

Explore the Bible: August 11

Healing • Acts 9:32-43

By Roland L. McMillan



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· The passage for the lesson focuses on two miracles during Peter's travels.

The first miracle happened in a town named "Lydda," also known as Lod in the Old Testament. A man named Aeneas had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. Peter encountered Aeneas and healed him. The healing is reported simply with a minimum of details, but the mention of "Jesus Christ" in verse 34 is the crucial detail. Aeneas was healed by the power of Jesus the Messiah with Peter as his representative. No sense of a private life existed in the ancient world. Everyone in town would have known about Aeneas' bedridden condition, and everyone in town would have known of his miraculous recovery. A substantial number of people became followers of Jesus as a result of the miracle. The effects were not limited to Lydda, but also spread into the region of Sharon to the north of town (Acts 9:35).

The second miracle happened in Joppa, on the coast near Lydda. Verse 36 introduces Tabitha. The name "Tabitha" is Aramaic. Since Luke was writing for a broader audience in Greek, he mentioned the Greek equivalent "Dorcas." Both names mean "gazelle." Her activities imply that she had above average financial resources and that she used her resources to help others. Luke described how she was always doing good deeds and helping people in need. When Tabitha died, people from the local church went to get Peter from Lydda. This suggests that the word-of-mouth grapevine was working, that believers knew Peter was in the area, and that they expected a miracle.

When Peter arrived, he found a sad scene. Tabitha's body had been washed in preparation for burial and placed in a room. The original language suggests that men were present in the room, but Luke focused on the widows. They were grieving, showing Peter the clothing that she had made for them. The most natural understanding of verse 39 is that they were showing Peter the clothing that they were wearing. If you have ever been in a room full of grieving people, you know that focusing your thoughts can be difficult. Peter sent the people out of the room and prayed. He probably sent the people out so

that he could focus on his prayer. After the prayer, Peter spoke two words (in his language), and the dead woman was alive again. Of course, the power was not in Peter's words, or in the prayer itself, but in the one to whom Peter prayed. Tabitha was raised by the power of God. Like the miracle in Lydda, this miracle in Joppa resulted in a considerable number of people turning to Jesus. Both miracles were signs, pointing to a reality beyond themselves – Jesus.

Luke included more details as he described the second miracle, and those details point toward some interesting connections. If you were to line up 1 Kings 17:17-24, 2 Kings 4:32-37, Luke 8:49-56, and Acts 9:36-42 side-by-side, you would see parallels in how the stories were told. Peter's healing of Tabitha echoes Luke 8, which in turn echoes 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. In Acts 9, Peter restored Tabitha to life. In Luke 8, Jesus restored Jairus' daughter to life. In 2 Kings 4, Elisha restored the Shunammite woman's son to life. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah restored a widow's son to life. The similarities in these stories show Peter's work continuing along the same lines as Jesus, and Jesus' work continuing along the same lines as the great Old Testament prophets. Peter continued Jesus' work and Jesus continued the prophet's work. The church was new as it spread in those early days, but the movement stood in a long line of God's work through the centuries. In the same way, we stand in the same long line as we follow Jesus today.

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