

## **ACTS 9:32 thru 10:48**

### **"KILL AND EAT"**

We've been in the book of Acts for a couple of months. I've made the point before and it is worth saying again – the main character in this book is God the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts is commonly referred to as the Acts of the Apostles, but really it is the Acts of the Holy Spirit. In Acts we see the Holy Spirit at work through various people. Yes, God can and does use angels. He even uses animals. But for the most part God uses people. In the book of Acts the two main people that God uses – in Chapter 1 to 12 the focus is on Peter and then Chapters 13 to 28 focuses on Saul, later called Paul. As noteworthy as these two men of God are, they would have accomplished little to nothing for the LORD without the Holy Spirit. Just contrast Peter before Pentecost and then after Pentecost. He was a completely different person. And he changes when the Holy Spirit came. Look at the difference in Saul before his Damascus Road Experience and afterward. The Holy Spirit completely transformed him also. What was true of Peter and Paul is true for us today. Like them, we will accomplish little for the Kingdom apart from the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. The Holy Spirit makes ALL the difference. If you do not learn anything else from studying the book of Acts, you need to learn that.

After the conversion of Saul, which we looked at last time, the narrative of the book of Acts shifts back to the Apostle Peter. The remainder of Chapter 9 on through Chapter 12 focuses on Peter's ministry. I want to point something out. This does NOT mean that the other apostles are not around or that they are inactive. They are. They are busy ministering to the church even if Luke does not mention them by name in the book of Acts. These other apostles are out preaching the Gospel and teaching the scattered saints in various house churches. How do we know that? We know this based on something Paul says in Ephesians – "And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). So, that is what the other apostles are

doing. They are part of this building up the body. They are busy doing that even if Luke does not mention them.

Remember, the New Testament has not been written yet. All the Gospel and the things Jesus taught while He was here on earth gets passed on through the apostles' teaching to the rest of the church. Now later, in the 2nd to 4th Centuries, the New Testament gets compiled. But the early church does not have that yet and so they are relying on the teaching of the apostles.

As we pick up the narrative in Acts Chapter 9 and verse 32 Peter has left Jerusalem and has made his way west to the town of Lydda. Today Lydda is known as Lod, which is a suburb of Tel Aviv. In fact, it is where Israel's Ben-Gurion International Airport is located.

READ Acts 9:32-35

This miracle replicates a miracle Jesus had performed in Peter's hometown of Capernaum. You all know that story. It is mentioned in three of the Gospels. Large crowds gathered at this house where Jesus was teaching. There were so many people blocking the entrance that these guys carrying their paralyzed friend could not get into see Jesus. So, they improvised. They went up onto the roof, tore a hole in the roof, and then lowered their friend down to Jesus. Remember that? In Matthew 9:6 Jesus tells the paralyzed man who had been lowered down to him, "Rise, pick up your bed and go home." And what happened? He rose and went home. There was immediate healing! Here in this passage that we just read, Peter's miracle replicates what Jesus did. It involves the same power (the power of Jesus). In fact, Peter attributes the healing of Aeneas to Jesus in v 34. These miracles involved the healing of the exact same disease (paralysis). And in both cases these miracles had the same result (an immediate healing of bones and ligaments). I want you to notice that the healing of these paralyzed men (by Jesus and by Peter) had far-reaching impacts. They affected more than just the men who were healed. When the people saw what Jesus had done in Capernaum, it says that they

glorified God. Here v 35 it says, "And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw [this formerly paralyzed man walking around], and they turned to the Lord." The very presence of these men walking around their respective communities served as living testimonies to the power of Jesus, for years.

Remember what we said the purpose for these miracles was (the ones by Jesus and the apostles) – to validate their message, to show that they were really from God.

Peter's healing of the paralyzed man is enough for all the people in Lydda and Sharon to turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. Do you see that? Contrast their response to the responses by the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They had witnessed Jesus performing miracle after miracle on a daily basis for several years and yet they still refused to believe in Jesus. Here we have just this one miracle and everyone in town believes! It is quite the contrast, isn't it?

Meanwhile just down the road in Joppa there is a disciple named Tabitha who is full of good works and charity...

READ Acts 9:37-39

What is interesting about this is that nobody asks Peter to do anything except to come. That is all. Perhaps they just want Peter to pay his respects to a dear saint of God who had impacted so many lives. Perhaps they anticipate Peter might be able to offer words of comfort for the woman's family. There is no indication given here in the text of what exactly they expect of Peter.

READ Acts 9:40-41

Peter again replicates one of Jesus's miracles – that of raising a dead person back to life. In Matthew Chapter 9 Jesus healed the paralyzed man who had been let down through a hole in the roof. Right after that Jesus raised Jairus's daughter back to life. Paralytic healed, dead person raised to life, two miracles back-to-back. The same thing happens here in Acts Chapter 9. Peter does the same two miracles back-to back. The similarities

to what Jesus did in raising Jairus's daughter and what Peter does here are striking. Both Jesus and Peter began by putting the people outside the room. Jesus said in Aramaic, "Tabitha kumi" which means "little girl, arise." Peter says the same words in Aramaic, "Tabitha kumi." But Peter here is stating the woman's name, literally saying, "Tabitha, arise!" Jesus took Jairus's daughter by the hand and raised her back to life. And here in v 41 it says, "[Peter] gave her his hand and raised her up." Very similar!

What is the result of this miracle?

READ Acts 9:42-43

Many people come to Jesus as a result of this miracle. That would get your attention, wouldn't it? They are coming to Jesus and God is using Peter in a mighty way, isn't He? Peter is performing the same miracles that Jesus performed. It should come as no surprise that Peter could do this because Jesus said this before He left (to His eleven disciples, Judas was not present), "Truly, truly, I say to you [My disciples], whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do..." (John 14:12). That happens when He goes back to the Father and the Holy Spirit comes. And Jesus goes on to talk about that. So, Peter and the other apostles received the same power to do what Jesus had done. That came from the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The book of Acts goes on to record some of the miracles that they did, empowered by the Spirit. Just like the Gospels do not tell us all the miracles Jesus did, neither does the book of Acts tell us all the miracles the apostles did. In fact, like I said, it focuses on Peter. Presumably the other apostles are doing similar things because they are empowered with the same Holy Spirit. But the focus here is on Peter and he is doing some of the things Jesus did, very similar.

Now, while God is certainly using Peter, He is, at the same time, working on Peter. God is chiseling away at some "imperfections" in Peter's life. Yes, the great Apostle Peter had flaws. The main issue in Peter's life and, for that matter, in the life of the early church that God had to deal with was prejudice. Let me remind you that the first Christian converts

came out of a Jewish background. The Jews basically despised the Gentiles, looked down on them, viewed them as unclean, and avoiding socializing with them. This prejudice of the Jews against the Gentiles went back centuries. So, if the church was going to carry out the Great Commission of our LORD, God has to change the attitude that these Jewish Christians have toward Gentiles. We've seen God already working on Saul getting him ready to minister to the Gentiles. Now God begins to work on the Apostle Peter, one of the leaders of the church. Usually, God's work begins with the leaders. This happens next in Acts Chapter 10.

Acts Chapter 10 is a long chapter, 48 verses, but we should be able to cover it today. It is a story, a narrative that flows very quickly and will require very little commentary. You know, sometimes as a Bible teacher I need to just get out of the way and let the word of God speak for itself.

READ Acts 10:1-2

So, Cornelius is a Roman centurion. He is a Gentile.

READ Acts 10:3-8

Cornelius obeys the angel of God. He sends two servants and a soldier. These three men make their way to Peter.

READ Acts 10:9

So, it is about 12 noon and getting close to lunchtime!

READ Acts 10:10-12

So, Peter sees animals – things such as rabbits, snakes, pigs and vultures. These were considered to be unclean by the Israelites based on the dietary laws in Leviticus Chapter 11. A good Jew would never eat these things!

READ Acts 10:13

But Peter, being the good Jew that he is, adamantly refuses...

READ Acts 10:14

Even though Peter recognizes the voice to be the voice of the LORD, he pushes back against what he is being told to do. He says, "By no means, Lord."

READ Acts 10:15-16

The message to Peter is this: God is now declaring "clean" what was formerly considered to be "unclean." What had previously been forbidden to eat is now fair game. This is repeated three times for emphasis. Peter wonders why God is saying this to him. It goes against every tradition and belief he has ever been taught!

READ Acts 10:17-18

The three men who had been dispatched by Cornelius have now arrived at Peter's house and they are asking for him. But Peter is so caught up in this vision from God that he is not aware of this.

READ Acts 10:19-23

The Holy Spirit directs Peter to go to Caesarea, to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile. Cornelius is no ordinary Gentile. He is described here as a righteous and God-fearing man, well-respected by the Jewish community, not your typical Gentile. Since it is growing late in the day, Peter shows hospitality and puts the men up for the night. He asks some of his fellow believers there in Joppa, his brothers in Christ, to go with him. The next morning the group heads out on a mission trip to Caesarea.

READ Acts 10:24-27

This is really quite an interesting scene. Here we observe something highly unusual – a Gentile Roman centurion bows down to a Jewish man. But Peter is no ordinary Jew. He is The Apostle Peter. His reputation precedes him. He is a celebrity. Cornelius is awe-struck by this remarkable man of God whom he had heard so much about. Peter reminds Cornelius that he, Peter, is just a man and, as such, is not to be worshipped. Worship is reserved for God alone, right?.

READ Acts 10:28

Now we see the application of the vision God had shown Peter up on his roof. Peter now understands what had perplexed him previously. Peter gets it. While Peter may have been a bit hard-headed in the past (we know that from reading the Gospels), he clearly understands the lesson God that was teaching him in regard to the Gentiles. So, you have to give Peter a little bit of credit here. Peter's statement here in this verse breaks the tension and sets his Gentile audience at ease.

READ Acts 10:29

Peter is asking for clarification from Cornelius. He thinks he knows why Cornelius sent for him, but he just wants to be sure. And so in v 30-33 (I will not read this because we read the same thing at the beginning of Chapter 10) Cornelius recounts the story of how the angel spoke to him. Cornelius wants to hear the message that the LORD has given Peter. That is what he wants.

With that, Peter begins to preach the Gospel, the good news about Jesus. "So, do you want to hear the message God has from me? Here it is!" And Peter does not hold back.

READ Acts 10:34-42

Peter's message is that Jesus is Lord of all. He lived a perfect life. He performed signs and miracles to show He was from God. He was rejected and crucified on a cross. But He rose again and appeared to His followers. He then gave the Great Commission to preach the Gospel and make disciples of all nations. It is all there. Perhaps they knew some of this already. Peter goes through the whole story about Jesus.

READ Acts 10:43

So, the Gospel message in a nutshell is that "Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through His name." It is a simple message, right? It really is. But it is amazing how so many people stumble over it, isn't it?

Well, before Peter even has an opportunity to give an invitation, the Holy Spirit shows up and interrupts his sermon. The Holy Spirit does that sometimes, doesn't He? He interrupts us.

READ Acts 10:44-46

As soon as those hearing Peter's message believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit falls on them. Basically, what we see happening here in Caesarea to these Gentiles is the same thing that happened in Jerusalem at Pentecost to the Jews. The men who had accompanied Peter from Joppa are amazed at what they are seeing and hearing. It is quite a scene!

Then Peter declared...

READ Acts 10:47-48

Baptism is simply an act of obedience. Peter, their spiritual leader, directs these new Gentile believers to be baptized in the name of Jesus. The ramifications of what happens here are huge! Both Jews and Gentiles are equally accepted into God's family. That was a revolutionary concept. They are accepted the same exact same way – by believing in Jesus! Nothing else. Not even baptism. You do not have to become a Jew (be circumcised) to be a Christian. This is going to become a debate later in Christian circles. There is a sect of Christianity called "the circumcision party" (Acts 11:2) that were insisting people become Jews before they become Christians. "No!" Peter says. All that is required is that you, by faith, believe in Jesus. That's it.

[Class discussion on studying the Bible – there is always something new that you can learn]

A few applications from our passage today in Acts Chapters 9 and 10:

- Those who have been physically healed are walking, living, breathing testimonies to the gracious power of a loving God. Many of us can give our own personal testimony to that!



- Good works do not save you. Case in point: Cornelius. He was a highly respected God-fearing man who gave generously. But that was not enough to secure a relationship with God. He realized he needed the salvation in Jesus Christ that Peter preached.
- Salvation involves two things working together: (1) God's part: the Holy Spirit's prompting as God convicts us of our sin and prepares our heart to receive the Gospel; and (2) Human part: our response in faith, repenting and believing in Jesus Christ upon hearing the Gospel.
- At the moment a person believes and is saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them. God says, "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules" (Ezekiel 36:27). This is what happens to all of us New Testament believers and it began at Pentecost. In the Old Testament this was only a promise. For us it is now a reality.
- God is no respecter of persons. We are all saved the same way, that is, through faith in Jesus Christ and nothing more.
- If we Christians are going to carry out the Great Commission, there is no place for prejudice. "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female, [fill in whatever human identification you can think of]. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 NLT).