

07. Acts 9:32 - 10:48





We have just witnessed the risen Christ effecting a radical change in the life of Saul, the persecutor. We are about to witness a radical change taking place in the life of Peter, the leader of the apostles. The first step in this conversion is when Peter begins to move in ways in which his mission is blessed, ways that open the way for the mission to the Gentiles.

The believers living in Lydda are called ‘**saints**’ – a term already used by Ananias when referring to the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 9:13). They are saints (‘holy’) because the ‘Holy One’ (2:27) dwells among them, and because it is his Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31) that binds them together, as they share in the life enjoyed by the glorious risen Lord.

## Acts 9:33-35

There he found a man named **Aeneas**, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralysed. Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; stand up and make your bed!' And immediately he got up (compare Luke 5:24-25). And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

In his gospel Luke records a scene in which Jesus encounters a paralysed man, and says to him: 'I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home.' Luke continues: 'Immediately he stood up' (Luke 5:24-25). As Peter explicitly states, and as the residents of Lydda and Sharon recognise, Jesus is carrying on his healing ministry through Peter. In the Gospel and here in Acts the words 'rise up' (ἐγείρω, Luke 5:24) and 'stand up' (ἀνίστημι, 9:34; see 9:40) are used in relation to the resurrection. The healing is a sign of the power of the risen Jesus to give eternal life, the life that death cannot take away because it is a sharing in the very life of God.



## Acts 9:40-43

Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and **prayed**. He turned to the body and said, '**Tabitha**, stand up (ἀνίστημι).' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

( compare the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:13-15)

& Jairus's **Tallitha** (Luke 8:54-55)

Behind these scenes as described by Luke stand the biblical legends about the great prophets Elijah and Elisha (see 1 Kings 17:17-24 and 2 Kings 4:18-37).

Death was unable to conquer Jesus. Now, raised by his Father to life-beyond-death, he who is 'the **initiator of life**' (2:28) continues his life-giving ministry through Peter.

We are too far away from any of these events to be able to make an accurate statement of the exact medical condition of those involved. We do know how things appeared at the time, and that these events have been included to demonstrate that not even death can 'separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:38-39). As the song of Zechariah states: **'By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death'** (Luke 1:78-79).





## Acts 10:5-8

Now send men to **Joppa** for a certain Simon who is called **Peter**; he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.' When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

## Acts 10:9-16

About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large **sheet** coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Then he heard a voice saying, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is **profane** or **unclean**.' The voice said to him again, a second time, 'What God has made clean (see Luke 10:8), you must not call profane.'

This happened **three times**, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

## Acts 10:17-23

Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, **the Spirit** said to him, 'Look, three men are searching for you. Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.' So Peter went down to the men and said, 'I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?' They answered, 'Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.' So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging. The next day he went with them, and some of the **believers from Joppa accompanied him.**

## Acts 10:24-29

The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshipped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, 'Stand up; I am only a man.' And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; and he said to them, 'You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?'

## Acts 10:30-33

Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this very hour, at three o’clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes (called ‘an Angel of God’ in 10:3; compare Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10) stood before me. He said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.’

In his commentary Bede reminds us that ‘three o’clock’ (that is, ‘the ninth hour’), the hour when Cornelius was praying was ‘the time at which the Lord himself was praying, with his hands stretched out upon the cross for the salvation of the whole world’.

## Acts 10:34-36

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus the Messiah – he is Lord of all.

Cornelius would know of God's promise of peace:

'The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my covenant love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you' (Isaiah 54:10).

The notion ‘**peace**’ is a rich one, denoting prosperity (see Isaiah 48:18) and harmony in every aspect of life:

‘I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase’ (Ezekiel 34:25-27).

It would be the task of God’s Messiah to achieve this peace, and Peter declares to Cornelius that Jesus is the Messiah:

‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’ (Isaiah 52:7).

## Acts 10:37-38

That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power;

1) how he went about doing good

2) and healing all who were oppressed by the devil,

3) for God was with him.



1) **‘He went about doing good’**. One thinks of the gentle scene with the widow of Nain (see Luke 7:11-17), and the way in which he related so sensitively with the sinful woman at the banquet (see Luke 7:36-50). One thinks of the blind man of Jericho (see Luke 18:35-43), and the man who was crucified with Jesus (see Luke 23:39-43). One thinks of Jesus’ teaching about forgiveness (see Luke 17:4), and about love that remains constant in a violent environment (see Luke 6:27-36).

One thinks of Jesus’ stories about the caring Samaritan (see Luke 10:29-37), the lost sheep (see Luke 15:4-7), and the boy that was welcomed home (see Luke 15:11-24).

In a way that is special even among the Gospels, Luke portrays Jesus as one whose heart goes out to the poor, the downcast, the rejected. He took their side and refused to stop caring even when his commitment to them cost him his life. This was true of Jesus' ministry up to his death. In Acts, Luke shows us Jesus continuing his 'doing good' through his disciples.

2) 'Healing all who were oppressed by the devil'. Luke portrays Jesus not only as a life-giver, the 'Initiator of life' (3:15), but also, as we have seen, as 'Saviour' (see commentary on 4:12) and liberator. Those who experienced the gift of life from Jesus experienced it as a release. Prior to their encounter with Jesus, and in different ways, they were distracted, caught up, trapped and imprisoned in physical, psychic and spiritual ways which were anything but life-giving and from which they were unable to break free. A new way of looking at life was needed: a new mind, a new heart, a new spirit.

It was Jesus who taught them to repent and whose love made this repentance possible. It was Jesus who brought them 'the message of salvation' (Acts 13:26). It was his love that enabled them to hear it and to embrace the freedom which he offered (see Luke 4:35,41; 6:18; 8:2,26-39; 9:37-43; 11:1). This ministry of conquering evil continues with even greater power, through the apostles over whom he has poured his Spirit (see Luke 5:1-11; 8:9-2; 13:4-12; 16:16-18; 19:11-20; 28:1-6).

3) **'God was with him'**. This is the heart of it all. It was the love of the Father and the gift of the Holy Spirit that brought about Jesus' conception. The source of Jesus' healing love and of his power over evil was his communion with his Father. We see this when Jesus is found by his parents in the temple, aged twelve: **'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house'**(Luke 2:49). It was an overwhelming experience of love that set him on the path of ministry; **'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'** (Luke 3:22). It was this love that enabled him to withstand the temptations that he faced in the wilderness (see Luke 4:1-13). During his ministry, as Luke reminds us, Jesus is constantly in prayer (see, for example, Luke 5:16; 6:12):

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Luke 10:21-22).

Throughout Acts, Luke continually relates Jesus to God, for it is God who is being revealed as we watch and listen to what Jesus is saying and doing through his witnesses. We are reminded that it is God who raised up Jesus as our Saviour (see Acts 13:23; 3:22). It is God who consecrated him with his Holy Spirit (see Acts 4:27; 10:38). It is God who announced peace through him (see Acts 10:36) and worked wonders through him (see Acts 2:22). It is God's providence that encompassed even Jesus' death as an instrument of salvation (see Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28).

It is God who raised Jesus from the dead (see Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33; 17:31). It is God who caused Jesus to appear to his disciples (see Acts 10:40), who raised him to glory (see 2:33; 5:31), who gave him the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:33; 5:32) and who glorifies Jesus in his disciples (see Acts 3:13; 4:30). It is God who established Jesus as judge (see Acts 10:42; 17:31) and who will send him again at the parousia (see Acts 3:20). It is God who guides the whole universe through him (see Acts 17:31).



## Acts 10:39-42

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed (ὥριζω) by God as judge of the living and the dead.

Peter speaks of Jesus' death. He then tells the Gentile group that God raised Jesus to life. Those chosen by God can witness to this, for they 'ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead' (Acts 1:4; Luke 24:30,42). The risen Lord is more powerful than Caesar. Caesar has power of judgment over the living. The risen Jesus is 'the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead'.

Paul writes: 'To this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living' (Romans 14:9). 'Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead' (2 Timothy 4:1).

## Acts 10:43

All the prophets testify about him that **everyone** who believes in him receives **forgiveness of sins** through his name.'

We recall Peter's words to the Jewish crowd on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

And Peter's words to the Sanhedrin: 'God exalted Jesus at his right hand as Leader and Saviour that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins' (Acts 5:31).

Peter has spoken of God as not showing partiality. God accepts anyone who recognises dependence upon God, is open to grace, and acts in accordance with God's will (see 10:34-35). Peter now declares that '**everyone who believes in Jesus**' (see 3:16) receives this forgiveness.

## Acts 10:44-46

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God.



## Acts 10:47-48

Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptising these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ [Pentecost 2:4; see 4:3; 8:17] So he ordered them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

We can choose to baptise.

We can only wait for the surprise gift of Jesus’ Spirit!