

Peter's Miracle Ministry
Acts 9:32-43
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You know, the book of Acts can really be divided into two simple categories; that is, chapters 1-12 is the ministry of Peter, and chapters 13-28 are the ministries of Paul. You can remember that real easy; the book of Acts, the ministry of Peter, chapters 1-12; and the ministry of Paul, chapters 13-28. We're kind of in the transition where we're coming to the end of the ministry of the apostle Peter, and we'll be transitioning into the ministry of the apostle Paul. We've already seen the conversion of Saul of Tarsus last week in Acts 9 when Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the people of the Lord and was arresting Christians, having them put into prison; and he got letters from the priests in Jerusalem and was going all the way to Damascus to arrest Christians, bringing them back bound and throwing them into prison.

On his way, Saul was converted. At high noon the light shone round about him and the Lord visited Saul. He was struck to the earth and heard an audible voice, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me," and Saul said, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice came back, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Is it hard for you to kick against the goads, the conviction of the Holy Spirit? Saul was blind and they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. They were in Damascus for about three days, and he had a vision of a man named Ananias who was a disciple of the Lord there in the city of Damascus. He came and laid hands on Saul and said, "Brother, Saul, the Lord Jesus that appeared to you in the way has told me to come and pray for you that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul, I believe, was converted on the road, but he came to a full experience of the Holy Spirit in his life there in Damascus as Ananias laid his hands upon him and he was filled with the Holy Spirit and his eyes were opened. He went blind so that he could see spiritually. He was finally sent back by the disciples to his hometown of Tarsus, and there we leave Paul (Saul becomes Paul) until we get to chapter 13.

I said all that to now we're kind of, "meanwhile back at the ranch." When you're going through the book of Acts, it's not all in chronological order; so you come back in Acts 9:32, and let me point this out to you, it says, "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord." They saw the miracle that was taking place through the ministry of Peter, so when it comes to verse 32, it goes back to the person of Peter. Peter is going to be prominent to the end of chapter 9 and all through chapter 10. Chapter 10 is one of the great chapters of the book of Acts because it contains for the first time the gospel going out to the Gentiles. Now, the gospel started in Jerusalem, and remember in Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." That's an outlay of

the book of Acts. It starts in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth as the gospel spreads out.

Peter has been in Jerusalem and finally takes the Lord's words that they are to go into all the world and preach the gospel—the great commission as we call it. He gets a little aggressive now and moves out of Jerusalem into the area of Judaea to a city known as Lydda. Notice it in verse 32. “And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters,” that district, “he came down also to the saints,” there is a church or a group of believers, “which dwelt at Lydda.” In the Old Testament Lydda was known as Lod. Today it's the area where they have the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. (Actually, in a couple of weeks we're going to be flying into the airport right there in the ancient city of Lod and about 25 miles from there up to Jerusalem. This whole area that we're going to read about tonight we're going to be actually visiting in just a couple of weeks. We're going to be in this land and going to these same locations and some of these same spots.) Peter is out preaching the gospel. He is ministering in the name of Jesus Christ, and God is going to mightily use this man who we call Simon Peter.

I have a map. Peter was in Jerusalem, you see on the bottom right-hand corner of the screen, and then he went about 20-25 miles northwest. I don't know if he took the little turn that you see on that little arrow right there, but he went up to Lydda or modern-day Lod, and it's the spot where you fly in the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. It's actually kind of on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Then, he's going to go to Joppa and eventually, chapter 10, up to Caesarea. You see the Mediterranean coast on the west coast of Israel, and you see Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea in the south. I just wanted you to get kind of a feel for where Peter is traveling and where he's going. When you're studying the book of Acts, it is really helpful to kind of glance at the map and get a feel for where you're going. If you want to get a better feel, get on the plane with us and come to Israel the next time we go. You'll actually see the distance, the hills, the outlay, you'll get to visit these places in person, and the Bible will just absolutely come alive. It's amazing!

There are two stories that we're going to cover tonight. The first is verses 32-35. It's basically Peter's miracle ministry tour. It's kind of like a Beatles tour. It's Peter's miracle ministry tour, and it starts in Lod or Lydda and moves to Joppa. There are basically two miracles. There's first the miracle of the lame man, Aeneas, who is healed; and then there's the woman, Dorcas, who dies and is actually raised from the dead. Both these miracles not only symbolize how God saves sinners but remind us of the truth that Jesus Christ is alive! Amen? Jesus is alive and powerful and able to heal, raise the dead, and forgive our sins. There are three miracles. There is the miracle of Aeneas, the lame man, the miracle of strength through Christ, that we can walk in God's ways. The second miracle is that of Dorcas. She is raised from the dead, the miracle of new life in Christ. Then, in chapter 10, I'm calling it the third miracle. We'll get it next week, and don't miss our study in the entire 10th chapter next week of the conversion of Cornelius and his household because that's the greatest miracle of all, when God does save a soul and forgives our sins and translates us into the kingdom of God.

In Acts 9:33, it says that Peter “...found a certain man.” The Bible doesn't actually say that

Aeneas was a Christian. It's believed he is, but it doesn't say that he is, so we don't really know if he was or wasn't saved. It's possible that he wasn't saved and God healed him and he maybe came to faith in Jesus Christ. It's possible he was saved and gets healed. Either way, God heals the man; but the most important thing, of course, is the salvation of a person's soul not the healing of their body.

The name Aeneas is actually a Greek name. It's believed that he was a Jew but that he was a hellenist or a Jew following the Greek or hellenistic culture. Notice he's been sick for eight years. He "kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy." It's believed that he was possibly quadriplegic and couldn't move his arms, legs, was completely paralyzed, and lay there on his mat kind of 24/7 for the last eight years. It's not easy to have prolonged sickness. It's not easy to have a sickness that won't go away, that you live with day and night, 24/7, and you live in pain. It just starts to really wear on you, so it's interesting that Peter encounters this man.

In verse 34, "And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," the tense of that statement, Peter looks at this man and he's actually saying, "Right now, right this minute, Jesus Christ is making you whole." Lest I forget, and I don't know if I would forget but lest I do forget, I want to say this. The two miracles we look at tonight are almost a perfect pattern of a couple of miracles that Jesus performed and Peter observed Jesus performing. The first, when he heals Aeneas, is very similar to the one when Jesus healed the paralyzed man who was on the bed and had four friends carry this lame man up onto the top of the house, and you remember, they tore the roof off and lowered their friend down on a mat. Remember that story? And it said, "and Jesus seeing their faith," which is interesting in light of our sermon this Sunday in the book of James—faith without works is dead—that he actually saw their faith. In other words, he saw the evidence of their faith by the works that they performed—tearing up a roof, lowering their friend down, convinced that Jesus could heal this man—that Jesus said to the man, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." Now he's looking at a lame man, tells him to get up, roll up your bed and walk, and the man just obeys what Jesus says. He gets up, rolls up his bed, and just goes walking out the door, and everyone marvels and is amazed. Peter was there and was kind of following the Lord's pattern.

It's interesting, having been discipled by Jesus Himself, that Peter now in his ministry is following that pattern, no doubt, being led by the Spirit knowing that the Lord wanted to heal Aeneas, he just flat out says to him, "...arise, and make thy bed." This is what parents like to say to their teenagers. This is a great verse for your teenagers, by the way, Acts 9:34, "...arise, and make thy bed," in the name of Jesus. "And he arose immediately." Dr. Luke is recording this for us. The word "immediately" means instantly. There was no time to gain new strength. He didn't have to go to any kind of physical therapy. He just instantly jumped to his feet and rolls up his bed, which is an amazing thought! And, very simply it says, "And all that dwelt in Lydda," some feel that this is perhaps hyperbole, that not every literal person in Lydda, but all the Jews or all the believers or a great number of people, "and Saron," Sharon was that area that surrounded Lydda. It's known as the Sharon plain. It's what's called the Coastal Plain of Sharon. And all that are in Sharon, "...saw him," that is, Aeneas, healed, "and turned to the

Lord.”

I want you to notice, you'll have it in both of the miracles, that the result was people came to faith in Jesus Christ. Miracles, just for miracles sake, are really of no purpose. A miracle has to be a sign, and a sign pointing to something; that is, that Christ is alive, Christ is the healer, Christ is the Savior, Christ is the deliverer, and the preaching of the gospel. So, what the believers and apostles would do would pray for healing but would also preach Christ. If you have healing ministry but don't preach Christ, and you don't point sinners to the Cross and bring them to salvation, what does it really profit? What good is it for someone to have a healed body but die in their sins and be lost for all eternity? It would indicate that Peter was preaching the gospel. He was preaching Christ. God used this to get the attention of many people, and they turned to the Lord. They were saved and were baptized and joined the fellowship. This is also indication that the church is growing out of Jerusalem. Paul had already gone back to Tarsus, no doubt, taking the gospel with him. Remember Philip spoke to the Ethiopian who went to Africa with the gospel? So, the gospel is already spreading in just a short time after Pentecost, and the Samaritans had already had a revival and had come to Christ. Believers were up in Damascus, believers were down in Africa, believers were now in the plains of Sharon, Joppa, Lydda, Caesarea, and the gospel is just spreading—which is kind of a cool thought because that's basically what the gospel does.

The gospel is good news. When you're full of the Spirit and you have good news, guess what happens? It just spills out of you. It just flows out of you. It's kind of like a perfume bottle. When you take the top off, its fragrance just fills the room. That's all you have to do with a Christian is just kind of take the top off and let the good news of Christ, the fragrance of Christ, just start to permeate the room or fill the air. Shame on us as believers, too, if we're not walking in the Spirit and sharing the gospel and letting the good news just flow out of us. As a church, we should be leaving this place and going into this community and into the world—everywhere we go—sharing the gospel and the good news spreading through the preaching of Jesus Christ. Amen? It's sad that sometimes we hold back and don't share Christ, but the early church was exploding in the power of the Spirit. They were going everywhere, not only through the apostles seeing men and women healed, but primarily they were preaching the gospel and many people were being saved and coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

The second episode in verses 36-43 is that of the miracle of Dorcas being raised from the dead. Follow with me, verse 36. “Now there was at Joppa,” Joppa is about 12 miles from Lydda. We won't go back to the map that I showed you a minute ago. When you leave Jerusalem, you go northwest and come to Lydda. Then, if you continue west over to the coast, you come to Joppa. (Again, we'll be there in a couple of weeks.) Joppa is the ancient port where the prophet Jonah went down to catch a ship to Tarsus. He was trying to run from the call of God to take the gospel to a heathen nation, and now God is actually going to the city of Joppa where Peter would be called in Acts 10 to go to Caesarea up the coast to a Gentile who is a Roman soldier and sharing the gospel with him. Today, it's also known as Jaffa. It's known as the port of Joppa. It's a suburb of Tel Aviv, a beautiful, beautiful little spot right on the coast of the Mediterranean. There is surfing there. That's where I would live if I were there. It's just a

beautiful, beautiful coastline. You think you're in California when you're there. There are surfers everywhere and stand-up paddling going on. It's just beautiful beach and it's just a very, very, very cool spot. It kind of looks like Newport Beach, but we're going to read more about it when we get to chapter 10, and we see at the end of our story tonight that Peter is in the house of Simon the Tanner who was in Joppa.

"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha," that's Aramaic and means gazelle, speaking of a woman. By the way, this is only the second time we have focus on a woman in the book of Acts. We first had Ananias and his wife Sapphira, and now we have this woman named Dorcas. Her name was Tabitha, which is Aramaic and means gazelle. I'm assuming that is her name because it was a graceful, beautiful animal, "...which by interpretation," Luke tells us her name "is called Dorcas." That's the Greek of the Aramaic or Hebrew Tabitha, and both the names Tabitha and Dorcas have the same meaning. They both mean gazelle. It says, "this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds," she's famous for being a servant of the Lord and busy about the Lord's ministry and business, serving with her hands. She had a warm heart and helpful hands. She was "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died."

Let me stop right there. This was a Christian. She was a godly woman, and she was serving the Lord. I want you to notice she got sick. Don't ever let anyone tell you that if you are a really good Christian and you're serving God and you have enough faith that you won't get sick, okay? Dorcas got sick, we could get sick; and if Paul had a thorn in his flesh, we could have a thorn in our flesh. If some other people that were godly suffered, we can suffer. There's no Christian fallout shelters. There is no guarantee that we won't have times of sickness, loss, or bereavement. She actually ends up dying, notice verse 37. "And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died," which indicates that she had a sickness that quickly led to her death, "whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them."

There are a lot of interesting things about this story. As I mentioned, Dorcas is a godly woman, a servant of the Lord, and we're going to see that she actually made clothes and gave them to people and helped people out. There are ministries today called Dorcas ministries named after this woman. When we get to heaven we can meet her. She was probably just an amazing person, but she got sick and died. The normal customs in those days were that you buried a person that died immediately. Today, you call 9-1-1 or the coroner and they take them away. They go to a place where they prepare the body and maybe a week or two later you have the funeral. They are either buried or cremated, you know, there's the long process. In those days, a very warm humid area, they didn't have the means or refrigeration or the other things that we have to preserve the body, so they would rapidly bury people in those days. The further you got outside of Jerusalem, the less restricted that was, but that's the general rule. They would die and within hours they are putting you into the ground. Obviously, you better make sure that they are fully dead before you stick them into the ground. You don't want to bury anybody alive, but what they did was interesting. They washed her and laid her in an upper chamber.

The upper chamber would be like a guest room. It would be a place where they would have their meals. Remember Jesus had his last supper in the upper room? So many times the upper room was a big place where they would have dinner or they would have a guest room. What they're doing, it would seem, is that they loved her so much they didn't want to let her go. It could be that they knew Peter was nearby, and they had enough faith that they're going to call the apostle Peter expecting God to answer Peter's prayer and raise their dear Dorcas from the dead. So, they just wash her corpse and lay her in this upper chamber.

It says, "And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa," that is 12 miles, so that would take about three hours, walking. It's estimated that you can walk about 12 miles in about three hours. I'm sure it depends upon how briskly you walk, but "the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them." Peter is in Joppa, and they call for him, "Will you come and pray for our dear sister?" "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." All these widows, now it's possible that Dorcas was a widow and she ministered to other widows. We don't know for sure, but it does say that these were widows, and they were weeping and crying. Maybe they were wearing the garments that Dorcas made. "Dorcas made me this shawl." "Dorcas made me this dress." "Dorcas made me this beautiful coat. Isn't the stitching amazing, and look at the buttons," or maybe they're holding this blanket that Dorcas made for them. And crying (in a weeping voice), "She made me this." Peter is saying, "Yeah, that's really cool. That's really awesome. I'm real excited about that." I mean, Peter is called and taken up into this room. There's a corpse there, and all these widows are crying, weeping, and showing him all these garments that Dorcas had made.

The miracle that Jesus performed that this miracle parallels and reminds us of is the raising of Jairus' daughter. You also can go back to when Elijah the prophet raised the widow's son and took the widow's son up into an upper chamber. He laid him down, fell upon him, and prayed. He was brought back to life, and then he gave him back to his mother. When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, He took into the room with him...He went into the room and they were weeping and wailing, so Jesus actually took them all out of the room. He had them all leave the room, and He took into the room only three people with Him: Peter, James, and John. They are sometimes called the inner circle because Jesus would take them into special places with Him. Peter was there, and Jesus turns to this 12-year-old girl and utters these words. He said, "Talitha cumi," which is interpreted as little lamb, arise. The Bible says that she sat up and opened her eyes. Jesus took her by the hand and gave her back to her parents. He encouraged them to feed her, that she is hungry. Peter goes in and does the same thing only says, "Tabitha, arise." It's interesting that there is only one letter difference between Talitha cumi and Tabitha cumi. He actually said Tabitha cumi. He almost said the same words. He reached out and she sat up, and he took Dorcas and gave her back to her friends. So, it's almost the same way that Jesus performed His miracle, and I'm sure that Peter had that in his mind as God was preparing him for this miraculous miracle of the raising of Dorcas from the dead.

Dorcas had been dead for a while, and “Peter put them all forth.” He does several things here. First, he removes them all from the room. This isn’t going to be on television. This isn’t going to be: Peter the Healing Evangelist! Watch Peter’s Healing Ministry. There’s no flash. There’s no show. There’s no fanfare. There’s no demonstration. It’s just done with no one in the room. “Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed.” So, he’s kneeling down and praying. The Bible says the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, so Peter’s calling on the Lord. He’s praying for Tabitha or Dorcas, “and turning him to the body said,” and here’s where he utters those words like Jesus, “Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive,” just real matter of fact, real ‘cas’ this is amazing! By the way, this is the first time in the book of Acts where somebody is raised from the dead. It won’t be the last, but it’s the first time somebody is actually raised from the dead.

When we say she’s raised from the dead, this is a miracle. She does come back from the dead, but she comes back in her same body. She comes back in her mortal body, so she’s going to have to die again. She’s not coming back in a resurrection like Jesus did, she’s just coming back from the dead in her same mortal body, and she’s going to have to die again. She’s probably thinking, I was in heaven, why’d you bring me back? This is kind of a bummer, actually. You know, when people die and we want them to come back, they don’t want to come back. They’re with the Lord. They leave us to deal with the problems down here. We’ll see you when you get up there, kind of a thing. If I die, don’t pray for me to come back from the dead. Let me hang out in heaven. I’ll see you when you get there.

“And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand,” and gives her back. Amazing! God healing in the name of Jesus. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and He heals by His power. Not only is there strength to walk in His name—the man Aeneas was lame and now he’s walking in the ways of the Lord—but when we’re dead in trespasses and sins, it’s through the blood of Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and we are given new life. We’re regenerated, and now we can live in His name as well.

It says,”And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.” Again, that’s almost identical to verse 35 where it says, “And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.” Now, “...it was known throughout all Joppa,” verse 42, “and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days,” these “many days” could’ve been a couple of years. Peter is hanging out now in Joppa. Like I said, it’s a beautiful spot. Who wouldn’t want to hang there? Here’s the interesting statement, he was, “...in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.” You say, “Well, big deal. What’s the big whoopee he’s hanging out with Simon the tanner.” Basically, the Jews hated and despised this profession of tanning.

What was a tanner? They would kill animals and skin them and actually prepare skins. They would prepare animal skins. They used animal skins for a lot of things, especially tents and other pieces of clothing and so forth, making cloth out of. It was a profession that made them ceremonially unclean. Actually, there was a rabbinical law that said if a woman had a husband and he became a tanner, that she could actually divorce him because of his unclean

profession. What it seems to be is that God's conditioning already, Simon Peter, that what God has cleansed not to call anything unclean. God is going to send Peter in the very next verse, Acts 10:1, to go to a Gentile, so He gives him this vision of the sheet coming down from heaven with all these creepy animals on it that a Jew would never eat. God tells Peter, "Rise...kill and eat." Peter starts to argue with the Lord, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." And God says, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common," or unclean. He was preparing Peter to go to the Gentiles and to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was awful hard for Jews to accept the fact that God would save Gentiles—really hard for them—so they needed God to soften their hearts to prepare them.

What's amazing to me is the hand of God on these two episodes. God preparing Peter, He moves him out of Jerusalem to Lydda, which was more of a Gentile area. Then, He moves him to Joppa, and he sees this woman and goes to stay with Simon the Tanner. Then, he's called by God in chapter 10 to go to Cornelius' house and shares the gospel.

Let me mention a couple of things about these miracles before we close. Whenever God is doing a genuine, authentic miracle, God gets the glory. If someone is doing a miracle and drawing attention to themselves, it's not the work of God. God is the One who gets the glory. When God heals and God performs a miracle, God is the One who is glorified. There is no fanfare. There is no show, and the gospel must be preached. I don't believe in ministries that go out and all they do is pray for healing. Jesus never said, "Go into all the world and heal people." He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel." Signs and wonders may follow believers, but believers don't follow signs and wonders. You go and preach the gospel, and we see people saved to the preaching of the gospel. Sooner or later our bodies will get sick, we will die, and what's most important is our eternal salvation.

In these two miracles (and I think that whenever Jesus performed healing in the Bible in the gospels, it was an actual healing), there's an actual story. It's historically accurate, but it was a picture. When He cleansed the leper, it was a picture of the filth of our sin and that we need to be cleansed when we're saved. When He healed a lame man, it was a picture of how as unbelievers and unsaved people we're lame and we can't walk in the ways of God. When people were healed of deafness, they couldn't hear, it's a reminder that sinners can't hear the voice of God and need to be born again so they can hear God's voice. When he healed blind people, it was a picture, a reminder, of how people are blinded by their sins and only Jesus can open their eyes and give them sight. When He raised people from the dead, how's that? It was a reminder that we're dead in sins and that God quickens us and gives us new life. I'm not saying they didn't happen. I'm not allegorizing and saying they weren't true, but I'm saying that there's a picture behind those miracles of God saving and forgiving us of our sins. He heals us and helps us to walk in His ways. He cleanses us. He opens our hearts and our ears and our eyes and gives us new life. Amen?

That's what communion is all about. Communion cannot save you, but we do it in remembrance of Jesus Christ. So, if you've been born again, if you've trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you put your faith in Christ, then I encourage you to partake of

communion tonight. When the Bible speaks about not doing it in an unworthy manner, it means that your heart isn't right with God. Don't pass up communion tonight. Get your heart right with God. Ask God to forgive you. Ask God to restore you in your relationship with Him, and then take up the bread in remembrance of what Jesus did when He gave His body on the cross to die for us. Pick up the cup and drink the cup with us tonight when we pray and remember that His blood forgives our sins, and it's the symbol of the new covenant that we have in His blood. Amen?