

Part 28 – Peter’s Ministry

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, March 30, 2016

† Acts 9:32-43

Last Wednesday we examined verses 20-31 which covered Saul’s early preaching ministry. We read two different occasions where the audience he was preaching to wanted to kill him but the Lord made a way for him to escape. We saw that the Apostles at first were afraid to accept him and it took Barnabas convincing them before they would. We last read that Saul returned to his home country of Tarsus and the Bible said *31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

Then the writer of Acts, Luke, switches gears back to the life of Peter. He began with Peter in the beginning of the book, then switched to Saul and now back to Peter. That is sort of how the whole book plays out through all 28 chapters.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

As the Church was getting some relief from persecution, Peter is visiting around different areas where the Saints are living, here in particular the Bible mentions “Lydda.” Lydda is a place in Israel that used to be called “Lud” in the Old Testament times. It is in the Plain of Sharon about a day’s journey from Jerusalem. It was one of the main towns on the trade route between Egypt and Babylon.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

This man, Aeneas (**pronounced: UH-KNEE-US**), has a Greek name. He has been stricken with this disease of “palsy” for 8-years which has made him bed-ridden.

Palsy is paralysis. It is where we get our term paralyzed from. You have also of course heard of “**Bell’s Palsy**”, where one side of your face goes paralyzed. I had Bell’s palsy for several months about 16 years ago and it was one of the worst times in my entire life.

I did some research on different forms of palsy in the Bible and one commentator had a pretty good write up on it already. Let me read that to you:

‡Many infirmities were included under the general name of palsy in the New Testament.

1. The paralytic shock, affecting the whole body.

2. The hemiplegy, affecting only one side of the body; the most frequent form of the disease.
3. The paraplegy, affecting all the system below the neck.
4. The catalepsy. This is caused by a contraction of the muscles in the whole or a part of the body, and is very dangerous. The effects are very violent and fatal. For instance, if, when a person is struck, he happens to have his hand extended, he is unable to draw it back; if not extended, he is unable to stretch it out. It gradually becomes diminished in size, and dried up in appearance. Hence, it was called the withered hand, Mat 12:10-13.
5. The cramp. This, in Eastern countries, is a fearful malady, and by no means unfrequent. It originates from chills in the night. The limbs, when seized by it, remain unmovable, and the person afflicted with it resembles one undergoing a torture. This was probably the disease of the servant of the centurion, Mat 8:6; Luk 7:2. Death follows from this disease in a few days.

Of course we don’t know what form of the palsy this man had but whatever it was it kept him from being able to get out of bed and he had been bed-ridden for 8-years.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

Obviously Peter is following the leadership of the Holy Spirit and is still indwelt with the power of the Spirit to heal people. Remember back in Chapter 5 of Acts that they were bringing the sick out into the streets in hopes that just by Peter passing by and his shadow came over them they would be healed.

I want you to pay particularly close attention at who Peter gives the credit to; “**Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.**” He didn’t say, “I Simon Peter, the Rock, maketh thee whole.” No, he gives credit where credit is due. Peter is just a willing vessel to be used by the Lord to fulfill His will. Too many people today want to take credit for things that the Lord does. It’s not YOUR ministry, it’s HIS ministry.

He tells Aeneas to arise and make his bed. Well, if that wasn’t a kick in the pants. Sick in bed 8-years and the first thing Peter tells him to do is make up his bed! (JOKE). This expression; “make thy bed,” was used to prove to him that he was healed and no longer needed to lay in bed. By making the bed it was an outward sign that he wasn’t getting back in it, at least until it was time to go to sleep.

The Gospels tell of a man stricken with Palsy that the Lord Jesus healed and afterwards he told him to “take up thy bed and walk.” Then the Pharisees accused him of blasphemy.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

This miracle had a great impact on the people of Lydda and Sharon. I don’t know how many people believed in the Lord after that but the Bible says “**all**” that dwelt. I can only assume it was a very large number of people. That phrase “turned to the Lord,” indicates they believed in the Lord Jesus and trusted Him as their Messiah.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Now we are introduced to a woman named Tabitha or Dorcas (the Bible uses both names for her in these passages). She lives in Joppa which is about 10-miles from Lydda where Peter is at. If I’m not mistaken, this lady is the only female that we read about in the Bible who is specifically referred to as a “**disciple**.” To be a disciple means that you are a pupil of, a student of, or a follower of. In this instance a follower of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that she was “**full of good works and almsdeeds**.” This means that she spent her time helping others. The word “**almsdeeds**” means “**compassionate toward the poor**.” So she was sort of a 1st Century KARM (Knox Area Rescue Ministries) or Salvation Army.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

So, for whatever reason, Tabitha became very ill and died. We have no way of knowing what her sickness was. Since she spent her time working with and helping the poor she may have contracted some kind of disease from them.

The Bible says that they washed her. That is a common practice in many parts of the world to wash the dead before they are buried. She has been washed and now placed in an upper chamber. Probably a temporary place to hold the body until they could prepare for the funeral.

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.

It does not specifically indicate that they sent for Peter because they thought he might be able to raise Tabitha from the dead, although that may have been the case, but they may have sent for him so he could come and comfort the family or say some words befitting such a true disciple of the Lord.

39 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.

What a heartbreaking scene this must have been. Several widow women had come to the house and were weeping over the loss of this dear woman.

We also get another insight of some of the charity work that Tabitha had performed. It says that the widow women were showing coats and garments that Tabitha had made for them. She obviously spent a lot of time caring for the poor widow women, sewing for them making sure they had clothes to wear and coats for when it was cold. They loved Tabitha and were there as an outward sign of their love for her.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

Peter has all of the widows leave the room and he gets down on his knees and starts praying. We aren’t told what he prayed but he probably was praying for guidance and power from the Holy Spirit and that God’s will be done. The Holy Spirit directs him to tell her to arise and that’s exactly what she did.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

My, what a testimony Tabitha would have to tell the rest of her life. You know, we hear a lot about several miracles in the Bible but you rarely hear this one that we are studying about tonight. What a miracle!

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

And so the Lord uses this miracle to bring glory to himself. Because of it more people believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

The story ends here tonight with just an introduction to a man named Simon who was a tanner. We will talk more about him in our next study as we begin Chapter 10 of Acts.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version

‡ Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible