

Lives are restored through faith in Jesus

We come as needy people. The beauty of the Christian life is that there is, at the very beginning, the acknowledgement that we are in need of help outside ourselves. We look to One greater for aid, for comfort, for support, sometimes for the miraculous. And God meets our need. That's not to say that God is our heavenly vending machine and worship is our payment. We worship God because we've been redeemed, and worship of God is our joy and our purpose. But we find that, in this relationship with God, our part is the one of dependence and need. *We need the miraculous, transformational, restorative intervention of God in our lives.* What need do you come with today? **Lives are restored through faith in Jesus.**

Scripture Passage: Acts 9:32-43

As we focus our attention on the last part of Acts 9 this morning, we'll see people in need, and their needs being met in marvelous and miraculous ways. There are two accounts that follow a similar pattern. We learn of a problem, a need, and then we see how Peter, working by the power of the Holy Spirit, brings healing and restoration. By faith in Jesus, lives are restored.

Sickness and Healing (vv.32-35)

- v.32** "Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda." - We've spent the last few weeks learning about Saul and his conversion and early ministry. Now, seemingly abruptly, the story shifts back to Peter. Peter is fulfilling his calling and ministry, caring for the churches, tending and feeding Christ's sheep.
 - We read that Peter came to the saints at Lydda. It's not a word often used in the book of Acts, but it is an important word. The early believers were known as saints. This isn't referring to some select group of believers in Lydda that only a special few qualified for, but all the believers in Lydda. It's a word tied to holiness, distinctness, being set apart by God for God. **1 Peter 1:15-16** "but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"
- v.34** "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." - We aren't given the background of this story, other than that he is a man and has been paralyzed 8 years. He wasn't always this way, but something happened to paralyze him. And now Peter, led by the Holy Spirit, speaks these words of healing to Aeneas.
 - But there's not only the words of healing spoken. The words of healing are directly followed by a command by Peter. "Rise and make your bed." Aeneas obeys, and he realizes the benefit of the healing immediately. No atrophy of the muscles, but total and immediate healing. It was only as Aeneas obeyed that he realized the benefit of what had taken place. He could have stayed on his bed in unbelief and not realized any of the benefit of the healing power of Jesus Christ.
 - I wonder how many of us are like Aeneas, and how many choose instead to stay on our beds. We hear the words of healing, we read the words of promise, and we think they're great and beautiful. Then the words of command come and we just lay there. Take, for example, our ministry of reconciliation. Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." A new creation! Reconciled to God through Jesus! But also given a ministry of reconciliation. If you're not carrying out your ministry of reconciliation, you're not realizing the benefit of your own reconciliation.
 - Aeneas rose from his bed, walked in this new strength that God had provided, and became a powerful testimony to his church and city of the power of Jesus to heal.

Transition: That's the first pattern of problem and solution. There was sickness, and healing is brought. The next pattern isn't just sickness and healing, but death and life.

Death and Life (vv.36-43)

- v.36** "Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha... She was full of good works and acts of charity." -
 - Tabitha is worth study and consideration. What a godly woman. What a beautiful gem. She is said to have been full of good works and acts of charity. This means she was characterized by these things she did. When people thought about Tabitha, they couldn't help but think of all the ways she served the church and blessed the saints.

1. Tabitha was a living example in her church of **Ephesians 2:10** “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” This is God’s plan for you, believer. It might be in the home caring for young children, on the farm, in the office, or in your recreation. What characterizes you? This might be a good question to ask someone else. **Titus 3:8** “The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.” It’s worth pointing out, and important to do so, that the Titus passage follows the same reasoning as the passage in Ephesians. The gospel is displayed, by grace are you saved through faith, and then the devotion to good works follows. It must be this way. Our good works always must flow out of the gospel’s work within us.
2. **v.37** “...and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.” -
3. **v.39** “All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments...” - Peter, this great apostle, was a great servant. Two men came to him with news of Tabitha’s death and the church’s need, and Peter goes immediately with them. He hears the stories of Tabitha’s service to the church, especially the widows. He hears the weeping, which doesn’t mean sobbing, but loud crying. Then how does he respond?
4. **v.40** “But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed... And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.” - Peter turns to prayer. His prayer isn’t recorded, which is probably for our benefit, and we’re not told how long he prays. But then he turns to Tabitha and says these two words. “Tabitha, arise.” With that, this dead woman opens her eyes and sits up.
 1. When we lived in Bend, on Tuesday mornings we would have a delivery of water to our church, as the well had dried up. Every one of these Tuesday mornings the delivery driver would park his truck and come into the office to talk. Every one of these Tuesday mornings involved some story of the prison ministry he was doing, and how just two days earlier either someone was raised from the dead, someone blind was given their sight, or someone paralyzed was healed. I never believed him. I still don’t believe the stories he told. But I do believe this account. His stories conveyed that he and others with him could heal at will, and the focus was always on the miraculous healing and never the miraculous Healer. I tell you this because I come to an account like this and I have questions. Does God still raise the dead? A couple quick observations. First, I do believe that God still works in the miraculous, and I think our prayers should reflect our expectation that God would work miraculously. I believe one of the reasons we don’t see the miraculous as often is because we don’t ask. Instead, we turn to a prescription or medical professional. James tells us that the sick are to call for the elders of the church to come and to pray (**James 5:14**). Second, I do believe that God still works in the miraculous, but he worked in a specially concentrated way during the time of the early church and through the apostles to establish the church. So while we might not see the same concentration of miracles in our lives and ministries, we can and should expect miracles, and should pray for miracles that would result in God being glorified.
5. **v.41** “Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.” - This is really who this miracle was performed for, wasn’t it? It certainly didn’t benefit Tabitha. After she died, she went into the presence of the Lord, and she was more alive than ever. Peter brings her back. The Lord had more work for her to do on earth, and through her life, work, ministry, and now radical testimony, the church is helped and God is glorified.
 1. This brings us to an interesting point to consider. That is, how do we measure what is the best outcome of our prayers? Is God more glorified when the paralytic is healed versus when the paralyzed person remains in that condition, yet trusts God and lives for him, allowing physical limitations to amplify spiritual growth? I’m reminded of Paul’s prayer in 2 Corinthians for the removal of the thorn in the flesh he dealt with, and how the Lord answered him. **2 Corinthians 12:8–10** “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
 2. This isn’t to say we shouldn’t pray for healing and health, for the positive outcome with surgery, or for healthy pregnancies. But what about when our prayers aren’t answered according to what we asked? Have you given time to consider that maybe God is doing another work of healing or restoration that isn’t so readily apparent? Perhaps through your adversity God will work in a way unexpected, for his glory and your good, and as a witness to others around you? Maybe you have some sort of thorn in your flesh, and that ailment or disability is to be used to open ministry doors that otherwise would never be available to you? Have you considered that? Have you prepared yourself for that?

3. Tabitha being restored to life wasn't for her benefit. But we can believe that the church was greatly benefited, and Tabitha was blessed as part of the church.

Transition: Now, we've seen the two accounts with the similar pattern, but there's one more thing we haven't given attention to this morning, and that is the greatest miracle.

The Greatest Miracle (vv.35, 42)

1. **v.35** *"And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord."*

2. **v.43** *"...and many believed in the Lord."*

1. Isn't this the greatest miracle of all? The other two miracles, even the raising of the dead, are lesser miracles. They were physical and temporal, but people turning to the Lord and trusting in him is spiritual and eternal.

2. This is how Peter puts it in **1 Peter 1:3–5** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*

3. Paul says in **Ephesians 2:1–9** *"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*

Conclusion: The miracles performed in our passage this morning reveal God's power and compassion, and direct people to God's mercy. The Lord Jesus heals, restores, and saves. What need do you come with today? How can we pray for you? How can your request and our petition be to the praise of the glory of God, for the good of the church, and testimony to those unsaved? Will you bring that need to Jesus, and allow him to work the miraculous, transformative, and redemptive, according to his will?

Family

Table Talk



August 12, 2018

Family Discussion

1. In Acts chapter 9 we see great miracles: Renewed sight to Saul; healing of the paralytic man, Aeneas; and bodily resurrection of Tabitha. But in each of these cases, what was the greater miracle? What was the greatest gift given?
2. At the end of Acts 9 we see Peter praying. We don't know what he said, but what was the outcome of his faith through prayer? Was it only a physical miracle? What do you often see as the greatest outcome of your prayers? Is it for bodily healing, the removal of hardship, the provision of something material? Consider the restoration and reconciliation the apostles speak of in the passages listed. What do you see is the greatest gift? How might your perspective on the temporal change in light of these truths? In what areas might your faith in Jesus Christ grow?

GOD'S TRUTH

Lives are restored through faith in Jesus!

Key Verse

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."
2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

TABLE READING

Lead your kids into God's Word...

1. Acts 9; 2 Corinthians 5:17
2. Acts 9:40; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:9-14



Scripture Memory: Acts 10:42-43

"AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES." - DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (ESV)