

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters

Sermon Series - The Book of Acts/God's Plan for His Church

Sermon Title - Healing 101

Sermon Text - Acts 9:32-43

Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

Introduction

"When this life of trials tests my faith, I set my hope on Jesus, When the questions come and doubts remain, I set my hope on Jesus, For the deepest wounds that time won't heal, there's a joy that runs still deeper, There's a truth that's more than all I feel, I set my hope on Jesus" Today we're going to talk about a subject that every single one of us will face at some point in our lives. The need for healing for ourselves or for one of our loved ones! This is a controversial topic and there are certainly good brothers and sisters in Christ with different views. But God's Word does give us direction when it comes to the concept of healing. So let's pray and ask God to teach us His Word through the inspiration of The Holy Spirit. Prayer

Our main text for today is found in Acts 9:32 and following. You can turn in your Bibles and read with me if you like!

Acts 9:32 As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda.

Acts 9:33 There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years.

Acts 9:34 "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up.

Acts 9:35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Acts 9:36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.

Acts 9:37 About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room.

Acts 9:38 Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

Acts 9:39 Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Acts 9:40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed.

Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.

Acts 9:41 He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.

Acts 9:42 This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

Acts 9:43 Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

I don't have all the answers when it comes to the question of healing. Sometimes it puzzles me why some are healed and others are not. Ultimately, we must trust God's intentions and His heart. When we choose to trust Him regardless of the circumstances, we open the door for God to work in our circumstances for our good and for His glory. When it comes to healing, let's look at...

The Purpose

God has a purpose for everything He does. Healing is no different.

Acts 9:33 There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years.

God cares about our struggles. This man had suffered for eight years and God wanted to give him some relief. Also, God had a purpose for Aeneas that was yet to be fulfilled and he needed to not be bedridden to accomplish this purpose so God healed him. God truly cares about the hurting. We see this in Exodus 3:7...

Exodus 3:7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

And we know that God eventually delivered His people from Egypt. When it comes to our present sufferings, whether it be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, God will either heal us or grant us His presence and power to endure with grace and strength. Of course, if we will allow Him. I knew a woman who was diagnosed with stage four cancer at age 44. God granted a miracle to her through the doctors at M.D. Anderson and after her treatments she lived six years cancer free. During this time she continued to touch lives in her own special way and then when she had fulfilled her God given purpose she went home to be with her Lord. We can never fully understand God's purpose for allowing us a miraculous healing here on earth or bringing us home to heaven to heal us, but when we have the faith to trust Him either way, oh what peace that brings to the human soul! If God does choose to heal in a miraculous way in this world, the purpose may be to help others come to know Jesus and His reality. Well see that in just a moment, but let me say this...

Sometimes God does not heal because He has a reason, some greater purpose. Maybe it's growing your relationship with Him, and your ability to trust Him in the tough times. Maybe it's growing our willingness to love and trust Him in the good and the bad times. It could be for someone else. When I crushed my foot in a freight elevator I was able to witness to the EMT in the ambulance. I had long hair and was a teenager, so when I started talking about Jesus he thought I was going into shock and told me I was going to be okay. To which I replied, in between my moans and groans of pain, that I agreed because Jesus was going to help me! During my stay at the hospital, one of my nurses who was a grandmother asked me to pray for her grandson who had become involved with drugs. And back in 2022, when I did not go back into sinus rhythm on my own, which I had prayed earnestly for, and had to be cardioverted, I

ended up sharing my testimony with the medical team as I was coming out from under the anesthesia. When Debbie came in to see me I said...“I think I just shared my testimony with everybody!” One of the nurses said, yes you did, it all happened when you were 14 ½. Then just a few weeks ago when I had my heart ablation and subsequent hospital stay for the Pneumonia, I had the opportunity to minister to some of my health care providers. One who had recently lost a family member to a tragedy.

But I'll never forget a dear Lady in Pleasant Grove who battled cancer and yet had the most amazing faith, peace, joy and witness for Jesus. The day she died, her lost and wayward son was there along with other family members. She once again smiled and talked about how she was so thankful for her life and for her relationship with Jesus and her excitement to see Him in glory. When she drew her last breath, her son grabbed me by the arm and said come with me. He led me out the sliding glass door into the back yard and with tears in his eyes said, “That woman was the most Godly human being I've ever known. How can I have what she had?” I shared with him the gospel and he prayed to receive Jesus right then and there. So moments after that lady entered heaven I believe she saw all the angels rejoicing and when she asked why they informed her that her wayward son had just been saved! I think she probably said with a smile, “My suffering was worth it! Thank You Jesus!”

When I think of miraculous healing, or not, I realize that for a Christian we win either way! Paul said...

Philippians 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

Philippians 1:23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Philippians 1:24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

As we continue to look at our text we discover the identity of...

The Healer

Acts 9:34 "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you."

It is always Jesus that heals. The person through whom that healing flows is simply a vessel of God's wonderful grace. It would be ludicrous for a person to think that a medicine bottle cured their cough. It's not the bottle, it's what's inside. Sometimes people think they have to get to a particular person in order to receive healing. Not so. It is God who heals and it is a person's faith that opens that door. A person with the gift of healing does not do the healing but has the God-given ability to lead a person to the healer. Throughout Scripture we discover that God is

the healer. The Psalmist had written a Psalm about this for the congregation of God's people to sing. Here's part of the song...

Psa 107:18 They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.

Psa 107:19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress.

Psa 107:20 He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Psa 107:21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.

Psa 107:22 Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.

In other words, when a supernatural miracle of healing takes place, it is God who heals, not the vessel through whom that healing took place. This is pointed out in an incident in Acts 14...

Acts 14:8 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.

Acts 14:9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed

Acts 14:10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

Acts 14:11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!"

Acts 14:12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.

Acts 14:13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting:

Acts 14:15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

God is the healer!

So what does it mean to have the gift of healing?

I believe that it means having the discernment to know how to lead a person to have faith that God can heal them and that if He doesn't bring immediate healing, or doesn't choose to heal in this life, to trust that He will provide healing in other ways. Folks, in our context for today we are talking about miraculous healing. But I want to say this: Thank God for Doctors and medical professionals who study hard, train hard, and work hard using every modern technique, equipment and medicines to bring about healing. And I believe that those kinds of things are a type of miracle in and of themselves. But at the end of the day, I think we all know that when they have done all that they know to do, and the best medicines have been given and the most

effective procedures have been performed, we still need the blessing of the Great Physician for healing to take place. I was with a family in Birmingham, Alabama when the doctor came in and let them know that he had done everything within his power to help their loved one and that now it was in the hands of The Almighty! I'll never forget it, he asked them if he could pray with them. And standing around their loved one, that doctor prayed one of the most beautiful prayers I've ever heard. He told the Lord that he had done all that he knew to do and that he was trusting God with the outcome. This physician truly had the gift of healing in more ways than one. His words brought a comfort to that family that words cannot describe! You see...

The gift of healing goes beyond the physical

It includes mental, emotional and spiritual healing. I believe Dr. Jeff Nave, who is a counselor and one of the professors of counseling at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has the gift of healing. He brings healing by the wisdom, comfort, and guidance he gives to people through Godly counseling. He and other counselors I know lead people to God for emotional, mental and spiritual healing. And did you know that some of you may have the gift of healing? Maybe you bring healing to relationships by being a peacemaker. Or you may bring healing to someone's soul through a word of encouragement. There are many ways to practice the gift of healing! Now let's look in our text to discover some things about...

The Healing

Acts 9:34 "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up.

Sometimes God heals immediately, as in this situation. However, sometimes God heals a person over time, and sometimes God brings ultimate and complete healing by bringing a person home to heaven where they will never face sickness or death ever again! In other words, sometimes God grants a miraculous healing and at other times a miraculous grace to endure the suffering until God's ultimate and once for all healing takes place in heaven. I did a funeral a year ago for a friend of mine's 18 year old son. It has been tough as you could imagine, but he has told me how he felt so supported by his work place, his family and his church. This boy's mother, after praying earnestly for her son's healing and yet putting the outcome in God's hands, was able to see 7 miraculous circumstances on the day their son died which proved to her that God had not abandoned their family and was in fact with her son and got him safely home to heaven! What perspective!

Because healing comes through faith in what God can do, there are some who mistakenly teach that the person who does not receive healing has a problem with their faith or doesn't have enough faith or their faith is not big enough. But you've heard me say before, it's not how big your faith is but how big your God is that you put your mustard seed of faith in that counts. But here's the deal...I've known people of great faith who prayed for healing and did not receive the physical healing they hoped for. This does not mean their faith was flawed! As I said in my first point, God may have other purposes. Some say that you can claim your healing based on a

Scripture and speak it into existence by commanding God to heal! I don't command God to do anything! I ask God. A Scripture that I read last week says it well..

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Let me give you an example from the Bible of a person who was not healed even after asking numerous times. Nowhere does it suggest that he commanded God. Listen to what Paul said...

2 Cor 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

2 Cor 12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

2 Cor 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

When praying for healing, pray for God's will to be done in your life and trust Him to answer your prayer in the best way! Some teach that you should not pray for God's will when you are sick you should just claim healing. I couldn't disagree more. Jesus set the example for all areas of life when He prayed, "not my will but Thy will be done." God may grant a special miracle, or use the miracle of modern medicine to bring healing. I believe we are to do our part to take care of ourselves, eating right, exercising, resting, and not being stubborn about going to see the doctor! Once we do our part we let God do the rest. If God uses medicine, thank Him, if He grants a miracle, thank Him, if He chooses not to allow healing in this world, trust Him and thank Him that He promised to never leave you or forsake you, and that we can say along with Paul...

Philippians 4:13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

In our text we must understand that...

The Healing was not meant to be a spectacle

Acts 9:40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed.

Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.

Acts 9:41 He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.

Peter didn't make a spectacle of the actual healing. He sent them out of the room.

Many times Jesus chose to heal privately. Here's some examples...

Mat 9:23 When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd,

Mat 9:24 he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

Mat 9:25 After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up.

Mark 7:32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

Mark 7:33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd...

My concern with many modern day “healers” is that they seem to only be able to heal when there is a crowd and are in an arena. If they truly have the gift of healing in such a way that they can simply touch someone and they are instantly healed, why aren’t they traveling from hospital to hospital? One final thing in our text concerning healing is that we see...

The Result

Acts 9:35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him (Aeneas) and turned to the Lord.

Acts 9:42 This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

God used Aeneas’s and Tabitha’s healing to reach others. When God brings healing, whether it be physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental, we should first of all, thank God and then we should share the news of what God has done for us so that others will know that He cares for them and will be there for them like He has been there for us. But never forget, our greatest need is spiritual healing! This was pointed out in the following miracle story from Jesus’ ministry...

Luke 5:17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.

Luke 5:18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

Luke 5:19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

Luke 5:20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 5:21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Luke 5:22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?”

Luke 5:23 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?

Luke 5:24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

Luke 5:25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

Luke 5:26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Can you imagine what this man's friends were thinking when Jesus said "Friend, your sins are forgiven." "Wait, we brought him here to be healed physically!" Which Jesus did, but He knew that the man's greatest need was spiritual and that miracle of healing came through what Jesus did on the Cross! Peter put it this way...

1 Pet 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Pet 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

So there's the result of miraculous physical healing and there's the result of miraculous spiritual healing through salvation! But when it comes to the concept of healing, and having the faith to trust God with the outcome, I want to ask you a question or two. What are you going to do when the doctor tells you "it may be cancer, you will need a Biopsy!" What will be your attitude? I'm trusting my life into God's hands or worry yourself sick? And what if they say it's cancer, here's your options! What will you do then? Sometimes it's easy for us to tell others to just trust God when they are facing uncertain times, but what if it's you? I had a friend who faced this. Let me tell you the story.

Mr. Warren Eaves introduced me to a good friend of his, Jay Richards who lived in Las Vegas. He was saved a number of years ago and led a Bible study out there. He watched or listened to our services every week through streaming or podcasts. Jay and I became friends and he copied me in on an email he sent to one of his doctors from another doctor. Here's some of the email...

"Saw Doc Kiani on Monday. He confirmed what I had thought, that I have congestive heart failure. He said he had great difficulty attaching the clip to my mitral valve in Thursday's surgery, saying it would only lessen the regurgitation of blood flow by about 50 percent, not stop it completely...I asked him not to pull any punches but to be completely straight-forward in answering my question as to how long he thought I had left, since he had now operated on two of my heart valves (aortic and mitral). He paused and said, "Hopefully," then pausing again, "two years." I replied, "Awesome! Looks like I'll be going home to Jesus sooner than I thought!" He looked shocked, saying "That's not the response I usually get to this kind of news." I reminded him, "You can't threaten a Christian with heaven! This is like getting an early parole from prison!"

Where does that kind of faith come from? Psalm 23

Psalm 23:title A psalm of David.

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

Psalm 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

Psalm 23:3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, (the valley of the shadow of death) I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Psalm 23:6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

I have a friend in this church who has been through such hard times physically, surgeries, and the tough cancer treatments, and not even being able to taste food, but has maintained such a sweet spirit through all of this and his faith is so strong, and this brother has been worried about me and checking on me to see how I am doing! What an inspiration. And I told him that he and some others I know who have been through way tougher things than I went through a few weeks back, were a part of my inspiration to stay strong! I kept thinking to myself, "this is nothing compared to what my friends have been through and are going through! Perspective is so vital! And talk about perspective.

I've had many situations down through the years where I've ministered to people who have great health and yet they want to die because their circumstances are not good and they've come to believe that God has it in for them! And yet I've known other people with circumstances that I think would have buried me but their faith, and their commitment to Jesus was unshakable and their spiritual health was amazing. So I've come to realize that our spiritual health, which has a powerful impact on our mental and emotional health, is even more important than our physical health! Like Tobymac said about his song "Lord I need You", the world throws all kinds of things at us, and in the end, Tobymac says he realized, "I just need you!!" And Tobymac is no stranger to pain, he recently lost his son.

And C.S. Lewis who lost his wife to cancer after only 4 years of marriage and who wrote a book called "The Problem of Pain," said this...

"There is one criticism which cannot be brought against me. No one can say 'He jests at scars who never felt a wound', for I have never for one moment been in a state of mind to which even the imagination of serious pain was less than intolerable. If any man is safe from the danger of underestimating this adversary, I am that man."

Lewis, C. S.. The Problem of Pain (p. 2). HarperOne. Kindle Edition.

And talk about perspective, there are times when I wished I could have someone who is so down about their circumstances come with me to see someone battling for life who has been given the bad news of inoperable or incurable and to understand that that person would happily trade their broken body for the other person's healthy body even with their bad circumstances because they would have the perspective that they could find some way to overcome the circumstances because they would have their health back. Please know that I am not trying to minimize the hurt and pain that comes from really hard and difficult times in life, but again it's about gaining perspective.

Years ago I was really down, discouraged and wondering if maybe it would be better if The Lord would just call me on home. I was driving at night when all of a sudden someone pulled out in front of me and I had to swerve and went off the road to miss them! I realized how precious life is! I was sitting there thinking that guy almost killed me. And then I realized how much I wanted to live and how quickly my God given will to live kicked into gear when faced with an imminent threat to my life! Let me end with this final observation about this topic.

Remember that sickness and suffering are sometimes things that we go through at no fault of our own. Of course we all know that sometimes there's consequences to bad decisions, but when someone is sick and suffering health issues that doesn't mean that they've sinned and are being punished. We see this in John 9...

John 9:1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

John 9:2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

John 9:3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Jesus said this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him! Which brings us full circle to God's purpose for healing...that the glory of God might be revealed. And when you think about the glory of God, and you wonder about the suffering of man and how these two go together it causes questions. But God's glory is not the same as some prideful ego trip, man's glory, kind of thing. God's glory is where he works good in the life of a human being, trapped in this fallen world and where God works good in spite of the evil in this world.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Let's pray!