

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Peter's Ministry in the Coastal Plain
Acts 9:32 – 10:16

Last time...Saul's ministry began

- healed of his blindness
- baptized with the Holy Spirit
- baptized in water
- strengthened by fellowship with like-minded believers in Damascus
- personally instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ for 3 years in Arabia
- boldly proved with the Scriptures to the Jews in Damascus that Jesus Christ is Lord
- given a way of escape from those Jews who plotted to kill him
- returned to Jerusalem and was strengthened by the fellowship of the apostles and disciples there
 - it is essential that believers see each other, touch each other... wisely in these days
 - extended isolation is harmful to the health (and impact) of the church
 - especially as we see the Day of the Lord approaching (Heb 10:22-25)
- boldly proved to the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus Christ is Lord
- given a way of escape from these Jews who also sought to kill him
- sent home to Tarsus for a time of preparation

This time...with Saul off the radar screen, the record of the ministry of the Holy Spirit focuses on Peter

- his ministry in the coastal plain of Sharon
- ministering to the church as he had been prepared and commanded
- being prepared by the Holy Spirit for what the Lord is going to do next

We will be in Acts 9 and 10

Acts 9

v32 passed throughout...to the saints:

As we have seen in the Book of Acts, an Adventure in Faith is revealed
step-by-step, as one thing leads to another and our steps are ordered by
the Lord

Persecution in Jerusalem against the church scattered the disciples of Jesus Christ
to Judea and Samaria.

They went, preaching the Word

Some of the scattered disciples of Jesus Christ went to the coastal plain of Sharon

Peter, obeying the Lord's command (John 21:15-17) when the Lord restored him, is visiting those small flocks, making his rounds among the scattered believers in Sharon

Note: all these fellowships are – Jewish

The stop mentioned here: Lydda aka Lod

Timeframe: about 3 years after Saul's conversion since this is after Acts 9:30-31

v33-34 there he found...Jesus Christ makes you whole:

In Lydda Peter found a bed-ridden sick man named Aeneas

“Found”, that is to say,

- his steps ordered by the Lord, Peter is led by the Holy Spirit to an appointment with Aeneas
- Peter did not know precisely where he was going as he went, he was walking by faith (Heb 11:8)

Peter spoke, “Jesus Christ heals you.”

Aeneas received Peter's words and was healed...by Jesus not by Peter

On display here are the “very best” spiritual gifts (for this situation) of

- faith: for Peter to say those words and for Aeneas to believe them
- healing: the Lord touching and making well a sick person/disciple

Peter had been prepared for this appointment...

Acts 3:6 Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk

Peter is an obedient and available vessel of what the Lord is doing and all glory goes to the Lord who did the work

We do NOT see the rise of “Simon Peter Ministries” as we have seen the rise of the fraudulent “Benny Hinn Ministries”

Spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit...1 Cor 12:7-11, 28, 31a

Are you sick?

Is a loved one sick?

Pray for the spiritual gifts of faith and healing and see what the Lord will do

And when He does (in His time e.g. Charity after how many prayers?), be sure to give Him all the glory!

Do not be too proud to be a part of what the Lord may want to do

v35 all...turned to the Lord:

All those in Lydda and in the plain of Sharon

- repented
- believed on Jesus Christ
- were converted...made new creatures in Christ

As a result of

- a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - being led by the Spirit
 - exercising his spiritual gifts
- the Lord working among His people using His people
- all glory for that work being given to the Lord

one miracle was multiplied into many miracles

Every conversion of a sinner into a child of God is a miracle!

Meanwhile, in Joppa

v36 Joppa...Tabitha...full of good works:

Continuing his “Feed My sheep” rounds in accordance to his calling, Peter’s next recorded stop is in Joppa, near modern day Tel Aviv

Part of the fellowship in Joppa was a very Godly woman named Tabitha/Dorcas/”gazelle”

Why was she Godly?

- faith...it is impossible to please the Lord without faith
- evidence of that faith...works
 - good works: Godly, self-less, deeds done unto the Lord as acts of thanks and worship
 - almsdeeds: compassion, benevolence, sharing the Lord’s things entrusted to her with those in need
 - James 2:17, 26: faith without works/evidence is dead
- useful, fruit-bearing witness of Jesus Christ, a vessel of blessing

The spiritual gift on display here: helps

v37-39a died...Peter arose and went:

While Peter is serving the Lord in Lydda, Tabitha got sick and died.

Her body was prepared for burial, but not buried because v35...

the fellowship in Joppa heard the testimony of what the Lord did in Lydda

And since Peter was still there, they sent for him, asking him to come immediately

After all, what might the Lord do regarding Tabitha?

1 Sam 14:6-ish..."It may be that the Lord will work for us."

The fellowship at Joppa had the faith (active) to find out if the Lord would work for them...as did Peter

v39b-40a widows...weeping and shewing...Peter put them all forth:

Peter and the 2 disciples from Joppa walk the 6-8 miles to where the body of Tabitha is laid

The grieving widows converge on Peter, showing him the garments Tabitha had made for the needy

And Peter put them all out of the upper chamber

He had been prepared for this...Mark 5:35-42

In the now quiet upper chamber, alone with the Lord, Peter goes boldly into the Father's Throne Room to ask the One who conquered the grave and raised the dead,

"Lord, what do You want to do?

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

v40b-41 Tabitha arise:

What did the Lord want to do?

The Holy Spirit gave Peter, again, the gift of faith, the faith to speak to the lifeless body and say, believing, "Tabitha, arise."

And the Lord raised "sleeping" Tabitha from the dead

The body of Tabitha was on earth in the room with Peter

Where was Tabitha?

In heaven with the Lord! (2 Cor 5:8)

Therefore...the Lord sent her back to earth to inhabit that body again for a time

Tabitha opened her eyes and saw...Peter, not the Lord!

The Lord would have prepared her for that

Phil 1:20-26

Then Tabitha sits up and Peter extends his hand to help her to her feet
Peter had been prepared for this appointment...

Luke 22:31-32 the Lord said, *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Acts 3:7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength

Then Peter proclaims the mighty work of Jesus Christ to His disciples in Joppa
See what the Lord has done!! He has worked for you!!

v42 it was known...believed in the Lord:
PTL!

Not "Praise Peter!"

Once again, one miracle resulted in many miracles!
John 11:45 again

v43 tarried many days...a tanner:

The Holy Spirit does not lead Peter to the next fellowship in the coastal plain of Sharon, He has him stay in Joppa for many days

During those many days, is Peter

- ministering to the fellowship in Joppa?
- communing with the Lord, being given a time of rest from the work of the ministry (the Lord cares more about His ministers than He does the ministry...Mark 6:30-32), since not everything is recorded?
- waiting upon the Lord, and being prepared for the next thing the Lord wants to do?

An indication may be in the accommodations the Lord has given Peter –
the house of a tanner

- a workman who deals with dead animals
- one of the "lowest" vocations in Jewish society
- continually unclean ceremonially

This is where the Lord has Peter...preparing him for something Jesus foretold

John 10:16 *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd*

Now. let's move up the Med coast to Caesarea

Acts 10

v1-2 Cornelius...devout:

In Caesarea

- the man-made port built by Herod the Great
- the capital of the Roman governor of Judea (vs Jerusalem)

is a centurion named Cornelius

- Gentile
- military commander of 100 Roman soldiers from Italy
- an officer in the Roman occupation of Judea
- pious, faith-ful, devout man
 - feared/revered the God of Israel, of AI&J
 - because someone cared enough about him to speak of the OTL God to him
 - led his household into this faith
 - giving and generous with the Jewish people, not oppressive
 - man of prayer

He is like the centurion in Capernaum whose servant was sick (Matt 8:5-13)

v3-4a a vision...angel of God...What is it, Lord:

Cornelius is given a plain, clear vision by the Lord – an angel (messenger) of God

Vision: the ability given by God to someone in the physical realm to see and communicate with the spiritual realm

This happened at the 9th hour of the day

Roman: 9am?

Hebrew: 3pm?

Context: The God of Israel and prayer, so we are on “Hebrew time”

Therefore, 3pm is the timestamp

Jewish times of prayer were 9am, noon, and 3pm

The angel/messenger addresses Cornelius by name; his name is known in heaven

Seeing and hearing a being from the spiritual realm address him by name,
Cornelius is frightened (quite naturally!)

Cornelius knows this angel is a messenger of God

He knows how authority works (as did the centurion in Capernaum)

So he knows the message is from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth

v4b-6 send men to Joppa...Peter...tell you what you ought to do:

The Lord's message to this Gentile military man:

God has taken notice of your prayers and compassion for His people
Send two men (his authority in earth recognized as utilized) to Joppa,
to the tanner's house, to summon Peter.
Peter will tell you what you are to do

What is taking place here?

1. As the Ethiopian eunuch (Ch 8) was reading and meditating on Is 53, was Cornelius
 - meditating on Is 55...v1-7?
 - asking what Saul had – Lord, what would you have me to do?
2. The Lord is preparing Cornelius for the Apostle Peter, a fisher of men
3. The Lord is going to use Peter, a man and not an angel, to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his household

People are God's chosen vessels to preach the Gospel and to make
Jesus Christ known to other people

The Lord could use angels, but His Sovereign will is to use people
It is a God-given privilege to share the Gospel with someone!

v7-8 called...sent:

Cornelius' response is immediate

As soon as the angel left...as soon as the vision was over...Cornelius summoned
his delegation, 3 people who faithfully attended to him every day,
including one soldier of like-mind with him

They leave Caesarea for Joppa about 3pm on a journey of about 35 miles

v9-10 On the morrow...sixth hour...trance:

The delegation of Cornelius travelled as far as they could on "Day 1" and
continued on "Day 2"

About noon the following day, they were close to Joppa

At that time in the tanner's house, Peter goes to the rooftop to pray in the cool
breezes coming off the Med Sea

Jewish times of prayer were 9am, noon, and 3pm

And he is very hungry

While the midday meal preparation is taking place, Peter falls into a trance...
"ecstasy" when aware of the presence of God

v11-13 heaven opened...great sheet...all manner...kill and eat:

In a trance, Peter sees the sky open up and a large sheet (like a sail) bound/tied on the four corners come toward him

Like a “projector screen” on which is displayed a menagerie of animals

- herbivores...plant eaters
- carnivores...meat eaters
- reptiles
- birds

Then hungry Peter hears a voice telling him to get up, kill and eat.

Hunger is a very powerful drive in our flesh

e.g. 1 Sam 14:28, 32 *ff*

v14 Not so Lord...never...common or unclean:

Like the centurion in Caesarea, Peter knows this is a message from the Lord

And in typical Peter fashion (he has same personality), he pushes back!

“By no means, Lord!

I have never broken the Dietary Law, I have never eaten anything
profane, defiled, foul, or impure!

(And I am not about to start now!)

Peter is saying, “No” to God, that he will have nothing to do with what God told him to do!

Peter was not perfect before he was saved/born-again

Peter was not perfect after he was saved/born-again

He is still a work-in-progress

True for all of us too

We are not perfect by our efforts because we fall short of perfection

We are made perfect “in Christ”, Jesus makes us perfect/complete

Phil 1:6 is still in play in all of our lives

What is happening here?

The Lord is NOT testing/tempting Peter to sin (James 1:13)

The Lord is preparing Peter for Cornelius and the Gentiles

v15-16 What God has cleansed, call not common:

The Lord instructs and corrects Peter...3 times (“Feed My lambs”-ish)

The Lord is going to do something “new”, something amazing!

He is going to use Peter when He does

He is preparing Peter for a mystery...a truth of God from before the foundation of the world that is about to be revealed

Rom 10:4

Col 3:11 there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all

Eph 2:11-16

After the 3rd delivery of v15b,

- the great sheet is taken up into the sky
- the trance ends
- Peter is left in the silence, alone with his thoughts
- Until...next week

Application/Lessons

Given John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do

John 16:7 It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.
(the power of God from on high to be a witness for Jesus Christ)

Acts 1:1 all that Jesus began both to do and teach
To this very day...using people and not angels!

Rom 10:13-15 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (quoting Is 52:7)

1. Preparation (to be used by the Lord)

Each of us, children of God, have unique personalities and have been

- uniquely prepared to be used by the Lord Jesus Christ
- led and empowered by the Holy Spirit

I am not like any of you and none of you are like me...we are all unique

My preparation is not your preparation...we are uniquely prepared to serve the Lord

- family born into...father, mother, siblings, finances
- cultures in which raised
- people who influenced our lives
- places lived
- education experiences
- work experiences
- circumstances leading to conversion/salvation
- level/degree of surrender/submission since conversion/salvation

So do not look around to compare or compete with any other person

Look up and be faithful to the One Who saved you from eternal death and is ordering your steps

He has prepared you to be a part of what He is doing right now...using you

He is preparing you for what He wants to do next...using you

2. Participation (in what the Lord wants to do)

We can only participate in what the Lord is doing (no greater rush!) by walking by faith and not by sight

When we walk by faith, the Father and the Son empower us with the Holy Spirit,
Who gives us gifts thru which He works to glorify the name of Jesus Christ

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are exercised using ordinary people who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and who are available to share the love and grace of God

Therefore,

“Here I am Lord, send me!” (Is 6:8)

Stir up your gift! (2 Tim 1:6-9)

Let's see what the Lord wants to do!

How can the gifts of the Spirit be exercised,
How can we have an impact on this dark world,
How can we share the message of God's love and hope,
How can we participate in what the Lord is doing,
when the Church is in isolation?

Peter made an effort to be in fellowship with the churches in the coastal plain of Sharon

It was in that fellowship that he was used by God to bring the gift of healing to Aeneas and to offer his hand (to touch) to Tabitha

If we can go to work (not everybody works from home) or to the grocery store or to Costco or to Home Depot, we can go to church to

- increase in spiritual strength (Acts 9:22)
- be edified and encouraged
- be comforted (Acts 9:31)

A word of encouragement:

There is great value in fellowship – believers need to see and touch each other, believers care for and minister to other believers

Let's not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, each of us guided by the wisdom of God in our circumstances

Let's not let fellowship become a casualty of extended isolation

Let's ask, "Lord, what would You have me to do?"