

The Acts of the Apostles

Sermon Number: 16

Acts 9:32-43

July 10, 2011

“God Works Miracles”

Acts 9:32-43

³² Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. ³³ There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. ³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

³⁶ At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. ³⁸ And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹ Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought *him* to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. ⁴³ So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

NKJV

God Works Miracles

There is no doubt in my mind that God works miracles, even today. But I'm just as sure that God doesn't use some modern self-appointed "miracle worker." Peter didn't want an audience.

We have all heard of cases where a cancer disappears and the doctors have no medical explanation for it. God can and sometimes does heal the sick in an unusual manner or in a short period of time.

While the healing of the body is sometimes an apparent miracle every instance of Holy Spirit regeneration is a true miracle.

When Jesus Christ confronted Saul of Tarsus it was a miracle that a man with the history of Saul would be called by God, convicted of sin and guilt, and given a new heart.

It was no less of a miracle when the Lord saved this sinner who stands before you. If ever there was a man who deserved condemnation it was me.

I will say this boldly, “If you think you deserved to be saved; you are not saved!”

“All the fitness He requireth is to feel your need of Him.”

Peter Heals a Paralyzed Man

God is going to use Peter, a strongly prejudiced Jew, to open the door to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Saul, who was also called Paul [Acts 13:8] is appointed as the apostle to the Gentiles. Generally, Peter ministered to the Jews but there was a mixture of Jews and non-Jews in the ministry of both apostles.

We will see exactly how God taught Peter not to be prejudiced against Gentiles when we study Peter and Cornelius in Chapter 10.

In our text today, Peter is used by God to heal Aeneas and to raise Dorcas from the dead.

³² Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. ³³ There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. ³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

The last time we read about Peter, he and John were on their way back to Jerusalem after ministering in Samaria [8:25].

Peter had severely rebuked Simon the Sorcerer who wanted to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then the Holy Spirit sent Philip to join the Ethiopian Eunuch and Philip preached Jesus Christ to him from Isaiah 53; the passage that puzzled the Eunuch.

Next came Saul's reign of terror against those of "the Way" that came to an abrupt end when Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus.

There was a period of relative freedom from harassment for the Christians in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. We find Peter visiting the Christians who had fled from the persecution in Jerusalem.

Peter comes to Lydda which is a mostly Gentile city twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem. Philip had preached in all the cities and no doubt had been to Lydda. [8:40]

There in Lydda Peter found a man named Aeneas who had been bedridden and paralyzed for eight years. Peter makes no grand show of his power; he simply commands the man in the name of Jesus to rise up.

Acts 9:34

And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. NKJV

Luke doesn't tell us very much about Aeneas; his age, was he a believer in Jesus, was he Jew or Gentile. All we know is that he was helpless and that he had no prospects of ever walking again.

To me there is a similarity with this helpless man and every sinner who is saved. You must have no hope in yourself if you are to trust in the righteousness of Jesus Christ completely.

How did Peter know that Jesus would heal this man? It occurs to me that it takes as much faith on Peter's part as it did for Aeneas.

After Pentecost Peter's first miracle was to heal a lame man at the temple Gate called Beautiful. [Acts 3]

Both Peter and Paul healed the lame; both were arrested and released from prison by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The miracles performed by Peter and Paul probably had something to do with the favoritism and schism that arose in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

¹⁰ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you. ¹² Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

When the Holy Spirit healed Aeneas it was instantaneous. Everyone could see that it happened and the man's testimony was open to all to see and hear.

Continuing to make a comparison between Aeneas and a saved sinner; as Rolf Barnard put it, "When the Lord saves a sinner; even the old dog in the yard will know it."

Pardon another personal reference but when the Lord saved me my brother remarked, "Jim is taking this a little too seriously."

We are not told what else Peter did in Lydda but there is no doubt that Peter continued to obey the command of Jesus to "Feed my sheep."

³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

There was a great response to the Gospel in Lydda and the coastal plain of Sharon.

Peter Raises the Dead

³⁶ At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. ³⁸ And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹ Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought *him* to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. ⁴³ So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

Travelling northwest from Lydda about ten miles brings you to Joppa on the seacoast. You will recall that Joppa is where Jonah went as he tried to run away from God. God had told Jonah to preach to Nineveh and Jonah didn't want to preach to Gentiles.

Well, you know the story of Jonah, the great storm, the great fish, and all that God prepared before Jonah finally obeyed the Lord. Jonah's reluctant journey to Nineveh resulted in the greatest missionary campaign in the history of the world.

Peter was not reluctant to go to Joppa and preach to the Gentiles.

In Joppa there was a Christian woman named "Gazelle". Her name in Greek is Dorcas and the Aramaic/Hebrew word is Tabitha which means gazelle or antelope.

The Lord is good and we cannot question His wisdom but we are puzzled as to why He would take the life of someone who was so useful in the church.

We must learn to say with Job, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." [Job 1:21]

The word of what had happened in Lydda had spread to Joppa and the believers there sent two men to ask for Peter to come. There was no precedent for an apostle to raise the dead so what did they expect Peter to do?

The Jewish burial custom was to wash the body which proved that she was dead and to anoint the body with spices for burial.

Tabitha is lying in state and the widows were weeping and showing some of the clothing that Dorcas had made for the widows in the church.

This also shows that the instruction of Paul to Timothy and of James to provide for the widows was being followed.

Peter follows the example of the Lord Jesus when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. Notice the similarities of these two miracles.

Mark 5:35-43

³⁵ While He was still speaking, *some* came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

³⁶ As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." ³⁷ And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. ³⁸ Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. ³⁹ When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

⁴⁰ And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying. ⁴¹ Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴² Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years *of age*. And they were overcome with great amazement. ⁴³ But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that *something* should be given her to eat.

The words spoken are the same:
Jesus, “Talitha cumi” “Little girl, I say to you arise.”

Peter, “Tabitha arise.”

Jesus took the girl by the hand before He spoke to her showing that He was not afraid of becoming ceremonially unclean by touching a dead body.

Peter took the girl by the hand after she sat up.

How much ability does a dead person have to give themselves life?

Exactly the same ability that a spiritually dead sinner has to come to Christ before the Holy Spirit gives him life.

John 6:43-45

⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, '*And they shall all be taught by God.*' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned* from the Father comes to Me.

Peter stayed in Joppa “many days” and surely taught the believers the Gospel because “faith” based on miracles alone will not save anyone.

Already Peter is being prepared to be loosed from the legalism of Jewish rabbis. Peter is staying with Simon, a tanner.

Leviticus 11:35

And everything on which *a part of any such* carcass falls shall be unclean;

According to the Jewish rabbis a tanner would be “unclean.”

Peter is about to “graduate” in the school of faith. By that I mean that he is going to be taught in a dramatic way that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to justification. There is one God; one Gospel; and one way to be saved.

The Book of Acts is a fascinating account of “all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” The works of Jesus continue with the apostles in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When you hear a preacher tell about how Jesus is the sufficient Savior does it resonate with your soul?

Have you repented of your sin and placed your entire hope for eternal life in the righteousness of Jesus Christ?

The message is the invitation: Repent and believe in the Gospel.