**Apostles Without Quarters**

(Acts 9:32-35)

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

A barber was cutting a man’s hair one day when a young boy entered his barbershop. Seeing him, the barber said to his customer, “That’s the dumbest kid in the world! Watch, I’ll prove it to you!” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a dollar bill and three quarters, and offered them to the boy. The boy promptly took the quarters and left. “See? What did I tell you? It happens every time. That kid never learns!”

After the customer left the barbershop, he bumped into the boy coming out of an ice cream shop, licking a cone. He asked the by, “How come you always take the quarters?” The boy replied, “Because the day I take the dollar *the game is over!”* And he gave his ice cream cone another lick.

Well that young man was smart enough to know that the day he took the dollar, the barber would stop testing his smarts, and he’d be *a boy without quarters!* But as we resume our study of Acts 9, we find *an apostle* without quarters:

**“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda” (Acts 9:32).**

Now the “quarters” that it’s talking about there are obviously not the money kind. It’s actually talking about the four quarters *of the Roman Empire,* the ones we read about in Luke 3:1:

**“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being *tetrarch* of Galilee, and his brother Philip *tetrarch* of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the *tetrarch* of Abilene” (Luke 3:1).**

That word *tetrarch* is the transliteration of a compound Greek word. The “tetra” part of it is the Greek word for “four,” and the “arch” part of it is the word for *ruler—*like when the Bible talks about arch-angels. Those are angels that *rule* over other angels. Put those words together and you have a *tetrarch,* a man who ruled over a quarter of the Roman Empire.

Now I point that out to show you what a *careful* historian Luke was (the man who wrote the Book of Acts). The Bible is not a history book, but it is always accurate when it touches on historical things, as we see when Luke acknowledged that Rome was divided up into four quarters. That’s something with which secular history books would agree.

All that might not mean much to you, since you believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and so it can be trusted for that reason. But Bible skeptics like to try to find historical *mistakes* in the Bible to discredit it. But they won’t find any in Luke’s writings—or in the accounts of any *other* Bible writers, whether they wrote as historians, or poets, or prophets or what have you.

It’s kind of like how the Bible is not a book of *science* either, but when it touches on scientific things it is always completely scientifically accurate. Well, the same is true in that the Bible is not a book of history, but it is always historically accurate.

In fact, sometimes secular history has to play catchup to Bible history. The Bible mentions a Persian king named *Darius* a couple of times, and for centuries Bible skeptics used him as an example of a historical inaccuracy since there was no historical record of any king of Persia by that name. But eventually archeologists found evidence that substantiated the Bible’s history, of course, and secular history caught up to the Word of God.

This is similar to how science also has to catch up to the Bible at times. Look what Moses wrote in Numbers 19:15:

**“…every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, *is unclean”***

Now you know why you don’t leave open vessels of food laying around without a cover. But it took science nearly 3,500 years to discover that uncovered food gets contaminated with germs.

And 3,500 years ago Moses *also* wrote,

**“…the life of the flesh *is in the blood”* (Leviticus 17:11).**

But up until 100 years ago doctors practiced what was called “bloodletting.” They’d bleed patients to let out all of that “bad blood”!

If you’re wondering where they ever got an idea like that, it was from Hippocrates, the physician for whom the Hippocratic oath sworn by doctors to this day was named. Hippocrates thought that the reason women menstruate was to “purge them of ill humors.” By “humors” he meant *fluids,* like the vitreous humor liquid in an eyeball. He figured that if God designed us so that bloodletting was good for *women’s* health, it was probably good for *everyone’s* health!

That’s the reason doctors probably killed George Washington when they bled him for a throat infection that he is said to have died of. He probably actually died of medical malpractice! Thankfully, medical science eventually caught up to the Bible and when *you* go to see the doctor, he lets you keep all of *your* “bad blood!”

Well, now you know what Luke meant when he said there were saints “in all quarters.” And the “saints” he had in mind were *not* the kind that the Church of Rome makes a man years or centuries after he dies. That’s one of the many Catholic traditions that Rome wants you to think they’ve always practiced. But the truth is, their church began in the year 300 A.D., and they didn’t start “canonizing” saints until 700 years later in 995 A.D.

You may have heard that Rome has what they call “a patron saint” of travelers named St. Christopher. They also have a patron saint of earaches, a patron saint of STDs, and even a patron saint of unattractive people. That’s my guy! But I don’t even want to know what he looked like.

But the “saints” in Acts 9:32 were very much alive! That’s because the word “saint” is the Bible word for a *believer,* someone who is saved by grace through faith (Eph.2:8,9) in Christ’s death for our sins (ICor.15:1-4) and is *sanctified.* The word “sanctify” is the verb form of the noun *saint.* If you’re sanctified, you’re a saint. If you’re a saint, it means you’ve been sanctified. That’s why Paul addressed his epistle to the Corinthians, “

**“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus, *called to be saints”* (I Corinthians 1:2).**

We have a man named Louis in the church that I pastor, and he likes to be called “Saint Louis!” We also have an assistant pastor named Paul, and he doesn’t mind being called “St. Paul” at all, since he preaches the same message as the Apostle Paul!

A few years ago the pope canonized an 18th century friar named Junipero Serra, but many Californians remembered him to be someone who abused Native Americans. So when the pope made him a saint, some of those people *protested* his elevation to sainthood by topping a statue of him. That shows that when *the pope* makes a man a saint, there’s always going to be someone who objects on the grounds of something they know about him, since “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23).

But on Judgment Day, when the Lord declares you and I to be saints, if anyone objects, the Lord will just point to the wounds in his hands and feet and say, “I *paid* for his sainthood *with My blood,* so sit down and shut up!”

But if you are familiar with this passage, you know that the *early* part of Acts 9 is all about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who later became the Apostle Paul. And in our last lesson I mentioned that with his conversion the focus in the Book of Acts begins to shift *away* from the 12 apostles *to the Apostle Paul.* And the reason for that is: the 12 apostles were the apostles of *Israel.* If you ever wondered why the Lord picked 12 apostles, it was because he needed 12 men to rule the 12 tribes of Israel (Mt.19:28).

But when the nation of Israel crucified the Lord and stoned Stephen, that showed they *rejected* the kingdom that the Lord came to offer them. And after that, Paul was given the new program—the new dispensation—of grace (Eph.3:1-9). And with his conversion the focus of the Book of Acts shifted away from the 12 to him.

But if that’s so, why does Luke go back to talking about *Peter* here? The answer is that while the nation of Israel might have rejected her kingdom, God didn’t drop her like a hot potato.

Did you ever wonder where that expression comes from? I looked it up and learned that potatoes stay hot a long time after you bake them because they contain a lot of water. So a while after you heat one up you might go to pick it up, thinking that it must be cool by now—and end up dropping it *like a hot potato!*

See the things you learn in our lesson? No, no need to thank me! There’s no extra charge for that!

But now, you’ll probably remember that story—don’t forget the point that I’m using that story to illustrate. The point is that while God began a new program with Paul by sending him to the Gentiles, He *continued* to bless and use the 12 apostles in their ministry to Israel. He didn’t drop Israel like a hot potato, and He didn’t tell the 12 to sit down and shut up just because he started a new ministry with Paul. He continued to do what we read in Romans 10:21, where Paul quotes God as saying,

**“…to Israel He saith, *All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”***

The *nation* might have rejected the Lord, but He kept reaching out to *individuals* in the nation.

And one of the ways He *kept* reaching out was by making Peter *an apostle without quarters.* You’ll never understand the Book of Acts unless you understand that God’s kingdom program for Israel gradually tapered off as God’s new program of grace expanded and increased. That’s why in speaking of Israel, Paul talked about “the *diminishing* of them” (Rom.11:12). If you don’t recognize the diminishing of Israel you’ll never understand why kingdom things like tongues and healing and water baptism continued awhile after the new program of grace began with Paul.

And there’s one more reason that Luke has gone back to talking about Peter, a reason we’ll see in Acts 10 where God teaches Peter that the Gentiles are no longer to be considered unclean. That was God’s way of *using* Peter to introduce Paul’s new ministry to the Gentiles. So that’s *another* reason Acts continues to focus on Peter during the transition period from the kingdom program to God’s grace program.

Well, let’s see what Peter found when he arrived in Lydda:

**“And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy” (Acts 9:33).**

Now “palsy” is the Bible word for *paralysis,* as we see when we read about a palsied man who wanted to be healed by the Lord, but had to be *carried* to Him:

**“…one sick of the palsy…*was borne of four”* (Mark 2:3).**

Peter is about to *heal* this paralyzed Jew to show that God is continuing to reach out to individuals in Israel.

But as we are about to see, this man Aeneas was a type of the nation Israel, beginning with his name. All names have meanings. My name Ricky is short for *Richard,* a name which means *powerful* or *strong ruler.* Just sayin’!

But the meaning of names *in the Bible* often have spiritual and symbolic significance. The name *Aeneas* for example means *praise—*and praise is what the nation of Israel was supposed to be! They were supposed to be the source of praise to God on Planet Earth. That’s the reason God created her, as we see when Isaiah wrote,

**“This people have I formed for Myself; *they shall shew forth My praise”* (Isaiah 43:21).**

God created the nation of Israel to show His praise to all of the *other* nations of the world—and someday, in the kingdom of heaven on earth, she will! Speaking of Israel in that day, we read:

**“…their seed shall be known among the Gentiles…all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed…*the Lord God will cause…praise to spring forth before all the nations”* (Isaiah 61:9-11).**

That’s what God wanted Israel to be when Peter offered her the kingdom in Acts 3. But after the Jews crucified the Lord and stoned His prophet in Acts 7, here in Acts 9 we see a symbol of what they were instead. We see a man whose name means *praise* suffering from the palsy. That’s a type of how God’s program to have the nation of Israel lead the nations in praise of God had bogged down and become *paralyzed.*

Remember, the Book of Acts isn’t a book of dry history. The events we read about in Acts are symbolic of what was going on at the time, and what will go on in the future. Only God could have written a book like this!

And you’ll notice that this man was paralyzed for “eight years” (Acts 8:33). Bishop Ussher dates this page in your Bible as 38 A.D., eight years after the Lord began His ministry at age 30 (Luke 3:23). So when Luke says Aeneas had been a paralyzed victim of palsy for eight years, that makes him a symbol of how Israel had been paralyzed *since the beginning of the Lord’s ministry* due to their unbelief and overall rejection of His message as a nation.

Now the Lord did His best to raise them up *out* of their spiritual paralysis, as we see symbolized in Matthew 9:6:

**“…(then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) *Arise, take up thy bed,* *and go”* (Matthew 9:6).**

When the Lord raised that palsied man up, that’s a picture of what He wanted to do for Israel, but they crucified Him instead.

Well, let’s read on in our text to see how Peter heals this paralyzed man:

***“*And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately” (Acts 9:34).**

Here we see Peter doing the same thing the Lord did, healing a man who was a type of paralyzed Israel. But the Lord did it as an example of the spiritual healing he wanted to give the nation, while Peter did it as a picture of what God will do for them in the kingdom. That’s the reason this miracle was repeated.

You see, even though Israel *rejected* Peter’s offer of the Kingdom in Acts 3, God is still going to make good on His promise to make Israel a source of praise on earth. Someday He is going to raise that nation up out of the spiritual paralysis they’vbe been in for 2,000 years now and make them the praise He has always wanted them to be before the Gentiles.

But what the Lord was asking Aeneas to do was a real test of faith. I don’t know about you, but if I’d been paralyzed for eight years, the first thing I’d want to do after getting healed would *not* be to make my bed! If I didn’t have asthma, I wouldn’t bother making my bed, but beds left open in the daytime get dusty, and dust triggers asthma at night, so I reluctantly make the bed each morning!

But when Aeneas obeyed what the Lord told him to do, that’s a picture of how the Jews in the kingdom will finally begin to obey God after 2,000 years of spiritual paralysis. And when they do, it will have an effect on the world, as we see as we read on in our text:

**“And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord” (Acts 9:35).**

Here we see *more* types of what will happen in the kingdom. You see, “Lydda” is the Greek New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew name *Lod.* And back in the Old Testament, after the Jews went through a time of tribulation in captivity in Babylon, the children of Lod were among the children of Israel who returned to the Promised Land of Israel when they had the chance to do so. Not all Jews did, but the children of Lod did!

**“Now these are the children of the province *that went up out of the captivity,* of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon…The children of Nebo…The children of Magbish…*The children of Lod…”* (Ezra 2:1-33).**

That’s a picture of what will happen someday after the Jews go through *the great* tribulation and return to the promised land after seeing God lift the paralysis of the nation Israel in the kingdom.

We see more proof of this when Acts 9:35 says that “Saron” *also* saw Aeneas get healed and turned to the Lord. You see, the name *Saron* is the New Testament Greek spelling of the Old Testament Hebrew name *Sharon.* And do you know what the prophets predicted of Sharon in the kingdom?

**“…the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and *Sharon*, they shall see the glory of the Lord, *and the excellency of our God…*Then shall the lame man leap as an hart…” (Isaiah 35:1,2,6).**

When Sharon sees the desert blossom as a rose, and lame men like the palsied man in our text healed, she will see the excellency of God and turn to the Lord. And you’re seeing all of this pictured here in Acts 9!

But in closing, when it says Aeneas was “sick of the palsy,” I have to say that I’d be sick of it too after 8 years! I’m kidding, of course, but I’ve had asthma for over 60 years, and I’m plenty sick of that! And if you’re sick of whatever affliction you have, I can’t offer you healing as Peter gave to Aeneas. God is not shoing His power today by healing us, He’s showing His power today by *teaching* us—teaching us the lesson He taught Paul in II Corinthians 12:7-9, where Paul wrote:

**“…*there was given to me a thorn in the flesh*…for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, *My grace is sufficient for thee:* for My strength is made perfect in weakness…”**

God’s showing His power and “strength” today in the dispensation of grace by teaching us to be satisfied with His grace!

Now if you think that it shows *more* of God’s power and strength to heal a man, I beg to differ. If you know anything about the perverseness of human nature, you know that it takes a whole lot more power to make a man satisfied *without* healing than it takes to heal him. But the grace of God can empower you to do just that, if you’ll just learn the depths of His grace as they appear to us in the epistles of the apostle of grace, the Apostle Paul.