

**Acts 9:32-42**  
**Living with Hope**  
**Ryan Perz – March 8, 2020**

Intro: The more time we spend with people in this broken world, the more often we find those who are hopeless. Just think of the amount of addiction, depression, even suicide that exists around us. There is a lot of hopeless people out there. It's ironic. Even though we live in one of the most economically prosperous and affluent times ever—things our great grandparents could never imagine—it has not erased hopelessness.

Yet hope is part of the great triad of biblical spirituality, what's been called the "theological virtues" (1 Cor 13:13)—like a triangle, all fit together: faith, hope and love.

Yet sometimes even Christians, can get hope out of focus.

"I am also persuaded that Christians, especially in the Western world, do not focus on our biblical hope as much as we should, in part because we live fairly comfortable lives...*Christian hope rises in glory where hardship exists on earth.*" (Mark Jones; *Faith, Hope, and Love*)

In other words, it hard to appreciate and exercise hope unless our faith is tested by some type of hardship.

*In our text we meet two people, two situations that at first look hopeless, but the saving power of Christ comes to bring hope.*

Let's keep in mind that this is Acts and the broader concern is mission.

We move into the next major section in Acts (9:32-12:25): The Jerusalem church beings to engage the Gentiles in mission. Rom 15:12 "...in him the Gentiles will hope".

**Hope through healing (32-34)**

- If written as a travel journey, it would read, "Peter Goes West".

- This is not because Peter likes to travel and needs to fill empty space on his Instagram. The church is in a time of peace (31), which means he can move somewhat freely.
- These stories show v31 in action!
- During this journey, Peter probably took opportunities to evangelize.
- But also, a main objective is to edify the saints—v32 “he came to the saints at Lydda”.

Let’s pause and look at the place and people:

Place: Lydda: 25 miles NW of Jerusalem

People: Saints

Saints, one of the main identity marks of believers. Not in the Roman Catholic sense of sainthood. Saints means “ones made holy, set apart by Christ”.

(1 Cor 1:2) “To the Church of God...to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.” A Saint is one who finds their main identity in what Christ has done for them.

Do you find your main identity in Christ? His work? His grace? Welcome to sainthood!

In Lydda, Peter finds a man, Aeneas, physically afflicted for 8 years.

Now we don’t get any commentary from Aeneas, but we can imagine he may feel hopeless and depressed. But God has a big surprise in store.

—Peter encounters, and just speaks the Word...just speaks the name of Jesus (v34).

—We also see the men like Peter are just instruments, just tools. *It’s really Jesus’s work!*

Think of the implications for living on mission. We are simply instruments and tools that Jesus uses.

- (34) “And immediately he rose.”
- But does living with hope mean this always happens? What about the times when God does not heal?

Let’s look at two principles:

Principle 1: The saving power of Jesus Christ includes physical healing (miracles) *as God wills*.

Several different scenarios that people experience, which is tied to this.

1. *There is a market for pseudo healing to be aware of.*

Over the past few years, a man named Costi Hinn started sharing his story. If you recognize his last name it's because he is the nephew of Benny Hinn. Costi has become a vocal critic and exposed the lavish lifestyles of the Hinn Dynasty. His uncle's ministry rolls in around a 100 million dollars a year.

But Costi said he never saw one person really healed.

The deceptive thing: there are screeners at his healing crusades that prevents the truly disabled from gaining access. How phony and evil.

2. *God does not always heal.* For 8 years, healing was not the answer for Aeneas. Similarly, God did not grant Paul what he asked for several times.

(2 Cor 12:7-9)

<sup>7</sup>So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness

Even when the answer is no, Jesus is enough!

3. *Sometimes God does grant the healing (as he wills)*

- Biblical healings often validate the message. They show that God's kingdom arrived in Jesus.
- They also foreshadow the new creation. God's eternal rule means the absence of sickness and death (Rev 21:4)—sickness and death that is part of this fallen creation will be gone *forever!*

Now in a very similar scenario, Jesus healed a paralyzed man (Lk 5:17-26), yet with one major difference: Jesus forgave his sin also. He gave the *ultimate healing* needed.

Principle 2: The saving power of Christ *always* includes soul-healing *as we believe*.

(1 Pet 2:24-25)

<sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

These four words were life-changing for Aeneas that day: Jesus Christ heals you. The old KJV says *made whole*.

Saints, our hope lies in those 4 words: Jesus Christ heals you. He has healed every sin-sick soul that trusts his mercy.

Some need to hear those words and find hope today: Jesus Christ heals you.

Jesus can make you whole. Addictive sin-patterns, deep rebellion, bitterness, or casual disobedience. It all paralyzes and leaves us on the sickbed unable to rise. But Jesus Christ can and does heal sinners.

### **Hope in resurrection (36-41)**

- The location now shifts to Joppa.
- This was Judea's primary port city. Again, we see the apostles filling the command to take the gospel to Jerusalem, into Judea (1:8)

Here we see the presence of the Lord is at work in some powerful ways

#### 1. Presence of the Lord in faithful discipleship: Tabitha

- Now the Scripture could have just named that a disciple had died; but instead it gives us a picture of this woman's heart (v36)—full of good works and acts of charity.

One aspect of discipleship is doing good, seeing and helping others, especially the overlooked and afflicted.

- Tabitha used her life to bless others, especially those on the margins. “Today Christians must bring as much shalom as possible to those on the margins” (Larkin)

(Jas 1:27)

<sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

## 2. The presence of the Lord in a moment of crisis (37-39)

- We can think that when a crisis hits, God has disappeared.

The presence of God is personal. We don't need to look for a cloud or bright light to know the presence of God is near in a crisis. Often, just look for a Christian, who God sends.

## 3. The presence of the Lord through prayer

- So many of the Psalms teach us to take our crisis to God in prayer. Cry out to him.
- V40, draws our attention to Peter praying. It may call to mind 2 Kings 4:33—when Elisha prayed for a miracle.
- The NT advises this approach:

(Jas 5:13-16)

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven....

## 4. The presence of the Lord in resurrection (40)

- Here again, Peter's actions mirror the Lord Jesus. The command to rise sounds just like what Jesus says in Mk 5:41 when a little girl was lifted from her deathbed (Mk 5:41).

Just like the healing, the resurrection shows the saving power of Jesus over death. In Christ, death does not have the final word.

(1 Cor 15:54) Death is swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

### **How God can use our hardship (35, 42)**

- Let's circle back to the beginning.

“Christian hope rises in glory where hardship exists.” (Mark Jones)

That seems to prove true for Aeneas and Tabitha —sickness and death are hard things, but...look at how God used them: revival.

(v39)—all the residents of Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord

(v24)—many in Joppa believed

Often when hardship hits, we are tempted to lose hope. Maybe we say, “why me”, or more biblically informed, “How Long, O Lord?”

But the God who works in unconventional ways may choose to use our personal hardship to bless another, or save another.

What is the supreme illustration of it? Look no further than our Savior. His life was marked by ongoing hardship.

(Is 53:3) “despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

But Jesus was no navel-gazer when it came to hardship. Through his outgoing and generous love, his hardships worked for our good.

(Is 53:4) “Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows”

God is often doing a 1,000 things. We may be aware of just a few of them. Consider how God may even use your hardship for his greater purpose. Maybe even to give someone the hope of everlasting life.

### Conclusion

Jesus used the metaphor of sickness to help us understand his mission and saving power.

(Lk 5:31-32)

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Having a whole life starts with repentance. Christian hope rises in glory where hardship exists. Jesus lived a hard life, and died a hard death, to open up the way for us to return to God, and find healing and wholeness.

Our hope rises in glory as we behold him.