

Peter's Ministry in Lydda

Text: Acts 9:32-35

Introduction:

We left off with Saul having to flee Jerusalem, as the Hellenists were trying to kill him. The disciples ushered him to Caesarea, and from there, he went to his native city of Tarsus. We will not hear from Saul again until mid Chapter 11, where Barnabas will retrieve him from Tarsus, so as to solicit his help for the growing church in Antioch.

In the mean time, Luke, our beloved author, will transfer us over to the ministry of the Apostle Peter for a time, so as to see how the Lord further extended His kingdom through Peter, especially emphasizing the conversion of the gentile centurion, Cornelius (in Chapter 10). And so, this morning, we begin by following Peter about 25 miles west of Jerusalem (toward the coast), into the town of Lydda.

I. Peter's Ministry in Lydda

"Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda" (vs. 32).

Here, we find that Peter has been traveling around throughout the country of Judea, preaching the Gospel. And Luke, would here, especially begin to highlight his ministry at Lydda, where many more will be converted, and as a starting point for that which will lead Peter to Joppa, and ultimately up north, into the coastal city of Caesarea, where he will meet Cornelius.

Notice two points of interest here, before we move on:

1) Who did Peter come to, at Lydda? The "saints." Contrary to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, all of the true people of God, upon conversion, are "saints!" We don't need to be miracle workers, or to exhibit any special powers to be saints. All, who are in Christ, are "set apart," and hallowed in Him! Such is a privilege, for those who are in union with Christ!

2) Might it be the case, that some of these saints, were converted through the ministry of Phillip, who had travelled by this way, when he went up the coast to Caesarea, himself? Peter is able to be refreshed by the brethren there, and he will further be used by God, to add to their number, as we will see in a few moments. Again, recognize the glory of seeing the work of the

Kingdom of Christ, as a "body effort." Are we content to be one mechanism, in the glorious whole organism, or, like the world, are we looking to build our own legacy? Are we satisfied to be one tool in the utility belt of Christ, or must we be noticed for our individual labors? What a joy it is, brethren, to escape the shallow grip of "me-ness," so as to find the freedom and joy that comes with being a part of the body, which knows but one Name that ought to be highlighted and glorified, even that Name, which is above every other Name, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Together, brethren, we are the supporting cast (and we are wonderfully blessed and privileged to be that), but Christ is rightfully the whole show! Our blessed, unmerited redemption compels us, not merely to be content here, but to be ecstatic and joyful; indeed, jealous for Christ's sake!

Peter and Philip, no doubt, contribute to the work in Lydda, among others, but all in all, the risen Christ, by His Spirit, through many human vessels, was the One building His church!

"There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed" (vs. 33).

While in Lydda, Peter came upon a man, who was paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. We are not told how the man became this way. What we do know is that his paralysis was not from birth, but had come upon him for some reason, eight years prior to this occasion. And obviously, enough time had passed, for him and his family to presume that his condition was permanent. Having worked with many people who have suffered from some form of traumatic brain injury, and having worked among several who had suffered from partial or total paralysis, it is generally an accepted reality, that, the longer the person sits in such a condition, the more unlikely they will ever be restored to full health. They receive various therapies and treatments, but progress is often very slow, and generally it tapers off at some point, and the reality of accepting things as they are, begins to settle in. And no doubt, while those working with such people, attempt to present them with a sense of purpose and importance...on the inside, they are suffering deeply. They "remember what it was like to....(fill in the blank; work, feed themselves, use the restroom on their own, walk, laugh, speak clearly...etc)", and those times have since past. A new era of suffering and sorrow has come, and more than likely will remain.

And so, I can imagine, to some extent, what this man must have felt. Is there any hope for such a one as this? Is this all, and then the grave? Well, Peter here reveals a glorious hope in our text, not only for those who are physically paralyzed, but most of all, for all who are spiritually paralyzed by their sin, being naturally condemned and alienated from their God! And

brethren, the good news is that while we cannot offer the physical element of what Peter does here, we can offer the far better spiritual element (to all), and that ultimately anticipates the physical element as well!

"And Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed,' Then he arose immediately" (vs. 34).

Notice first, the clear, most obvious, element of grace emphasized here. This man did not seek Peter. Peter came upon him, and called him to arise and make his bed. And, by the active power of the risen and present Christ, he was healed, and he immediately arose. He who was bedridden, stood up and made his own bed. Indeed, brethren, we see another glorious display of the power of the kingdom of God, as we are given a present picture of Christ's redeeming and healing of the paralyzed soul, and a foreshadowing of the glorious physical resurrection unto wholeness, to come! Both, the physical and spiritual benefits, of being in union with Christ are revealed here, brethren! And we proclaim the Gospel, which brings about both, in due time.

And so, brethren, let us not see even the physical element of this paralytic's healing as meaningless or irrelevant for us, or without taking any physical application in the present. Indeed, this miracle served to further authenticate Peter's apostolic authority in Lydda, unto the laying of the foundation of the church, but furthermore, it is also, indeed, a foreshadowing of the blessed resurrection unto wholeness, which all who are in Christ, will experience! Of course, we certainly don't want to miss the spiritual emphasis here, most of all, as well!

[Note: This man suffered paralysis for eight years...we ought still to pray for Danny in this regard, mostly for the spiritual blessing, but let us not doubt that Christ is yet, more than capable of bringing about the physical as well. We do believe in miracles, brethren! We don't see an extended use of the miraculous gifts, but God does still perform miracles, does He not?!]

"So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" (vs. 35).

Once again, the Lord's miraculous work served to help authenticate the message, which Peter preached, and the word spread all the way up the coastal plain of Sharon, so that all (in Lydda and Sharon) who saw the healed man, had turned to the Lord.

This miracle had wondrous affects, probably beyond Peter's immediate expectations. The Lord started the work, and He promoted and carried it to its full course, in accordance with His will. Peter was happy to light the match, and the Lord spread the fire!

1) You never know where God will carry your Gospel labors (and to how many generations), brethren! What we do know, is that they are *never* in vain!

2) Note the word "all" here. Does this mean, every single *individual* in Sharon and Lydda (or many from these regions)? Relate to the extent of Christ's atonement. [See also Mark 1:5]

Amen!