

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Lazarus, Come Forth!

Scripture: John 11:37-44

Code: 1533

The Raising of Lazarus

Turn in your Bibles, please, to the eleventh chapter of John. Finally we're going to get Lazarus out of the grave this morning. And this is indeed a tremendous passage of Scripture. It's the kind of Scripture you don't interpret; you just kind of feel it. It's just alive. There are things here that are incomprehensible to us and yet tremendously exciting truths. As we come to verses 37 to 44, which is the lesson that we'll deal with today, we come to a picture of power that is fantastic.

In this portion, we're going to see the cosmic supernatural creative divine resurrection power of God in action. And this power is beyond the ability of man to understand, let alone to accomplish on his own. We're going to see the kind of power that stops the processes of death decay, the kind of power that reverses rigor mortis, pours new life into rotted organs and starts a bloodless heart beating and pumping fresh blood to every organ and every limb, the kind of power that creates a whole new body, the kind of power that creates blood out of nothing and makes it flow fast and fresh, the kind of power that takes sightless decomposed eyes and gives them new tissue and new nerve in order that they may see again, the kind of power that takes a nonfunctioning decomposed mass of rotted brain tissue and gives it new powers to think and feel and move and speak. We're going to see resurrection power, the kind of power that in a word makes the dead alive. This is the power that Jesus puts on exhibit in this chapter and this kind of power is something that belongs only to God. God alone gives life and Christ here, giving life to Lazarus, proves beyond doubt that He is God, for the ability to give life belongs to God.

And really, that's the whole point of the chapter. Because the chapter is to verify the claim of Christ that He is God and that He does have the power of life. And He is ... He is concerned with verifying this to two groups who happen to be present here at the funeral of Lazarus. The first group are the Disciples. He wants them to see His power in order that their faith might be strengthened. And then the Jews who are there, He wants them to see His power in order that faith might be produced to begin with. And so, as He is performing this miracle of unbelievable power to call the dead to life, He is doing it for the benefit of the Disciples lest they become discouraged and disheartened over the rejection and think maybe He's not the Messiah after all. He is also doing it on the behalf of the Jews who have come to the funeral that they might see and understand that He is the Messiah and they might believe.

And so, the miracle forms, as I told you before,, a bridge from the public ministry of Christ which is now ending to the private ministry of Christ with His own which is now beginning. And in the bridge miracle, He involves the public--the Jews--and the private-His own, the Disciples.

Now as we come to our section, beginning in verse 37, we've already seen a couple of sections to this chapter. First we saw the preparation for the miracle in the first 16 verses. Mary and Martha sent a note to Jesus and told Him Lazarus's problem. And Jesus discussed it with His Disciples and decided to go. The second section, verses 17 to 36, was the account of Jesus arriving at Bethany and what happened when He got there. And now we come to the third section, the miracle itself. We've seen the preparation, the arrival, here's the miracle. Then from verse 45 to 57 you see the results and we'll look at that next time.

Now, last time and we considered the arrival of Jesus at Bethany, we came face to face with the great classic statement of Jesus that is the key to the whole chapter. The chapter is keyed on verse 25 to 27; look at it for a moment. Jesus meets Martha and here's the great claim that He uses the miracle to substantiate. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me though he were dead (physically is the idea) yet shall he live." Christ will make him alive. "And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." That means spiritually and eternally. And then He says, "Believest thou this. She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, I am already believing that Thou art the Christ the Son of God who should come into the world."

Now there you have the key to the chapter. Jesus' claim to be the resurrection and the life and to have the power to make alive physically and spiritually. That is the key to the chapter. Having claimed that, then Jesus proceeds to demonstrate His resurrection power by raising Lazarus from the dead physically and by bringing spiritual life to the Jews, some of the Jews who were watching. And that you'll see in verse 45 when it says, "Many of the Jews believed on Him."

So, He makes the claim and then substantiates it by this astounding display of power. So again, and here's a little footnote, again Jesus confirms a statement by a miracle. You remember that on one occasion He said He was the bread of life, and then He verified it by multiplying bread for 20,000 people. Not only that, He not only fed men's bodies, but He fed their souls.

Then Jesus came along and said, "I am the light of the world." He not only said it but He proved it by giving spiritual and physical sight, physical sight to a blind beggar and then following it up with spiritual sight.

Jesus said, 'I am the living water.'" He not only said it, He proved it by giving to that woman of Samaria and many people from her village spiritual water that made them so they never thirst again.

Then Jesus came along and said, "I am the Good Shepherd," and He proves it by the constant physical and spiritual care of His own sheep.

And now in this chapter He says, "I am the resurrection and the life, and doesn't leave it at a claim, He substantiates it by this blazing display of power, as He raises the dead man to life and gives spiritual life to those who are standing there. You see, in each case He does physically and spiritually what He claimed to be able to do. Jesus verifies His claims.

So, here in this particular section the resurrection of Lazarus then is an illustration of His life-giving attribute, the fact that He can give life. Now I want us to look at this most powerful miracle that Jesus has done yet and I want us to see what we can learn from it.

As we approach verse 37, where we'll begin today, just to give you the setting, Jesus is standing there with Mary and Martha and with a whole lot of people who have come to mourn at the funeral. They've been mourning now for four days, sometimes these funerals went on for seven days, this one was about to end right here. But they have been mourning already for four days. They have been sharing their anguish and their tears and now Jesus steps right in and does the same. And as Jesus stands there, He, too, is sharing their sorrow. Tears fall from His all-seeing eyes and they course down those cheeks that soon will be covered by the spit of His enemies. He is sympathetic. He weeps because He's a man. He weeps because He has a deep affection for Lazarus. He has a love for the women. He weeps because He is genuinely sympathetic for those in sorrow.

And if you remember, I told you back in verse 33 it says at the end of the verse He was troubled. That's a reflexive. It means He troubled Himself. He let Himself care. He felt what men feel. He knew Lazarus was going to be risen from the dead in a matter of moments and yet He was totally sympathetic and caught up in the emotion and the sorrow of the moment. That's His beautiful humanity.

Let me give you a little footnote here to think about. Is it not really tremendous, now get this thought, is it not really tremendous that in a book that is designed to present His deity there is no qualms in the mind of the writer about presenting His total humanity? If this, book was false, if the Bible was not true and John was trying to push off on men a Christ who wasn't God, John would not even deal with the depth of His humanity. Do you see what I mean? He would bypass that. But the very fact that in a book where John is endeavoring to present the total divine nature of Christ as God in human flesh that He at the same time does not hesitate to give a complete detailed delineation of His humanity, speaks for the accuracy of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and indeed verifies that this is a book written by God. And it is. So Jesus the man weeps in warm expression of love and sympathy and then Jesus God raises the dead man in a blazing expression of unlimited power.

Now, a simple outline will carry us through the narrative and the points don't necessarily hang together except to give you little hooks to hang your thoughts on as we go. Five basic points: the perplexity of the problem, the promise, the prayer and the power. Maybe you can remember them if they all start with a "P".

First of all, notice the perplexity. Here's the scene. Jesus is standing there. All the mourners, everybody wailing, Lazarus has been dead four days. Where has Jesus been? If He had been there before he died it wouldn't have happened. And here's Jesus, beginning in verse 37, He meets the perplexity of the Jews who are there.

"And some of them said," now some of who? Going back to verse 36, the Jews. And John's use of the word "Jews" refers primarily to Jewish leaders ... to Jewish leaders. Now it may have reference also to the people in this case, but primary reference to Jewish leaders. "And they said, Could not this man," referring to Christ, "who opened the eyes of the blind," remember the blind beggar in chapter 9 that He gave sight to, "could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind have caused even this man," that is Lazarus, "that even this man should not have died?"

In other words, they're confused. How is it that if Jesus loved this man so much that He delayed His coming until he was already dead? Couldn't He have come when he was sick? And if He could give sight to a blind man, why couldn't He have healed this man? You see, they could not justify the delay of Jesus with the power of Jesus and the love of Jesus for Lazarus. Because back in verse 36 when they saw Jesus burst into tears, they said, "Behold how He ... what? ... loved him." And they could see His love and yet they knew His love but could not understand how His power and His delay of timing related to His love. Why didn't He come when the man was sick?

Undoubtedly the messenger had returned from Jesus after he had delivered the message to Him from Mary and Martha and said, "Jesus says don't worry, your brother won't die." And they had perhaps been anticipating His coming and He hadn't come and He hadn't come and the mourners had already been there four days and here He finally arrives. If He loved him so much, why did He get here at this time? Where was He when we needed Him? And so they're perplexed. And they mention the blind beggar, it's interesting why. The answer is simple. Because the last public miracle that Jesus had done of a major consequence was the healing of the blind beggar.

You remember in chapter 9 He met the man by the temple and He spit on the ground and made some clay, put on his eyes, said, "Go wash in the pool of Salome." He went and washed and came seeing. And met his neighbors and they went to the Pharisees and said, "What are you going to do about this guy? He used to be blind, now he can see." A little dialogue happened and so forth and so on. That was a notable public miracle and it was the last one that these Jews remembered and so they assumed that anybody that could do that could take care of a disease like Lazarus had.

Now some people have suggests in this passage that there's sarcasm. That what they're really saying is sarcastic, that they're saying in mockery of Jesus, "Well, I mean, if You can heal the eyes of a blind man, this would be a small detail for You." But I don't see that at all. I don't see any sarcasm here. I think these Jews in this point are honest. I think they're truly perplexed. The reason I don't think there's any sarcasm here is because of verse 36, they really did believe Jesus loved that man. That's not a sarcastic comment in verse 36, that's a very objective comment. And I feel in verse 37 there is an honest perplexity. They are in fact saying it doesn't seem to fit that if Jesus loved him so much and had the power to do this that He didn't show up in time.

But until ... you know, unless you get in too big of a hurry to chastise these Jewish people, just remember that this is the common inquiry on our part as well. We are just like they. We do the same thing constantly. We say, "Well, God, I mean, how did You...why did You let it get this far?" right? "God, if You had only stepped in when I asked You we wouldn't have gotten into this mess." And very often we act the same way, you see. We get kind of intolerable and say, "God, I mean, I've been praying about this thing for 30 minutes and nothing's happened. God, where are You? We've been talking about this. You knew we were going this direction. What's going on?" If only...it's like Martha and Mary, you said, "If only You had been here, you know, my brother wouldn't have died." And it's the same idea. We ... we think we trust God, we just don't always, you know, like to abide by His own timing. Well, that's the case here. Very easy for us to do that. If we would only trust Him and His purpose and His timing.

Let me give you three things to trust. If you've got these three things, you're zeroed in. Trust God's will, trust God's power, trust God's timing...you trust those three things and you're a trusting soul. Trust His will, His power and His timing; God knows what He's doing. And He knows when to do it. And it's so easy to sit back and say, "Well, God has gone so far now," you're really messed up, "You're not going to be able to do anything about it now." And you start wavering into doubt. I like what it says in John 13:7. Peter, he was always asking *questions*. *The Lord* was always telling him, you know, to remember his place. Verse 7, "Jesus answered and said unto him," after he had asked a particular question about washing feet, "Jesus said,, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Just hold on to your hat, Peter, and we'll get there. That's the idea. We always want to run ahead. You know, we want God to do everything right now but God is adjusting history to His purposes. And God knows what He's doing. Trust His will, His power to do His will and His timing to do it when it's time to do it and not until. That's the essence of real faith. And by the way, God doesn't have to give you an account anyway of what He does. Job 33:13, 1 like this, Job says, "Well, He giveth not account of any of His matters." You like that? God answers to nobody. God doesn't have to turn in a time sheet. God doesn't have to tell you what His calendar is. God's doing what He's doing in perfect power and perfect timing.

So, obviously, their perplexity, they conclude the thing is hopeless. I mean, after all, Lazarus is dead. I mean, we might as well, this is ridiculous. They're just confused. We leave the perplexity and we come to the problem, second point.

And here we come to the human explanation for everything. "Op, can't be done ... it's hopeless," see, this is the result of human logic. All of our human analogies (analogies) bring us to the point that nothing can be done. Isn't that what we do? We really enjoy that. We thrive on that. We thrive ... we exalt in our impossible situations. "Well, here I am again ... now what do I do?" see. And naturally, Martha who is somewhat pessimistic, not to be compared with Mary who is totally pessimistic, as I said last week, she should have married Thomas ... but Martha, Martha is pessimistic. And she figures it's all over, let's just, you know, why make a big issue, he's dead, he's there, forget it. Human ... the human approach to the problem, see, it can't be solved no matter what.

Verse 38, "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself, deeply moved in His inner man, cometh to the grave." Now they move toward the grave and Jesus walks right up there. And Jesus is deeply moved and this idea of deeply moved, again the Greek word is very very hard to translate cause it can have so many shades of meaning. But perhaps the best translation is "indignation." Jesus is literally holy ... is in a state of holy indignation against the effects of sin and death. He looks around and sees the sorrow and the curse of sin and He has an indignancy in His inner man that brings anguish. Mix that indignancy over sin with His own sorrow and sympathy and love and thirdly with His own anticipation of His sin-cursed death that He's going to die and you know why He's torn up on the inside. Jesus was no Stoic, friends. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He knew it all.

And here is the tomb and He stands in front of this thing and it stands as the very evidence of the death that brought all this anguish on people. It stands as the very verification of the curse of sin. And His spirit is torn in the inside with the pain of sorrow of love, of anguish over sin and anticipation of His own sin-cursed death on the cross. And so He groans again. He's torn.

Isn't that a beautiful picture of His humanity? In view of the fact that in just a matter of minutes He's going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He is still torn up inside, so sympathetic was He.

Then it says in verse 38 at the end, "It was a cave and a stone lay upon it." Now in Palestine that was a very common kind of grave. Either a natural cave or a rock area would be hewn out to make one and within the cave they would, the floor would sometimes be level, sometimes it would be grated a little bit so there would be a shallow decent. And the average one would be about six-by-nine-by-ten, so they weren't very large. And usually they would put about eight shelves carved into the rock. You'd enter into the cave and there would be like three on one side, three on the other and two facing. And they would just keep burying the members of the family by laying them on these shelves. This was the type of grave they had.

Now, the bodies were wrapped in linen garments and some kind of spice was sprinkled in the folds. They had no embalming properties, it just was sprinkled there. I don't know really what the reason was, as sort of a gentle preservative for a little while and maybe to prevent initial order. But anyway, it was put there. Then the arms and legs and hands and feet were bound separately. The Jews did not wrap them like mummies. They wrapped each one individually and each leg individually. And then they would lay the body. The head would be wrapped and completely covered in a towel-like substance.

Now, the tomb had no door. But in front of the opening they constructed a groove and in that groove they placed a rock something in the shape of a cartwheel, very often it was low and they had to get down to crawl in, almost. And they would just roll the cartwheel over which would seal the tomb,, the rock that was like a cartwheel. And so this is the type of grave that it is, a cave and a stone is rolled across the front.

Verse 39, "Jesus said," this is terrific, "take away the stone." Now now we're getting down to the nitty-gritty. Jesus says take the stone away. And that's an interesting thing, too, that I think that He uses men to do this. This is a good insight. Jesus was not in the business of just doing tricks just for public appeal. I mean, if He wanted to, He could have had that stone fly up in the air and do flips. He could have had that stone write skywriting across the sky just by a mira ... He doesn't do that. Jesus does not do things like that. He's not in the business of clowning around with His power. Only God can raise the dead but men can move the stone. So He says, "You guys move the stone. You do what you do and I'll do what I do." And so He says move the stone.

Incidentally, at His own ... somebody asked the question, "Well, at His own resurrection He didn't have men move the stone." No, that's rather obvious because He was in the inside of the grave and there was nobody in there with Him to tell to move the stone so He just got an angel to do it. But in this case He has these people remove the stone.

Well, the command to remove the stone just activated Martha. Evidently, Martha was a very outspoken individual and she says something that is completely impulsive. It's just ... it's a reaction to what's going on. She's in a state of terror already. Her heart is crushed because of what has happened to Lazarus. The whole scene is sorrow and anguish and wailing and mourning. It's a mess. And now Jesus says roll the stone away and it just stabs her like a knife. And this impulsive reply states the universal approach to all Problems, "Oh-oh, forget it, it can't be done," see. And even in her faith doubt has found its way. The seriousness of the problem is just too much.

So, she says this, verse 39, "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Him," that is to Jesus, "Lord, by this time he stinketh for he hath been dead four days." In other words, her thoughts are all on the corpse, see. She is visualizing this corpse. And she's saying, "O Lord, I mean, who wants to

see that corpse that stink...You roll that stone away and whew! You know." Because she knew that naturally in the process of decomposition there is an odor and so she thought it would ... what a horrible way to see her brother. She wanted to remember her brother as he was and when they had laid them in there so gently and so clean and all...and all of the decay. Evidently she thought Jesus just wanted a last look at him, see. That Jesus just wanted to just go in and, you know, and just have a last look at Lazarus. And so she says, "Lord, he stinks already. The odor will be terrible. He's in decomposition. We don't want to see him like that."

And, of course, this isn't a calculated statement. This is a quick thoughtless reaction. And her heart is just full of terror. Can you imagine the fear, the anxiety, the terror going on in her heart and mind, just tearing her apart as she hears Jesus say, "Roll that stone away"? She couldn't stand the exposure of that corpse. She probably figured, "Well, after all, he's going to be raised at the last day anyway, why go through all this? We'll see him again." Remember back in verse 21 ... verse 23, I mean, Jesus said, "Your brother will rise again?" And she said in verse 24, "Yes, I know, at the resurrection, the last day." So she was thinking future.

And so, she just reacts, she just throws the ... "Here's the problem, Lord, it's too late, You can't do anything, too far gone." Like she said earlier, if only You had been here before You could have stopped this thing and now it's passed Your control. And the odor of death would be potent by this time and there was nothing to check the process of decay. The Jews had no embalming process at all. The Egyptians did. The Egyptians had a very sophisticated method of embalming. First of all, they disemboweled the entire body and removed the brain so there would be no inward deterioration. And then they soaked the body in some kind of a chemical solution that they had developed and they soaked the body for 70 days. At the end of 70 days they wrapped them like the mummies that we see and that's why they preserved them so long. But the Jews had no such process. And really, 70 days, that's a whole lot of effort for nothing. When somebody's dead, they're dead, just forget it.

So, Martha can only see the corpse, that's all, just the corpse, just the problems. She's got, you know, tunnel vision. All she can see is the corpse and the problem.

It's an interesting comment about the four-days idea. The ancient Jewish tradition used to say that when a person died, for four days his spirit floated around the body hoping to gain a reentry. But on the fourth day, the face was no longer recognizable and so the spirit would depart. So perhaps reflecting upon the tradition in her own mind, she realizes that the decay would be so serious now that it's hopeless. And so that sets the stage.

So, we see the problem and the perplexity. The perplexed Jews who can't figure out how come if He loves him so much He didn't show up. And Martha who only sees the problem of a corpse in there that's already giving off an odor and in the state of decomposition, it's too late, why go to all that trouble of rolling the stone away just to look at that thing which would be horrifying.

In the midst of all this stuff, we come up with the promise. And that's in verse 40. And here Jesus really hits the nail on the head. "Jesus saith unto her," and this is good, "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Now that may be ... He may have said that direct statement to her earlier. If He did it's not recorded. We don't have that exact statement. Or that may be a composite of verse 4, verse 25 and verse 26 and just summarizing it. Whatever, Jesus had said this to her or implied this. And He repeats it.

Now notice it, here's a real key. "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" And back in verse 4, remember, when the first message came and they told Him that Lazarus was sick, He said, "This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified by it." And over in verse 25 and 26 He told her to believe. So He had told her to believe and she'd see the glory of God.

Now here comes something you're going to have to think with me on this because I want you to get this truth. This is very important. It has many ramifications ... particularly to our Christian lives. Now watch this. Jesus said, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe you'd see the glory of God?" If you believe what? In Me, right? Now watch this. He does not say, "If you believe, I will do the miracle." No. He doesn't make the miracle conditioned on her faith, does He? He says, "If you believe, you will...what? ... see the glory of God." Now there's a great distinction there. He is not saying, "If you believe, I'll do the miracle." No, no, the sovereign act of Christ in raising Lazarus would have happened whether Martha believed or not. But, in order for her to see the glory of God in the miracle, she had to have her faith in Christ. Do you see the difference?

Now, I'll delineate it a little more because it's really an exciting truth. Now watch this. She has been fighting a battle of faith and doubt, right? Right now she's got her tunnel vision focused on what? The corpse ... not Christ. okay? Now, Christ says, "In this miracle, Martha, I don't want you to see a corpse made alive, I want you to see the Son of God glorified." Do you see the difference? The difference is just this, if you keep your eyes on the corpse, when the corpse comes alive all you're going to see is a living body. If you keep your eyes on Me, when the corpse comes alive all you're going to see is My glory. Do you see the difference? You see, what you carry into the miracle, Martha, is what you're going to get out of it. That's exactly what He's saying.

Oh, this is a tremendous principle. And He says I want you to see the glory of God. Now the glory of God is everything, isn't it? Everything that is, is what it is because of the glory of God. That's the theme of the universe, the glory of God. Everything is for God's glory...everything. There are only two rebels, remember, fallen angels and fallen men. And God takes care of them. Everything in the universe is to give glory to God. And so, Jesus says, "I want you to see in this the glory of God and Myself. I'm not nearly so concerned about what you think of Lazarus as I am about what you think of Me," do you see?

May I add this? This miracle was for the glory of God, not primarily for the life of Lazarus. I mean, it was not big thing for Lazarus; he's going to die again anyway. The miracle was for the glory of God, wasn't it? And for her to be limited only to seeing the healing of Lazarus or the raising of Lazarus would not have been what Christ wanted her to see. Oh, this is a very important truth.

Now you say, "What is the glory of God?" The glory of God is the revelation of all of His excellencies ... all of His attributes, all the fullness of His person. For example, His glory takes many, many facets. Moses said in Exodus 33:18 "Show me Your glory." And what did God show him? His goodness, His grace and His mercy. See. Those are just three of God's attributes. All of God's attributes or excellencies composite His glory.

Now, one other attribute gives Him glory and that is His ability to give life. Now when Jesus came He was God in a body, wasn't He? He was the glory of God embodied, right? The expressed image of His person. He was the glory of God, Hebrews 1:3. John 1:14, "In Him was glory." Now Christ comes as the glory of God. Now you can see glory in His mercy, in His grace, in His goodness, in His love, in His judgment, in His justice, in His wrath. In all the attributes that Christ gave revealed the excellencies of God, didn't they?

But, here is one particular manifestation of glory. What is it? The ability to give life ... see. That's one of His attributes along with the others. And Jesus is saying, "Martha, I want you to see this one manifestation of glory, the ability to give resurrection life." In other words, "Martha, get your eyes on Me."

Did you know that resurrection life was one of the attributes of God's glory? In Romans 6, listen to this, tremendous truth, verse 4, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death," that's speaking of our death with Christ, we died with Him. Now watch this, "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life." What raised Christ from the dead? The glory of the Father. What is the glory of the Father? That manifestation of it in resurrection power. One of the excellencies, one of the manifestations of God's glory is resurrection power. And so, Jesus says this miracle is for you to see the manifestation of God's glory in resurrection power. "Martha, I'm not so concerned that you be preoccupied with Lazarus. I want you to be preoccupied with Me and My glory."

Now you say, "Well, how does that apply to us?" Just this. And this is really an important lesson for us to learn. If Martha sets her heart on the corpse, all she's going to see is a living body. If Martha sets her heart on Christ and then the miracle happens, she's going to see a glorified Christ. Right? That's the key. And so, Jesus is saying, "Martha, if you'll only stop thinking about a smelly rotten corpse and rivet your attention on Me, then when the miracle happens you're going to see a true sign of My deity and My glory." And that's really what He wanted.

And you know, we're like that. You know what happens? If you go through life and all you see is the problems, you know that's how some people are, just problems, problems, problems. All they ever see. And they keep their eyes on the problems, they get ulcers, they get worries and they get gray hairs and they go on through all these problems, problems, problems. And you know what happens? When God sees ... when God answers their problems, you know what they see? They see an answer to their problem. Oh, I see the solution, there it is right there. Oh dear, there's another problem...oh, there's another solution. They always see, see. Because they've got their eyes on their problems ... eyes on their problems. So what do they see when the answer comes? The solution to their problem. That's all.

But you know what happens to the Christian who keeps his eyes on Jesus Christ? When the solution comes, what does he see? He sees the glory of Jesus Christ. And you know, every time a problem's answered, you say, "Hey, praise the Lord, this is terrific." See. It's terrific. I've seen the glory of God. Listen, would you like to see the glory of God? Moses did. He said, "God, show me Your glory." God tucked him in the side of a rock and He said, "Okay, Moses, I'm going to let a little of my afterglow, you know, pass by ... you couldn't see the whole thing and blind you ... but a little of My afterglow will kind of drift your way." So He tucks him in a rock and Moses is in there and whew, he sees God's goodness and grace and mercy in the form of the Shekinah light, right? Well, you and I don't see the Shekinah but we can see the glory of God, sure we can. Where is it? It's in the face of Jesus Christ, isn't it? As we gaze in His face, everything that happens in our lives becomes a glory to Him.

Now let me show you the verse. If you haven't memorized this verse, memorize it. Second Corinthians 3:18, it's a key verse. Listen to this, 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all with unveiled faith," boy, since we've been saved the veil is off, we can see it now, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." What are we supposed to be looking at in our Christian lives, our problems? No, no, no, we're looking into the glory of the Lord. And what happens to us? We are, listen to this one, terrific, changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. You know what that verse is saying? That's saying that when you gaze into the face of Jesus Christ, you're going to see His glory. And not only that, you are literally going to be changed into His image from glory to glory. His glory is going to become your glory. You're going to be Christ-like and actually giving off His attributes.

Is a Christian supposed to keep his eyes on his problem? No. Keep his eyes on Jesus Christ. Don't worry about your problems. If you look at your problems, all you're going to see is answers to your problems. If you look at Christ, all you're going to see is glory for Him. You see, that's what's so devastating about psychologically oriented preaching. Psychologically oriented preaching focuses on everybody's problems, that's absurd. All you need to do is don't even worry about your problems, you focus on Jesus Christ, your attention is riveted to Him and whatever happens you see His glory. And His glory becomes your glory as the Spirit of God transforms you into His image. And the excellencies

and the attributes that are His become yours and you become like Him as you gaze at His glory. That's a great promise, isn't it? He says, "Martha, get your eyes on the right thing and you're going to see glory."

I'll tell you, I'm ready to see some glory. I don't care about seeing problems. I want to see glory, the excellencies of God. And so, we keep our minds riveted on Christ. What a promise.

And then we see not only the perplexity, the problem and the promise but look at the prayer. Jesus prays a prayer in verse 41. It's not really a petition; it's a thanksgiving prayer to the Father. Just the first part of 41. "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid." Evidently they had been standing still, not moving the stone until Martha and Jesus got this whole thing worked out. Then they were activated and they took the stone away. Then Jesus prays to the Father a simple prayer of thanks, not a petition. He doesn't ask the Father. He thanks Him. And notice this, "And Jesus lifted up His eyes," He just changes His demeanor and lifts His eyes toward heaven, it's beautiful, "and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me," now watch this, "and I knew that Thou hearest Me always."

Now you say, "What's He doing this for? Why is He praying out loud this prayer?" I'll show you why. Look at verse 42 in the middle. "But because of the people who stand by I said it that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Now, what was Jesus' great claim all through His ministry? What was it? That He was sent from God. That He was God in human flesh. And now what He's doing is publicly announcing that He and God are one. "Father, isn't it wonderful to know that You and I have already agreed on this whole deal? And that You always hear Me because I always ask according to Your mind and Your will." What's He doing, friends? This is a prayer that really is an announcement of the unity of the Father and the Son, isn't it? Really what He's doing. He's just standing up and declaring an absolute unity. He doesn't have to ask God for the power to raise Lazarus; He had the power ... no question. He didn't have to ask God for the right to do it; He had the right to do it. He didn't have to ask God what God wanted, He knew, He was God. And yet He was distinct. And so, He just says, "Thank You, Father, that we always agree on everything."

Now, could any man say that to God? Could you say that? God, I'm so happy that You and I agree on everything. I mean, that would be the epitome of something or other ... egotism, to be sure. You and God don't agree on everything. Jesus could say, "Father, it's wonderful that You and I agree on everything." That would be absolute blasphemy if it weren't for Christ being God. Oh, it's tremendous. And so He makes this claim public. So the prayer is a thanks that He's one with the Father.

You know what He does this for? He wants those people there to know, especially the Jewish people, He wants them to know that He is connected with God. Do you see?

All right, now the power. The prayer is over, now watch the power. Talk about power, verse 43 He's got everybody prepared. He said all He wants to say. Everybody's in the right frame of reference and standing there in sheer terror. The stone's away, the tomb is open. And the smell is, you know, would normally be exuding from the tomb ... now whether or not it's there, I don't know. But then something happens. Evidently it would have been there. Verse 43, "And when He had thus spoken," that is when He cleared up everything, all the details, "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth."

Now, folks, that is the critical moment because if Lazarus doesn't come out of there, Jesus is through. It's all over. He called the shot and it had to happen. And the question immediately must have leaped in the minds of those people ... they must have been stricken with terror, just terror, fear, whether or not the imperative command of Jesus Christ to death to give up its victim and relinquish its grasp would be obeyed or not. Can you imagine the panic in their hearts? The pounding of their hearts when He said, "Lazarus, come forth."

Did He have the power to get him out of that tomb? Did He have the power to reverse death? Did He have the power to recreate fresh skin and all the organs of that body and have that man walk out of that grave? That's the question. And notice that He says it with a loud voice and the word is kraugaz and it's a word used to describe the shouting of a multitude, see. Just, you know, the loudest of the loud.

You say, "Well, why did He shout so loud?" well, the Bible doesn't say but I could give you possibly three reasons. Number one, in keeping with the character of death as a deep, deep sleep, He was shouting as if to release him from the sleep of death. Secondly, it certainly was a loud shout in comparison with all the power it was going to take to do it. That kind of shout fits that kind of power. But thirdly, I think He did it to shock the people standing around there into the realization that was going to happen was going to happen because He said so. He wanted them to tie the resurrection in with what He said. They'd hear Him. And so, He says, "Lazarus, come forth."

What power, three words, that's all. And Lazarus was addressed personally. You see. And it's a good thing because if He hadn't said "Lazarus" Hades would have emptied itself. He had so much power that every grave in the earth would have split wide open. So, He had to limit His power by saying "Lazarus." And he said it in a loud voice.

Someday, do you know something exciting, terrific? Someday if we're not all raptured and caught up in the air, we're going to be resurrected like Lazarus' body was. Our bodies are going to come out of the grave. And it's going to happen at the rapture and it's going to happen kind of like this, I like it. Over in I Thessalonians, just one quick verse there, two really but 1 Thessalonians 4:16, this is good, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with ... what? ... with a shout." Isn't that something else? With a shout. "The voice of the archangel also, the trump of God, the dead in Christ shall rise

first then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together to meet them in the air," you know, so forth and so on.

Now, when Christ comes to collect the church, He's going to do it with a shout. Now I always used to wonder, "What is that going to be? What's going to be that shout?" Well, I don't know, maybe this is the key. Maybe He's going to just say, "Come forth," something ... boom, everybody ... all the bodies come out of the grave, new resurrection bodies. What power. You can't even fathom that kind of power, friends. What kind of power is that, the ability to make dead people alive? Decomposed bodies at the Rapture that have been dead for thousands of years are going to come alive. Fantastic and their pounding hearts as they stood by the grave and the thunder in their brains as their heads pounded and the anticipation was relieved in verse 44, "And he that was dead came forth."

Can't you imagine? I don't know what went on, but I can just, you know ... ooh. You know, the just absolute shock when that Lazarus with all that stuff wrapped all over him just walked out of that grave and stood in the doorway. At the sound of the voice of Jesus Christ, the king of terrors yielded up his lawful captive, the insatiable grave gave up its prey and Lazarus walked out of that tomb. Captivity was led captive and Christ stood as the conqueror of sin, Satan and death. And you know something? The writer of Revelation says He still has the keys to Hades and death...and He's going to unlock it for everyone of His own.

Now there, friends, is absolute proof that Christ had power. That is some kind of power. And Lazarus walked out. It says in verse 44, "He was bound hand and foot with grave clothes." You remember I told you they wrapped each one individually, so it wouldn't be any problem to walk, he didn't hop like a mummy, each one was bound separately and he walked out of that tomb. You imagine him with all the hanging things that were on him and his whole head covered with this towel-like thing and there he is standing there? What a vivid weird picture he must have been.

And then Jesus says this as if to say, "Now let's not stand around and ask him ... 'Lazarus, how do you feel? Where have you been, Lazarus?' Let's not get into theological debate." He says one thing at the end of verse 44, "Jesus said unto them, Untie him and let him go ... when you get back to the house you can talk about it." Untie him and let him go. Can you imagine those guys moving toward him? Now I don't know who took the thing off his head, but when they took it off they found fresh skin, alive and warm. Lazarus was living.

There's so many lessons in this. Do you see a lesson in the statement, "Untie him and let him go?" Men rolled the stone away and men unwrapped the grave clothes. You see, men can do that. Only God can raise the dead. And you know something? That's how the Lord always operates. He uses us, doesn't He? He does what He does but we do what we can do. He's the only one that can give life but I'll tell you something, there's no greater joy in the world than going around rolling around gravestones and taking off grave clothes. That's what the ministry's all about, isn't it? He needs us.

There's a part that we play in what He does. What an honor not even given to angels. They don't even get to roll away gravestones and take off grave clothes, that's for us. And the ultimate application of this is just this, if Jesus Christ can stand by the tomb of Lazarus and say, "Lazarus, come forth" and he walks out of that tomb, someday when Jesus comes to this world just like He came to Bethany, He's going to say to His own, "Come forth," and they're going to come out of the graves all over this world and they're going to be gathered to meet Him in the air and they're going to go to be with Jesus Christ forever, that's our hope, isn't it? That's our blessed hope.

Listen, when Jesus stood up and said, "I am the resurrection and the life," He wasn't just talking; He then verified it by His power over death in the case of Lazarus. And someday He's going to verify it in my life. Someday the Apostle Paul says, "This mortality shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption and death will be swallowed up in a new kind of eternal resurrection life and no more will I wear the old rags, the old grave clothes of sin and death but I'm going to put on a white, bright, shining eternal robe and I'm going to walk in an exalted heaven with my Christ." He is the resurrection and the life. And may our eyes be fixed on Him constantly and may we see in everything that happens His glory that we might be changed into His image from glory to glory by the Spirit of God.

Our Father, we thank You this morning for teaching us again of Your power. We thank You for the tremendous illustration this is of our own resurrection. As You loved Lazarus, so You love those who are Your own. As You came to Bethany, someday You'll come to this world. As You said to Lazarus, "Come forth," so You'll say to Your own, "Come forth." As Lazarus walked in life, so shall we in eternal new life. Lord, we thank You for that kind of power. And, Father, we would pray that if there are some here this morning who are dead spiritually that You would by that same power call them forth from spiritual death to spiritual life that they might come alive today. And, Lord, for those of us who are Christians, get our eyes off our problems and get our eyes on the glory of the Lord that we might be changed into His image and radiate His excellencies through the energy of the Holy Spirit. We thank You in the name of Christ. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).