

Week 17

The Ministry of Peter

The Miracle Workings of Peter

The middle of Chapter nine shifts the focus from the conversion of Saul/Paul to the miracle working, apostolic ministry of Peter. Since Peter's days with Jesus, when he was first to confess Jesus as the Christ, and Jesus' taking the time to personally restore him to leadership after his denial, to the opening chapters of the Book of Acts, Peter is seen as leader and chief preacher and spokesperson for the Apostles.

As the church is spreading out to all parts Judea, Samaria, and beyond, Peter has led the young church through days of spiritual formation, and persecution such that we see that the church is enjoying a brief time of peace. In this time, they are continuing to grow not only numerically, but spiritually, as Luke notes the churches were being "edified." (vs. 31)

Vs. 32 tells us the Peter is on a preaching tour of all parts of the country where they church has spread. This shows his pastoral care and oversight of the whole church. He is their 'archbishop', in a very technical sense. His care and oversight extend to 'all' places and churches. The English word 'bishop' is in the Greek, 'episcopos' and literally means one who oversees or superintends. This shows the hierarchy of the early church, as the Apostles functioned as overseers of what was growing into a universal church.

While we don't have very many biblical examples of the ministry works done by many most of the Twelve Apostles, we do have several key examples that show us the same power that was at work in Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry to teach and heal, is still at work in the world through the Apostles.

In this chapter we see Peter visiting the town of Lydda and healing a man named Aeneas, who had fallen ill. We also see Peter doing that which only Christ had done before – raising the dead! Luke is giving clear testimony that the power of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost, is alive and well in the ministry of the church, through the Apostolic ministry.

Beginning in verse 36, Luke, the Physician, tells the story of Tabitha, also called Dorcas. He notes that she was held in high regard by the people as a compassionate woman, "full of good works." Then in vs. 37 he gives us the detail that, after she died, "...they washed her..." This is to give historical evidence that she was actually dead, so that her resurrection could not be discredited. The washing of the dead body was customary in preparation for burial.

Perhaps one of the most important things to note in this chapter is found in vs. 39. Even though Tabitha had died, the believers in Joppa (a nearby town) sent for Peter to come. What faith the

church exhibited. They believed that somehow, Peter, could call upon Jesus to raise Tabitha back to life. Peter found them in their grief, and they made their case to him about what a wonderful woman she was. Then as a true humble, Christ-like leader, Peter had them all go out of the room as he prayed over Tabitha for her life to be restored. He did not want to draw attention to himself. After praying, feeling assured in his spirit that God's will for her was for her resurrection, Peter commands her with assurance, "Tabitha, arise!"

As word of this miracle got around, Luke tells us that many "believed on the Lord." We should note that Luke doesn't add anymore words of praise for Peter or his faith. Rather, we see only the report of a faithful servant, doing as the Lord called him to do.

The humility of the Apostles is sorely needed in our church leaders today. All praise and glory for all success should always go to the Lord, Jesus Christ, in whose name and power all good is done and through whom all are saved. Thanks be to God!

B. THE CONVERSION OF SAUL (9:1-30). KEY PERSON # 3

1. Saul's Vision of Jesus (9:1-9)
2. Ananias Ministers to Saul (9:10-19a)
3. Paul Proclaims Jesus as the Christ (9:19b-30)

C. THE STATE OF THE CHURCH (9:31)

D. THE MINISTRY OF PETER (9:32-11:18)

1. Peter in Lydda: Aeneas is healed (9:32-35)
2. Peter in Joppa: Tabitha is raised from the dead (9:36-43)
3. Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)
4. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)
5. Peter Goes with the Men from Cornelius (10:17-22)
6. The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit (10:23-48)
7. Peter Defends Himself Before the Jerusalem Church (11:1-18)

