

The Power of God's Work Through His Church

In Acts 9, we see the continuation of God's work through the early church. After Paul's radical conversion, we now turn to Peter's ministry as he travels throughout the land visiting believers.

The Purpose of Apostolic Ministry

The apostolic work has always been an integral part of the church. God never intended for churches to be isolated entities or business-like organizations with contracts and rigid structures. Instead, the church was meant to be organic in the life of Christ.

While we may have different expressions of church in different locations, there should be the same heartbeat of Christ at the center. This is where apostolic ministry comes in - not to create cookie-cutter churches, but to ensure we stay on track with God's purposes.

What are the five-fold ministry gifts?

Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us: "These are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."

These gifts aren't titles given because we needed organizational structure. They are gifts from Jesus to His church for a specific purpose - to equip believers to do God's work.

Why do we need these ministry gifts today?

The text continues in Ephesians 4:13-14: "This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."

This work continues until we reach full maturity and unity. Since we haven't reached that point yet, these gifts remain essential for the church today. They help us avoid being "tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching" or "influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth."

God's Power to Heal and Transform

In Acts 9:33-35, we see Peter encountering a man named Aeneas who had been bedridden for eight years. Peter simply says, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed." Immediately, Aeneas got up.

How does God change our identity?

Notice that Peter didn't say, "I heal you" but "Jesus Christ heals you." The healing wasn't about Peter's power but about Jesus working through him.

Also significant is the command to "make your bed." For eight years, that bed had been Aeneas's identity - he was "the bedridden guy." By telling him to make his bed, Jesus was saying, "Leave that identity behind. You are no longer defined by your condition."

Jesus is always at work changing our identity. The outward healing was important, but the deeper work was in transforming who Aeneas understood himself to be.

What happens when God moves in power?

The result of this miracle was that "all who lived at Lydia in the Plain of Sharon saw what had happened to him, and they turned to the Lord." An entire community turned to Christ because of what God did through one man's healing.

Sometimes we wonder why God doesn't heal immediately. Perhaps, as in Aeneas's case, God's timing is perfect for drawing the maximum number of people to Himself.

Faith That Raises the Dead

Acts 9:36-41 tells the story of Tabitha (also called Dorcas), a disciple "rich in acts of kindness and charity." When she became sick and died, the disciples sent for Peter, even though she was already dead, washed, and laid in an upstairs room.

How has the church's faith grown?

This shows remarkable growth in the church's faith. When Lazarus died, people told Jesus, "If you had only been here..." implying it was too late. But now, the believers send for Peter even after Tabitha has died. They believed God could work through Peter to bring her back to life.

What does it take to see God's miraculous power?

When Peter arrived, he sent everyone out of the room, knelt down, and prayed. This wasn't a quick, casual prayer. Peter likely poured out his heart, acknowledging that raising the dead was beyond his ability and completely dependent on God's power.

After praying, he simply said, "Tabitha, arise." She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. Peter gave her his hand, helped her up, and presented her alive to the saints and widows.

This wasn't Hollywood - this was the real power of God working through a man willing to step out in faith and obedience.

What happens when God moves in miraculous ways?

Verse 42 tells us: "This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord." When God moves in power, He receives the glory, and people are drawn to faith in Jesus.

The Importance of Investing in People

The chapter ends by telling us that "Peter stayed in Joppa for many days with Simon, a tanner." This seemingly minor detail reveals important truths:

1. Church building takes time. Peter didn't just create a spectacle and move on. He stayed to invest in the new believers.
2. God was breaking down barriers. For a Jewish man like Peter to stay with a tanner (someone who worked with dead animals and was considered ceremonially unclean) showed that God was already preparing Peter for the next chapter - taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

Life Application

God is calling us to step out in faith and allow Him to work through us in ways that might seem beyond our abilities. He wants to use us to bring transformation to those around us - not just physical healing, but identity transformation.

This week, consider these questions:

1. Am I willing to step into uncomfortable situations if God calls me there?
2. Do I truly believe God can work miracles through ordinary people like me?
3. Am I investing time in discipling others, or am I just looking for the next spiritual high?

The God who worked through Peter is the same God who wants to work through you. He hasn't changed - we have. He's inviting us back to a place of trusting Him completely, not minimizing who He is, but allowing Him to be represented through us, His church, in all His power and glory.