

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### PROCLAMATION (ACTS 9:19B-25)

#### "JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD"

Not everyone comes to the conclusion that Jesus is the Savior as quick as Saul, but after his experience on the road to Damascus, no wonder he "Immediately began proclaiming Jesus..." Saul was extremely comfortable in synagogues, so that's where his witness begins.

#### WAIT, THIS GUY?

Of course the non-believing Jews and the Christians in Damascus were perplexed because just days earlier Saul came with the "purpose of taking [Christians] as prisoners..."

- Now he was "confounding the Jews" by "proving that this One is the Messiah." Saul was capable because of his **knowledge of scripture and his recent experience**

#### OVER TIME, THEY WANTED TO KILL HIM TOO

After "many days," thought to be around 3 year's time, the Jews in Damascus plotted to murder Saul. Even King Aretas IV assisted the Jews in this plot. Ironically, **the hunter now becomes the hunted.**

- We now learn that Saul had disciples himself, and they helped him escape through an opening in the city wall.

#### THE SUFFERING FOR HIS NAME HAS BEGUN

Jesus told Ananias that Saul will "suffer for My name!" (v16). Suffering begins in Saul's life with threats and a humiliating exit from Damascus.

- **Suffering for His name is a part of the Christian experience. Suffering associates us with Christ, purifies our faith, and builds empathy, character, and community.**

### SPEAKING BOLDLY (ACTS 9:26-31)

#### THE WORD HAD GOTTEN OUT

After years in Damascus as a follower of Jesus, Saul's conversion had spread to Jerusalem. When Saul reached Jerusalem, he was not welcomed by the disciples because they "were afraid" and "did not believe he was a disciple."

#### SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT

We meet Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, who took Saul and introduced him to the apostles and vouched for his conversion.

- After talking with the apostles, Saul was fully accepted by the Hellenistic and Palestinian Christians and began "speaking boldly in the name of Jesus" throughout Jerusalem.

#### THIS SOUNDS ODDLY FAMILIAR

Saul went around and "conversed and debated" with the Jews, but they "attempted to kill him." Essentially, **Saul was taking over where Stephen had left off.**

- It was not Saul's time to die, so the "brothers" took him out of town to Caesarea and then to Tarsus to protect him from an outcome like Stephen's.

#### WE WON'T HEAR OF SAUL FOR A LITTLE WHILE

Saul ended up in Tarsus (Turkey) for nearly 10 years. So, we take a break from the narrative of Saul to focus on other things happening within the church.

- We often think the events in the Bible happen in immediate succession, but **it is good to know that these Christians didn't develop overnight**

#### THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH

Ekklesia usually means the local church, but in v31 it is referring to the universal church. Now that the #1 persecutor of the faith has become a believer, "Judea (South), Galilee (North), and Samaria (Central) had peace..."

- **They grew in numbers and maturity because they respected God and were encouraged by the Holy Spirit.**

#### QUANTITY AND QUALITY

If we do not respect the power of God and the message of Christ, we will not only stagnate as a faith, but we will not mature and improve as individuals.

- **If we have a relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit will encourage us through times of peace and suffering.**

### GET UP (ACTS 9:32-35)

#### WE SHIFT BACK TO PETER IN LYDDA

Peter was traveling through cities near Jerusalem, and came to a town northwest called Lydda. More than likely, the gospel came to this area from Philip.

#### THERE WAS A MAN THERE NAMED AENEAS

This was a follower of Jesus who had been paralyzed for 8 years. Seeing God do the miraculous was nothing new to Peter, so his faith was strong.

- It's odd that no request by Aeneas was mentioned. Peter walked up from a prompting of the Spirit and told the man "Jesus Christ heals you."

#### "...AND IMMEDIATELY HE GOT UP."

This miracle quickly spread throughout Lydda and the surrounding towns causing many to follow Jesus.

- **The ultimate goal of miracles is the advancement of the saving knowledge of Jesus. Though it's wonderful to be physically or mentally healed, without soul healing, it's all in vain.**

#### WHAT ABOUT HEALING TODAY?

We should not only believe in modern day healing, but **we should pray with expectancy for it.** We should also know that **it is not always God's will to heal, and that we should ultimately want His will, not ours.**

### A GOOD WOMAN (ACTS 9:36-43)

#### MEANWHILE IN NEARBY JOPPA

There was a female disciple of Jesus named Tabitha in Aramaic, or Dorcas in Greek, that means **gazelle**. This woman had an amazing reputation for doing acts of service and good works for her community, especially the widows and poor.

#### SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We have seen examples of **miracles, healing, tongues, and prophecy**, but we are also seeing gifts of **exhortation** through Barnabas, **evangelism** through Philip, **teaching** through Saul, and now Tabitha with the gift of **servicing**.

- Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and 1 Peter 4:11 list the Gifts of the Spirit.

#### TABITHA BECAME SICK AND DIED

Normally a corpse would not lay overnight, but because her body did, we can infer that the followers of Jesus expected something miraculous to take place.

- The disciple heard Peter was near, so they asked him to come and pray for their beloved sister. Having the Elders pray for people is biblical.

#### THEY DEEPLY LOVED THIS IMPORTANT WOMAN

As Peter stood by Tabitha's body, the widows she had taken care of wept because she was so loved and needed in her community.

- **Death is the consequence for sin being inserted into humanity.** All of us will die in this life, but **if we trust in Christ we are resurrected and live forever.**

#### DEATH IS AN ENEMY

Satan comes to "steal, kill, and destroy." This progression of literal and spiritual death is Satan's goal for all of us and he finds joy in the grief, fear, and regret we suffer through in times of loss.

- **Death reminds us to live! Knowing we will die here should push us to live to the fullest via a relationship with Christ.**

#### PETER SENT THEM OUT, AND HE PRAYED

Raising people from the dead has never been the norm in Christianity. Jesus only did it 3 times in over 3 years, but Peter was present for all 3.

- The result was she was raised to life. The Believers rejoiced and many people joined the faith because of what had happened.

#### AND PETER MOVES ON TO AN UNLIKELY RECIPIENT

v43 says, "Peter stayed in Joppa with Simon, a leather tanner." Tanners were considered unclean to a rabbi because they dealt with dead animals, but Peter is **no longer confined to religious practice, but free in Christ to minister to all.**

- From here, Peter will share the gospel with the first **true** gentile convert.

#### TEMPORARY LIFE

- This life can be extremely difficult, and we are prone to selfish ambition, lustful desires, ease, comfort, self-preservation, and narcissism. All of these things may lead to temporary "life," but ultimately they lead to eternal death, a complete separation from God.

#### ETERNAL LIFE

- Every resurrection is a foreshadowing of our future. We have the ability to live life in abundance now. This is not shallow materialism, but a life of contentment, peace, and joy. A "fullness" of life.
- We also have the promise of a life with God in paradise for eternity (Revelation 21:4,27)