

"Peter's Ministry"

Part 1

Acts 9

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts 9 Saul departed to Tarsus where he will remain until we get to Acts 11:25 when Barnabas goes to seek him. Now as we move on in Acts 9 the Holy Spirit is going to focus upon Peter again and his ministry at Lydda and Joppa.

➤ **Peter's Travels**

Notice Acts 9:32

This is an interesting verse when we remember back to another verse.

Acts 8:1

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

When the persecution broke out after the death of Stephen the believers were scattered out of Jerusalem into Judaea and Samaria. But the apostles stayed at Jerusalem. This would have included Peter. But when we come to Acts 9:32 Peter is moving. This is because the church at Jerusalem is now established and is in good hands under the leadership of James, the half brother of Jesus. As Peter is now on the move God will direct him to Lydda and Joppa where he will be used to make a difference in the lives of the people there.

Application:

The lesson for us here is that God uses people who are moving. I heard the statement years ago that, "God cannot steer a parked car." The idea is that as believers we are not to sit in the house waiting for the Lord to send a message across the TV screen telling us what to do. God directs us as we move.

Proverbs 16:9

⁹ *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

Psalms 37:23

²³ *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

Jeremiah 10:23

²³ O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

The idea in each of these verses is that a man is to be moving and then God will direct his steps. Jeremiah tells us that it is not in man to direct his own steps. When we are moving and looking for opportunities to serve the Lord it is then that He opens doors for us to step through.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The opportunities are created by the Lord and we are to WALK in them which means we are to be moving. We are to live with an awakened spirit so that we will be aware when the opportunities are presented to us.

Romans 13:11-12

¹¹ And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Ephesians 5:14-15

¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Let us now notice how Peter's steps were directed by the Lord.

Notice Acts 9:33

Here we see that Peter found Aeneas who was sick of the palsy. This was not by chance that Peter came upon him. It was by the Lord directing his steps. This is exactly how God works. This was a divine appointment. We can see the very same thing in the life of Ruth when she and Naomi returned from Moab.

Ruth 2:2-3

² *And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.*

³ *And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.*

When Ruth went to glean in the fields, she chose a field that belonged to Boaz who was a kinsman of Elimelech. This was not chance or coincidence, but this was the hand of the Lord directing her. Notice also that she was directed because she was moving.

Notice Acts 9:34-35

Here we see why Peter was brought to Lydda. The healing of the man with the palsy was used by the Lord to turn all the people of these two towns to Himself. When I read this, I am reminded of the lame man healed in Acts 3 and how the religious leaders in Acts 4 were very angry about his healing. Here we see that the healing of this man was used by God to turn all the people of the two towns to the Lord.

Application:

Let us understand that when we make ourselves available to be used of the Lord, we have no idea how many people our service will impact. This takes my mind to Jesus Words at the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

¹⁴ *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

¹⁵ *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

¹⁶ *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

This is exactly what happened at Lydda. Peter did what he was to do and the man was healed and the Lord was glorified in the two towns. Now I know that we are not going to heal anyone and sometimes the opportunity before us seems very insignificant compared to this healing, but all acts of obedience are pleasing to the Lord and even the little acts can make great impacts.

John 6:5-9

⁵ *When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*

⁶ *And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.*

⁷ *Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.*

⁸ *One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,*

⁹ *There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?*

This unnamed young man had only five loaves of bread and two fish but when he gave them to the Lord many lives were impacted and still are being impacted today as people read and study this text. The point we need to see in all of this is that we do not need to perform a miracle to be used of God. It can just be a small act of obedience as we give Him our time, talents, and resources and He can use those to make an impact with eternal value.

Notice Acts 9:36

Here we are introduced to a woman whose name was Tabitha, which was translated, Dorcus. The name "Dorcus" means "gazelle or doe" and it has the idea of a very graceful animal. This helps us to understand that Dorcus was a woman that was very honoring to the Lord in the way that she lived her life. This verse tells us that she was known for her acts of mercy and kindness. This verse tells us that she was FULL of good works and almsdeeds which means she was merciful and compassionate. She had a heart for people and she would give whatever she had to help those who were in need. One of the points we see in Dorcus is that her faith was known by her works. Dorcus is a picture of James 2 in action.

James 2:14-18

¹⁴ *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

¹⁵ *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*

¹⁶ *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

¹⁷ *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

¹⁸ *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

Dorcus can be seen in Proverbs 31.

Proverbs 31:29-31

²⁹ *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.*

³⁰ *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.*

³¹ *Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

Dorcus is a picture of the modest woman in 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy 2:9-10

⁹ *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;*

¹⁰ *But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*

Notice the words of John Phillips on good works:

"There is a tendency in evangelical circles to be suspicious of good works. We have reacted against the social gospel of good works so forcefully that we have sometimes gone to the other extreme. Good works are an essential part of Christianity. They do not earn salvation but they evidence salvation. Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). A truly saved person ought to have compassion for the sick, the poor, the oppressed, the weak. Dorcas did, and her compassion took on a practical character. Her zeal in doing what she could to alleviate suffering is noted by the Holy Spirit."

Notice Acts 9:37

Dorcus became sick and she died. This was a gain for her but for the church it was a great loss. When someone who is walking in the Spirit as she was passes away there is always a major void left in the church where they served. As she had died, they then prepared her body to be buried. But before she was buried someone had the idea to call upon Peter.

Notice Acts 9:38

Peter had a reputation of being used by God at this time and that is why they called upon him.

Application:

This is a good barometer as to how others see us. People may not seek your company while all is going well but how do they see you when their world falls apart? If we are living our lives for the Lord then we can be sure that people notice. Our reputation gets built up as we stand true for the Lord. People may not like the stand we take because it brings conviction to them but I have learned that when they are dealing with the collapse of their personal kingdom, they will many times seek out those who have a relationship with the Lord. This then opens the door for us to have an opportunity to be a witness for Jesus Christ. I have seen this happen many times.

Conclusion:

We are going to stop here for this evening because there is much to consider in the remaining verses as Peter will be used to raise Dorcus from the dead. So, in closing I will just remind us that we are to be looking for open doors to serve the Lord. They can come at any time and almost always they open when we are moving/serving in the place we are at.

Notice two quotes by Spurgeon on serving the Lord:

"Idleness is the mother of vexation. A Christian who does but little for Christ, unless he is prevented from doing it by suffering, will, as a rule, be a miserable man."

"As an arrow which falls short of the mark, as a fig tree which yields no figs, as a candle which smokes but yields no light, as a cloud without rain and a well without water, is a man who has not served the Lord. He has led a wasted life—a life to which the flower and glory of existence are lacking."