. So what the TV sees, is a person who says he was healed. What they don’t see is the person’s crushed spirit weeks later.

On July 27, 2003, the Los Angeles Times reported one of thousands of similar examples that could be given. It said,

Sitting cross-legged in front of a big-screen TV, the 11-year-old squints through Coke-bottle glasses at a Miracle Crusade video made more than two years ago in which he starred as a boy who miraculously recovered from blindness. “I liked it at first because I thought I was being healed,” says Williams in the living room of his aunt and uncle’s home. On the screen, Hinn bends down to William, his hands on the child’s face. “Look at these tears, “ says Hinn, peering into the child’s eyes. “William, baby, can you see me?” Before more than 15,000 people in a Las Vegas arena, William nods. In a small voice, the boy says, “As soon as God healed me, I could see better.” Hinn, an arm wrapped around William, tells the audience that God has told him to pay the child’s medical expenses and education. People weep. Today William is still legally blind and says his sight never improved, and that his onstage comments were wishful thinking.” Incidentally, the family has yet to receive any of the promised money for medical or educational expenses.

Now, the Bible does talk about positive confessions of faith, but this is an abuse of that concept. Nowhere does the Bible authorize us to speak in this manner.

E. No money is received for the healings

Another test that you can find in both the Old and New Testaments is that the person who prays for healing does not receive money for the healing. You may remember the curse that came upon Elisha's servant, Gehazi, when he tried to get money from Naaman for his healing, when Elisha had already steadfastly refused the money. And yet this is one of the biggest ways that some modern crusaders raise money for themselves. They encourage thank offerings; or the planting of seeds of faith; or the purchase of blessed handkerchiefs or aprons. That is merchandizing God's grace. I believe in miracles, but I don't forward ever story of healing, because I know a lot of them do not line up with the Bible.

F. A record is given that would enable people to investigate (Acts)

Sixth, a record is given that would enable people to investigate the claims of the healing. That's what Acts is. It's a written record with actual names and places. When people ask for names and places of those who have been healed in some crusades, no names are forthcoming. Now I give these tests *not* so that you can dismiss all claims to miracles, but so that you can be cautious. There's a lot of chicanery that goes on out there.

G. A physician (Luke) corroborates

Seventh, a physician corroborated the story. His name is Luke. And those who have studied the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts say that it shows obvious familiarity with medical conditions, and medical terms. It would have been much harder to pull the wool over the eyes of the beloved physician Luke.

And there are many miraculous healings that have been corroborated by doctors, hospital records, morgue records, etc. I have a physician friend here in Omaha who has witnessed many miracle healings of people who have come through his office or been through the hospital. I know of a large ministry that has had thousands of hardest case scenarios healed, but despite their success, they constantly tell people, "Don't get off your medications until a doctor tells you that you are healed." They don't believe in positive confession. They want their ministry to be corroborated. But not all so-called healers do. And given the fakery of some, I can understand it. They use excuses like – "Testing a miracle is insulting to God." No. God tells us to test the Spirits, does he not? And what better way to prove that a miracle has happened than to have a hospital say that it has happened? Would that not be glorifying to God? And yet many supposed healers resist that.

H. The healing is tested (v. 34,35, 41)

Eighth, these healings were immediately put to the test. What does verse 34 say? Peter tells him, **Arise and make your bed. Then he arose immediately.** He was tested. And this testing of miracles was longer term.

Verse 35 says, **so all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him...** Is the healing verifiable? Is it testable? Augustine, the fourth century hero of Calvinists, witnessed many remarkable healings, including (by the way) a blind man being healed completely, a paralytic being completely restored and six resurrections from the dead. But Augustine always sought to diligently make sure that any claims to miracles were researched, verified and well documented before they were given to the church. The ministry I told you about earlier has many faults, but one of their faults is not whether healings take place. They invite secular media to check things out. Luke has no fears of people checking things out anywhere in this book. Even the opponents in chapters 4 and 5 can't deny that a miracle has happened.

I. The people who know the sick person the best are the ones who believe (v. 35; 42)

Ninth, the people who knew the sick person were the one's who ended up believing. I find that very interesting. In a lot of so-called healing crusades, the ones who know the person the best become the cynics, and the ones who don't have the foggiest notion of who has just gone up onto the platform are the believers. When you can talk to the relatives and friends of a person who has been healed and know that they have been convinced and transformed, you know something has been going on.

Here's an example of a story that we could apply this test to. In 1998 a Buddhist monk is reported to have died and a few days later his body was supposed to be cremated. Even though his body was smelling from decomposition, he was allegedly raised from the dead and told people that he had been rescued from hell and that all their followers who had died were burning in hell. That Jesus was the only answer. That is a report that I would tend to be very skeptical of, but a mission agency that works in the area investigated and said that 300 of the Buddhist monks who worked with this guy have come Christians as a result. That would be an example of this one test being applied. They were convinced that this was a genuine miracle. Tapes of the testimony were circulating in Myanmar. The Buddhist hierarchy and government has been so alarmed by this that they arrested the monk and have made listening to the tape a serious crime. Now, there are other tests that we could apply to that situation as well, and probably should, before we believe it. But when the people who know the individual very well, are *themselves* convinced, it is a better indication than simply a third hand report that makes third hand people believe.

J. Peter sticks around long enough to have to live with the results (v. 43)

Tenth, Peter sticks around long enough to have to live with the results. Verse 43 says, **So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.** If the two healings were fakery, he would have been run out of town. Many modern healers can't be held accountable because they move from place to place. Just by way of analogy, think of an unethical salesperson: if he rips people off routinely, after awhile he won't make money unless he moves from place to place. Again, this is not a negative test. It doesn't prove that those who move around constantly aren't healing anyone. But when you have a long-term ministry of healing in an area, it raises the level of credibility.

K. Peter directed attention to Christ in verse 34

Eleventh. Peter directed attention to Christ, not to himself. Verse 34: **And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you."** Be skeptical when healers are constantly drawing attention to themselves and how wonderful they are. When a ministry revolves almost entirely around one person's fame and fortune, it is not a good sign. Paul said that we ought not to say, "I am of Paul, or Apollos or of Peter." Our ministries (if they are healthy) should constantly be pointing attention to Christ.

L. Peter directs attention to God in verse 40

We see the same thing in verse 40. These widows have been showing the tunics Dorcas had made and drawing attention to how good of a person Dorcas was. It's almost as if they think that Dorcas is worthy of God's help. That shows an unbelievers spirit. And if you look at verse 41 you will see the widows being distinguished from the believers ("saints and widows"). If Dorcas were alive, she would have been embarrassed with the fuss the widows are making. Peter puts them all out, because it has nothing to do with our goodness, and it has everything to do with God's goodness.

M. The result is faith in the Lord (vv. 35,42), not faith in Peter.

The twelfth test is that this was a result of faith in the Lord, not faith in Peter. In verse 35 they turn to the Lord, not to Peter. In verse 42 it says that they believed in the Lord, not Peter. Yet how many times do people put their faith in the healer rather than in God.

N. Peter stays in a lowly place (v. 43) – a fact that must have been the work of God's grace (see Lev. 11:35-40)

The last test is the pride test. Verse 43 says, **So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.** A tanner was a man who spent every day working with the skins of dead animals. In Jewish parlance this meant that the tanner was always unclean. You can read Leviticus 11:35-40 to find out about that. This is an amazing thing for Peter to do – to associate with the lowly and the despised and the unclean. And it is a perfect sedge

way for Luke to bring up the issue of associating with Gentiles in the next chapter. But it shows the humility of Peter. After these two miracles, he could have picked the best places to live in if he had chosen. But he was making a clear statement about the need for each of us to have humility.

This is in such stark contrast to the empire building and the ego lifting that goes on in many self-proclaimed healing ministries. Some of those ministries just reek with pride. The larger than life posters, the puff-pieces; the \$3,000 suits, and so many things point to a lack of humility or modesty.

So those are thirteen tests by which you can evaluate claims to healing. If you don't like an odd number, you can add one more in there – No one in the Bible did *only* healing. Nowhere in the Bible do you read of a healing ministry. Peter was willing to serve in a wide range of things. And if you don't like even numbers, you can throw in a fifteenth one: that Peter didn't yell at God or command God to heal. That is blasphemy, yet it happens all the time. It staggers me how many times preachers yell at God and command Him to do things.

II. Can a Paralytic be Healed? (vv. 32-34)

A. *The tool – Peter*

With that as a background, let's quickly go through the passage verse by verse and look at the other questions of skeptics from today. The second major question is: Can a paralytic be healed? The way this is sometimes worded is, "I've seen people lose headaches and backaches, something that can be psychologically explained, but I've never seen a person grow back a leg. Nor have I ever seen a paralytic healed. I've never seen a dead person raised." The objector sometimes doesn't believe in any healing, but we evangelicals don't have any choice, do we?

We see the tool of healing in verse 32 – it was Peter. He was given the gift of healing. But Peter only sees himself as a tool. God is the ultimate healer.

B. *The problem – paralysis (v. 33)*

Then in verse 33 we see the problem. **There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bed-ridden eight years and was paralyzed.** Man! There's a good test case of a real miracle. After eight years there was no question about the fact of his paralysis. It would be hard to fake paralysis for eight years, wouldn't it. So that's the problem.

C. *The solution – Jesus (v. 34)*

The solution is given in verse 34. **And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose**

immediately. This cannot be explained away as a placebo effect. I don't know of any placebo's that have been effective with paralytics.

And so, we evangelicals do not question the presence of miracles in the Bible. We just doubt that they happened after 70 AD. Well, I tell you what – I've read a lot in the church fathers, and there has not been an age since the apostles when there weren't reports of miracles that were carefully investigated and verified. Or, if you want a careful historian who worked hard to separate fact from fiction, read Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, written in AD 731. Can God heal paralytics? Obviously, yes. Can heal them today. The church fathers seemed to think so. I think Norman Geisler worded it quite well when he said, "If there is a God who can ACT, then there can be ACTS OF GOD. The only way to show that miracles are impossible is to disprove the existence of God." Some have tried to connect miracles to the apostles, but Acts without any embarrassment has ordinary church members (like Ananias in verse 18) performing miracles. Others have tried to limit them to the first century, but Jesus said, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Unless the Scripture clearly says that something has stopped, we should not assume otherwise. And there are a number of testimonies to paralytics being healed in church history. Augustine names one who was healed both of his paralysis and his hernia, at the time of his baptism (of all things!).

III. If healings happen today, why aren't hospital wards being emptied of patients? (vv. 36-37)

One objection that is often offered is, "OK, if healings happen today, then why don't healers walk down hospital wards and heal everyone inside?" And my answer is, "For the same reason that Jesus didn't heal everyone he came across. The lame man in Acts 3 had been laid at the gate to the temple every day of his life. Christ could not have missed him. Yet he wasn't healed till Acts 3. Peter didn't heal everyone. Nor did Paul. Paul himself was not healed of some malady. God is totally sovereign in when and where He will choose to heal. And for healers to give commands to God to heal is blasphemy. We can no more empty hospitals than we can ensure that everyone we preach to will be saved.

We will look at verses 36-37 under point V, but it is clear that Dorcas was a godly lady. Yet she got sick in verse 7 and then died. Sickness and death is a part of God's plan, and you cannot stay alive one more day that God has determined. One reason why hospital wards are not being emptied is that it's not God's will for everyone to be healed in sight. But that is a

legitimate question to ask of many faith healers who believe that healing can be commanded into existence. How come they don't empty hospital wards?

IV. Can A Genuine People Movement Happen? (v. 35)

A. "So all who dwelt..."

But verse 35 brings up a totally different question that many people have been skeptical about. The question is, "Can a genuine people movement happen?" A people movement is a phenomenon that has been happening all over the world where an entire tribe becomes Christian: every man, woman and child.

Evangelicals have expressed skepticism about the genuineness of these conversions. Surely some of those people are just going along with the crowd? And it has not been until these evangelicals have gone and interviewed all the people in the movement that they have sometimes begrudgingly agreed that the conversions are genuine, and they can't explain it.

Calvinists ought to not have a problem with this. It is no harder for God to turn the hearts of everyone in a tribe, than it is for him to genuinely convert one person. Did God not promise to save 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe? How could God work it out to such exact numbers? It speaks of His sovereignty. And this verse is quite clear. It says, **So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.** Some commentaries say, "We shouldn't push the word "all." It could be just hyperbole. Or it could mean "all without distinction, but not all without exception." And granted, the word "all" is used that way elsewhere. But my question is, "Is that a Lukan expression?" If it were hyperbole, then why doesn't Luke use all in verse 42?

B. Contrast this "all" with "many" (v. 42)

In verse 42 he uses the term "many." **...and many believed on the Lord.** In the next chapter he uses the term "some," to indicate a fewer number. But often Luke will give exact numbers. Luke is known to be a very careful historian, and he writes as a historian. And the contrast between "all who dwelt" in verse 35 and "many" in verse 42 shows that this was indeed a people movement. Nor was this unprecedented. The entire city of Nineveh repented and believed. And there have been numerous times since then when people movements have happened. My answer is that a people movement can indeed happen today, and I know of several people movements worldwide.

V. Can God Allow An Indispensable Disciple Die? (vv. 36-40a)

Fifth question: can God allow an indispensable disciple die? And the simple answer is, “No one is indispensable. And yes, even a godly person can die.” Verse 36 does not deny that this woman was an incredible asset and an incredibly godly woman. It says, **At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.** God doesn’t answer the problem of evil by denying that bad things can happen to good people. Instead, we find that God makes all things work together for our good and His glory. If our sickness and even death works better for our good and His glory, then a death should not be apologized for. We should not go overboard on this issue of healing and expect that it is God’s will for everyone to be healed. We all know people who insist that healing is just as much to be expected as forgiveness of sin. And that’s wrong.

But verse 37 without any embarrassment says, **But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.** Sickness happens by God’s will.

VI. Can a Dead Person be Raised to Life? (vv. 36-43)

A. Many today and back then doubted it (Acts 26:8)

The next question is, “Can a dead person be raised to life?” There were skeptics back then who doubted it could happen. Acts 26:8 has Paul asking Herod Agrippa: **Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?** The word “incredible” means “not believable.” Why should it be thought not believable? Paul didn’t think it was hard to believe.

B. The disciples believed it could happen (v. 38)

Nor did the disciples. Verse 38 says, **And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them.** Why the urgency if they didn’t believe something could be done?

C. Peter believed it could happen (v. 39)

The next verse shows that Peter believed it could happen. **Then Peter arose and went with them. 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.**

D. Many witnessed Dorcas’ new life (vv. 40-41)

Furthermore, many witnessed Dorcas after she came to life. Verse 40 continues. **But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he 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.

E. Luke believed that it happened (vv. 40-41)

And finally, Luke believes that it happened. He wrote about it as fact.

But for some reason, modern Reformed people have a hard time believing the numerous reports of resurrections in our own day. In fact, I am sure that I will lose credibility in the eyes of some people when I say that I believe God can still raise the dead. If you examine these modern reports of resuscitations, some can't be verified, but some pass every test that we gave earlier for claims to miracles. There are sworn affidavits by doctors, morgues and witnesses, yet people will still insist that it is either a hoax or the person wasn't dead. And this despite the fact that in at least some of these cases, decomposition was beginning to set in.

All I can say to such skeptics is that Augustine started out as a skeptic, and when reports of miracles started coming in left and right during a time of revival, he carefully investigated and recorded these miracles, including six people raised from the dead. He began seeing miracles happening in his own ministry. And numerous other church fathers have said the same.

Ireneas in 189 AD claimed that numerous people had been raised from the dead since the time of the apostles.¹ He didn't worry that people would think that he was a nutcase.

Athanasius, in 354 AD, speaks of ministers who performed miracles. (*Letters* 49:9 [A.D. 354]). These were all highly respected ministers.

Hilary, who died in 368 is said to have raised someone from the dead.

Ambrose in 388 speaks of a blind man who received sight.

Saint Patrick of Ireland records over 40 resurrections that happened in his ministry. He was born in 387 and died in 461.

These are all people whom Reformed people take as reliable theologians. And yet these pastors from the earlier church all agree with my assertion that God can do anything He wants in the realm of miracles unless He has explicitly promised *not* to do it. To once again quote Norman Geisler, "If there is a God who can ACT, then there can be ACTS OF GOD. The only way to show that miracles are impossible is to disprove the

¹ "[Heretics are] so far . . . from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them and the apostles did by means of prayer, and as has been frequently done in the [Catholic] brotherhood on account of some necessity. The entire church in that particular locality entreating with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned, and he has been bestowed in answer to the prayers of the saints" (*Against Heresies* 2:31:2-4 [A.D. 189]).

existence of God.” And so, I would encourage you to believe in a God of miracles. Don’t be skeptics, and don’t be naïve. Uses the tests of Scripture.

VII. Other lessons from the life of Peter

1. Peter was active and involved_

Let me quickly end with six more lessons that we can learn from this passage. First, Peter was active and involved in his ministry. This is a lesson that all ministers can learn from. Peter was not distant from the people. He didn’t hole himself up in a study. He worked with them.

2. Peter Exalted Christ_

Second, Peter always sought to exalt Christ in his life. He was the opposite of Simon Magus who was self-exalting. And the church hugely benefited from his selfless character.

3. Peter was available and flexible

Third, Peter was available to be used and flexible in his schedule. Both of these situations were interruptions of his schedule. And it was no doubt a busy schedule. But Peter was available to be called by God to stop what he was doing and to engage in something else. He was not being driven so much by a schedule that people and their needs got lost.

4. Peter was Prayerful_

Fourth, Peter was prayerful. He had no illusions about who had the power. He knew that anything of any good that he might do flowed from above. So his dependence was fixed on Christ.

5. Peter was fruitful_

Fifth, Peter was fruitful. Many came to Christ in this section of Scripture. And that should be our desire as well. Lord, make us fruitful. Help us as sheep to reproduce sheep.

6. Peter was not prejudiced

And then finally, Peter was not prejudiced against those who were different. In fact, it appears in verse 43 that Peter went out of his way to stay with a person who was not high on the social list. One person commented that sacred cows hinder ministry, and we should be in the business of turning sacred cows into hamburger. That’s what Peter was doing here.

May we be a people who glory in God’s power, walk in humility and

neither fall into the rut of skepticism on the one hand or become naive and the gullible on the other. Lord, give us balance. Amen.

I charge you to believe in a God of miracles, but determine to serve Him whether you receive miracles or not.