

“The Lord of the Harvest”
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This message was preached by Dr. J.B. Buffington when he pastored the Calvary Baptist Church of Lakeland, Florida.

“The Lord of the Harvest” we’ll call our message this morning. Acts chapter nine, beginning at verse 31. There’s a passage in the Psalms, the 74th Psalm and verse twelve, where David said: *For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.* Now God’s primary business is getting people saved. *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, Paul said. *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

That means that He is on the initiative. That means that He is doing the seeking. Sinners don’t seek Christ. God seeks sinners; and when they begin to seek, it is because God’s dealing with their heart. Thank God, He is on the initiative, and He is a Sovereign working salvation in the midst of the earth. And this very day, God’s working on every continent of the globe. What He’s doing I may not understand, and His ways are not my ways; but He’s working and His working is to get people saved. Sometimes He works in such unusual ways. In Matthew 9:38, we are commanded: *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* Now He is a supervisor; He’s the Lord; He’s the manger of the harvest. It is not our harvest. It’s His harvest. And our business as Christians is to be in touch with the Lord of the Harvest and be available for Him to use us in the harvest where He wants us, when He wants us, and how He wants us. I do not know a better passage of Scripture to deal with this subject, the Lord of the Harvest, than this particular passage today. We see God uses different ways and different methods in his supernatural work of redemption.

Now consider first of all, in the first verse of our text today, in verse 31, it says: *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.* Now it’s interesting; God uses addition. He uses division. He uses multiplication. He also uses subtraction to get people saved. On the day of Pentecost, He used addition. *There were added unto them about 3,000 souls* and that was brought about by the preaching of the Word of God by Simon Peter. That was a tremendous day. In Acts 2:47, that’s this passage through the rest of the chapter, He deals with addition again. He said: *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* And when you read those verse it describes the early believers and what they were and their fellowship; and they were attractive in Christian living because of that. Then what happened? People got saved because of what they saw in the lives of these people. Then you find folks saved, 5,000 saved, by teaching in the book of Acts in the third chapter and fourth chapter. Five thousand folks got saved by this matter of teaching. Then, God subtracted. He took two members out of the church. I mean they had a Sunday morning service, and God said, “Drop dead,” and two of them dropped dead and what happened? Man, folks got saved right and left. That’s purifying; that’s by subtraction. And then, He divided a load in Acts 6; and the deacons came or brought into being, and the load was shared; and then great multitudes got saved. He divided and then they said, “Multitudes.” God began to multiply. And then persecution scattered the saints abroad, and they went everywhere, preaching the Word of God; and a whole city turned to Christ in the city of Samaria. Then God did personal work with a man, Philip the deacon, and he went down in personal work and dealt with one Ethiopian eunuch; and that man no doubt, according to tradition, is the fact that he evangelized the whole country of Ethiopia. God is working salvation in the midst of the earth. And then the persecutor. Man the persecutor, Paul scattered the saints everywhere, and God brought him under conviction and he got saved and anchored and sent out of the country, and then the Scripture says: *Then had the churches rest, and what? They were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.* Churches were multiplied, and you have a reproduction of church life. God is in this matter of getting people saved. He’s managing the harvest. And the churches were multiplied. Did you know what the purpose of this service is this morning? It’s to edify you, according to Ephesians chapter 4, *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:* Every Christian is supposed to be involved in the ministry. Every Christian is supposed to be engaged in the harvest field, and when this

service is over, you are supposed to be edified, challenged, built up to go out this week and this afternoon and try to reach somebody for Christ and bring them back to the services, get them baptized and taught; and they go back out into the harvest field, and there's a continual getting servants for the harvest, getting folks saved. God is managing the harvest, and that's what He's doing today in this earth. And God knows what He's doing.

Now, consider secondly, ministering to the saints. He's not only the Lord of the harvest, managing the harvest, but He's ministering to the saints. Look at verse 32 in our text. *And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.* Peter came down there, and the Scripture said: *also to the saints.* Three times in this chapter you have the word *saints* used. Now, you don't become a saint when you die and some miracle is supposedly brought about by your body. That's not found in the Bible, and that's not found in logic. That's a lot of bologna. You become a saint when you get saved. Sainthood is not a mark of the fact of maturity or a miraculous power, but everybody who's a Christian is a saint. Now we are supposed to live like saints, but we do not become saints by living; we become saints by salvation. You belong to the Lord, the set apart one; you belong to Him. And that ought to be evidenced in our lives day by day. You and I are saints. We are not saints at death. We are saints in this life, here and now. The Word of God says that. In the thirteenth verse, He said the saints were at Jerusalem; and in verse thirty-two, the saints down there at Lydda; and then in verse 41, you have: *when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.* Now we are made saints by salvation. He ministers to the saints. He ministers to His people who are saved. Now look at Acts 14, when you get saved, that's not the end of everything. That's the beginning. I have been several times to the hospital; my wife went with me, and from the hospital brought five children. And it never stops. It never stops. This care, this concern, this growth, this ministry, and when you get saved, child of God, God is still interested in you. He wasn't just interested in getting you saved; He's interested that you grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is interested in you and wants you to grow into an adult. The little babies over in the nursery; they are so wonderful. But if they never grow any in the nursery, and they are in there year in and year out, that's a tragedy. That's no longer wonderful. There's something bad wrong. And when you get saved, God is interested in follow-up; and that's the reason teachers are supposed to visit their classes. Look at Acts 14:21-22: *And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* Now, they got them saved; they came back, and they challenged them. Look at the fifteenth chapter and verse thirty-six: *And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.* Now, but I am not interested in converts that you can't find. I mean, this matter of salvation is something real. And he said, "Let's go back and let's visit and let's see how they do." And Christians, baby Christians, have to be followed-up. I mean they are babes, and babies get into trouble. They must be followed up. Why? They must be followed-up, or they will never grow into maturity. The cults get them, and their lives are not effective for Christ, and they will never get into the work force; and God's intention is that every Christian gets involved in the work force. You think of over five billion people on the face of God's earth. When you multiply the billions of people, there may be one fourth, which I doubt seriously, of the world's population that have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And can you think of what a tremendous harvest, and no wonder Jesus said: *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* My, what a tremendous need. And so there's a need. God is concerned for the saints. He ministers to the saints in order that the saints become involved in this matter of reaching others for Jesus Christ. Now young converts, or fellow believer, let me say this. There are some saints that if you don't visit them, they don't come. Every time you visit them they come to church. That's sad. And the saints can get so involved with the saints that we have no time to reach the lost. And you think of how many are absent from every church every Sunday, and you try to follow them up, and you don't have any time to carry out the great commission to get people saved. And, hey, child of God, hey child of God, I remember somebody coming to check on me one time in my entire life about the services of God. You ought not really have to be checked on. I mean, you ought to be in the house of God. Somebody ought not have to go after you and pull you and plead with you. Brother, if you

get saved, brother, there's something in the house of God for you; and if there's not something at the house of God for you, there's sin in your life or you didn't get saved because there's a hunger. Babies hunger for milk. Babies hunger for food. They scream; they cry. And when you got saved, there's a hunger in your heart for spiritual things. And you ought not have to be drug to the house of God. Why? There's something wrong. Grow up! Grow up! And I would make a resolve, "Nobody's going to have come looking for me to see whether I am in the house of God." I belong in the house of God. Why? Because God said so. And we ought to say, "I don't want anybody come knocking on the door after me. I'm going to be in the house of God." One time, one person came to me, and they didn't come to me because of the fact that I was out of the service. They came to me because they heard I was discouraged. And I was discouraged, but I was in the house of God. Now, He's ministering to the saints. Now, He comforts you to make you comforters and not comfortable. He does not come and minister to us in order to just make us comfortable, but He does comfort us in order that we may go to others who have problems and comfort them by the comfort that I got from the Lord. And so here in these verses, we see Him managing the harvest; we see Him ministering to the saints.

Now, number three, we see Him mending the diseased. God's concerned about sick folks. Does it touch His heart? Yes, it touches His heart; you have the compassion of the Savior. Now turn in the passage, and let's get some things clear. Turn to Matthew 11. Healing ministry and miracles were part of His credentials, and they were the credentials of the apostles, and we have a completed canon of Scripture. I don't need credentials; all I need is the Word of God today. I don't need credentials to prove anything. The Word of God has been approved, and it's verified. When John was doubting whether Jesus was the Christ or not, he was a forerunner, and now he found himself in jail. He said, "Hey, if He's the King, He's the Messiah. What in the world am I, His announcer, His forerunner, what in the world am I doing in jail?" And John had some problems, intellectual problems, and he sent a message to the Lord Jesus. *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* Jesus sent this answer back to him. *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* He said, "You go tell what you see and hear. You saw the lame walk, the blind to see; you saw the sick healed." Those were His credentials. Now, He's interested in sick folks. He's interested in you. Wherever He went, He healed sick folks. Does He heal today? Yes, He still heals today, but He does not heal like He did in the days of the apostles. Now, He still heals. He went about doing good; and to say He doesn't heal, violates the Word of God. And everybody here, if you have been healed, God had something to do with that. He made you. He put a healing force on the inside, but a healing force on the inside won't do any good unless a healer works in your heart and life. He heals. He heals. If we don't understand some things, a lot of folks are going to have their faith shattered. God does not heal everybody that's sick today. Turn to the book of Matthew 8, and let's look at these verses of Scripture. Some say that healing is in the atonement. Healing is not in the atonement. A new body is in the atonement, but healing is not in the atonement. So if the idea is, "Well, if Jesus' healing is in the atonement, all I've got to do is pray and I'll be healed." If that's so, nobody would ever die. Nobody would ever die. There wouldn't be any funerals; but rest assured, everybody who believes that healing is in the atonement, one day the hearse is going to take them to the cemetery and cover them up and they are going to die. If healing is in the atonement, why did it run out on them? Now look at Matthew, and let's look at this physical healing and spiritual healing. Matthew 8:16: *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:* Now he didn't heal all that were sick everywhere he went. He only healed one man at the pool of Bethesda. Here in this place, He healed all that were sick. Now look at the next verse. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.* And that is Isaiah 53:4, and that is not healing in connection with the atonement. That is healing in connection with the incarnation and with His credentials; He hadn't gone to the cross. Now turn to 1 Peter, and look at what kind of healing is connected with atonement in 1 Peter 2. Now to say that healing is in the atonement in every Christian, if there's not sin in your life, you would be well. Oh, no, no, no, no. Some of God's choicest saints have been sick all of their life. Some of God's greatest prayer warriors are folks who are sick. Now look at I Peter 2. In I Peter 2 you have redemptive healing; now, in the other you had physical healing by His life, now by His

death. Verse 24: *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, What? that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* That's not talking about physical. That's talking about spiritual healing from sins and redemptive forgiveness. Now Jesus is concerned. Why do we pray? The Bible says if any man be sick, pray! Why do we pray? Why do we go to the hospital and pray for the sick? Because He taught us to pray. We believe in prayer and the great heart of God. He's touched with the feelings of our infirmities. I have a right to pray when I am sick. I have a right to pray for others. I have a right to the great heart of God. He's touched with the feelings of our infirmities. But, I must recognize that God does not heal everybody today. Now if you think He does, you are going to have a battle with your faith. You say, "What in the world's wrong with me?" And they go to healing lines, and the healer blames you on the fact that they are not healed. No, when I read James 5, it says the prayer of faith shall save the sick. That's the prayer; that's the one praying. We can't pray a prayer of faith unless God gives me assurance in my heart that it's the will of God for this dear person to be healed because I do not have a verse of Scripture that assures me that it's God's will to heal everybody that is sick today. And I can't pray in faith because *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.* We see him in the harvest now ministering to the sick with His credentials and His compassion of a Spirit-filled apostle. Here we have Simon Peter coming along and then Paul later. Here's a man's prolonged paralysis, eight years. You know, we are an impatient generation; we have got an instant everything. Everything has got to be instant. Our young people think that when you get your sink stopped up, you go get that bottle of stuff the television talks about and your pour it in, and it goes glug, glug, glug, glug, and it's all cleared out. It ain't cleared out. And we have been advertising; we think how everything happened; we have seen television; we see it moving along. We think, "Boy, instant happiness." There's no instant happiness. There's no instant remedy of many, many things in life; and brother, we today are so impatient; we don't have time. And hear me; can you think of being in bed for eight years? And I want to say something now. God is more interested in my character than He is in my comfort. God's building character, and we don't like character's long process. Christianity begins at home. And here's a man eight years, somebody spent eight years of their life taking care of a man who couldn't take care of himself. That's character. That's character. And hear me. Our problem is God has a school ground and a school for teaching character; and it's not church, we teach it, but it's home. Our Christianity must work at home, or it is farce. It is not right. It's wrong. Hey, young people, character begins at home. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.* Go home, obey mom and dad. That's character. Hey, dad, go home. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,* That's character. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.* That's character. *Servants, be obedient to your masters.* That's character. And on, and on, and on. And a place that character is taught and if it's not taught there, brother, it's not taught anywhere else. It's undermined there unless the home is a place where we teach character. He came to this place, and behind the scenes somebody took care of a paralytic. Somebody bathed him, and somebody fed him, and somebody clothed him, and somebody sat by his side, and this is a day that demands character. And if we want to live for God and give a testimony, then, brother, our testimony is no better than our character is. And behind our testimony must be our character. And Jesus sent a man down to his house to deal with a man with prolonged paralysis and here ministered unto his needs. Does Jesus care? Yes, sir. You think about the hospital ministry. You will find it of Christian origin, the healing ministry of Christian origin.

Now quickly, number four, the magnifying of the mundane of the worldly. Look at verse thirty-six and thirty-nine. God magnifies that. We magnify something else. Acts 9:36: *Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.* Verse 39: *. . . and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.* Ladies, could I talk to you just a little while? This is the day and age that women say, "I want to find myself." The Bible says lose yourself. If you find yourself, you won't be happy. If you lose yourself, you'll be happy. And this day and age that has told women a lie, that my, you stay home and take care of little kids and all this and that's not living and you need to get out and find fulfillment of life. I will tell you, you can't find any greater fulfillment than in the will of God, and

the will of God brings satisfaction, and the will of God brings completion. And you find in the Word of God, a woman, and here is what honors God and God magnifies. This woman made no speeches. This woman, nothing is said about the fact that she's a saved woman; nothing is said about the fact she taught a Sunday school class; nothing is said about the fact that she was head of the Flower Garden Club, nothing of that sort. She's not a public figure. This woman is a woman who has given her life to others, and here it was about what she did and not about what she said. And the record in the Word of God, and after all is said and done, when your body lies prostrate, it's not the speeches that you made; it is the lives that you have touched that counts. It's not the functions that you've attended, but listen, the wounds that you've ministered to. Now turn to 1 Timothy 5. In the New Testament church, they did not put widows on the relief roll unless they met certain qualifications, and those qualifications had to do with character, Christian character. Look at it, 1 Timothy 5:10. And ladies today, this is a desperate need of the hour. We need a generation, not just men, we need a generation of ladies who teach character and live character and live Godly lives. We desperately need it. 1 Timothy 5:10: *Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.* You mean that's spirituality? Yes, that's spirituality. Do you mean changing diapers is spiritual? Yes, that's spiritual. You mean cooking meals is spiritual? Yes, that's spiritual. You mean setting a table and getting up early in the morning to cook breakfast is spiritual? Yes, that's spiritual. I'll show it to you in just a moment. Now here's a woman's qualifications to be put on the relief roll of the church, and you wouldn't call this spiritual. What? Except the good works. "Brought up children," you say, "what's spiritual about that?" If she lodged strangers, if she washed the saints feet, if she relieved the afflicted, if she diligently followed every good work and her life is wrapped up in meeting the needs of others, that's spirituality. Now turn to the book of Proverbs 31. *Who can find a virtuous woman?* Now what does this woman do? Oh, my. She does a lot of things, but let's look at, boy, she's busy. Her household is her throne. Look at verse eleven: *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, . . .* She goes to the K-Mart and buys *wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands,* and she has a sewing machine down at the house. "What's spiritual about that?" That's spirituality. *She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.* She's gone down to the grocery store, and she's bought groceries and she brings them home. Verse 15: *She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.* She's had breakfast ready before sunup. *She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.* What was it? She's involved in the matter of her household. Buying a field, planting it, and planted a vineyard. *She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.* Boy, she is sewing and sewing and sewing. *She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.* She's been sewing. *She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.* She didn't get her clothing from France, either. *Her husband is known in the gates, . . .* Verse 24: *She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.* My, she has a carport sale. You didn't know that was there, did you? These wives will have a verse now for all these carport sales. Just one more carport sale. There's a verse for it. *She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.* No speeches, no clubs. What is it? A life of ministry. Dear ladies, if you want to find fulfillment, don't seek your life. Lose it. Matthew 10:39: *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* And the most miserable women in all the world, and men, too, are those who are out seeking to find their life. Brother, you find yourself, and, boy, you'll want to commit suicide. Boy, you're not very good to look at. And here back to the book of Acts 9. He came to this household, and he magnifies the mundane. He magnifies. What did she do? She made girdles. And that isn't the kind of girdles we are thinking about, now. I see some of the men need some of them, but I mean, I'm not talking about that kind. She was making girdles and garments and so forth. She was full of good works. Christianity is practical. People say, "Well, I'm going to sit over in the Bible study, and I'm going to read my

Bible, and I'm going to pray." Yeah, you read your Bible and pray, but Bible reading and prayer is no substitute for taking care of your loved ones. And taking care of your loved ones is no substitute for private devotions. You need the private devotions and so forth for inspiration to take care of them, and when you get away from private devotions and serving the Lord, then you are interested in number one instead of somebody else. And you need to stay close to God so you will be interested in somebody else and not live a selfish life. That's the inspiration. And here is this woman that God magnifies. Turn to Titus 2 while we are here. Listen to what it says. The mothers are to teach their young people, their young girls. Say, if you don't, then what? The Word of God is blasphemed. Titus 2:3: *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, Godly women! not false accusers, They are not gossipers! not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, Hey, you had better be sober! to love their husbands, to love their children, Teach your daughters to love their husbands. How are you going to teach them? By just loving yours to death. A mama can't teach her girls to love their husbands if she doesn't really love her own husband. And I mean, just spoil him rotten. And moms and dads, you'll save a whole lot of problems. Listen, you'll save a whole lot of problems if you tell your daughters, I mean, to just spoil their husbands rotten. And we talk about the men, what they will do for their wives on Mother's Day. What happens? You're teaching your daughters something that builds a home and builds happiness. Okay, read on. That they may teach their young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, Hey, children, they are something. They're not problems. They are gifts from God. They are the heritage of God. They are my jewels. If you are going to do that, you are going to have to get out of step with the attitude today that, "Boy, they shackle me, and I can't go here, and I can't do this, and oh, what I am going to do when these kids are under my feet and be glad when they are grown and out from under my feet. I'll be glad of that." Hey, that's not why children are designed. Children are gifts from God. Teach them to love their children. And a mama can't teach her daughter to love her children unless the mama sets the example to her daughter of what it is to love children. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, You mamas teach your daughters to obey, to submit to their husbands. Why? that the Word of God be not blasphemed. Hey, this is a day of my rights, and we have got rebellion everywhere; we've got rebellion in church; we have got rebellion in the home; we have got rebellion in school. And folks who have rules in schools defy rules in the house of God. Hey, watch it! Watch it! Here is character, and God's Book magnifies the mundane, the things we think aren't spiritual. Many a woman has said, "I'm not doing anything for God. I'm raising a family." Boy, you raise a family and teach them the fear of God and get them saved and send them out into the world; brother, you've done something. You're not a failure. You've done something. And here the Lord is magnifying this matter. And by the way, the Bible recognizes women. People say they turn against Christianity because it belittles women. I beg your pardon. Look in this chapter how much He recognizes in this book alone. It recognizes the prayer meeting. Acts 12, here's a prayer meeting in her house. We don't have time to read it. In Acts 16, you have Lydia how she opened her house to the apostle Paul. In Acts 18, you have Priscilla and Aquilla who was a worker alongside of her husband and an instructor along side of her husband. But that's enough with that. Listen to this.*

Do what you can, being what you are.

Shine as a glowworm, if you cannot be a star.

Work like a pulley, if you cannot be a crane.

Be a wheel greaser, if you cannot drive a train.

Be the prime ore, if you cannot be the sailor.

Be the little needle, if you cannot be the tailor.

Be the cleansing broom, if you cannot be the sweeper.

Be the sharpened sickle, if you cannot be the reaper.

God magnifies the little things. Now, quickly. Look at Him magnifying the miraculous here in the matter of death and sorrow. Look back to the book of Acts 9. He magnifies here, manifested the miraculous. God works miracles. God works miracles. God's done some miracles this week. And I know about it. Nobody, but God could do that. God manifests the miraculous in death. In verse 37: *And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.* She died. It reminds

me, this is not very spiritual, but it reminds me of one man that got killed at the job. The foreman said, "My, my. I hate to go home and tell that lady her husband got killed." And a fellow came up and said, "Well, I'll go tell her." And he said, "Anybody just can't tell her. You've got to have a lot of tact, I mean, to tell that lady about her husband getting killed. She won't be expecting anything." And he said, "I can tell her." He said, "All right. Now you be tactful." So he went to the house, and he knocked on the door, and the lady came to the door, and he said, "Widow Jones." She said, "I'm not a widow." He said, "That's what you think." Now that's tact. Now they didn't quite announce it to her this way. But here's the miraculous. Our Lord paid attention. Wherever He went there weren't any funerals; the little girl just died, twelve years old; Jesus went into the death chamber, and she came out. A young man on the way to the cemetery, and Jesus Christ gave him life. A young man in the cemetery, and, brother, he was dead four days; Jesus brought back life again. The miraculous, the Gospel offers the miraculous. God does what man cannot do. He can mend broken hearts. He can mend broken bodies. He can mend broken homes. Listen, He can mend shattered dreams. He is a miracle worker. Jesus Christ went about doing good. If He's not a miracle worker, we just as well close up and go home. I mean, to get the Gospel to men takes a miracle. Hey, you think that when you get people saved, it takes just as much a miracle if you went out to the cemetery and you were preaching to dead folks. Did you know that? People who are lost are dead in trespasses and sin. They can't see; they can't hear; they can't feel. And he said: *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* And if you don't understand how much power it takes to get somebody saved, go out to the cemetery and preach to the cemetery. Hear me, it takes just as much power to call them from the dead, as it does to get somebody dead in the world, saved. This matter of salvation is not a matter of decision. It's a miracle. This matter of salvation is not turning over a new leaf. It's a miracle of God, and only God can perform it. No man can claim that power. We deliver the message, but that message must be delivered and anointed by the Spirit of God to get a hold of the heart and life and bring he who was *dead in trespasses and sin* and give them life. Dead people don't come to church. I didn't go much when I went. I never heard anything. I don't remember anything. I don't remember a Sunday school lesson. I do remember a song or two. I don't remember any message a preacher ever preached. I don't remember a Sunday school lesson the teacher ever taught. In fact, I don't remember much even having Sunday school teachers. What was wrong? It wasn't the church; it wasn't the preacher; it wasn't the Sunday school teacher. It was the fact that I was dead. The Bible says, *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* And one day, hear me, one day, Jesus Christ came into my life, and I've been alive. And now I can hear, and now I can see, and now I can feel, and now I can remember. Why? Because I'm spiritually alive. What made me alive? Christ made me alive. People say, "Boy, you think being a Christian is turning over a new leaf and living." No, no, no. If you want to be a Christian, you have to be born again, and that's a miracle of God and cannot be brought about by man. It is brought about by God and God alone. He manifested the miraculous. And people say, "I want to see miracles." Everybody that is saved today is a miracle. These are miracles back here. They are not perfect, but they are alive. Everybody alive is not perfect, but they are sure a whole lot better off than dead people. You say, "Well, I'll tell you, if I get saved, I wouldn't be like some folks in the church." If you are not saved, they're a whole lot better off than you because they are alive and you are dead. And when you get alive, you won't talk like that because of the fact that you are alive. It is strange that dead people talk about living people as though that they're repulsive. No, no. You've got the thing all mixed up. I've never seen a corpse yet that I envied. I've never seen a suit of clothes on a corpse that I wanted. I've never seen the body of a corpse that I wanted. I've never seen a ring on a corpse's hand that I wanted. Why? I'm alive, and they're dead. Here's the manifestation of the miraculous, the Gospel in death, the Gospel in sorrow. He comforts the sorrowing, but He also moves into the house of those who are dead and gives them life. How tenderly they took the body of Lydia and washed it and took it in the upper chamber. We need to come back to the fact again of a Christian business that, brother, the body is sacred, whether you believe it or not. The body is not something to cast away. The body is a house that your loved one lived in. Treat it tenderly. There is a house in Ocala that my Mama lived in, but she's not there now. She's gone. Nobody's living there. I don't think we are going to burn it down. It's an old house. It's not worth a whole lot of money. But it sure is associated with mama. Because it is associated with mama, it has special treatment. It is associated with mama. And here this woman, her body's all stretched out; here in

tenderness, they show their hope in the matter of death.

Now quickly, and let's close. Motivating the lost. Look at this. It's interesting. We read this, and if we are not careful, we don't see any purpose, but I want you to see something, what God's doing in death, in sickness, in tragedy, sorrow. God's working to reach people. Look at it. Look at verse 35. When this man that was sick was raised from the dead, the Scripture says in verse 35, the sick was made well. Verse 35: *And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.* Why does God heal people? He didn't heal them just as an end in itself; it was His credentials. Why? Folks get saved. Many turn to the Lord. Would you think that that just kind of slipped up on God, or would you kind of think that God planned it that way? He's interested in the sick man, but He's interested in the community that sees what God did in his body, and many turned to the Lord. Let's go a little farther in that chapter. Look at verse 42. Here this woman dies, and they brought her back to life. Look at verse 42: *And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.* Do you think that it was just some happenstance thing down there at that city that Peter goes around and gives her life back? Do you think that that's all God's interested in? God's interested in that. God's interested in the sorrowing, but God's interested in that people get saved. And here this woman's raised from the dead. Why? . . . *and many believed in the Lord.* He's the Lord of the Harvest. And what He does in our lives, He's interested in not just stopping at us, but He's interested in what? In somebody else getting saved. He said about Abraham: *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* God said, "I'm going to bless you so somebody else will be blessed because of you." God is managing the harvest and motivating the lost to get saved. That's His main business, to get people saved. He uses many methods to reach the lost. It may be the sick bed. It may be the sorrowing. Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead. Many trusted Christ as Savior. In John 2, it is written about a marriage, and a marriage ought to have a witness of Christ in the marriage. He went to the marriage in Cana of Galilee and the Scripture says, and he turned the water to wine. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee.* You heard about the fellow driving down the highway, and he was weaving. And the policeman stopped him. He pulled him over and said, "Mister, you are driving like you are drunk." "Oh, no, no, no. I couldn't be drunk." He said, "What's that bottle on the seat beside you." He said, "Just water." He said, "Let me smell it." So he took it off and handed it to him, and the policeman smelled the bottle and he said, "You smell it." And the man smelled it, and the man said, "Praise the Lord, He done done it again." That was deep. Some of you, you'll ask that one tomorrow. But he turned the water to wine. Now look at verse eleven: *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.*

A Christian wedding ought to do something in the heart of the unsaved that makes them want to get saved. And our sickness, what God does for us in our sickness, ought to touch somebody's heart. They want to get saved. In death in the family and sorrow, God intends that somebody get saved because of what God does in our lives in sorrow, in our salvation experience. You read in Mark 2. And we want to share this. Mark 2 talks about this experience of Levi, Matthew. Matthew got saved. Matthew was a tax-collector, and he preached the banquet in his house and many publicans got saved because of the fact he wanted to share his testimony. In Luke 1, you have Elisabeth and Zacharias taking their son John to the temple and dedicating him to the Lord. What happened? Many believed in the Lord. In the building of a house, there ought to be something established in the building of a physical building that attracts people to Christ. I read the other day, I don't remember where it was, I just read it in passing. I wasn't thinking of using it again. But a well-known Bible preacher, his daughter or his son got married and asked dad or daddy-in-law to come over to the house. They built a new house. So he walked in the house, walked in every room, looked in every room, but didn't say a thing. Then he came out and said, "What's the difference between your house and a lost house?" And they stood startled, and he said, "There's not a bit of difference between your house and a house of the lost. There's nothing in this house that I could look around because I looked around for a witness, if you weren't here, a witness that you're Christians." And it got hold of the young man and his wife. They put a silent witness in every home that they were Christians and that they loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything in your house that would tell somebody that you're saved? Anything? What is He saying? He's managing the harvest, and He's ordained what? That in all of the circumstances of life that we might have a witness for

Christ.

And the last thing is moving His servants. It's interesting. Here's Simon Peter; he's not in place. Paul is not in place, and God's moving His servants around. He had Philip in Gaza so He could send him down to talk to the Ethiopian eunuch. He had Ananias in Damascus so he could talk to Saul of Tarsus. He put Saul of Tarsus in a place, and then he sent him back to Tarsus till Simon Peter finished his task. And now he's got Simon Peter down in the city of Joppa. Just a few blocks, a few miles, over the hills is a man in Caesarea that has done everything he knew, and wanted to know how to get saved. And it is Simon Peter's calling God gave him to open the door of faith to the Jew, the Samaritan, and to the Gentile. And God's got Simon Peter in place now. Why? Because He's going to send an angel down to Cornelius' house and say, "Now there's a preacher over here at Joppa, and he'll tell you how to get saved." God moves his servants around to get them in the place that He wants them to reach people for Christ. There are no accidents. God said, . . . *all things work together for good to them that love God, . . .* And in our sicknesses, in our sorrows, in our joys, and in our problems, and in our homes, and everywhere, God is going to out of it somehow touch people. He moves us here and there. One thing is necessary that we are available where he puts us to be a personal worker, to be a witness. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* And He sends His laborers around the world, and they can be around the world. But if they are not available, there are hungry hearted sinners, and God can't get a message to them because He doesn't get somebody to cooperate with Him. And rest assured, just as sure as I am standing here this morning, there's some folks in Lakeland, Florida. "Oh, God, I wish I knew how to get saved." Well, who knows where they are? I don't know where they are. You don't know where they are, but God, the Lord of the Harvest, knows where they are, and, surely, in this city, God has somebody that's available to be where He wants them and obeys His command to go when He urges them to go, and you'll find the sinner prepared on the other hand. Now, he doesn't always win people like that, but He does win them like that sometimes. If you are here today unsaved, that's not an accident. Why did you come? Oh, you said, "I decided to come." No, no, no. You're here today because of the fact that you need to get saved. That's no accident. I can tell you how to get saved if you come today as a sinner. Don't come as a saint. You come as a sinner. You come, and quit trying to save yourself. Come as a sinner. Come with nothing to offer. Come with one plea. I don't have any plea except the fact you said Christ died for me. That's my only plea. If He can't save me, then I'm a goner. You just come as a failure. You just come as a sinner. You come to put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Him alone. Boy, He'll save you. *Him that cometh to me.* Now don't come to the preacher, and don't come to the church. You come to Jesus. We invite you to come so we can take the Word of God and help you and work with you and show you verses of Scripture, but we want you to come to Christ today. If you come to Christ, you will be glad eternally that you came to Christ. You may come to church and not get saved. You may come to the preacher and not get saved; but if you come to Jesus, you'll get saved. . . . *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*