

Jesus Turns Things Around

(Acts 9:31-43)

Introduction

1. Theme: Jesus accelerates us by the Holy Spirit to grow deeper through His family, wider in our impact for the gospel.
2. Big Idea: Jesus has power to turn people's lives around, and does so through His followers.

Jesus turns around the lives of the helpless [Acts 9:31-35]

1. [31] The Church experiences peace and growth following persecution
 - a. Not 3 churches; a single, united church (*ekklesia*; singular) throughout 3 regions: Judea, Galilee, Samaria.
 - i. Continuing to fulfill Jesus' command/prophecy to witness from Jerusalem to Judea/Samaria (cf. 1:8).
 - ii. Now will need to move out to the ends of the earth to complete His commission.
 - b. Despite the outbreak of persecution, their greatest enemy (Saul) has now become an ally & a Christian.
 - c. They experience peace, comfort and multiplying growth through the Holy Spirit.
2. [32-33] Jesus sends Peter to find Aeneas
 - a. [32] As the gospel sweeps through the region, Peter visits all the new Christians.
 - i. Saints: Literally "holy ones"; made holy by Jesus' work on the cross; any & all Christians.
 - ii. Lydda: Trade-route town, 23-25 mi northwest of Jerusalem, Sharon coastal region, mostly Jewish.
 - b. [33] Introduced to Aeneas
 - i. Unclear if he's a Christian or not; irrelevant as Jesus' work here can apply to either.
 - ii. What is clear: Whether by accident or disease, he's paralyzed & been bedridden for 8 years.
 - iii. Imagine how helpless, hopeless & useless he feels, trapped or resignation.
 - c. We may also feel crippled or paralyzed, not just physically, but emotionally or spiritually.
 - i. We may feel trapped/resignation in our work situation, depression/anxiety, addictions, loneliness, broken marriages/homes.
 - d. Peter found Aeneas; Jesus sought Aeneas & led Peter to him.
 - i. God's grace: Aeneas didn't seek, merit, or earn God's approval.
 - ii. Jesus sought him out because He is the God who gives us what we need, not what we "deserve."
3. [34] Jesus miraculously heals Aeneas through Peter
 - a. [34a] "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you."
 - i. Peter performs the same miracle as his master Jesus did with a paralytic (cf. Luke 5:24-25).
 - ii. Peter identifies Jesus as the source of the healing.
 1. He calls the man to trust in Jesus, His power/authority as Lord, God, Savior, King to heal.
 - iii. "Make your bed": To roll up the mat he laid on that symbolizes his paralysis (cf. Luke 5:24), because he doesn't need it anymore; he's been set free by Jesus.
 - b. [34b] How will Aeneas respond?
 - i. Not with skepticism, bitterness, doubt or rejection.
 - ii. "Immediately, he rose"
 1. Jesus' authority & the power/presence of the Holy Spirit effect immediate, total healing.
 2. By faith, Aeneas says yes to Jesus, responding to grace, trusting His power to heal/save him.
 - c. Jesus turns around the lives of those who feel helpless.
 - i. Not only during the days of the Church of Acts; He's still doing so today.
4. Application: Where do you feel helpless or hopeless today?
 - a. Fatalism: False belief that nothing will change; it will probably get worse.
 - i. It is functional atheism: Jesus won't break into our world/lives, & is unable to turn things around.
 - ii. Jesus is not dead, distant, silent, weak, uninterested in our world, progress of His mission, your life.

- b. Application: How do you need to respond to Jesus' call & take a step of faith to rise?
 - i. What mat (which you depended on while paralyzed) do you need to roll up & put away?

Jesus also cares about the helpful [Acts 9:36-41]

1. [36-38] Tabitha's ministry & death
 - a. [36] Introduced to Tabitha
 - i. Joppa: Port town, 11 mi northwest of Lydda, coastal region of Sharon.
 - ii. Tabitha (Aramaic) or Dorcas (Greek): "Gazelle"; appropriate because of her beautiful grace.
 - iii. She's well-known for her good deeds & charitable work with the local poor.
 1. Good deeds are not required for salvation.
 2. However, the mark of a genuine believer is spiritual fruit & blessing others in the name of Jesus, particularly the needy.
 - b. [37] Tabitha catches a fatal disease & dies.
 - i. They prepare her body for funeral & burial.
 - c. [38] Some believers hear that Peter is in the area & the Holy Spirit working powerfully through him.
 - i. They send a couple men to request his presence & help.
2. [39-41] Jesus miraculously heals Tabitha through Peter.
 - a. [39] Led by God's Spirit, Peter agrees & goes with the men directly to Tabitha's wake.
 - i. All the widows she has ministered to show Peter the tangible blessings of Tabitha's ministry to them.
 - ii. Observation: You may not always see it, but God moves people to appreciate your ministry to them.
 - b. [40a] Peter moves all the mourners out of the room for privacy & to pray.
 - i. He's not a doctor, so he does not examine the body or try to diagnose the problem.
 - ii. Instead, he turns to Jesus, kneeling in submission to Jesus as God, through prayer.
 - iii. Prayer: An expression of our belief that Jesus is able to turn things around.
 - iv. Application: Do you turn to Jesus in prayer as your first option or last resort?
 - c. [40b] Peter performs the same miracle as his master Jesus did to raise Jairus' daughter (cf. Luke 8:52-55).
 - i. Turning to her body, he commands "Tabitha, rise" (cf. Luke 8:54b, Mark 5:41 "Talitha, rise").
 - ii. She opens her eyes & sits up immediately (cf. Luke 8:55).
 - d. [41] Peter takes the hand of the ceremonially unclean dead woman (cf. Luke 8:54a).
 - i. Jesus makes the unclean clean, the dead alive.
 - ii. Peter calls all the believers & widows back into the room, and presents her alive.
3. Many of you are like Tabitha: You love Jesus, faithfully serve Him, tell others about Him
 - a. You demonstrate His mercy & compassion through humbly serving/sacrificing for others as they have need.
 - b. There comes times when you try to be faithful, but circumstances seem to cut off your opportunity to minister.
 - i. Examples: Ministry at church or work doesn't go well, people aren't open/appreciative to your ministry, you get burnt out, your time/opportunity decrease (because you lose a job or gain a job), you don't see much spiritual growth.
 - c. You may wonder if you're effective, if it's worth it, if Jesus cares/notices; you may have given up.
4. Application: Take heart. Jesus not only cares for the helpless, He also cares about the helpful, those who trust Him, follow Him, serve Him, & bless others.
 - a. Was Tabitha in perfect joy in Heaven with Jesus? Yes.
 - i. Why did Jesus send her back? So many blessed by & weep over her; her work was not done.
 - ii. Paul knew it was by far better to be with Jesus, yet would stay to minister to people (cf. Phil 1:21-26).
 - b. Jesus assigned Tabitha to the needy in Joppa; even the ultimate roadblock (death) would not stop His work.
 - i. Jesus cares/notices: When you love/serve Jesus by loving/serving others, you are not just a cog in the ministry machine, & your ministry is not in vain.
 - ii. Whatever Jesus calls you to do, He will help you complete the work.
 - c. Tabitha's resurrection is a reminder Jesus is God & has power.
 - i. There will come a day when Jesus raises all who call on Him as Lord, Savior & God from the dead.
 - d. We all sin [Rom 3:23], & all sinners die [Rom 6:23]; we were all crippled & helpless like Aeneas, all will die like Tabitha, but Jesus demonstrates He has authority, power & love for us to heal us & save us.

Jesus turns lives around through us [Acts 9:42-43]

1. [42] The result
 - a. Word about the miracle spreads; many come to believe in Jesus, as they did when Aeneas healed (cf. 9:35).

- b. The point of the miracles: Not only to alleviate our current suffering, but also others' eternal suffering.
 - i. The miracles are not the gospel; they demonstrate the reality of the gospel, the truth & power of Jesus as Savior & God.
 - ii. They impact those who are far from Jesus to have their lives turned around for eternity.
- c. Peter performs miracles identical to Jesus because the disciples are sent out to preach good news & heal in His name/authority (cf. Luke 9:1,6; 10:9), & they do so (cf. Acts 3:6; 4:10).
 - i. Point: When Jesus ascended to Heaven, the work begun in His earthly ministry didn't end.
 - 1. He continues His work by commissioning & empowering his followers to do the same.
 - ii. In the same way, we are called to bless/serve others & demonstrate the love, care & power of the gospel in tangible ways.
 - iii. When we boldly engage in the miraculous for Jesus & by Jesus, it is a testimony to all who see & hear that Jesus is alive, cares, has power.
 - iv. Jesus turns lives around through us!
- d. Application: How will you be a Peter to someone this week?
 - i. You can be God's agent of miraculous blessing to others.
 - ii. There is a multiplying effect upon all who see & hear what Jesus does through you, so they too will come to know Jesus.
 - iii. Look for opportunities to be the Church, God's chosen vehicle to show people that Jesus is the hope of the world.

Conclusion

- 1. Jesus is the God who's in the business of turning lives around.
 - a. He turns enemies into friends, brokenness into healing/wholeness, death into life.
 - b. He resurrects dead people, dead marriages, dead families, dead jobs, dead ministries & churches.
 - c. When His children feel helpless, hopeless & useless, He transforms us to be helpful, hopeful & useful.
- 2. Jesus is pre-training Peter; this is just the warm-up event for even greater things ahead (cf. Acts 10).
 - a. Those who are faithful with the little things now, Jesus will entrust with even greater ministry & experiences of Him (cf. Matt 25:21; John 14:12).
 - b. Turn to Jesus; allow Him to turn you around today.