

25—Acts 9.-32-43—What Jesus Began Continues!

I. Introduction

- a. By way of introduction, I'd like to remind us of how this book began. Luke stated in (Acts 1:1) In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. Again, take note of the word began. When I use this word, I mean that I haven't finished something. Our text highlights the ongoing work of the risen Lord Jesus in Luke's second book, Acts. Jesus hasn't finished.
- b. Also, there's another verse that must tag along with us as well. Jesus promised in (Acts 1:8) you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
 - i. As we look at our text this morning, it seems at this point in the unfolding of events, the gospel has spread throughout Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.
 - ii. What still remains to be seen in this book is the expansion of the word to the ends of the earth. And we should be looking for it!
- c. Even now there are yet more nations that have not heard the gospel! May what we see compel us to pray and to go.

II. Main Point

- a. The word continues to spread and the church continues to multiply through various means!

III. Outline

- a. V.31 Happening!
- b. Led by Jesus through Circumstances
- c. Jesus continuing his work in Lydda
- d. Jesus continuing his work in Joppa
- e. 10 Applications for Multiplication

IV. Exposition

- a. In last week's text, Luke stated in (Acts 9:31) ³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
 - i. We need to ask, "How did it multiply?" and what can we do to multiply?
 1. We see Peter moving about freely. He had stayed with the rest of the apostles when the threats were high after Stephen's death. Now he travels away from Jerusalem to other regions of Israel. The word has spread all over and the apostle Peter is part of the means by which Jesus is building up his church and multiplying it.
 - ii. Because Jesus is risen and reigning, he continues to work even now as the gospel penetrates the darkness!
 1. By repentance and faith in Jesus, we have been forgiven and counted righteous by faith. We too have been given the Holy Spirit to be a witness for Christ. May we be the means by which the church multiplies.
- b. With this next point, I want to point something out about how Jesus might lead differently as we go through Acts. I want to show how Peter is led differently than what we saw with Philip a few weeks ago. In this section which is larger than just 32-43, Peter is led by Jesus through circumstances.
 - i. Similar to a child, we are close by them at an early age. We watch. We instruct. We take them by the hand and lead them where they need to go. Their job is to listen, obey and follow. As they learn and mature, we back away from these ways of leading our kids. If we are doing our job correctly, they will continue to do what we have taught them without the parent holding them by the hand. And at some point, we push them out of the nest to fly!

- ii. I think Jesus does something similar with new disciples, even the likes of Peter. In these two scenes, the events are dominated by this word we would translate: "Now it happened that" or "It came about."
 - 1. It's used 54x in Acts and 4x in this text alone.
 - a. It came about that Peter went here and there and found Aeneas
 - b. It came about that Tabitha became ill and died...
 - c. It became known that Tabitha was alive and many trusted upon the Lord...
 - d. It came about that Peter stayed in Joppa...which sets us up of for chapter 10.
 - 2. At times, Jesus has said to some, "Go hear. Do this." At this point, Peter has been trained for years and he is expected to follow in the midst of everyday life.
 - a. I think Jesus still directs in some way when we are growing and even when we should know what to do. But the direct instruction we have seen at the beginning of Acts gives way to "now it happened" and Peter responds as he has been taught.
 - b. I try not to make decisions by gut feelings. Those are more difficult to understand and I could be trained to trust a faulty sensation. What if I rely upon that feeling to do something and the feeling doesn't come but the way I need to respond is obvious?
 - i. Like, love and compassion beg for action.
 - ii. I want the default of my actions to be based on the truth of Scripture. And when life happens, I respond according to what Jesus has taught me.
 - iii. You all have probably heard...The **parable of the drowning man** is a short story, often told as a joke, most often about a devoutly Christian man, frequently a minister, who refuses several rescue attempts in the face of approaching floodwaters, each time telling the would-be rescuers that God will save him. After turning down the last, he drowns in the flood. After his death, the man meets God and asks why he did not intervene. God responds that he sent all the would-be rescuers to the man's aid on the expectation he would accept the help.
- iii. Here's what I mean:
 - 1. (2 Tim. 3:16-4:1) ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
 - 2. Let our every impulse be directed by the word/Jesus!
- c. Now, let's see Jesus continue to do and teach through Peter in Lydda as he **happened to be going there**.
 - i. V. 32 And it happened that Peter went here and there among all (that sounds pretty wide open...how will he find his way?) Well, he came down also to the saints who lived in Lydda.
 - 1. The question may come to mind, "How are there Christians in Lydda?"
 - a. First, Lydda is about 30 miles northwest of Jerusalem near the coast.
 - b. A few possibilities:
 - i. They could easily be some of those who fled Jerusalem when the great persecution came about. We were told they went about proclaiming the gospel. The suffering did not silence them.
 - ii. It's also very possible this happened through the witness of Philip. He would have passed through Lydda on the way to Caesarea.

- iii. Certainly, both could be possible as the same time. Whichever the case, the gospel has spread!
 - iv. Which proves my point second point. Philip wasn't told to preach the gospel on his way, that's just what he does. The saints fleeing persecution were not told to spread the word as they left but they did.
 - 2. Now that Peter is among the saints building them up in the word for the work of the ministry to reach more people in the area, is that all he's there for?
 - a. Well, it says he found a man named Aeneas who had been bedridden for 8 years because he was paralyzed.
 - i. This is the world we live in. There's brokenness everywhere. It takes no effort to find people who are sick or have diseases like cancer or any number of things. It's hard not to see it.
 - 1. Jerry and I went to help a lady this week. Kendell prayed for someone at his work, you should ask him about that story. God has answered prayer among us too!
 - b. Peter initiates this encounter with the paralyzed man and says, "Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed."
 - i. This story reminds me of Jesus healing the paralytic in Luke 5. This is Peter being like Jesus. We do not hear Jesus telling Peter to do this but rather he is responding to what he finds.
 - ii. I think it has the same purpose too: to reveal Jesus!
 - 1. (Lk. 5:24)²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- he said to the man who was paralyzed-- "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."
 - iii. Jesus heals this paralyzed man too. When Peter acts, he acts in the name of Jesus.
 - 1. It says in (Acts 9:34) And immediately he rose.
 - 2. Though this is temporary; it points us to the future reality of what will be at the resurrection for all who trust in Jesus.
 - ii. We see this man's suffering had purpose. It wasn't meaningless. As the Lord guided Peter through what may have seemed to be a normal day of ministry, this man's healing resulted in the multiplication of the church.
 - 1. (Acts 9:35)³⁵ And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.
 - 2. Eight years of suffering to reveal the salvation in Jesus for eternal life. Was the suffering worth it? When the baby is born, the birth pains lose their sting!
 - d. Now let's look at Jesus continuing his work in Joppa
 - i. Luke begins this story by describing a female disciple named Tabitha. That's her Aramaic name while Dorcas is her name in Greek.
 - 1. She is described as full of good works and acts of charity.
 - a. These are the kind of things we have been talking about last week. These are evidences of grace too. Indeed, these are some of the things salvation intends to happen.
 - b. (Eph. 2:8-10)⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
 - c. Saved BY GRACE and FOR good works!

- d. Don't miss the word "full."
- e. Acts of charity are acts of benevolence like giving to the poor and probably more precisely in this case, the caring for widows as many of them come grieved over her death because she took good care of them.
 - i. This would be like giving to the Help Center or personally giving to others.
- ii. This description doesn't prepare us for what comes next. It actually makes it worse.
 - 1. Again, the word we have already mentioned begins verse 37. "And it happened that she became ill and died." In other words, the events of the day are unfolding precisely according to God's will.
 - a. But, you're like...what? Why take someone who is so faithful and so needed?
 - b. The response of the church in Joppa tells us something about what they believed about Jesus.
 - c. They washed her body which is a fairly normal procedure but the next thing they do isn't normal.
 - i. They take her body into the upper room. Why? Because Peter happened to be in Lydda about 10 miles away. They obviously know how Jesus had healed through Peter.
 - d. They send two men to Peter. It's a three hour walk.
 - i. They urge him to come without delay.
 - ii. Peter did not hesitate. He did not wait for his gut feeling. The right thing to do is obvious.
 - 1. In fact, Peter had watched Jesus do this almost exact thing with Jairus' daughter.
 - 2. (Mk. 5:22-24) ²² Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." ²⁴ And he went with him.
 - e. The scene continues to unfold much the same way as it did with Jairus and his daughter—Talitha—as Peter goes quickly to Tabitha. Only one letter difference.
 - i. Jesus is a work here. He is ruling and reigning from heaven. He must. Peter doesn't have the power to raise the dead or heal paralytics.
 - ii. But Jesus is also at work through what he has taught Peter. His actions in the midst of life in a broken world follow Jesus' examples.
 - iii. Both are necessary!
 - iv. Peter enters the upper room. The widows are weeping which is normal and right. They show Peter the things Tabitha has made for them. Maybe even the very clothes they are wearing.
 - v. Peter puts them outside just like Jesus did with Jairus and his daughter. Remember, Jesus allowed Peter to stay and watch. Showing is part of learning and Peter watches and then imitates his Lord!
 - f. Peter has followed the Lord's ways so far. But he knows only Jesus can raise the dead.
 - i. Therefore, Peter falls to his knees in subjection to the King and he prays!
 - ii. Then he turned to the body after having turned first to Jesus and said: "Tabitha, arise!"
 - iii. When she saw Peter, she sat up!

1. It's been at least 6 hours! Stop and consider being pronounced dead on the operating table and 6 hours later you are alive!
- g. Peter presents Tabitha alive to those outside and the same result happened again.
 - i. Her death wasn't meaningless. (Acts 9:42) And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.
 - ii. The Lord displayed his power through "and it happened that" and Peter responding as a faithful disciple should.
- e. I want to end with 10 applications directly from the text to help us multiply
 - i. Be going—in v. 32 Peter went here and there among them all and the Lord had things for Peter to do that he did not plan. As we go about the day, let's be available.
 - ii. Next, be hospitable. As Peter went here and there he needed places to stay. Be ready when you hear of a need to change plans. The places he stayed were providential and those who were hospitable were just as much a part of the work Peter did as he was. Even Simon the tanner here at the end plays a part in the salvation of Cornelius and his family.
 - iii. Be looking—v.33 says that Peter found Aeneas. That means he was looking for him. Ask the Lord give you opportunities to love and serve others. Those with the greatest of needs are often waiting for someone like you to notice them and care for them. Ask those in need how you can pray for them.
 - iv. Be receiving—this one seems to be harder for most. It wasn't hard for Aeneas to receive the healing Peter gave but we struggle to let people help us. Listen, even when you can do it yourself, please let those who ask to help, do something. Both of you will be blessed by it.
 - v. Be generous—Tabitha was marked by generosity. She is an example for us to follow. Your ministry might be caring for a few widows by making clothes for them. That is pleasing to the Lord!
 1. Many churches have sowing ministries that make blankets for people. They would make a quilt for someone to say that we have been covering you in prayer and will continue to do so. It meant a lot to those people.
 - vi. Be serving—not only was Tabitha generous but she also served others. One could just throw some cash at the needy without engaging them personally. These widows loved Tabitha greatly because she took care of them.
 - vii. Be willing—when the men are asked to go to Peter, they went. And when Peter was urged to come without delay, he was willing to walk 3 hours to do what was asked of him.
 - viii. Be grieved—the brokenness of this world is to be grieved. Jesus wept over the brokenness. He felt compassion. We can become numb to the chaos but that deadens the awareness of the needs around us.
 - ix. Be prayerful—Jesus heard the prayer of Peter while he was in the upper room. God is faithful. He has answered many of our prayers and we must continue to call upon his name!
 - x. Be trusting—when the circumstances of life take you here and there, trust that the Lord is with you and there are people who need to be ministered to. Don't rely on your gut feelings but may we love like Jesus.

V. Response

- a. Maybe you are still thinking about following Jesus. I hope you see the power and love revealed through these people as compelling and that you too would turn to Jesus.
- b. For those who are following Christ, may this help you see that everyone has an important role to play in the multiplication of the church. Even the smallest of things is Kingdom work!