

Readings

Scripture

³² Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. ³³ There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. ³⁵ And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶ Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. ³⁷ In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸ Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." ³⁹ So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

- Acts 9:32-43 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

A new phase in the work and expansion of the church began when it found itself forced to decide about its attitude to those who were not Jews. The issue had already arisen in principle with the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, but this particular incident had no permanent effects on the policy of the church; once, however, converts were made who formed a permanent part of the life of the church, the question of their acceptability could not be delayed. Luke relates two major incidents in this connection. First, he recounts how the problem arose for the Jerusalem Christians as a result of the conversion of Cornelius and his family, and, second, he describes how the church in Antioch moved naturally and easily to the formation of a Jewish and Gentile Christian group. The fundamental decision to evangelize the Gentiles was thus taken, although the problem of whether they must be required to live like Jews continued to perplex the church for some time.

- I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (p. 177)

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

- Acts 11:19-26 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

What does a miracle do to the heart?
Acts 9:32-43

The Acts of the Apostles
Brad Anderson

Miracles/signs/wonders have not always yielded the outcome we might expect...
(Acts 9:35, 28)

What does a miracle do to the heart?

Sometimes the evidence of a miracle can help turn a heart toward the Lord God...

- In the case of Aeneas: Jesus' healing/restoring... (Acts 9:32-35)
- In the case of Tabitha: Jesus' resurrection... (Acts 9:36-43)

Sometimes the evidence of a miracle can further harden an already hardened heart...

- Because seeing does not necessarily mean believing... (John 10:31-42)
- Because hardness of heart is the perennial human challenge... (John 11-12)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- If you were a mat, what would you be: Welcome mat? Wrestling mat? Place mat? Door mat? How so?
- What is the purpose of these signs and wonders in Acts 9:35, 41-42? (Look also at Acts 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12-14 to help shape your answer). Although Peter had healed many people, he had never raised anyone from death. What might he be feeling as he goes to Tabitha's home?
- Which of Jesus' miracles do these two incidents remind you of? (Luke 5:17-26; 8:41-56)
- Why is it that Tabitha could be raised, but Stephen died, even though Peter was there too? (Acts 8:2) How would you explain God's ways to Stephen's widow or mother? How might what happened as a result of Stephen's death and Tabitha's resurrection help you to understand?
- Read John 10:31-John 12. How do the events of signs/wonders/miracles intersect with both hardness of heart and conversions? How is Jesus treated? How is Lazarus treated? How does Jesus respond to the various opponents, the crowds and his closer friends?
- How have you experienced God's healing in your life? What resulted for others from this healing?