**Marks of an Effective Personal Ministry, Part 1**
Scripture: Acts 9:32-35
Code: 1732

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For our guests, we would just mention that we've been studying the book of Acts for some time and are in the process of going through the 9th Chapter, just having concluded the section on the conversion and transformation of Saul of Tarsus in to the apostle Paul. And now we're coming back to a study about the man Peter. And Peter is a fascinating, fascinating disciple and we all are richer because of his life. And I've entitled this passage, kind of with two titles, the miraculous ministry of Peter, but perhaps a more direct title in terms of what I'm going to talk about is the marks of effective personal ministry. The marks of effective personal ministry. Because as I studied this passage I couldn't help but focus on the very basic principles that are exhibited in this personal ministry of Peter.

And again I've been refreshed and challenged in recent days about having a personal ministry. It's sometimes very easy when you're a "speaker" or a preacher to confine yourself to large groups. But you know, as I study the Bible, I find that this was really never done by the great men of God and the Word of God. They always maintained personal ministries. And how my heart has been refreshed in recent days to be involved in such personal ministries, I've asked God to give me several people to work with and as always, He gave me more than I asked for. And it's a blessed thing anyway and I am really enjoying this. But as...and maybe it's in the frame of reference that I read this passage, but here we don't see Peter like we have in the past chapters of Acts preaching to great crowds of thousands. We see him kind of isolated with individuals. And some tremendous principles just kind of ooze out of the text as we shall look at Acts 9:32-43. It had planned to be, but we only got to verse 35 in the first service, so we'll have to stop there in this one. Praise the Lord. I know, you're thinking that.

But anyway, this is the beginning of what is now two parts. We'll see how it goes next time. Now the apostle Peter with all of his pre-Pentecost weaknesses and all of the failures that kind of help us to brand him as the apostle with the foot shaped mouth, finally after Pentecost, got his foot out of it and really began to speak for God. He really was fired up in every sense of the word. His life becomes then the dominate theme in the first 12 Chapters of Acts. From Chapter 13 to 28, Paul dominates the picture.

But here Peter dominates. And everything that we saw in terms of failure at the beginning in the gospel sort of passes away with the energizing of the Holy Spirit in Chapter 2 and we see a dynamic and powerful apostle who not only is the leader of the church, but the leader of the other apostles as

well. And so he is dynamic to put it mildly. He is effective to put it simply here in the book of Acts. And we might say that we learn both sides of living the Christian life from Peter how not to do it in the gospels and how to do it in the book of Acts.

And as we look at Peter's life, it's a lot like Paul's life. There are so many principles of ministry that we can find. There are maybe two passages that kind of stick out in my mind where Peter kind of unloads, first of all directly and then secondly, as we look at this one, indirectly, principles for effective ministry. The first one that jumps into my mind I'd like to use as just as a beginning is 2 Peter Chapter 1. In 2 Peter Chapter 1, from verses 12 through 21, Peter kind of shares four very basic principles to effective ministry. And I want to use these as just a starting point and then I want to go to the book of Acts and add to these some other very important practical marks of an effective ministry.

But here to begin with four personal qualifications. Before you can have an effective personal ministry as he does in Acts 9, there must be certain things that you possess personally. Before I'm going to have any impact on you, something's got to be going on in me. That's the point. And as we look here, we see kind of the heart of Peter unbared in a very direct way and he gives us four things that really qualified him to have effective personal ministries. Number one, personal concern. Verse 12, 1 Peter 2...2 Peter 1 I should say.

Verse 12, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things. Though you know them and are established in the present truth. Yet I think it fitting as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." Now here is expressed the concern of Peter for those to whom he ministers. He cares about them. He is not satisfied to teach. He is satisfied that they learn, and there's a big difference. You have not done the job when you have communicated the truth. You have done the job when somebody else has learned it so that they can reproduce it.

And Peter says, I want you to know this. Now it's not that you haven't heard it before, it's that I don't want you to forget it so I'm going to remind you and remind you and remind you. He has a tremendous personal concern. Before anybody ever had an effective ministry, they had to care about people. And they had to care not that they presented it well, not that they got it off, that they came off looking good, but that somebody learned what it was they were saying. And Peter had that personal concern.

The second thing that he expresses here is personal urgency. In verse 14, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle," which is a long way to say I'm going to die, leave the body, "even as the Lord Jesus Christ has shown me." Remember in John Chapter 21, the Lord had said to Peter, "Peter you're going to die for Me." In fact, He even told him that he was going to get crucified. And so Peter lived his whole life knowing he was going to get crucified. You say well, that wouldn't make a very happy life. It did for Peter, because he realized that he was going to be faithful in the end.

You see he had had another opportunity when he was confronted with Jesus Christ and three times what did he do? He denied Him. So he proved that his commitment wasn't really valid. It was only verbal. And so finally Jesus said, next time Peter, you'll go all the way and die for Me and that was good news. Because it meant he knew that he would make it next time. It gave him confidence. Now if the Lord told most of us that we'd die of apoplexy before we ever got to the cross. But Peter, he wanted to know. He wanted to be sure that he'd be faithful, and so the Lord told him.

And so he says, I know I don't have long, I'm going to die. He knew he was going for a cross. Verse 15, "Moreover, I will endeavor that you may be able after my deceased to have these things always in remembrance." He said, I want to drum them into your brain while I'm still here so that when I'm dead you can't forget them. Now that's urgency. He knew he only had a limited time and he wanted to maximize that time. He wanted to cram as much as he could into the limited time that he had.

I spent some time this week with a businessman who's an amazing guy. He's a graduate of Harvard with a Master's Degree in Economics. Got a brain like a computer. And he left me in the dust, you know, on that area. But nevertheless, he had figured out that he was wasting years of his life, because he didn't know how to maximize his time and make account for God. So he has figured out all of these sheets, time sheets, of his life and how he can maximize every moment for God. And it was absolutely hysterical for four days I was with the guy. And he had...he was the one who worked out my schedule when I was in Wichita. And so all the week long I was agreeing, this is great. Oh this is using your time knowing on Thursday I'm going home. I'm going home, you know.

But anyway, he had this fantastic schedule. And he would come in and he would say we have three minutes and 30 seconds and we've got to make sure we're there on time because every minute counts. We need to communicate Christ to these men. He'd rush me out to a country club to meet with a banker and a guy and some community leader and he'd say now we've got to be sure that we're there on time. And I've checked back with their secretaries. They'll all be there at two minutes after, etc., etc. We've got to make use of our time. Time is so limited. And he had me on this schedule. The last day I was there, I had five appointments and spoke six times. But...you know, and it was fruitful, believe me. It was fruitful. I don't know if I could take it very long, but it was fruitful. But you know, you say well, that's going a little far. For him this is what functions best. He works on that kind of a schedule best. And the Lord is using him.

I met another man who's got the same kind of a schedule and he opened up his notebook and he showed me the list of about 15 to 20 men that he meets with every week to disciple. And he has how much time he gives each one of those men. And then under their names, he has the names of other men that they've begun to disciple and a third generation and some men are on their fourth generation of disciple cycles and he's got a big sheet that folds out of his notebook telling what he's teaching every one of these men and what they're teaching their men. Now that's maximizing your

time and making the most use of opportunity.

Now Peter was the same way and I don't know if he had a notebook like that, but Peter said I want to use every moment to get through what I need to get through. Apostle Paul was in Ephesus. He said, "I have not failed to teach you with tears night and day for three years." And that's personal urgency. The third thing that characterized Peter in an effective personal ministry would characterize anybody was personal experience. Verse 16, he says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were," what, "eyewitnesses." I'm not giving you secondhand information. This is experienced in my life. I'm telling you what I know. Now experience itself isn't a final qualification so he further...and he incidentally was talking about the transfiguration as he states in verse 17 and 18 in the Holy Mount he saw Christ, so he knew what he was talking. But he goes a step further and says you not only need personal experience in effective personal ministry, but personal knowledge.

Experience unless it's coordinated with the scripture might not be valid, right? So he moves in there with verse 21. "For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." And he calls this in verse 19 a more sure word. More sure than what? Experience. So Peter says to begin with as I look at my own life there are four things that are needful. Personal concern, personal urgency, personal experience, personal knowledge. And if I have those four things I'm ready for an effective personal ministry.

Now go back to Acts 9 and let's see how effective it was. And let's see if we can pull out some of the keys that made his ministry effective. Now just to give you a brief kind of insight into some background, keep in mind that when Jesus left this earth at the end of Matthew, at the end of the book of Mark it's recorded, he said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." In Matthew it says that he said "Make disciples out of them, teach them, and baptize them." So our Lord had the goal, the vision to reach the world with the gospel. That was His plan.

Now, the Lord made a strategy out to accomplish that and the strategy ran this way. First of all, He would work in Israel. And He would gain believing Jews. And when He had a group of believing Jews, they would be launched, blasted off the launching pad to reach the world. Now God has to start somewhere. God never, in His plan, had designed that Israel just sit there and be the dead end street for all of His blessing. They were always to be a channel to the world. And so He was planning then even in the New Testament to first begin in Jerusalem. And begin with believing Jews and then they would go out to reach the world.

Now the plan is indicated in Acts 1:8, the strategy for the church, you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You shall be “mumartures,” My witnesses." And this being said to about 120 Jews. You are going to be the beginning of this explosion. You are going to be the key. "And you'll start in Jerusalem, then you go to Judea, Samaria, and finally the uttermost part of the

earth." That's the outline of the book of Acts. So He starts with a group of believing Jews. Step number one is to hit Jerusalem. And so He says to them, now you guys get yourself in there in Jerusalem together and you wait til I send the Holy Spirit to indo you with power from on High. And they were all gathered up there in the upper room and the Spirit of God came in power, baptized them into the body, filled them and they shot out of that place and began to speak to everybody the wonderful works of God and every many heard in his own language. And then Peter stood up and preached the sermon and 3,000 people were saved and the church began in Jerusalem that day.

They were baptized and added to the fellowship. Then it went from there and they continued to preach in Jerusalem. Peter was thrown in prison, he preached to the Sanhedrin. Went back to the temple, when the angel let him out of prison on the other occasion, preached again to the people and the church grew. In Chapter 4, there are 5,000 men in the church to say nothing of the women and the children and young people. And so the church explodes in Jerusalem.

And finally, the characterization of the church in Jerusalem was made by the hating world as the Jews dragged the disciples in and they say this, "You have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching." And so they mark off Jerusalem and say it's time for Samaria. Well, you know, it's an interesting thing that God often does a little bit of fire building under the saints to get them to go where He wants them to go. And so the Lord knew that the church might tend to kind of languish a little bit in Jerusalem. Especially since the Jews just by cultural pattern despised the Samaritans.

And to try to get them to go out into Samaria, might be a little bit tough even though they were believers and even though they loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Old patterns die hard don't they? Even we become a Christian we find these old patterns die very hard. And so the Lord had a little bit of an impedance and the impedance was a man by the name of Saul. And it says that Saul was consenting in Chapter 8, verse 1 to the death of Stephen. And says, "Then at that time there was a great persecution against the church. Verse 3 says Paul or Saul at that time became Paul, "Saul led the persecution." So the Lord just let the church get persecuted. The result was this. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. So the Lord just said, I'm going to help you guys get going a little bit, and just started persecuting. They all bailed out and went just exactly where the Lord wanted them to go.

Now in verse 4 of Chapter 8, it says, they were scattered abroad and they went everywhere preaching the Word. Isn't that good? You see the church then moved to the second step in the commission, Jerusalem, then Judea, and Samaria. And they moved outside the city of Jerusalem, blasted off the launching pad this time by persecution, the first time by the energizing of the Spirit of God and they'd begun to move throughout Samaria and Judea. And they had marvelous, marvelous results. Now this is an exciting thing for Judea and Samaria isn't it? But it's kind of tragic for Jerusalem, because it spelled really the final call to Jerusalem. As Jerusalem Jews had confirmed their unbelief, had arrived at a place of static and permanent disbelief and rejection of Christ and so

God just moves out.

And so while it's victorious and joyous for Judea and Samaria, there's a note of tragedy as the persecution flames in Jerusalem against Christ and His people. Now we saw in Chapter 8 how that the work in Samaria was dominated by a man by the name of Philip, but he was assisted also by Peter and John who later came up to Samaria and did some preaching. And so there was a great work going on Samaria, Christians scattered all over everywhere and they were being brought into the church. And they received the Holy Spirit at the hands of Peter and John and were united with Jerusalem church, in fact, and in obvious vision. And so the church grew.

And now it's time to go another step. The third step in the expansion of the church is the ministry to the Gentiles. And that's not an easy one because that's even another large step for the Jews to take to extend themselves to the Gentiles whom they had been taught traditionally through all their history to despise. The Samaritans were half-breeds. So they were a little bit akin. The Gentile, that was going a long ways. And you know, God had a special man to do the job with Gentiles. He was introduced to us in Chapter 7, verse 58 by the name of Saul. But before God used him, like everybody before He uses, He had to switch him around. And so we read in Chapter 8 how He transformed Saul into Paul. And this was the man that was going to be the guy who would labor and really do the work among the Gentiles.

But you know, he had to have some time of preparation. And so he, remember, spent three years in Nabatea and Arabia and in Damascus, then finally after three years, he came down to Jerusalem and only lasted 15 days before he had created such havoc they had to ship him to Tarsus to calm the scene down. He was that kind of a guy. So they finally shipped him out. And so by this time we've been only introduced to Paul who is going to be apostle of the Gentiles. And he's gone back to Tarsus. So the scene then refocuses on Peter who dominates from now through Chapter 12. He becomes God's man in the expansion of the church.

It is not Paul who opened the door to the Gentiles, it is Peter. Paul later came in and spread the Word. Peter was the door opener. And you know, that takes us back and let me read you a very important verse in Matthew 16:18, to this statement of our Lord in which He commissioned Peter for this. Now in verse 18, Jesus said, "I'm going to build my church." Remember that statement? "The gates of hell will not prevail against it." Then He said this in verse 19. "And I will give unto thee," and he was talking to Peter, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Now I believe the phrase there for general purposes is synonymous with the church. The kingdom of heaven was the church, the expanding church. He says, Peter, you're the guy who's going to unlock the doors as the church expands.

Now Peter was there in Jerusalem at Pentecost wasn't he? And he was the guy who preached. Peter was there in Samaria. Remember the Samaritans believed, but they didn't receive the Holy Spirit to

be included in the body until Peter arrived and laid hands on them. So Peter opened the door of inclusion to the Samaritans in Chapter 10. As we get to Chapter 10 in a week or so, we're going to see Peter opens the door to Cornelius, lays hands on Cornelius, the Gentile. He receives the Holy Spirit, and Peter has unlocked the last door in the expansion of the church.

So Peter was the key to opening the doors of the church. Though later on Paul comes back in, slides back in in Chapter 13 and begins the ministry following up and building that church that Peter really officially initiated. Now, let's look at Peter then beginning in verse 32. God is beginning to prepare him for the move to the Gentiles. He's done pretty well so far. I mean, with all the prejudice that he'd had all his life. He was pretty accommodating to the Samaritans and the Judeans. And the Lord had kind of gotten him over that hump of dealing with those terrible despicable Samaritans. He begins to include them both officially and unofficially within his heart. And so God is preparing him for Chapter 10 when he's going to come face to face with Cornelius, the Gentile, and he's going to see the Gentiles included in the church, which was a big shock and he went running back and he said you'll never believe this, but the Gentiles have the same thing we've got. But his heart is beginning to soften.

Now, as you pick up the action in verse 32, Paul is gone back to Tarsus and Peter is an itinerant preacher. He was busy and he was moving around everywhere. And he's taking a trip now from Jerusalem down to Joppa. Now everything is down from Jerusalem as we say often, because it's up on a high mountain. And so he went down directly in a straight line west to the coastline. Joppa's a seaport, called Jaffa it's a suburb of Tel Aviv. But it's just west of Jerusalem. I'd say 45 to 50 miles. And so Peter's on the way. He's going to Joppa. He was always going somewhere. Never stood still for five minutes in his life. He was always in the mainstream of activity with what God was doing. Was a very busy guy. There were Christians all over everywhere, not only pockets in Jerusalem, but outside of Jerusalem, and he was moving around teaching, preaching, winning people, confirming saints, building them up, very busy man. And on this particular trek, he's on his way to Joppa.

Now, as we look at this occasion and what happens, because this scene clear through verse 43, deals with that, we're going to see some of the principles that brought him...I should say that illustrate to us what brought him such an effective personal ministry. And I hope and pray to God that you'll be able to pull these things out of this text and apply them in your life. I'm really committed to the fact that we must have personal ministries. I've been challenging our deacons. Our deacons at this church meet together at 5:30 every Friday morning for prayer and breakfast and Bible study and we're challenging them together with us to personal ministries in the lives of men, discipling and teaching them the Word of God.

And so as we see Peter, I hope and pray that some of us will be able to pull out of this the principles of really effective personal ministry. Now I've pulled six of them out of the text that I just want to share with you very simply. They are these. Peter was effective personally because he was involved. You

don't have to get them all down, we'll get them as we go. He was involved, Christ exalting, available, powerful, fruitful, and free from prejudice. These are basics to effective personal ministry.

First of all, he was involved, verse 32. And I took a long time to get to that verse. "It came to pass as Peter passed through all quarters," isn't that terrific? Peter was just going all the time, active, maximizing every opportunity, involved. "It came to pass as Peter passed through all quarters he came down also to the saints who dwelled at Lydda." The church is in a state of rest. Verse 31 says, "All the churches had rest and they were edified, built up spiritually, and they began to multiply." And this was for several reasons. This was, of course, due particularly to the work of the Spirit of God. But it was also due to the fact that Saul got out of town and didn't create such a mess, so many problems. And it was also due to the fact that the Jews were now bugged by Caligula, the Roman emperor, wanting to set up idols in Jerusalem. And they were fighting the Romans. They didn't have time to fight the church. So the church had a little period of rest here.

And so Peter was at liberty to move. And he was really on the move. The rest of the apostles were out in Samaria and Judea moving around too. In fact, when Saul finally came to Jerusalem, according to Galatians 1, he said the only apostles he found there were James and Peter. The rest of them were long gone. The other ten were moving around preaching. So they're preaching and Peter's one of them and he's moving around. And that speaks to me in a very dynamic way of a very important principle. The people who are already involved in what God is doing are usually the ones that are given the more fruitful ministries. God keeps His richest ministries for His busiest saints. Have you ever noticed that?

Have you ever noticed how that some Christians seem to get involved in everything that God is doing? You know why? It's a lot easier to handle and steer and operate somebody that's going somewhere. When God's got a job to do, He doesn't go up to the dusty shelf of the dilapidated, impotent, non-functioning Christians and say I think I'll dust off Joe and give him that job. God uses people who are already in the mainstream flow of what He's doing. And that's why some people have abundance of ministries while other people are sitting around saying I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing. See?

Everybody who's active seems to be able to find enough to do. The little principle the rich get richer can apply in terms of spiritual richness. Boy when you get into rich ministries you'll find that you'll...first of all, you'll bear fruit and then you'll bear more fruit and then before you know it, you'll bear much fruit. And Peter, with all the burdened he carried, and I know he was a busy guy and I bet you people wanted his time and demanded his time and wanted to talk to him and sit with him and counsel with him and have him speak for their groups and there this and that. And yet God kept opening new ministries. There was never any end to it. I really believe people that if you ever want to be fruitful in the ministry of Jesus Christ, you're going to have to now get in the mainstream of what God is doing. God does not go up to the shelf and dust you off for some great, important ministry.

Start where you are. There are so many things needful to be done, to pray, to teach, to minister to others needs, to use your spiritual gifts. And as we begin to do this, as we're into the mainstream of the priorities of what God is doing, He'll butt us right up against ministries right after the other.

And it gets to the point where you sort of sit down at night and you say God I don't know if I can handle all the stuff You've given me to do. And then He always comes back with the power of the Spirit and never gives you something to do that He doesn't give you the equipment to do. There's a great illustration of this that comes to my mind in Genesis Chapter 24. You might want to turn to it for a minute. They had a kind of an interesting custom back in those days of picking out brides and so forth for guys who wanted to get married. Today it's the...you know, it's an elimination process. And the elimination maybe due to several factors in each case. We won't go into that. But nevertheless, in the Old Testament, they had a different method. In the Old Testament the way it worked was mom and dad picked out who you would marry. And the older my kids get, the more I think I like that. You know, but any way that was the way they did it.

And so Abraham wanted to get a bride for Isaac, his son. And he didn't want one of those Canaanite women. He wanted to go back to his family and get a girl of his own upbringing and one who really turned out to be his second cousin. And so he gets a servant. He says, now you go find my son, Isaac, a nice bride. What a servant? How...what does he know? I mean, this is really secondhand stuff. He's not Isaac and he's not Abraham, so he's twice removed from the real issue.

So he's got to go find a bride that's going to please Abraham and Isaac. But he doesn't stand around, he goes. He gets into the flow of the deal and he just packs up his camels and whatever else and off he goes. And as he's going along, believe it or not, he bangs right into the right girl. Right, he doesn't even know where he's going particularly. Right into the right girl. Her heart is willing. Her father's willing. Fantastic deal. And you ask him how in the world did that ever happen? And that beautiful answer comes in Genesis 24:27. He said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master. Abraham who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth."

You know, he says God is super intending this deal. Then comes this little statement which is just a really potent statement. He says, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." Did you get that? You know who the Lord leads to successful ministries? The people who are already moving. He says, "I being wandering around all over the place, God just put me where He wanted me." Believe me Christian, you can go back to Acts 9, that's how it works. "I being in the way, the Lord led me to the right house," he said, "and there was the girl." And if you want to be used of God, get up and get going. Do something.

Go in some direction. Get active in what God is doing. Be involved in what it is that the Spirit of God is doing. Don't be sitting around. Some people are idle. They're just twiddling their thumbs. They have no sense of commitment to active ministry. Their priorities in life are everything else. Now let me just

put it simply. If God is third or fourth on your list, believe me, you're third or fourth on His too. If in terms of the priority of your life God is 25th, then when He needs a job done, you're 25th too. And if He ever gets down that low and gets that desperate, He just might use you.

But you see, God uses His priority ministries for His people who put Him in the priority place. Believe me, "I being in the way, the Lord led me," is a valid principle. That servant was going the right direction. He was moving because his master told him to move and God led him where He wanted him to be and fitted him with the right kind of thing. And it's God's people who are already active in what God is doing to find themselves getting new ministries all the time.

And there are other people who are detached from what God is doing and they...and we talk about how needful things are and what the ministries are and they don't even know what we're talking about. They're never even in it enough to find out. You know, one guy said something, people make things happen, and others watch them happen and some people don't know anything's happening. And that's true. I was...spoke at a missionary conference last night and were talking with some of the missionaries about how many people think that God some day is just going to say all right you, I'm going to make you a missionary to go to this place and reach all those people. And the guy's never done anything in his life for the Lord yet. Do you think God's going to waste a whole mission field on one who's never done anything?

Do you think God's going to dust off some person and put him in a strategic place? No. And the sad part of this thing is that you miss all the joy of ministry. If you're faithful over little, he'll make you what? Lord over much. But you've got to start where you are. You know, I imagine God's got a gigantic file that says some day. You know, and somebody says, Lord when I get done with this, I'm going to serve You. Well, that's another one for the someday file. See.

Now, I always say God couldn't care less about your future, you'll never live there. It's today that He wants you to get going. And if you're faithful today, then in some other today, He'll use you there. And then in some other today, He'll use you there. Peter was moving. And it came to pass as he was going around everywhere, God zapped into Lydda right where He wanted him. Now if you're active in doing what God's doing, if you're caught up in the mainstream, then you're going to find so many ministries, your life is going to be abundantly enriched beyond which you could even dream. If you're too busy doing your thing, then you may not even know ministries exist.

And it might not only be because you don't know, but because God isn't too sure you're very useful in there anyway in terms of really strategic things. All right, so let's go back to verse 32. We're going to get to the text in a minute. "It came to pass as he passed through all these quarters. He came down also to the saints who dwell at Lydda." Now he arrives at a little group of believers in this town called Lydda. Lydda's an interesting town. It's very historic, very old. In the Old Testament it was called Lod, L-o-d. And it's still called that today and if any of you have ever been to Israel, you've been there,

because that's where the airport is. And it's about ten miles east of Jaffa or Tel Aviv. And so Lod is a very old, very ancient and in this time it was a very, very important city because it was right on the area of the trade route from Egypt to Babylon going east. And a lot of the goods that were dropped off at the seaport of Joppa went to Jerusalem right through Lod. So it was a very important kind of a mainline town.

Now there were some saints there. Now I just want to give you a footnote. This is not part of the sermon, but I want to give it to you anyway. I know there are many of you folks who have been saved in recent days and months out of Roman Catholicism. And when we read the terms saints, I can't really pass it by without speaking to the point for just a moment. Because when the Catholic church speaks of the saints, they speak an entirely different vernacular and entirely different context than the Bible does. And when you hear the word saints you immediately think of Thomas or Peter or Andrew or some of these saints and on and on and on and on and on they go. And I want to just for a brief moment see if I can help you to understand what saints are.

The word saints, hagius here, simply refers to all Christians. All Christians are saints. There is not a hierarchy of super pious people or people canonized by God. There are some canonized by the church, but none of them are canonized by God. And even the church isn't too sure from time to time because they've been decanonizing some that they formally canonized. But God canonizes nobody. There is no hierarchy of believers. The body is equal. We're all one of another. There are no saints that are above other saints. Why? Because positionally, we're all perfect in Christ. And when he's talking about being saints, he's talking about our position, not our spiritual condition. Sainthood is a positional thing, not a conditional thing.

And so all Christians are saints. For example, the word hagius appears in Ephesians 1:4, where it simply says this. "According as He hath chosen us, all Christians in Him that we should be," hagius, "saints." Holy. Then over in Colossians 1:21, the same thing is indicated. "You were once alienated enemies in your mind by wicked works. You have now been reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you saints." Holy and so forth. We are saints who love Jesus Christ.

All Christians are saints. There are no special ones. All of us are saints. I am not less than any other man. I am not less than Peter. I am not less than Paul in the eyes of God. I am equal, because I am in Christ. And so when I pray, I do not need to pray to them. That would be redundant. They're no different than men. I can pray directly to God through Christ. Now Rome tells us that special people are designated with certain honors by the church and that they are to be venerated, they are to be honored, they are to be worshiped as sort of super Christians who have an in with God and with Christ and we need to repproach them.

Reading from Ludwegot, which is the basic Catholic Theology book. I was reading it the other day and I jotted down some of these things. It says this, "It is profitable to venerate the saints in heaven

and invoke their intercession." That is what is known in Catholic Theology as absolute adulia. It goes on. "Holy scripture does not explicitly refer to the veneration and invocation of saints." That's interesting. Do it, but the Bible doesn't tell you to. Now you say where do they get it, because their church councils are equal to scripture.

That's the tradition of the church. It goes on to say this, "Our right to do this," that is to invoke and venerate saints, "can be deduced from the veneration offered to the angels in holy writ." In other words, the Catholic church says because they are...we are to worship angels, we are instructed to worship angels or because angels are worshipped in the scripture, we therefore can also worship glorified saints. Now there are several problems with that. And the problem number one is that the whole book of Galatians is written to prove that you shouldn't worship angels.

Apart from that, if there is any possibility of apart from that, Revelation 22:8 says this, "And I, John, saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel." Here's John going to worship an angel. "Then saith he unto me, don't do that." That's the free translation. But this is what the angel says, "For I am thy fellow servant of thy brethren." I'm a created being. "The prophets and them that keep the words of the book." Then he says two words, "worship God." Get up John. Roman Catholic church says we have the right to worship saints because of the fact that we have the right to worship angels. The Bible says we don't even have the right to worship angels. So how can we deduce from that that we have the right to worship saints?

Take it a step further. If ever there was a saint in the Catholic Church, it's Peter. Peter...St. Peter's Cathedral, Peter's sainthood is magnified and glorified and so forth and so on beyond imagination. And yet I want you to see in Acts Chapter 10 what happened. Peter came to Cornelius, Cornelius got carried away with Peter, verse 25 of Acts 10 as Peter was coming, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

There was old Cornelius kissing Peter's feet, worshipping Peter. Peter says unto him, stand up. What are you doing down there Cornelius? Get up. I myself am a man. Now if ever there was to be anybody who said the Bible taught that you should worship the saints, I don't know what in the world they would do with that Chapter in those two verses. Nor do I know what they'd do with the case of the apostle Paul. Remember they wanted to make God's out of them and worship them too. Paul says, don't you do that.

Over in Chapter 14 that's recorded. The council of Trent even went further in Catholic Theology and permitted that saints bodies be worshipped and so there was a veneration of some saints teeth and certain other bones and this kind of thing. And that was called relativadulia. In 787 the council of Nisea said they could worship images of the saints and so the churches are dominated with images and dashboards and pins and medals and all this kind of thing where you see these images. And of

course, you have this statement in Exodus 20, verse 4, "Thou shalt have no graven images."

The whole theology of the saints is wrong. It is unscriptural. It is unbiblical. And so when we talk about the word saints, be sure you that you understand it in a biblical frame of reference. That's only the reason I introduced that because some of you who are new believers might need clarification at that point. All right back to our text.

Verse 33, so Peter was available and he's moving and that's the first thing about effective ministry. You've got to be involved or you're not going to be in the spot where God wants to use you. Verse 33, "And there he found a certain man named Aeneas who had kept his bed eight years." Now that doesn't mean that he made his bed. Some of you say I can't even get my husband to keep the bed for one week. But anyway, it means it was sick of the palsy. He was in bed paralyzed for eight years. The word, palsy is paraluo, and it's a word from which we get our word paralytic and it basically has to do with a disease that is characterized by the extreme loss of the power of motion due to some kind of damage to the motor centers of the brain or the spinal cord. It's just typically paralysis. And it was always very serious, especially in those days when they had no treatments. And it was usually permanent and it was progressively deteriorating.

So this man was really sick and everybody knew it, because it was eight years long that this guy was in bed. But there's about to be a marvelous miracle, because Peter has been available, because Peter has been moving and involved, he comes face to face with a fantastic opportunity for a ministry. And the upshot of this miracle that day in Lydda was the fact that it says in verse 35, "that everybody in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord."

Now here's one guy who affects one personal ministry with one other man and multitudes, thousands literally, came to Jesus Christ. Believe me personal ministries can have repercussions can't they? It isn't only effective when we talk to big masses of people. It's also effective when we get involved with individuals. Specifically, since Peter had apostolic miracle power, his personal ministry was potent.

But there we see the first principle of effective personal ministry and that is involvement. He was involved. The second one, this is as far as we'll get. He was Christ exalting. Believe me, any kind of ministry that is going to bear any fruit and have any kind of effect on anybody is going to be that one which lifts up Jesus Christ. And I love this in verse 34, "Peter said unto him," Peter arrives in Lydda, goes into the bedroom of Aeneas, Peter says, "Jesus Christ maketh thee well." Isn't that terrific? Arise, he says, and make your bed.

And what did he do? "And he arose immediately." Just got up and made his bed. See. Now, I want you to just catch a couple of things that hit me in that verse that are so thrilling. First of all the word arise, it's amazing, but even in the miracles of Jesus there was a response of faith demanded. He didn't just go in and go zap and old Aeneas shot out of that bed. Aeneas had to exercise his will in

response to the statement of Peter. True faith always responds doesn't it. And so here again he's given the opportunity to do an act of his will. Remember Jesus with the man put the saliva and the clay on his eyes and made the guy go clear across town? Well, that was a test of faith wasn't it?

I mean, any way along the line he could...boy this is ridiculous. Look at the people looking at me with all this mud on my eyes, you know. But he obeyed, because you see real faith has built into it true obedience. And so this man obeyed. And it says at the end of verse 34, he arose immediately. That's a dominating word in the book of Acts. The word immediately, it pops up everywhere. Peter was doing things immediately. Paul was doing things immediately. This guy is doing things immediately.

Again, we're talking about maximizing opportunity. And when you're obedient, you're obedient now, not tomorrow. So he was immediately obedient. True faith obeys and he was...it doesn't say that he was a Christian here. It says nothing about that. Perhaps he was and perhaps because he was, his faith was strong. Perhaps he was not, but at that point hungry to know the truth he believed and was healed. And the over in Matthew Chapter 7, we have a distinction between the faith that really responds, you know, obedience in the faith that says it does, but doesn't. And that's in Matthew 7:24. "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them," that's the key. You don't only hear it, you do it. James said, "Don't be a hearer only, but," what, "a doer." He said, "I will liken this man who hears and does to a wise man who builds his house on the rock. And rain ascended, the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon the house. It fell not for it was founded on a rock." You see, you're only founded on the rock when your faith issues an obedience validating it as true faith.

"And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not," you know like the man who built his house on the sand. "A foolish man, the rains ascended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house and it fell and great was the fall of it." The next verse says, "The whole crowd was astonished at this teaching." They were stunned at the crash of the false disciple's house. True faith is founded on obedience, we see that principle.

And so he gave him a chance to obey and respond in real faith. Then the second thing that hits me here is he said make your bed. Now in the Greek, there are two different kinds of verbs, point action verbs called airest and continuous action verbs called linear. For example, I spoke or I was speaking. One is linear, one is I spoke. And here he uses airest imperative. He says make your bed. What does that mean? Once and for all, it's over with. Make that bed up. Want to know something? Every time in the Bible you hear about healing where Jesus Christ is involved it is absolute, complete healing. Always complete.

And so he says, "you make your bed." And that guy got up and made his bed. The cure was total, it was complete, the man would make up his bed for good. That whole part of life was done away. Now those are two things that hit me in this verse, but the thing that really hits me and overwhelms me and the point that I want to make is this statement, "Jesus Christ maketh thee well." That is a great

statement. Not only for what it says, but for what it doesn't say. It is Peter's disclaimer to any power at all. Do you see what he's saying? He doesn't come in there and say I'm here to heal you. Who does Peter want to exalt? Jesus Christ.

Beloved, it's so true and maybe we've said many times, but let us say it again. No ministry ever has true fruit that is not set for the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the moment that you begin to think that you can do it, you have disqualified yourself from fruit and fruitfulness. You know, we need to be so constantly reminded because our stupid pride and our self-generated ability and activity gets in the way of what God wants to do. Whatever is being done to His glory is being done by Him. You know what Paul says in Ephesians 6:10? He says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." You have no strength elsewhere.

In Ephesians 3:20 he says, "Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you that we can ask or think according to the power that worketh in you." It's not you, it's Him. And then the next verse says, "Unto Him be glory in the church." The glory's not ours. We can't say I did this for the Lord and I did that. You haven't done anything for the Lord. It's only what the Lord did through you. Anything you tried to do was undone.

1 Peter 4:11, you know, Peter, says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as the ability which God giveth that the glory may belong to Jesus Christ in everything." Boy you know that's a battle you fight. You know, you think you get to the point where you're doing it in your own flesh and doing it in your own strength and it's a wipe out. The effective servant only wants to lift up Jesus Christ.

You know, Paul had the same kind of a disclaimer at the end of Romans. Listen to this, I just love this. Romans 15:17, he says, "I have therefore that of which I may glory," you do, "Christ Jesus." See. Then he goes on. "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me." That's interesting, because the only good things that ever came out of his life were what Christ did. So he says, I'm not going to talk about the stuff that I do. Smart.

And then he goes on. "Here's what Christ did through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God." See. Hey I want to tell you about what the Spirit of God's doing. Boy, I'll tell you ego dies hard doesn't it. I don't know in your life, but it does in mine. Dies hard. But Peter didn't want any followers of Peter. He said Jesus Christ makes you well. Disclaiming any power. Christian, the only power you have is Christ's power through you and as long as you think you're doing it on you own, you forfeit that power and its fullness. Believe me.

I've had so many illustrations of that. Look at verse 35. Oh this is so good. "And all that dwell," and that's a general all not inclusive of every human being, but it means a total populous. "All that dwelled at Lydda and Sharon saw him." Now Sharon here is not the name of a girl. It's the name of a valley

from Joppa clear north to the top of Mount Carmel, a long valley of many miles between the mountains and the sea of...Mediterranean Sea, that beautiful fertile valley. We drove right up through that valley. It's become a synonym for fertility, Sharon. Beautiful and that whole valley...the gospel just went north, whom, as a result of the raising of this paralytic.

And watch, it says, "And all that dwell at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to Peter." Is that what it says? Who'd they turn to? The Lord. Aren't you glad? I'll never forget sitting with a pastor one time and it's always stuck in mind and there was a guy who came walking in the door and the pastor said to me, "you see that guy over there?" I said, "yeah." He said, "one of my converts." I said, "really?" He said, "yeah, mine, not the Lord's." I never forgot that. Mine, not the Lord's.

You know, there are a lot of people who left a trail of followers around the world but they're not the followers of Jesus Christ. They're the followers of some man. Now it's all right. Paul says, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." Listen to John 12:32 and Jesus said this, watch, "And I, if I be lifted up will draw men," what, "to Me." Now you see if you want to draw men to Christ then you're going to have to exalt Him. Because if you're looking for your own exaltation, you may get some people following you, but they won't be His.

A really effective personal ministry beloved is based upon a total absorption and preoccupation with the exaltation of Jesus Christ. And a good way to do it is to continually disclaim anything of your own verbally as Peter did. Just continue to face the fact that you have nothing to offer. And they turned to the Lord. Aren't you glad they turned to the Lord? Aren't you glad that nobody's gotten messed up with Peter. Aren't you glad that they didn't start a Peter cult. Boy you know, they tried to start one in Corinth didn't they? I'm of Paul, I'm of Peter. And then the pious ones I'm of Jesus.

And Paul lambastes them from one side to the other. But Peter didn't start a Peter cult. They turned to Jesus. Just a footnote here that hits me. They turned to the Lord. That word turned kind of rings in my mind. It's a common word today. Have you ever heard somebody say, well so and so's turned on to drugs and then they throw that into Christianity. I heard a kid give a testimony. I turned on to Jesus. Or Jesus is a turn on. You know what I say? I say boo. Watch this one. Jesus is not a turn on. Jesus is a turn around. He is not a turn on, he is a turn around. You don't, oh, oh, and get higher on Jesus. You stop turn around and go the other way. That's the turn around.

You know, I was sitting with a faculty of unbelievers, unbelieving faculty of this school and I sat in the midst of them and the headmaster of the school wanted me to take the time to do it...talk with them. Anyway, I had spoken at the school for three days in a row and shared Christ with them. We had a wonderful time about, oh I don't, 25 students received Christ, the football coach received Christ and we had a chance to work with him. But he said, I want you to come and talk to the whole faculty. So last week I sat down with this whole faculty. And of course, a lot of them had all these philosophical arguments against Christianity, all kinds of things, you know. And so I sat there and they were

pumping questions. And so they had really been rapping my commitment to Christianity and why I thought Christianity was so great. And that they were offended and I don't buy it and all this kind of stuff.

And so finally, the headmaster says, you know, he says, I teach economics and he says I don't mind if people get excited about free economics and you don't mind...he pointed to this guy in English, he says you don't mind if people get excited about poetry and you don't mind they get excited about higher mathematics and you don't mind if they get excited about history and you don't mind...and he said, well, why are you guys so uptight when somebody gets excited about Jesus Christ? And he looked at me and said couldn't you answer that? Hmmm?

I was ready let me tell you. So I simply said this. I simply said it's very easy to explain. All those other things are just an addition to your life. What is so offensive about getting excited about Jesus Christ is you've got to crucify your ego, recognize you're a vile sinner, reject everything you've lived for turn around and go God's way and that's offensive. Got very quiet. Jesus isn't a turn on, He's a turn around. And aren't you glad they turned to Him?

If you want an effective personal ministry, just do two things, get involved in what God's doing already and live to lift up Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we're going to continue this next Lord's day and we pray that You'll help us to remember these principles that we might add to them as we come together for study next time. But we thank You for just this brief look at the principles of effective ministry in the life of Peter. Father, may these part and parcel of our ministry and may we be so effective that we might touch the lives of other folks that might be multiplied again and again a thousand-fold to Your glory. May we be involved. May we give our lives into the mainstream of what You're doing. And may we live and breathe for the exaltation of Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

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