

Peter's Early Ministry

1. Observation and exposition of Acts 9:32-43
2. The take-away for us?

Observation and exposition of Acts 9:32-43

1. Read **Acts 9:32-43**
2. General observations and background
 - a. While persecution was happening in Jerusalem, the apostles stayed there, at the epicenter of the persecution. Now that the church was in a time of peace, and if Peter was an example of all the apostles, it seems that they were “free” to leave Jerusalem and minister to the church in the surrounding areas.
 - b. What Peter is doing is an example or illustration of “the church being built up” and “multiplied” in **9:31**.
 - c. Another reason for this passage to be included in Acts? The controversial conversion of Cornelius and his household is next in the story, so this passage serves to “validate” Peter and his ministry.
 - d. Where is Lydda on a map?
 - i. Between Jerusalem and Joppa
 - ii. The Greek form of Lod
 - e. Compare Peter healing Aeneas with Jesus healing the paralytic in **Luke 5:17-26**, which Peter witnessed.
 - f. “And all the residents...”
 - i. “Here the use of *pas* (all), as elsewhere in Acts, should not be taken literally but is an example of rhetorical hyperbole, intended to indicate a large response and to impress the hearer.” Peterson, 321, quoting Witherington
 - ii. “Not that we need interpret the ‘all’ as meaning literally every single inhabitant, for, as Calvin wisely comments, ‘when Scripture mentions *all*, it is not embracing, to a man, the whole of whatever it is describing, but uses “all” for many, for the majority, or for a crowd of people.’” Stott, 183
 - g. Joppa was apparently a distinctly Greek city, so Peter was definitely in Gentile territory at this point. Perhaps God was preparing him gradually for his meeting

with Cornelius?

- h. Tabitha (Aramaic) = Dorcas (Greek) = Gazelle (English)
- i. Dorcas was “full of good works and acts of charity.” (36)
 - i. Compare **Titus 2:3-5, 7, 11-14; 3:1, 8, 14**
 - ii. Peterson suggest that she was “probably a woman of means, ‘with leisure and freedom to do good deeds for others’.” (322)
 - iii. Was she also a widow? Perhaps, but we don’t know for sure.
- j. Why was Dorcas’s body washed and placed in an upper room, rather than buried?
 - i. Perhaps the believers in Joppa had heard of Peter healing Aeneas, and were hoping for a miracle?
 - ii. There is no evidence of an apostle raising someone from the dead, before this account.
 - iii. Also, understand that when I say Peter healed or raised, he was simply the means that God used to do the healing or raising.
- k. Compare Dorcas’s resurrection with **Luke 8:49-56** and **Mark 5:35-43**, which Peter also witnessed.
- l. We tend to gloss over biblical accounts of healing and raising the dead, probably due to our familiarity with these accounts. But think through what had to happen for Aeneas to be healed, and especially for Dorcas to be raised from the dead.
 - i. For Aeneas, assuming his spinal cord had been severed, those nerves were knit back together, instantly. Muscles, tendons, and ligaments restored to their former state.
 - ii. For Dorcas, use the whiteboard to list all that had happened to her and her body after she died.
 - 1. Her spirit/soul was gone.
 - 2. Her body:
 - a. Rigamortis
 - b. Pooling of blood (and other fluids?)
 - c. Starting to decay
 - d. Cells begin to die

The take-away for us

Resources

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce
2. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
4. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III
6. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, F. F. Bruce