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## HOW GOD PREPARED SIMON PETER FOR GREAT WORLDWIDE SERVICE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS  
NUMBER 36  
ACTS 9:32-42

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We have seen how God prepared Saul of Tarsus, the greatest Christian, theologian and church-builder of all time, for his great worldwide work. We have also seen the contribution Mr. Ordinary Christian made to the development of Saul. Now we pass on to an entirely different type of leadership. Simon Peter is a different type of Christian, but a very dynamic and influential one. In the last words Simon Peter ever wrote, he recommended the writings of Paul for those who would truly understand Christian doctrine.

ACTS 9:32 "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda." We have now left Saul of Tarsus in his home city and we will not hear from him for a while. Now we are to discover how Simon Peter developed in the early church. "It came to pass" suggests a change of pace. Simon Peter is one of the great leaders of the church. His job was following up the evangelistic efforts of others. Here we find him indoctrinating those who had already been saved earlier. The word "Saints" here refers to believers. It doesn't mean they were super-pious people, but rather refers to converted people who had a vital relationship with Christ. Here we find Peter following the Evangelist Philip. Simon is doing follow-up work. Now don't expect too much of immature Christians. You see, Philip had been to Gaza, then Lydda, then Caesarea. Now Simon Peter comes along this same route to indoctrinate and instruct these new saints. The name "Saint" is the first designation given to a Christian in the Bible. It simply means being in union with Christ. The ministry of Simon Peter was to get these new converts on the right road.

ACTS 9:33 "And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy." Aeneas is a famous name. Virgil wrote his famous epic poem about a man named Aeneas. In this famous poem Aeneas escaped the fall of Troy and was responsible for the foundation of Rome. Now here in our story of Simon Peter at Lydda, we discover a man by this name who was a paralytic. The first thing Peter did in Lydda was to heal this man. He did not heal him mainly to alleviate suffering, but to call attention to the power and person of Jesus Christ. This is always true of healing in the Bible.

ACTS 9:34 "And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately." Please note that Simon made it quite clear who it was doing the healing--"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole". The Greek says, "Jesus Christ has already healed you". Now arise, and roll up your bed.

Let me emphasize here that the gift of healing was a temporary gift. After the whole Bible was finished these temporary gifts stopped. Gifts of tongues, healings, apostleship and etc. do not exist today. They stopped when the Bible was completed.

1. The gifts and signs which accompanied the apostles in the beginning of the Church Age were all bestowed by the Holy Spirit.  
1 Cor. 12:11 "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will".
2. The distribution of these temporary gifts not only involved the gift of the Holy Spirit but also involved the grace of God. Please note: Peter didn't deserve to have this gift of healing but it was given him by the Holy Spirit on the basis of the grace of God. Peter didn't have these gifts because he was better than others--it was the grace of God.  
Note: This is true today. We have what we are in his service not because of any merit but because of God's grace.

3. No believer ever earns or deserves spiritual gifts.
4. Due to the completion of the Canon of Scripture these temporary gifts passed away. Once the Bible was completed the gifts of healing, tongues, discerning spirits, apostleship were all terminated.
5. The fact that the Holy Spirit has withdrawn these temporary gifts in our day is God's way of focusing our major attention on the Word of God. Everything we need is in the Word of God. In the word of God we have something more significant than gifts or miracles.
6. There are those today who question the good judgment of the Holy Spirit in withdrawing these temporary spiritual gifts. These people want to show that they deserve these gifts by what they do. They say through prayer and fasting and a real pious life they can gather up enough power on their own to do these amazing things. Now let me speak very frankly--The people who don't know the teaching of Scripture at this point and engage in tongues and healing are spiritual morons.
7. In the apostolic age there was emphasis on supernatural things--in order to attract attention to Jesus Christ. When they went to new centers where Christ was not known, they always began with a miracle to get attention to their message. The important thing was the message not the miracle. This is true here of this man Aeneas. He has been an invalid for eight years, but his suffering is nothing compared to the greatness of the message of salvation. Jesus healed for one reason--not to alleviate suffering but to focus attention on who he was and what he said. The healing of Aeneas was for one reason--to focus attention to the message Peter delivered.
8. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit who produces the image of Christ within us and divine good on the outside. Therefore, we don't need these temporary gifts. Please remember God still heals--but no man can do it.
9. The miracle of today is the filling of the Spirit in the ordinary believer and produces the character of Christ within the life. The spectacular is not the spiritual.

GALATIANS 4:19 "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"

GALATIANS 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Now please notice that Simon Peter didn't take credit for healing this man. He said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole" and the form of the Greek shows that it means Christ had already done it. It was an accomplished fact even before Simon Peter spoke the word. On the basis of what Christ had already done, Simon Peter commanded him to get up. The man had been paralyzed for eight years and naturally didn't try to move even though Christ had already healed him. But when Simon commanded him to "Get up" he immediately arose.

The word "Arose" is in the active voice and means that the man did so of his own volition. You see, God never forces a man against his will.

This healing of this man is a picture of salvation. Jesus had already healed him, now for him to enjoy it he was commanded to Get up". The important thing is not what we do, but what he has done for us. Please always remember that belief in Christ is always non-meritorious. This man got up on faith not on his own merit. Aeneas is operating on grace. Jesus Christ did the work and Aeneas responded. It was not anything that Aeneas did but what Jesus Christ did.

ACTS 9:35 "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord." The miracle was very timely. It must have been farmers' day in town for everybody was there. They all saw what had happened. Note the use of the word "Saron" here. In Hebrew it is Sharon, but Greek has no "h" and brought over into Greek Sharon becomes Saron.

Please note the results. Simon Peter preached and many turned to the Lord. The word "turned" is *epi-strepho*-- it means to turn, to convert. Many of their own volition believed.

### Simon Peter In Joppa

In this passage we are going to discover that Simon the Tanner, an ordinary Christian, is going to be to Simon Peter what Ananias, an ordinary Christian, was to Saul of Tarsus.

ACTS 9:36 "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." This woman was named Tabitha. This is an Aramaic name and it means gazelle, or beautiful. In Greek the word is "Dorcas". Remember that most Jews had two names. Dorcas was a wonderful believer and was full of grace in action. She was a great Christian woman.

ACTS 9:37 "And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber." Here the resuscitation of Dorcas is going to do for the unbelievers in Joppa what the healing of Aeneas had done for the unbelievers in Lydda. Her death was to glorify God. They had prepared the body for burial, and as we often say, she was lying in state awaiting the funeral.

ACTS 9:38 "And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them." This simply explains God's way of getting Simon Peter in the place where he can be of the maximum service.

ACTS 9:39 "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." The widows were weeping. This was hysterical weeping as they showed each other the beautiful things Dorcas had made for them with her own hands. They were weeping and emotion had taken over. We know this from the next verse.

ACTS 9:40 "But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up." The words, "But Peter put them forth" doesn't mean that he said in a soft tone, "Now you nice ladies step outside for a few moments". The Greek word is *ek-ballo* --ek means out and ballo is the word from which we get ball and it means to throw. He literally threw them out. He threw them out because they were what we call "operation cry baby". Now there is a legitimate time for tears. It was right for them to cry for Dorcas. But the point still holds that God cannot use a cry baby. There is no place for a whining cry baby in the Kingdom of God. Simon had to get them out of there so he could do God's great work. Simon said, "Tabitha, arise". This is resuscitation, not resurrection. She would die again and will be resurrected at the proper time. Simon Peter once was a crude man, but he had been softened since his conversion, so we read, "He gave her his hand!". This is the gesture of a gentleman. He called the saints and cry babies back in and presented her alive. This is the point--It is alright to cry, but don't become emotionally unstable. Just remember--if you have friends who are emotionally unstable, you don't need enemies. They will love you today and hate you tomorrow.

ACTS 9:42 "And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord." This is the result. The dear woman had been raised up so the Gospel could be preached and so people would believe.

ACTS 9:43 "And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner." Now this is an amazing verse because it says Simon Peter stayed with Simon the Tanner. But remember, no one stayed with a tanner. A tannery stinks. He lived in a house separated from other houses, down by the seaside. A tanner had to touch dead animals when he skinned them. The Jews passed a law that anyone who touched a dead animal was unclean and they ostracized him. A Rabbi had said, "IT is impossible for us to live without tanners, but woe unto the man who is a tanner". A Jewess could get a divorce if her husband became a tanner. So it is quite easy to see that Jewish society had nothing for tanners. But Simon Peter had made great progress in his Christian life and is willing to stay in the house of a tanner.

Before we close this study, let us get some points on the difference in the training of Simon Peter and the training of Saul of Tarsus.

1. Simon Peter had to be trained by easy transitional steps. Simon Peter is being prepared to work with a Gentile army officer in Caesarea, and he must be prepared in easy transitional steps. Simon Peter failed many times, but he stayed with Bible doctrine and finally he arrived as a great servant of Christ. He was possibly the hardest to influence of all the disciples. But he never gave up. He was hardheaded and stubborn, but the Lord was patient with him. Remember, God's grace is greater than anyone's hardheadedness or stupidity.
2. The ministry at Lydda prepared Simon Peter for the greater ministry at Joppa. And the ministry at Joppa prepared Simon for the even greater ministry at Caesarea. You see, God was leading him step by step.
3. Peter learned slowly and had to take a little at a time so he could digest it
4. Paul learned rapidly. After his three years in the Arabian desert, Paul was spiritually mature. Paul learned in about three years, but Simon Peter took about twenty-five years to mature.
5. With Simon Peter it took many years and hard experiences to learn doctrine. With Paul it took less time and more concentrated study. There are two ways you can learn--through many hard experiences or through concentrated study. Peter followed the former, and Paul the latter.
6. Peter learned by experience, and Paul learned by academic study. Peter became a great leader and was next to Paul in greatness. Paul arrived sooner and thereby, had a greater ministry
7. Both Peter and Paul arrived at spiritual maturity, but each arrived in a different way. Peter came by the road of trial and error and hardships over a long period, and Paul came by concentrated study and academic faithfulness. By this I do not mean to say that Paul did not have hardships also.