

Introduction

1. In our introduction to Acts, I proposed that Luke used the words of Jesus at His ascension as an outline for the book (1:8): **“but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”**
 - a. Chapters 1-7 focus on the establishment of the Church in Jerusalem and involves primarily Jews
 - b. Chapters 8-12 detail the expansion of the Church into Judea, Samaria and the beginnings of gentile territory (it began with the stoning of Stephen, scattering of Christians from Jerusalem, and the ministry of Phillip)
 - c. Chapters 13-28 then reveal how the Lord used Paul to take the Gospel to the gentiles in the **“remotest part of the earth”**
2. This middle section, the expansion into Judea and Samaria in chapters 8-12 (which includes our passage for today), is rather interesting from an arrangement perspective:
 - a. Luke begins with Phillip’s ministry in Samaria
 - b. He then records the conversion of Saul/Paul and the beginning of his ministry
 - c. But, then he goes back to Peter for three and a half chapters
 - d. Before returning to Paul for the remainder of the book
 - e. Why? Luke is using this section as a transition not just between Judea/Samaria and the ends of the earth, but from Peter’s ministry and his prominence in the book to Paul’s ministry and his prominence
3. In our passage today, Luke records two miracles performed by Peter as he’s traveling throughout Judea and Samaria:
 - a. In the first, he heals a paralyzed man named Aeneas
 - b. In the second, he raises a young woman named Tabitha from the dead
 - c. What makes these unique, is that unlike most of the healing miracles in the book of Acts, these are performed on Christians, but as we’ll see they have great evangelistic impact and lead many Judeans and Samaritans to Jesus

A. The healing of Aeneas (9:33-35)

1. Luke informs us that Peter was traveling through Judea, Galilee and Samaria and stopped in Lydda to visit the Christians living there (READ 32):
 - a. **“those parts”** is defined for us in v. 31
 - b. It’s likely that Peter was making his way back to Jerusalem after the events of Acts 8—when the Apostles heard about the Samaritans’ conversions during Phillip’s ministry, they sent Peter and John down to them upon which they laid their hands on them and they received their Spirit
 - c. Lydda was a capital city of an administrative district about 25 miles from Jerusalem, had a predominantly Jewish population but was ethnically diverse with a heavy Greek influence
 - d. Luke doesn’t tell us how there came to be a group of Christians in Lydda but it’s not unreasonable to think they might have been a result of Phillip’s ministry

2. While in Lydda, he meets a man named Aeneas who is confined to bed (READ 33):
 - a. Luke doesn't specifically state that Aeneas is a believer, but we can assume he is because the context suggests he's one of the saints mentioned in v. 32
 - b. He's been "**bedridden**" for eight years because he's paralyzed:
 - 1) When you think of bedridden, what image comes to mind?
 - a) A bed with a comfortable mattress, nice set of sheets, a pillow maybe?
 - b) Maybe the person's propped up on some pillows so he can watch TV, do some reading, or play on his iPhone or iPad?
 - 2) That's far from the reality for this man:
 - a) The word "**bedridden**" here is more literally the phrase "**confined to a mattress**" and the mattress was more like a pallet or pad that was simply laid on the ground—physical beds were most often found in the homes of the wealthy
 - b) The word translated "**paralyzed**" implies more than simply not being able to walk like the lame man Peter healed at the temple in Acts 3—Aeneas was immobilized, confined to his mat
 - c) The description is very similar to the paralyzed man in Luke 5 whose buddies cut a hole in the roof to lower him down to Jesus to be healed
 - d) Needless to say, life for Aeneas was probably fairly miserable and had been so for many years
 - c. But, that all changed when Peter showed up (READ 34):
 - 1) We're not told what prompted Peter to heal Aeneas, but he does and like he did the lame beggar, immediately he gives credit to the real source of the healing: Jesus
 - 2) As proof of the healing, Peter calls on him to "**arise**" and make his bed:
 - a) The phrase is actually "**arise and spread (or furnish) for yourself**" which isn't all that clear
 - b) Most commentaries suggest that it should be interpreted as a charge by Peter to either roll up (as the NIV) or put away the mat because it was no longer needed
 - c) It could also be a way of encouraging Aeneas that he could now care for himself (if the phrase "spread for yourself" is treated as an indicative rather than an imperative)
 - 3) In response, Aeneas immediately stands up—a demonstration of the immediate and complete healing he'd experienced
3. While this healing wasn't public like most of the others in Acts, it nonetheless had a huge evangelistic impact (READ 35):
 - a. The impact went beyond the city of Lydda to the entire region of Sharon which refers to the plain along the Mediterranean coast
 - b. "**All who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord**"

B. The raising of Tabitha (36-42)

1. The second miraculous events in our passage today involves an amazing female disciple named Tabitha (READ 36):

- a. Tabitha is from Joppa which is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea about 10 miles from Lydda
- b. While we had to speculate a bit about Aeneas, we don't have to do that with Tabitha; we know she is a disciple because Luke tells us this specifically
- c. Her works and deeds are further evidence of this—she was a godly woman who reflected Christ: **“this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did”**
- d. Later in our passage we learn she made tunics and garments for others, presumably for widows (v. 39)
- e. Unfortunately, tragedy struck (READ 37)

Obituary for Christie (friend while in seminary): ...“Christie spent all her life taking care of others, including fostering mentally and physically challenged adults. She was like a mother to Ted, who lived with them for 19 years until his death at age 82 last year. She also was a godmother for a special little girl, Emma. Her home was always open. Her generous heart and loving care soothed and uplifted so many. Christie was always ready with delicious food, “pats”, and a listening ear. Her warm hugs were cherished by all who received one, and babies loved to snuggle with Aunt Christie. Speaking ill of anyone was not permissible in her presence. She always had something positive to say; she encouraged everyone. She was well known for her beautiful soulful voice and sang in college and in her church. Christie loved to make things beautiful. She enjoyed flowers and gardening, sewing and crafts. Many a great-niece, nephew and other little one's treasure their embroidered pillows and quilts made by her loving touch. Many Weddings, Vacation Bible schools, Children's Choirs, Woman's Retreats, Church Events and Holidays have benefited from her hand-made decorations.”

2. After learning that Peter was nearby, two men go to Lydda to persuade him to come to Joppa (READ 38):
 - a. Luke doesn't tell us why they wanted Peter to come to Joppa but there are plenty of clues in the passage:
 - 1) The first is that they washed Tabitha's body but it's curious that there is no mention of anointing it for burial which would have been customary
 - 2) The second is that they placed Tabitha's body in the upper room which was unusual because normally the dead were buried the same day (before sunset)
 - 3) The third clue is the urgency with which the two men pleaded with Peter, **“Do not delay to come to us.”**
 - 4) These seem to suggest that the disciples in Joppa believed that Peter could raise Tabitha from the dead:
 - a) There's no evidence that Peter had raised anyone from the dead up to this point
 - b) However, there are instances in the OT where the dead were raised—Elijah raised the Widow's son (1 Kings 17:17ff) and Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:18ff)—and interestingly enough both of these took place in the upper rooms of houses
 - c) The disciples undoubtedly heard of Jesus raising the dead
 - d) They also likely heard of the miracles Peter had already performed
 - b. Peter is obviously moved by their plea because he goes with them immediately (READ 39)
3. Then, the miraculous happens: Peter raises Tabitha from the dead (READ 40-41)—there's two things that stand out:
 - a. The first is that there is a sense of humble reliance upon God for this miracle as Peter kneels down and prays—once again pointing to the true source of the miracle that's about to take place

- b. The second is the sense of tenderness and warmth Peter displays, including taking the hand of Tabitha
- 4. This miraculous event is similar to the healing of Aeneas in that it was also more private (Peter sent the others away before raising Tabitha), but it also had a huge evangelistic impact (READ 42-43)

Conclusion

Takeaway:

1. There are some within Christendom who promote the false teaching that believers should not suffer with sickness and disease and that if you just have enough faith, you will be healed
 - a. They often turn to Jesus' healings in the Gospels and passages like this one to prove it
 - b. The truth is, there is no single Bible passage that when properly interpreted and understood promises divine healing simply because of our faith in Jesus
 - c. We have examples in the Bible where people are healed like Aeneas and Tabitha, but we also have examples like the Apostle Paul who weren't healed, but rather given the grace to endure
2. So, why does God heal some and not others?
 - a. One obvious purpose to healing is to provide comfort and relief for the one suffering
 - b. However, the greater and more primary purposes of healing include:
 - 1) Ultimately, the Lord uses healing to glorify Himself
 - 2) Healings are used to authenticate the messenger (e.g. Jesus, the Apostles, etc.)
 - 3) Healings are used to authenticate the message (e.g. the Gospel)
 - c. This is precisely what we see in our passage today:
 - 1) The Lord received the glory for healing Aeneas and raising Tabitha from the dead
 - 2) Peter's previous healings authenticated him as a messenger of Jesus
 - 3) Both of these miraculous events authenticated the Gospel and led to many getting saved
3. So, the main take away is that not everyone is healed, but when God chooses to heal, He does so to glorify Himself, and He often uses it as a tool to promote the Gospel