

## **Acts 9:32-43**

### **PETER AND THE WONDER WORKING POWER**

Over the last couple studies of ACTS 9, we saw how God intervened in the life of the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus **to change his heart, to save his soul, and to call him into ministry to 'rightly' serve God.**

That once prideful and pride-filled man had been the instrument in hunting down, imprisoning and putting to death those who believed and proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, Christ, and Messiah.

- God would now use him as an instrument of salvation as an apostle to the Gentiles!!

**In today's message we take a break from Saul's amazing story** – to check in on the **Apostle Peter** and what God was doing through him in the lands of the Gentiles.

Before jumping into Acts 9:32-43, I would like for us to consider some things about the Apostle Peter.

Much of the book Acts is about Saul, or Paul as he would go, but here we get a glimpse into what God was doing through PETER.

### **Peter and Paul were two very different men on a very similar path!**

Both were accustomed to hard work.

- Peter as a fisherman and Saul as a tent maker.

Both were capable of great stubbornness.

Both Peter and Paul made mistakes along the way and needed correction, rebuking, forgiveness, restoration in the Lord Jesus Christ, to clearly line them up with His purpose.

Both Peter and Paul were called as apostles to serve Jesus.

- Peter to the Jews, Paul to the Gentiles.

Both taught on godly marriages.

Both taught on the end times.

Both warned of false teachers and apostasy.

Both stressed the truth of the Lord's return.

Both worked signs of miraculous healings in the name of Jesus including-

- The lame being made to walk and even the dead being raised!

Both were imprisoned for their testimony.

Both were miraculously freed from their prison cells.

Both served as role models for the church.

Both were seen as leaders in the church.

And through the ministry of both, the church was strengthened, encouraged, and continued to grow with lost souls receiving Christ Jesus by faith and being saved.

**Spoiler alert – God will use you too – IF – you are willing to get YOU out of God’s way to work through you.**

**What an amazing change** happens when the person who has denied Jesus Christ comes to the knowledge, realization, and fully committed faith in everything Jesus declared and taught!!

- Sinners become Saints!
- Those who were dead in their sins, are granted eternal life in the Lord!
- Those who once cursed Him, now praise His name!
- Those who once wandered in darkness, now walk confidently in His light!
- And those who mocked, now humbly proclaim, “Jesus is Lord!”

But Paul and Peter had to grow into the role that God had planned for Him –

**And so do you and I!**

We have heard about the stumbles of Paul until God placed him on the right path.

But Peter wasn’t always a hallmark hero of the faith and example of a righteous walk with Christ Jesus!!

In **Matthew 14:30-33** – it was Peter’s lack of faith that caused him to sink on the water.

We remember that in **Matthew 16:22-23** Jesus was explaining to the Apostles that He would soon *“Suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again.”*

**Peter** then responded: *“This shall never happen to You!”*

Both in the Matthew passage and in **Mark 8:32** we read- “And He (Jesus) was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to **rebuke Him.**”

Friends, there are many places you may find yourself and many things you may want say to Jesus...

**But standing in front of Jesus trying to rebuke the King of kings and the Lord of Lords – IS NOT ONE OF THEM!**

We also remember the exchange between Jesus and Peter during the Last Supper-

*Matthew 26:31-35* Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’

Peter had replied - “*Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.*”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” <sup>35</sup>Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.

It is a hard read, the trials of Jesus of Nazareth, and during them we read in **Matthew 26:69-75** that just as Jesus declared, **THREE** times Peter was confronted about being a follower of Jesus, and **THREE** times Peter denied even knowing Him. *Ouch!*

But for his humanity and his mistakes, (after all, haven’t we all done and said things we regret?) God knew Peter’s heart.

And understand this – The struggles we face today, help develop the strength we need to overcome the problems of tomorrow!

Like Paul, Peter had **a deep love** for God, **a commitment** to God, and **a passion** to follow Jesus.

When the apostles on the boat saw Jesus walking across the waves – Who was it that had the courage and the faith to step out of the boat onto the water? **PETER** (Matt 14:22)

When Jesus asked if the Apostles would also leave Him as some of the other followers were doing – Who was it that declared “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.*” **PETER** (John 6:68)

In **Matthew 16:13-19** when Jesus asked the Apostles who THEY declared Him to be – Who was it that responded first and boldly- *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”* **PETER**

When Jesus was arrested, who in his zeal to defend Him drew his sword and struck out? **PETER** (John 18:10)

Like Paul, God had big plans for Peter.

Because of his **faith** – Because of his **commitment** - Because of His **passion** –

Here is my assurance to you –

- If you choose to reach out to God in **FAITH**–
- If you choose to make a **COMMITMENT** to Christ Jesus–
- If you move with a **PASSION** that desires to serve the Lord-

God WILL do amazing things **IN you** and **THROUGH you** for the His glory!!

When there was something that needed to be said, something that needed to be done – **PETER** was the kind of guy that you could count on to act!

He didn't get always get it right... **but he never quit trying.**

**What about YOU? What kind of disciple of Christ are YOU?**

Are you a disciple who says *“I got my ticket to heaven. I'm good to go.”*

Or are you one who declares *“I got my ticket to heaven, and you can have one too! Let me show you how!”*

It was in this attitude of going and teaching that Peter was travelling the cities north of Jerusalem and when he came to the cities of **Lydda**-(**LŪdah in the Greek**) and **Joppa**. *“eeopay in the Greek”*

As he travelled, God was working through Peter to bring encouragement to the young churches and new believers.

**God also continued to work miracles through the apostles, in the name of Jesus, to further confirm the truth of the message they shared.**

SO with that in mind, let's take a look at what God was doing through Peter's willingness and desire to serve the Lord.

## Acts 9:32-43

<sup>32</sup> Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

<sup>33</sup> There he found a man named Aeneas, (eye-nay-uhs) who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.

Lydda was located along a major trade route about 25 miles NW of Jerusalem.

It was located along the route to the port city of Joppa which served as a primary route of goods being imported and exported from the region, including goods to and from Babylon and Egypt.

Because of its high levels of trade, the town was largely of Gentile population.

The church in Lydda was likely planted by or at the very least had been encouraged by Philip the evangelist as he travelled through this region.

Scripture does not give us much detail on Aeneas.

His name is Greek, suggesting he was possibly a gentile or a Hellenistic Jew – who were Jews living within the Greek culture and speaking the Greek language.

Because of this, there were often conflicts between them and traditional Hebrew speaking Jews who generally considered them to be “**lesser**” Jews.

The passage does say that Peter was in the region to encourage believers, “**Saints**” and therefore it is likely that Aeneas (*Eye-nee-uhs*) was a believer.

The only other thing we know is that he had been **paralyzed and bed-ridden** for eight years.

<sup>34</sup> Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.” Immediately he got up.<sup>35</sup> And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

Scripture records many, many people who were miraculously healed by God’s hand, but few are named.

Therefore, that Aeneas is named here is likely significant and worth considering.

- 1) Peter struggled at times with the gospel going out to both Jew and Gentile leading to **equality** in our relationship with God, Christ Jesus and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The healing of Aeneas demonstrated that equality.

- 2) We also see the impact this healing had on the local region. As we read, the response of the healing was that- **“<sup>35</sup> all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.”**

The healing of Aeneas verified the authority of the word of God being taught in that region.

Perhaps Aeneas was well known in these parts. Perhaps he had been outspoken as a paralyzed believer and all the more as one who had been healed in the name of Jesus.

- 3) Also, Luke is writing this account to Theophilus about the things that happened after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and His ascension into Heaven.

Luke writes as one who has conducted the interviews, gathered the stories, and is presenting a convincing argument for faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and author of salvation.

**Names of specific persons in specific places creates a challenge to those who would deny the truth of the account.**

- If anyone chose to do so, they could have verified or sought to refute any of these accounts.

And yet, historically, there is not a single piece of verifiable evidence to dispute any named person or place provided in scripture.

**There are some striking similarities to this healing and one Peter had witnessed Jesus perform during His time of ministry on earth.**

In Mark 2:1-12, we read the story of the paralyzed man whose friends had such love for their companion, and such faith in the healing power of Jesus, that they carried their friend to the rooftop of a house where Jesus was teaching.

Tearing a hole through the roof, they lowered their friend into the room where Jesus was.

### **Mark 2:5-12**

*<sup>5</sup>And Jesus seeing their faith \*said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup>But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,<sup>7</sup> “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup>Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, \*said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?*

<sup>10</sup> But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He \*said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> **"I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."** <sup>12</sup> And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

**The account of Aeneas does not speak to a sin issue or not, but it does speak to the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives.**

Consider how this event changed the life of Peter, Aeneas, and those living in Lydda and Sharon!

- The teaching of Peter was validated.
- The power of the name of Jesus was affirmed.
- God was glorified and the Holy Spirit's work was displayed.
- Many came to receive Christ Jesus as their Lord, their sins were forgiven, and they were granted the promise of eternal life!

**Consider also, from a worldly view, people would not expect much from the life of a paralyzed man.**

BUT GOD – makes the insignificant *significant*.

He makes our weakest moments our strongest moments and turns our defeat into victory.

And through our testimony of God working IN and THROUGH ordinary people like YOU and ME – God can work to redeem lost souls.

Now while there was rejoicing and praising of God happening in Lydda, nearby, God had already set up the next big thing.

This is part of what is meant by the passage in Ephesians 2:10

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

God sets up opportunities for us to glorify Him. We need to be obedient to walk through these doors of opportunity in faith!

<sup>36</sup> Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas) **"Dor-caus"** this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.

Friends, there is letter better than this type of woman in our homes, our families, and in our church. **And I am so thankful for them!**

**This was a woman well known for her kindness and charity. Her life was characterized by her faith.**

- Let me ask you – when your obituary is read, what will be said about you?
- What words will be used to describe your character?
- And how will those words glorify God – if they do?

**<sup>37</sup> And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.<sup>38</sup> Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, “Do not delay in coming to us.”**

Over the years I have felt the ache of saints who are serving the Lord with great care and compassion who seem to be taken to soon.

I am reminded of the passage the suffering servant Job proclaimed-

*Job 1:21 “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

Joppa was 13 miles west from Lydda on the coast of Judea and a major port city with ships frequently sailing in and out of the region bearing goods.

It is most famous, *up to this point*, as being the port city that the prophet Jonah fled to while attempting to escape God’s calling on his life.

Given the men who sent for Peter were followers of the teachings of Jesus (Disciples) it stands to reason that Tabitha was also a believer.

Because of her life – these men were moved to acts of compassion.

**It is unclear what the hope or expectation was in sending for Peter.**

- Perhaps simply because he was in the area.
- Perhaps to minister to those who were hurting.
- Or, if they had heard of the Christ’s raising the dead, perhaps they hoped for a miracle.

Regardless, **like all good ministers** – when God’s people reached out, Peter was willing to respond.



**<sup>39</sup> So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.**

Here we see a little more depth into the character of this godly woman.

No mention is made of her family, but her love was poured out on those around her.

And she was well known for her gracious heart of service and love.

Now up to three days were allowed by Jewish custom for the body to lay in wait of burial. This to ensure death had occurred, for proper mourning to occur, and for the body to be prepared for burial.

The body of Tabitha had been bathed and placed in an upper room, but it does not appear the final preparations for burial had occurred

Still, given the travel time from Joppa to Lydda and back, it was likely late on the second day or even perhaps the third by the time Peter arrived.

Peter took all these things in.

Surely memories of the raising of **Lazarus** came to mind.

There a man four days in the tomb had walked out untouched by death by Jesus commanding, "Lazarus, come out."

Or surely Peter recalled a time so similar when **Jairus**, an official of the synagogue, came to Jesus to plead with Him to come and lay hands on his daughter for healing, as she gravely ill.

As recorded in Mark 5, As Jesus approached the residence, they were informed the girl had already died.

There we read that in the upper room where the child had been placed, Jesus commanded all but Peter, James and John to leave.

Jesus then took the hand of the deceased child and declared, "*Little girl, I say to you, get up!*" and immediately she awoke and was made well.

In like fashion, full of faith and the wonder working power of God we read-

**<sup>40</sup> But Peter sent 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. <sup>41</sup> And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.*

### **Why did God do these things then but not in our day?**

As we have said before – these were **unique** times in biblical history, and these were **unique** men with Apostolic authority and spiritual gifts.

Today we have the completed revelation of God to man at our fingertips!

- All that needs to be revealed, has been revealed!
- All that needs to be proven has been proven!
- But that does not mean that God is done working miracles!!

I have witnessed to the power of the prayers of the saints over, and over and over again!

God is not done working miracles – and much more is to come!

*<sup>42</sup> It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.*

Peter was boldly and in faith carrying on the ministry and the message of Christ Jesus.

- He was teaching the things that Jesus had taught.
- Proclaiming the things that Jesus had proclaimed.

And through and for the name of Jesus, God was working miracles through Peter as Jesus had worked miracles.

**And from these – and by these – the word of God was being validated and people were coming to know Christ Jesus as their Lord and be saved by faith.**

Today, God's people struggle.

They struggle to feel relevant. – They struggle to feel effective. – They struggle feel like they are making a difference.

**Friends, the problem with all of that, is that it has nothing to do with how you **feel**.**

## 1 Corinthians 1:26–29

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong ... and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

Understand dear saints that it isn't about US being relevant –

- GOD IS.
- And He is always relevant.

It isn't about you and me being effective –

- The word of God rightly proclaimed by a believer walking by faith will ALWAYS be effective!
- Whether to convict or condemn

And friends, if you are walking by faith and serving as an ambassador of Christ, you are making a difference. First and foremost, in your own life, and by example to everyone around you.

- God wasn't finished with Paul.
- God wasn't finished with Peter.
- And God is not finished with you either.

It does not make any difference where you have come from - or what the failings of your past were.

If you are alive and know Jesus Christ as your Savior, God has not finished with you.

Keep learning. Keep doing. Keep serving. Keep loving. Keep sharing.

Living for Jesus by FAITH, in COMMITMENT, and with PASSION.

Get you out of God's way and be amazed and what He will do **IN** and **THROUGH** you through His wonder working power.

Let us pray.