

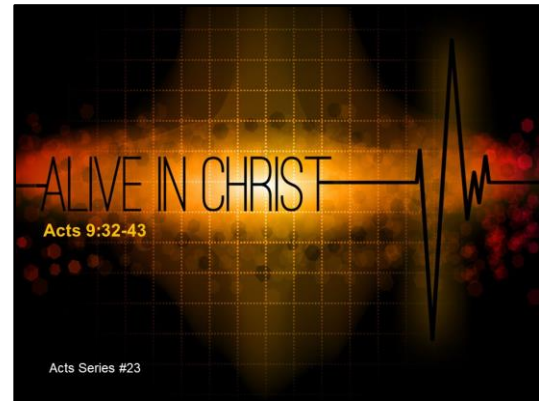
# ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

## Message #23

### “ALIVE IN CHRIST”

Acts 9:32-43



In the recent episodes of our series in Acts we have seen one of the greatest evidences of the power of God to transform lives through the conversion of Saul. This “Damascus Road experience” saw the fiercest opponent of Jesus Christ turned around to, ultimately, become the most vocal and active of the followers and advocates for the Gospel of Jesus.

However, as Luke points out at the end of the previous passage (9:19-31), even though Saul had finally been accepted by the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, his “bold” debating FOR the faith was still causing some problems and distractions for the church. So, Saul was “sent” back to Tarsus and, Luke says, the “church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened” (Acts 9:31). This was already a partial fulfilment of Acts 1:8.

Now the focus is back on the apostle Peter. Previously the spokesman for the early church but, now, his focus seems to be like an itinerant missionary pastor, going about encouraging the churches throughout the region beyond Jerusalem.

As Luke records two of the incredible and significant stories from Peter’s itinerant ministry, he reveals several principles that are still important for us in our own personal ministry and witnessing for Jesus.

#### 1. PETER WAS INVOLVED (9:32-33)

Saul was back in Tarsus. Peter resumes the role as lead human character in the unfolding story of the early church. “As Peter travelled about the country...” indicates an itinerancy about Peter’s ministry. He was out and about with people....and available and ready for God’s leading. Being wholeheartedly active in ministry for Jesus places a person ready for divinely appointed and strategic opportunities.

Peter found himself in Lydda (70kms northwest of Jerusalem and 16kms southeast of Joppa). Here he found a “certain man” (probably meaning he was not one of the followers of Jesus) who had been paralysed and bed-ridden for 8 years. The rest of his life was doomed to be the same. But God led Peter to this man for a reason!  
**Are you a task-oriented person, or a people-oriented person? How does that affect you in witnessing?**

#### 2. PETER WAS CHRIST-EXALTING (9:34-35)

In an age of celebrity and social media influence (even in the church!) we must make sure that our focus is on exalting Jesus, not promoting ourselves, or our church brand. Peter was not interested in personal fame. He said to Aeneas “JESUS CHRIST HEALS YOU!” (9:34).

Peter was aware that it was in the power of Christ alone that this healing came, not from his own abilities. Peter instructed Aeneas to take up his bed because he wouldn’t need it anymore. It was not just Aeneas whose life was transformed. Acts 9:35 says ALL who lived in Lydda and Sharon were saved!



#### INTERESTING LYDDA FACT....

**Saint George** was born in Lydda around 280AD. He became a commander in the Roman army. He was a follower of Jesus. He stood up to Emperor Diocletian in 303AD over the persecution of Christians and was tortured and beheaded on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 303AD.

**Why do you think it is so important to always give the glory to God/Jesus and not take it for yourself?**

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### **3. PETER WAS AVAILABLE (9:36-39)**

In nearby Joppa, a godly woman, Tabitha (aka Dorcas), became ill and died. She was prepared for burial but placed in an upper room. The believers heard Peter was nearby and sent for him. Because Peter's life was under God's leading, he went to Joppa. Peter was available for divine appointments.

Peter found the body of Tabitha in the room surrounded by the widows who had been blessed by her love and compassion. What was God going to do through Peter????

Peter's greatest ability was his availability!

God can do great and powerful things through the availability of even just one person. Are you available?

**How available are you for God to use? How do you feel about "interruptions" to your plans?**

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### **4. PETER WAS PRAYERFUL (9:40)**

Peter sent the others out of the room...he wanted time alone with God. He didn't presume upon the power and will of God. He wanted to know the heart and will of God for this occasion.

He was not wanting to act out of his own decision and desire...but God's.

Prayer is essential for all successful ministry. Prayer acknowledges dependence upon God, not self.

**Can you think of any time when you have tried to do ministry in your own strength? How did that go?**

**What are the dangers of trying to do things in our own strength, ability and desires?**

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### **5. PETER WAS FRUITFUL (9:41-42)**

After praying, Peter turned to Tabitha and told her to get up. And she did!

The others were called back into the room and celebrated this resurrection with her.

But, again, it was not just Tabitha being given "new life" here. Verse 42 says that news of the miracle spread throughout Joppa and "many people believed in the Lord". This was not just about a physical healing...it was also about a spiritual healing. Many people were made alive in Christ!

**Do we always get to see the "fruit" from our service for the Lord? What are your thoughts about this?**

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### **6. PETER WAS FREE FROM PREJUDICE (9:43)**

This last verse serves as a footnote to this passage and a bridge to the next...and is very, very significant!

We are told that Peter stayed in Joppa for some time after this at the home of Simon the tanner.

This was important because, according to the Jewish purity laws (from the Old Testament covenants) tanning was considered unclean because it dealt with handling the skins of dead animals. Therefore, in 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish society, a tanner like Simon was considered unclean...shunned from the local synagogue and someone not to associate with. Yet here is Peter the apostle staying in the house of a despised tanner! This is not to be taken lightly.

In this simple verse we see that God is using this action to demonstrate that the Christian church (and, therefore, God's kingdom) was not prejudiced against any one, by race, occupation, social standing etc.

Indeed, someone like Simon the tanner was also made alive in Christ!

There is no place in any Christian ministry for prejudice of any type. (See what Paul says in **1 Cor. 9:19-22**).

God was working powerfully through Peter...but this shows He was also working powerfully IN Peter, too.

And this would have ramifications for the whole church and its ministry and mission.

**When have you felt separated from people because of cultural, racial, sexual, social, political differences?**

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**Who in your world of relationships is most unlike you? How is your communication with that person affected by these differences?**

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Pray God would help you to be involved, Christ-exalting, available, prayerful, fruitful and free from prejudice.