The passage before us today provides descriptions of two miracles – one is healed from paralysis and another is restored to life. As we have navigated our way through the book of Acts, we have noted several “miracles, signs and wonders.” So before we examine the passage before us today, let’s take a brief look at the issue of miracles. Are miracles for the church today? Has God gifted certain individuals to perform healings today?

From the very first day that the church was born, the Spirit of God gave gifts to the members of the church by which they could build the body up - certain spiritual gifts by which they could minister to each other and build the body. In addition to the spiritual gifts, God gave certain sign gifts - gifts which were not meant for the building of the body, but which were meant to be a sign.

One of those sign gifts was the gift of healing which God granted to the apostles, even as Jesus Christ had exercised that the ability to give physical recovery to the sick, in order to verify that they were divine messengers. When the disciples would go somewhere to preach, miracles would often accompany their preaching, which evidenced to the people gathered around that God was acting. And if God was acting, then likely God was speaking. Thus their message, the message of the gospel, was deemed credible.

I. A Distorted Teaching

The healings described in Acts have created movements and ministries throughout the last century that promise physical healing as part of God's will for the faithful. And, there are people who claim to have the God-given gift of healing.

The healing movement is based upon a misinterpretation of Isaiah 53, the statement "By his stripes we are healed." And healers have historically used that to mean that in the atonement there is physical healing for everybody.
Let me remind you of something we went over in our first introductory

lesson on Acts. One of the facts we noted was that Acts is a **transitional book**; a book that transitions us from the gospels to the epistles.

We noted that it is **not** a standard for normal Christian living.

We began by noting some popular misconceptions about the book of Acts. If you read the book of Acts and stop without ever studying the Epistles, which were written by the apostles to the early church, you will be deeply confused as to the nature and pursuit of the Christian life.

If, for example, the evidence of faith and God's power is manifested through the binding of demons, healing the lame, raising the dead and possessing the power to heal any and all diseases; and if they are descriptive of normal Christian living, to be happening in the church today, then for me to teach otherwise means that we as a church are missing the blessing of God today.

There is no shortage of preachers who teach that the events described in the book of Acts should translate into the normal Christian's experience. Yet, none of these men or movements apply all of the passages literally. If they did, we would today:

- select spiritual leaders by the casting of lots, as they did in Acts;
- expect all liars who deceive the body with their financial contribution to fall over dead, as occurred with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts;
- expect angels to release all religious prisoners from jail, as recorded in Acts 5;
- expect, if I ever teach for such a long time that someone dies during the lesson, for me to resurrect them from the dead, as Paul did in Acts 20

If you do not see Acts as a bridge from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, or if you see Acts as something the church should be applying in every instance today, then you are in for great confusion. If you, as well, do not see the nature of the apostolic gifts as temporary, you will be frustrated as you follow men who claim to have those gifts today.
So let me just give you some facts to begin with that I trust will be of help to you in understanding the passage before us today.

- **Miraculous healings in Acts were not primarily to heal the afflicted, but to authenticate the apostle and his message.**

How were hearers to know that the message the apostles were delivering were from God – that they were authentic?

See Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:3,4; Romans 15:18,19; 2 Corinthians 12:12

The apostles healed people in order to authenticate the fact that they were of God; their message was from Him. If the apostles healed people just because they were sick, they should have healed every sick person in Judea, but they did not!

Why not? Because there was a divine purpose behind each display of power - it proved, authenticated, their apostolic commission from God.

- **After the church had the Scriptures, the litmus test for authenticity was adherence to biblical doctrine.**


I think this is interesting because, in the culture we live in today, if someone says they have heard some belief and the fact that they received it from some paranormal or mystical source, whether it is a vision, or a trip to heaven and back, or a channeled message, or whatever, the message that is taught and the fact that it came from some paranormal source, then somehow it should be believed; it should be considered authentic.

- **The miraculous gift of healing was demonstrated through the apostles only.**

Note Galatians 1:6-9 again. When the apostles passed from the scene so did the gift of healing along with miracles. So that whatever exists today in the area of healing, it would not be the apostolic gift of healing because there are no apostles.
As the church described in Acts developed, the miracle ministry of the apostles diminished.

A point only needs to be proven so often. Eventually the need for the apostles to prove that their mission was indeed from God became less and less important.

See 2 Timothy 4:20; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 5:23.

As Paul established and ministered to the churches, at no point do you find him going back to the established churches and healing the sick people there. It is never designated as that which is to be constantly administered within the framework of the body.

So we do not then assume that the biblical gift of healing was to be activated in the behalf of the church. People today who claim to have the gift of healing claim that all Christians have the privilege of receiving the benefit of that gift. And if you study Scripture you will find that was never given in the behalf of the Christians. It was given in the behalf of the unbelievers.

Let me just briefly note two other important facts in this regard.

The apostolic healer was 100% successful.

These apostles were like the prophets of old who claimed to be God's messengers by prophesying something that would come about. The Israelites tested a man who said he was a prophet. If the prophesy did not come to pass, they took him outside the city and stoned him to death as a false teacher.

A divine healer healed external, observable physical maladies

Why was this true? Because it was a sign to the people that those healing were the messengers from God.

Why is it important to understand the temporary gift that these apostles had? Because it addresses the nature and purpose of the church today. Our mission today is of a spiritual nature, not a physical
one. Our mission is revolves around the miracle of _changed lives_ - the miracle of _redemption_.

Having said all of this, let me add, does this mean that God does not perform miracles of healing today? Does this mean that we cannot pray for healing for those in our body? ____NO____

God’s healing ____does__ exist today. While God's plan today includes miracle healings, ____miracle healers____ are no longer part of His plan.

God may choose to heal and He may choose not to. He ultimately works according to His plan for our lives.

Now with that extensive background we come to the passage.

**II. A Disabled Man – Aeneas (vv. 32-35)**

Luke doesn't tell us much about Peter's motivation in going "here and there," finally arriving at a place called Lydda (Acts 9:32).

In Lydda, Peter encounters a man who had been paralyzed for eight years. Evidently there had been an accident, because this man was not paralyzed from birth. We do not know exactly what happened, but he had been paralyzed long enough for his entire village to know that he was beyond help medically - he was a lost cause.

Look at verse 34. Who healed him? ______Jesus____

Can you imagine, "immediately he got up"?! He had not walked in eight years, but now circulation is restored immediately, coordination is returned immediately, atrophied muscles are restored immediately, muscle memory is erased and re-written immediately. This is an incredible miracle!

Continue to verse 35: And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him,. . .
and they turned to ___the Lord____

III. A Deceased Woman – Dorcas (vv. 36-43)

"Tabitha" is an Aramaic name, and because his readers would be unfamiliar with it, Luke provides the Greek equivalent, "Dorcas." Both names mean "gazelle." Tabitha's death occurred when Peter was still in Lydda, some ten miles away (a two-hour brisk walk).

Believers from Joppa had heard that Peter was in Lydda, and two men were sent to urge him to come to Joppa "without delay."

One wonders what exactly they were expecting Peter to do. Tabitha was already dead, and they had laid her out in the upper room of her home and begun preparations for burial.

As he had seen the Lord do when He raised Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:40), Peter sent them all out of the room where Dorcas's body lay. He would not put on a display before the crowd that would draw all attention to him, and wanted a quiet place to pray.

Essential to all successful ministry, prayer acknowledges dependence on God. Prayer realizes that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to [His] power that works within us" (Eph. 3:20). Peter had learned the importance of prayer from His Lord, having seen and heard Him many times in communion with His Father (cf. Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:12-13).

Having finished praying, Peter turned to Dorcas's body and said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. For those who loved her the joy must have been inexpressible. That God did not raise her solely for their benefit, however, will soon become evident.

And it became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord (9:42).
God's greater purpose for raising Dorcas now became clear as word of her return to life became known all over Joppa. God used the raising of Dorcas as the spark for salvation throughout the city.

IV. Lessons

We have time to only mention two of many lessons.

- Both of these miracles were performed by __the power of Christ__

Again, this fundamental truth takes us back to the title of this book – The Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ through his people by the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the Father’s purposes. It wasn’t ___Peter__; it was ___Christ___ continuing His ministry from heaven through Peter.

- With God, there are no “___lost causes___”

You notice I have entitled this lesson “The God of Lost Causes.” At some point, we would have considered every key person mentioned in this passage as a “lost cause.” Among Peter’s many failings, just a few weeks ago, he had denied Christ three times and then faded away into obscurity temporarily. Aeneas had been paralyzed for eight years. And Dorcas was dead!

Isn't it wonderful that God delights to work in and through people that would be considered lost causes? Is He still working miraculously today? The answer to that question is a resounding __YES__

With God there are no lost causes. We might have thought that, after the incident at Caiaphas’ house, God would have been finished with Peter. In fact, notice in the very next chapter Peter is going to be sent to Cornelius, the Gentile, and by this means God is going to use him to open the door of the gospel to those who were not Jews.

Notice verse 43. The fact that Luke mentions where Peter resided the rest of his time at Joppa, with Simon the tanner, holds significance for what
happens next in the drama of the outworking of the early church and its inclusion among Jews and Gentiles, which is the focus of our next lesson.

*Lesson Twenty-seven: The Conversion of Peter, Part I - Acts 10:1-23*