

## Acts Chapter 9

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V: 1-2 Breathing out threatenings and slaughter, murder. Paul has moved from being present at the trial of Stephen and un-named, be being present and assenting to Stephen's death, holding the coats of those that stoned him. Now he is breathing out threatenings, expressing his hatred, now he's ready to slaughter and murder those that believe in Jesus.

- Sin like leprosy is progressive, and it is never satisfied, it always wants more and more, it always gets worse and worse unless it is checked in a Biblical way.

**Proverbs 27:20** "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."

Jesus said this would happen:

**Matthew 24:9** "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake."

- The enemy of our soul is still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of our Lord Jesus!

**1 Peter 5:8** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

- The war against Jesus is world wide, Sudan, Syria, India, Chine, Washington DC, and everywhere Christians are proclaiming the truth of Jesus, the hope of the Gospel.
- As Saul was persecuting the church, they began to scatter throughout Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Damascus was the next biggest, closest city, a logical place to flee to for Christians looking for a safe haven. Now Saul has set his sights on the Christians in that city.
- He'll be looking for "**any of this way.**" Christianity didn't really have a formal name at this point, later those that followed Jesus would be referred to as "Christians", but for now it was simply "**the way...**"

**John 14:6** "... I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

V 3-4 Saul asked for and received the papers or warrants; inferred by the fact that he is now on his way to Damascus, which is the capital of Syria.

- While en route he is overwhelmed by a bright light specifically from heaven and he fell to the ground, assuming that he was walking. It would have hurt more if he'd fallen off of a horse or donkey.
- In **Acts 26:13** Paul is testifying to king Agrippa about his conversion and he says that the bright light was brighter than the sun. Interesting comparison in that God spoke to Moses through a burning bush.
- As he hits the ground he hears a voice speaking to him and it's Jesus.

*"Saul, Saul..."* At this point Saul is a non-believer yet Jesus knows his name, knew where to find him, and knew what he was up to... and how to get his attention!

- Jesus has your number too, He knows our name, He knows where we are and where we're headed, and He knows what we're up to.
- Jesus asks him a penetrating question - why are you persecuting Me, the church.
- The church is the body of Christ and the bride of Christ all at the same time. Saul wasn't actually harming Jesus in person, but at he beat and imprisoned the believers he was persecuting Jesus.

*"... why persecutest thou Me?"*

- The question at hand is why are you doing this? Obviously out of hatred, but why such hatred? The Christians hadn't hurt anybody, in fact people were getting healed and raised from the dead - not bad things. The church was feeding widows and the poor - these aren't horrible crimes.
- Jesus and His followers were a direct challenge to everything he believed in. Their "traditions" were being proven to be false religious observances, their concepts of God was being proven false. The Pharisees interpreted the law in such a way that they obtained their righteousness from the observance of the Law and keeping the traditions of the fathers.

Jesus declared:

**Mark 7:6-9** *"<sup>6</sup>... well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. <sup>7</sup>Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. <sup>8</sup>For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. <sup>9</sup>And He said unto them, full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."*

- Jesus declared that they could only obtain a righteous standing through a personal relationship with Him, by believing in the One which the Father had sent.

**Romans 1:17** “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”

- The Sadducees were driven by greed, by materialism, to them their religion was simply a racket to fleece the flock, but the Pharisees, of which Paul was a member, they were driven by zeal and self righteousness.

**Romans 10:2** “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

- God was going to take this zeal that Saul had, and he would take the knowledge of God’s Word that Saul had and by the power of the Holy Spirit it would be transformed into “wisdom” in the ways of God, setting aside the traditions of man, and it would become a passion for God Himself.

V: 5 As this point Saul isn’t sure even as to who he’s talking to, he only knows that it’s someone who’s much bigger and more powerful than himself so he calls him “Lord.”

- “Lord” = Kurios, the OT equivalent of Jehovah.

Like the thief on the cross who said to Jesus:

**Luke 24:42** “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.”

- Paul’s conversion happened the moment he acknowledged Jesus as Lord.
- That is what salvation is all about, surrendering yourself to Jesus and acknowledging Him as the Lord of your life.
- At that moment, instantaneously, your sins are forgiven. We will see a 180 degree turn around as a result of Paul’s conversion experience.

*“... and the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”*

“... *I am Jesus*...” God reveals himself to Paul. Saul / Paul thought he was doing God’s will, thought he was serving God - so God intervenes and makes the correction.

**Jeremiah 29:13** “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”

- Paul learned a couple of things in that moment that previously he had determined was not true, and that is that Jesus is alive, that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus is God! All of which rocked his world to the foundations.
- The believers had all been saying that Jesus was alive, but he didn't believe them, now he couldn't say otherwise, he knew it for himself.
- Paul also learned that he was on the wrong side of the equation. He thought he was serving God and doing God's will - but God just told him that this was not so, that he was persecuting God, that he was at war, at enmity with God... that he was a lost sinner in danger of the judgment of God against His enemies!

*“... it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”*

- It is quite possible that Saul was struggling in his heart about Jesus. Understanding and believing what he had been taught, but at the same time seeing people and events that gave him occasion to question his understanding of things, yet at the same time being caught up in the lifestyle, commitments, and traditions.
- Can't say for sure but there is a strong possibility that Paul had been present at Jesus' trial and crucifixion.
- He may have heard Jesus praying to the Father "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do..."
- Later he was present at Stephen's trial and execution. Paul was a student of the Law, he knew the history of Israel as good as anybody. Having heard Stephens reciting that history he must have seen how it rang true. Seeing Stephen's face shining like that of an angel, going to his death peacefully and repeat pretty much what Jesus said before He was killed. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."
- These things may have been eating away at Paul, part of his kicking at the pricks / goads.

V:6 Trembling and astonished: his whole world has just been turned upside down. So many of the things he thought to be true, he now knows are false.

He just discovered:

**John 14:6** that Jesus is "... The Way, the Truth, and the Life..."

- He got the answer to his first question, he knows that Jesus is his Lord, his "Kurios" his supreme authority so he asks Him the next logical question: what would you have me do Lord?

- Paul's asking, he's willing to hear and to do - so the Lord speaks.
- "Get up, go into the city and wait for further instructions." He's given the first step. After he's been obedient to the first step he'll get the second step. That's often exactly how it works, one step at a time.
- One of the prerequisites of being an apostle was to be able to bear witness to having seen the resurrected Lord.

**1 Corinthians 9:1** "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?..."

- Paul also spoke about the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection, and then said:

**1 Corinthians 15:8** "And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time."

- This is a reference to his Damascus road experience where he met Jesus, and from this time on could bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

V:7 is sort of a parenthetical insertion, the men escorting Paul, perhaps a contingent of the Temple guards under Paul's command, they witness the event but don't understand or perceive what is happening.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** "But the natural man receive the not the things of The Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

- Later in **Acts 22**, Paul will say that the men with him saw the light but they didn't hear the voice. Some have tried to portray this as a contradiction. In **Acts 26** as he is describing the event to Agrippa, he mentions the fact that Jesus spoke to him in the "hebrew tongue" - which at that time was something that only the scholars knew, the common language of the day was Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. So the servants or soldiers traveling with Paul would have heard, but not understood what Jesus was saying.

V:8 Paul is obedient, he gets up - discovering that he is now blind. That doesn't stop him, the others now lead him by the hand into Damascus.

- Jesus' first command to Paul wasn't an easy one, he's blind, he needs help, but he presses through.

**Philippians 3:14** "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

V: 9 He was three days without his sight, but the last thing, the last image in his mind was that of Jesus!

- He didn't eat or drink for three days - he may have been fasting after this intense encounter with God, or he simply not have needed food or water, discovering that Jesus was his all in all.
- Paul spent three days in darkness, no distractions - time to think. Paul probably was re-thinking his religious background and beliefs.
- He had been an up and coming power, a fair haired prospect before the high priest, he was proud of his back ground, his education at the feet of Gamaliel, his keeping of the Law.
- But when he came to know Jesus, all of that vanished in a moment.

**Philippians 3:7-8** "7But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

- Paul left Jerusalem breathing out murder against the church, he arrived in Damascus having encountered Jesus on the road - a new man, a different man.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

- Somewhere between this chapter, (10-12 Peter's ministry to the Gentiles) and chapter 13 Saul becomes "Paul" - the new creature gets a new name.
- First you come to Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit begins to transform you into His image.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

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- Paul has been humbled, blinded, and introduced to his Lord and Savior. Paul asks "Lord" what must I do?" Jesus tells him to go into Damascus and he'll be given further instruction, and so being blind he's led by the hand into the city.

### V: 10 **Damascus: Map & picture from Golan:**

- Lying on a pleasant plain east of Mt. Hermon, watered by the Amana and Parphar rivers.
- Damascus controlled the main north-south trade route of the southern Levant.
- Damascus enjoys the reputation of being the oldest continuously inhabited city on earth.
- During the time of the Old Testament, Damascus like Jerusalem was constantly conquered by the larger powers to the north and south (the Hittites, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and the Romans).
- In Damascus there was a certain disciple named Ananias. Thus far in the book of Acts we've seen the ministry of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Apostles, and that of the deacons like Stephen & Philip; now were introduced to Ananias who is simply a "disciple", an ordinary believer in Jesus - who is still given a ministry and a mission to serve the Lord.
- Ananias = "Jehovah is Gracious"
- The Lord speaks to Ananias in a vision: A vision is similar to a dream; a dream is a vision or a story that is played out in a persons mind while they are sleeping.
- A vision is similar except that the person is awake and conscious. All through the scriptures God uses both dreams and visions to communicate to His children. Sometimes they are very clear - as with Ananias, sometimes they are more cryptic and need the help of someone with the gift of interpretation, like Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel.
- The prophet Joel describes the "last days" - and Peter quotes Joel in Acts 2 describing what will happen:

**Joel 2:28** "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:"

- The Lord speaks to Ananias, a disciple - and he can just as easily speak to us!
- The Lord speaks and Ananias responds: "I am here, Lord." "I'm listening Lord, you've got my attention, go ahead..." The moment the Lord begins to speak to Ananias, Ananias responds by immediately making himself available.

### V: 11-12 **Jesus speaks to His servant telling him to get up and go to Saul.**

- Ananias is more or less given an address on "Straight Street".

### Diagram / Damascus under the Seleucids.

- Under the Seleucids of the Hellenistic period the city was completely re-designed and laid out as a rectangle bisected by two parallel streets.
- The longest of these streets, a colonnaded “cardo” fronted by the city’s theater and palace, was “the street called Straight”.

### Picture / Gate of the street called “Straight.”

- Jesus describes Saul as praying at that very moment; the implication being that His direction to Ananias is an answer or response to Paul’s prayers.
- As Ananias is having this vision of Jesus speaking to him, directing him to Paul - at or about the same time Paul is having a vision of Ananias coming to him and placing his hands upon him that he might receive his sight.
- God’s Word is a two-edged sword and He so often seem to work on both sides of an equation at the same time - the ultimate economy of motion.

### V: 13-14 This is kind of the equivalent of “are you sure Lord...?”

- **Saints**; first use in the book of Acts, only the 2nd time used in the New Testament (Matthew 27:52)
- **Saints**: “hagios” (G40) Holy, set apart, sanctified, consecrated, saint. Its fundamental idea is separation, consecration, devotion to the service of God, sharing in God’s purity and abstaining from earth’s defilement.

**Acts 9:1, 10** “Disciples”

**Acts 9:2** “this way”

**Acts 9:13, 32, 41** “saints”

**Acts 9:17, 30** “brethren”

**Acts 11:26** “Christian” (Antioch) most used by us.

- “Disciples” most used title in the book of Acts.
- It was no secret what Saul / Paul had been doing in Jerusalem, and why he had come to Damascus - to continue his persecution of the church and bind up all those that called upon the name of the Lord.

### V: 15 The Lord doesn’t correct or rebuke Ananias as he asks this question, He simply answers the question and affirms his direction - “Go thy way.”

- At the same time God doesn’t necessarily reassure Ananias either, “don’t worry, I won’t let him hurt you...”



- It's assumed, or understood that God will protect him and keep him, just as He does for each of us.

**Isaiah 42:6** “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”

- This will be a step of faith for Ananias, trusting God and taking Him at His word.
- <sup>15-16</sup>God does explain the nature and importance of his mission; God is going to use Paul as a chosen vessel - the right tool for the right job.
- God is going to use Paul to bear the light to the Gentiles, and to kings, and the children of Israel.
- We'll see as Paul's ministry unfolds that he gets to speak to all kinds of Gentiles, Romans, Greeks, barbarians galore. He also carry's the Gospel to king Agrippa, and to Caesar Nero. Paul got to witness to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, to many synagogues throughout Israel, and Asia. There are many scholars that strongly suspect that Paul is the un-credited author of the book of Hebrews, a book specifically written to the children of Israel.
- Ananias is blessed! He's like the guy that led Billy Graham to the Lord; Ananias gets to be involved in ordaining Paul into his ministry.

V: 16 Paul would be used of God for glorious things; but there would also be a price to pay.

**2 Timothy 3:12** “Yea, and all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

- God was going to show Paul the things he must suffer for God's names sake, ahead of time.

**Philippians 3:10** “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”

- That would have been a real test of faith; “are you sure you want to play on my team...?” Here's what it's going to cost you.
- We shouldn't make emotional decisions about our faith or about Jesus - Jesus calls us to count the cost, to be sure of what we're doing.

**Luke 14:28** “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?”

**Luke 14:31, 33** “<sup>31</sup>Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?” - “<sup>33</sup>So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.”

- The Gospel is free to us in one sense, but it will cost us everything in another sense, Jesus says we need to count the cost!
- I wonder how much Paul got to see? He would later testify:

Turn to:

**2 Corinthians 11:23-28** “<sup>23</sup>Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. <sup>24</sup>Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. <sup>25</sup>Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup>In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and of thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. <sup>28</sup>Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

- Paul lists 28 things here on his list... not counting duplicates like that it happened 3 times.

**Philippians 3:7-8** “<sup>7</sup>But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup>Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”

- Paul had obviously counted the cost, examined it, considered it, and saw that Christ was worth way more than all, even more than his sufferings.

**Romans 8:18** “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

- So Paul is going to be given a preview of the things to come, the things which he must suffer.

V: 17 God said “go your way,” and Ananias “went his way...” he was obedient.

Jesus said:

**John 14:15** “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”

- Ananias was a true disciple, a real follower of Jesus. He was obedient to the word of God.

- Ananias went into the house, found Paul and put his hands on him... in fulfillment of the vision he received in V: 12.
- Based on what Jesus has spoken to him, Ananias refers to Saul as “**Brother Saul...**” because they were at that moment “brothers in the Lord” - “his brutha from anutha mutha...”
- Ananias confirms that the Lord has sent him as previously describe in his vision from Jesus - they both had corresponding visions.
- Ananias was sent to pray for Saul for two main purposes:
  1. For Saul to receive his sight, to have his eyes opened.
    - ❖ Now that his eyes have been opened spiritually, God would open his eyes physically to see the world differently than he ever had before.
  2. To be filled with the Holy Ghost.
    - ❖ This “filling” of the Holy Spirit is in this case is subsequent to salvation.
    - ❖ He has already been indwelled by the Holy Spirit, “born again” of the Spirit, that’s why he’s a brother. Now we have the laying on of hands and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the overflowing power of the Spirit not just dwelling in Paul, but flowing from him.
    - ❖ This is later evidenced in V: 20 as we’ll see him going out and preaching Christ and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

V: 18 As Ananias lays hands on Paul and prays over him “immediately” scales or coverings fall from Paul’s eyes and “forthwith” / right away, at that moment - he received his sight.

- Ananias in obedience to the call of God; was praying the Word of God, and the will of God, over a man of God - and God acted upon that prayer immediately and forthwith.
- Paul having received his sight, got up and was baptized.
- Baptism signifies the end of the old life, which is buried with Christ, and being resurrected a new man, a new creature in Christ Jesus.
- Identifying with Jesus in His death, His burial, and His resurrection.
- This also signals a final renunciation of Judaism, there is no turning back now.

- Too many people do try to look back, but it's awfully hard to go forward when your looking backward.

**Luke 9:62** “And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

- Paul never looked back:

**Philippians 3:13-14** “<sup>13</sup>Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, <sup>14</sup>I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

V: 19 Saul ended his 3 day fast, he received meat, he was strengthened, and he hung out with the disciples there in Damascus.

20-22 It doesn't appear obvious, but there is a gap of time between verse 19 & 20 of three years.

**Galatians 1:11-12, 15-19** (turn to / read)

- So Paul returns from Arabia and straightaway he preaches Christ in the synagogues of Damascus.
- Paul was probably one of the smartest men ever to live.
- He was a scholar with a tremendous understanding of the Hebrew scriptures, the Law, and the prophets.
- He was well versed in Greek philosophy, he would later hold his own in Athens with the Greek philosophers.
- Combine all of that with 3 years of private tutoring by Jesus it's no wonder that he confounded the Jews that dwelt in Damascus, proving who Jesus is.
- Using their own scriptures, proving that Jesus is the Messiah.
- Once the proof has been given, then it's up to that person to choose whether to believe or not.
- If they choose not to believe it's in spite of the evidence. For the Jews their unbelief was not disbelief based on an intellectual issues, their unbelief was based on prejudice and not wanting to turn away from their traditions. That would have meant a change in life style.

- They enjoyed their religion, their culture, they didn't want to stop offering sacrifices, they didn't want to change.
- They allowed their traditions and religious observance to supersede God's Word.
- May it never be so with us!

- Paul confounded the Jews with his wisdom; he won the argument, but not their hearts.

V: 23 Paul has returned to Damascus after having spent three years away being disciplined by the Lord. (Galatians)

- As soon as he had gotten back he began preaching Christ in the synagogues and was well known to the Jews there.

*“After many days...”* the Jews took counsel to kill Paul, they had reached their limit.

**Galatians 5:19-21** *“<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, <sup>21</sup>envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

- Taking counsel to commit murder means that a group of them got together to plan it out, in modern terms that is called “conspiracy”.
- People who do not want to accept the truth do their best to silence the voice of truth. That is why our culture is trying to silence Christians today, that is why they are trying to limit where the 10 commandments can be posted, or where you can read a Bible - all in an effort to eliminate the truth, and the source of it.

V: 24-25 Somehow Saul knew about their plans; he may have been informed by a sympathizer who got wind of the plot, or he may have received a word of knowledge from the Lord, we're not told.

- Often times people's houses were built onto or as part of the walls to the city. Paul may have gone to one of those homes and then was lowered out through a window.

Paul later writes about this incident:

**2 Corinthians 11:32-33** *“<sup>32</sup>In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: <sup>33</sup>And*

through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”

- He came in blind, being led by the hand, now he’s in a basket being lowered down - humbling to say the least. This is just the beginning of the many things he would suffer to share the truth of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

V: 26 Paul left Jerusalem some 3+ years prior headed to Damascus breathing out threatenings and slaughter to the disciples in Damascus, just as he had done in Jerusalem and Judaea.

- He made quite the impression upon all the Christians; now after having been converted he is trying to join their ranks and they are naturally suspicious, not really believing that he’s a disciple.
- Repentance is one of those things that often times takes some time to determine if it’s genuine or not.

Jesus said:

**Matthew 7:16** “Ye shall know them by their fruits...”

John the Baptist declared:

**Matthew 3:8** “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:”

- Fruit is not always instant, it takes time to develop, and to ripen.

Paul, describing baptism:

**Romans 6:4** “... even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

- So the believers in Jerusalem aren’t convinced at first; Paul just kind of showed up. They were probably not sure what to do with him.

V: 27 “But Barnabas...” Barnabas on the other hand is convinced and he takes Paul directly to the apostles.

- We’re introduced to Barnabas in **Acts 4:36-37**. His name means “son of consolation” which could be interpreted as “comforter”, or “encourager” - he’s a Levite so he knows the Law, he’s from Cyprus so he’s familiar with the Roman / Greco / Grecian / worldly culture
- Barnabas testifies on Paul’s behalf that he had seen the risen Lord, how he had spent time with the Lord, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in Jesus’ name.
- This is all “fruit” that can be examined.

- Peter had the gift of discernment of spirits: in **Acts 5** he saw right through Ananias and Sapphira. Later in **Acts 8** when Philip was in Samaria, and Peter & John went to minister there, Peter correctly discerned Simon the Sorcerer's false profession of faith.
- Some of the disciples didn't embrace Paul right away, but that doesn't seem to be the case with the Apostles which would have included Peter.

V: 28 Paul was accepted by the Apostles, staying with them, and running around with them.

- This was in a way a test for both the Apostles to be seen with Paul; a former Pharisee and persecutor of the church. And it was a test for Paul, to be seen and associated with the leaders of the Church who were not in the good graces of the Jewish high counsel, nor with the civil government, both the Romans and the descendants of Herod.

V: 29 Paul, knowing that he was in a vulnerable position was very discreet about his faith... not! Paul jumps in with both feet and speaks boldly in the name of Jesus.

- He spoke boldly and disputed with the Grecians, the Grecian Jews - this just means that he didn't back down or let anything slide.
- They responded true to form, if you can't win the argument then kill your opponent. The only problem is that so often the "opponent" isn't the person, in this case Paul, their real opponent is God who is leading, guiding, and empowering His servant.
- The same works the other way as well. So often as Christians we get upset at the person who is behaving wickedly - but they are not the enemy. The enemy is Satan who is leading, and guiding the wicked to do what they do.

**Ephesians 6:12** "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

V: 30-31 Again the brethren got wind of the plot to kill Paul they decided that the best thing to do was to get him out of town where he'd be safe and let things settle down.

- **Map:** So they send Paul back to **Tarsus** via **Caesarea**.
- Paul will be cooling his jets in Tarsus for seven years until the leaders of the church send Barnabas in **Acts 11:25** to seek Paul to be used to spread the gospel.

- There is no record of what Paul did during those 7 years of preparation; perhaps he renewed his study of the Word, now was reading them in a whole new light. Now he could see Jesus in all the prophecies.
- God has a purpose and a plan for Paul, but from the time of his salvation to the beginning of his ministry there will be 10 years of training and preparation.

**Ephesians 2:10** “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

- <sup>31</sup>Then, meaning after Paul was gone, there was peace in the church, rest throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria.
- They were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit - and they were multiplied. An indication that the decision to stash Paul was of the Lord.

**James 3:17-18** “<sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

- Now the focus will shift back to Peter’s ministry:

V: 32 “... as Peter passed through all quarters...” Peter is following Jesus’ example, and Samuel’s, and others - kind of a circuit preacher, moving around ministering to as many as he can in the name of Jesus.

- With the previous persecution of Christians, many had moved from Jerusalem to the smaller villages and towns throughout Judea, Samaria, and beyond; and we see Peter going out to minister to them, doing as Jesus instructed him, feeding the sheep.

**Map:** Along his travels Peter came to “Lydda” which is the same as “Lod” which is on the main road that leads from Jerusalem to Joppa.

V: 33 In Lydda Peter came upon a man who had been bed ridden for 8 years with the palsy. Palsy was an excruciating condition which was the result of VD / STD.

- As the palsy advanced in a person, it would effect their joints and muscles leaving the mind in tact. The persons muscles would cramp up and the joints would lock up making the person rigid, in a state of paralysis, but still able to think and perceive what was going on around them. There was no cure for this condition, eventually they would just wither away for lack of being able to eat.



V: 34-35 Peter finds this man who had been suffering suffering of the Palsy for 8 years, whose name we see is Aeneas - and being led of the Spirit tells him in the name Jesus Christ, you are made whole, you are healed.

- Aeneas then got up - and everyone else could see that he was healed. Lydda is the city where they were, Saron was the outlying region from Lydda to the coast.
- **Romans 12 & 1 Corinthians 12** lists the various gifts of the Spirit. Here we see the miraculous gift of healing along with the gift of faith.

The Bible describes how every believer is given a measure of faith:

**Romans 12:3** "... according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

**1 Corinthians 12:9** "To another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;"

- This is different that the ordinary faith of **Romans 12:3**, this is the faith God gives us to step out in faith in an extraordinary way - like praying for a paralyzed man.

V: 36-38 **Map:** Joppa at the coast. Tabitha / Aramaic, Dorcas / Greek - Gazelle. was a kind and generous woman.

- Tabitha got sick and died, so they washed her in the ceremonial manner and laid her in an upper room.
- The healing of the man with palsy was known throughout Saron, which included Joppa. Knowing that Peter was in Lydda, not too far from Joppa they sent for him to please come without delay.
- Up to this point there is no record of any of the Apostles being used to raise the dead, so this is another example of their faith, faith that Jesus could work through Peter to accomplish this.

V: 39 Peter's whole purpose is to minister, he got up and went with them. He made himself available.

- They brought him to where Tabitha was lain. The different people that she had ministered to were there showing him all the clothes and things she had made and given to them. A testimony to her kindness.

V: 40-41 Very similar to when Jesus ministered to Jairus' daughter, Peter had everyone leave the room.

- Kneeling down, he prayed - speaking to God, knowing that he wasn't up to the task, knowing that it wasn't his power or spirituality, he called upon God, then he spoke to Tabitha telling her to arise.

- She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. Peter then took her by the hand and presented her to the saints and widows.
- A miraculous occasion, a joyful occasion for Tabitha's friends, she may not have been quite so thrilled!

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

V: 42-43 This too was known throughout Joppa and many believed in the Lord.

- They believed in the Lord because that is who got credit for the miracle, Peter made it a point to glorify God, to give Him the glory!
- Peter then stayed in Joppa waiting his next assignment.
- He stayed with Simon a tanner. A leather worker.
- We see God further preparing Peter for ministry. In **Acts 8** he was ministering to the Samaritans, 1/2 breeds from the Jew's perspective. Now he's with a tanner, considered to be one of the lowest vocations, considered un-clean because they were dealing with dead animals as their trade. Tanners were not allowed to live within the city limits.
- If a father betrothed his daughter to a man and later found out he was a tanner, the contract was null and void.
- But here's Peter staying with a tanner. God is breaking down walls in Peter's heart, and this is just the beginning as we get to the next chapter.