

Bible Study 33 – Acts 9:32-35 – Peter’s ministry at Lydda

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.

1. The focus of the chapter now turns to the Apostle Peter’s ministry: Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

a) Peter was an apostle and leader in the early church... as an apostle he was a sent one... he had not only been called by Christ, but he had received a commission from Christ to feed his sheep and lambs...

b) Peter made himself available to the church near and far... his ministry was peripatetic, that is, he travelled near and far to minister to God’s people and to proclaim good news to those yet strangers to God’s saving grace in the gospel...

c) Peter therefore sought out the Lord’s anointed people in Lydda... That is what is meant by the phrase he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. We tend to think of the saints as a special class of Christian within the church. And we do so on account of prominent Christians like Peter and exceptional characters throughout church history. And so, understandably, the word saint conjures up thought of extraordinary Christians. People who were/are known for their holiness, gifts, graces, achievements and so on. However, biblically speaking, all Christians are saints, meaning separated ones. Anointed by the Spirit of adoption. And called to be saints – to show the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. To pursue holiness by walking before God and one another in love.

And so, when we read that Peter visited the saints at Lydda it means that he sought out the church, the followers of Jesus Christ in that locality, rather than a few special individuals noted for their specific or peculiar gifts and service.

2. Peter’s ministry was faithful: 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.

a) Peter encounters a paralysed man called Aeneas at Lydda...

b) Peter entreats Aeneas to rise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ... Peter is an agent or instrument, or conduit through which Christ’s power is manifest... Jesus’

continues his ministry through his apostles and church more generally... The apostles enjoyed unique spiritual power to affirm and authenticate the faith... We discovered that in chapter 5 where we read: Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles (Acts 5:12).

c) Aeneas emphatically regains his mobility and is cured... it was evident to all that he has been marvellously and miraculously healed... This man who had been confined to bed and had been wholly dependent upon the care of others rose and walked in Jesus' name...

3. Peter's ministry was fruitful: And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

a) Non-Christians in the vicinity saw the transformation in Aeneas that came about by Peter's faithful ministry... In other words, because Peter was faithful, he was fruitful... God works through his people... Christ is the Head, the church is his body.

b) Non-Christians in the vicinity turned to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith... People heard the good news of Christ's gospel; they saw lives transformed for the better... They believed; they became; they belonged...

c) The church in the vicinity thrived as it grew congregationally, and in conviction and confidence in Christ Jesus... He is Lord and Saviour. He is our strength and song. The church exists because of him and for him...

Questions

- 1) In what ways might Peter's ministry be a good example to us?
- 2) In what ways does our ministry today reflect the Christ-centred approach of the early church?
- 3) What does it mean to be a saint?
- 4) Should we expect the extraordinary apostolic gifts to continue in the contemporary church?