

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 26TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

TRIALS (ACTS 9:19B-30) "SAUL WAS WITH THE DISCIPLES"

Saul found himself in the company of the people he had set out to destroy.

- Although the disciples may have shared many stories and insights from their own experiences, Luke states that Saul immediately began proclaiming Jesus in the local schools of religion.
- **We can be educated and have knowledge, but understanding will change the way we share Jesus.**

THEY WERE ASTOUNDED

The sudden transformation of the famous persecutor made many question his motives and understanding.

- His teaching was solid and aligned perfectly with every prophecy about the Messiah, and every time he shared, he became stronger in his own relationship with Christ.
- **Obedience brings growth. We will talk about the One who is on our minds.**

"MANY DAYS HAD PASSED"

Luke compresses Saul's time before returning to Jerusalem into "many days."

- During this time (about three years), Saul continued to teach as he received instruction from Jesus (Galatians 1:10-24).
- **We will continue to grow in understanding as we live for Christ, but the moment we begin following Jesus is the beginning of our opportunity to share with others.**

THEY CONSPIRED TO KILL HIM

By the time Saul returned to Damascus, he had developed a reputation as a disciple of Christ, and he wasn't winning friends among the religious establishment.

- Knowing that he would try to leave, they posted guards at the gates of the walled city.
- **What kind of reputation are we developing as followers of Christ? Do we expect to become popular?**

FRIENDS, FOES, AND FEAR

Some who believed Saul's conversion helped him escape from the plot to kill him by lowering him through an opening in the wall.

- He returned to Jerusalem as a follower of Jesus, but the disciples there believed he was still seeking to destroy the Church.
- **Even Believers who have seen the power of God at work in their own lives can doubt God's ability to change others.**

BARNABAS EXPLAINS

Barnabas took Saul to the spiritual leaders and told them about the genuineness of Saul's experience—specifically, how Jesus had spoken to Saul and how Saul had been boldly sharing the gospel for the last three years.

- **Are we willing to believe that God has the power to change people? How long did we have to wait before others believed us? Do our lives offer any proof that we are followers of Christ?**

A PATTERN IS ESTABLISHED

The apostles and the disciples in Jerusalem began to believe that Saul was the real thing, and they received him into their fellowship.

- Saul followed in Stephen's footsteps and engaged the religious leaders with unwavering truth. They couldn't win the debate, so they tried to kill him.
- As we follow Saul through the book of Acts, we will continue to find him confronting his past, proclaiming the gospel, and barely escaping with his life.

GROWTH (ACTS 9:31-35)

PEACE AND STRENGTH

After giving a brief account of Saul's conversion and growth as a true disciple, Luke returns to sharing about how the Church continued to grow all throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.

- In spite of Saul's persecution, the Church continued to grow.
- In the middle of persecution, the Church experienced peace and strength. How?

"LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD"

Saul's conversion wasn't the end of persecution; it was just the end of part of it. The Church was under constant persecution and oppression.

- Because the Church knew the power of Jesus' resurrection and had the Holy Spirit guiding them, they realized their devotion, awe, and respect for God were bigger than their fear of anyone who stood against them.

- **Where are we looking for peace and strength?**

PETER FOUND A MAN NAMED AENEAS

It may seem like a sudden change of topic as Luke describes the event in Lydda.

- Aeneas had been bedridden for eight years. In that culture, he was considered a broken burden to society and may have been seen as deserving his condition because of his sin.
- His sudden physical healing became a visible testimony of the power of the living Jesus.

CHRIST HEALS

It was harder for the disciples to believe that Saul was changed than it was for the lost people in Lydda and Sharon to believe that Aeneas was healed by the power of Jesus' name.

- Luke is telling the events surrounding the ministries of Peter and Saul, but we must remember who is doing the healing and saving.
- People will turn to the Lord because He is the one who saves, changes, and grows His Church.

ALIVE (ACTS 9:36-43) DISCIPLES IN JOPPA

Peter was summoned to Joppa, where a disciple had recently died.

- It seems this was Gentile territory, but that didn't keep Peter from answering the call.
- Jew or Gentile, lost or saved, male or female—Peter knew that people needed what he had.
- **When we pass our message through a "who deserves it?" filter, we reveal what we believe about the message.**

GOOD WORKS, CHARITY, AND TABITHA

Tabitha had a reputation for always doing good works and acts of charity.

- She gave from the work of her own hands, not just financial gifts.
- She was a disciple who had given herself to supporting her community, and her death had impacted many in Joppa.
- **Service doesn't go unnoticed. Sadly, many communities wouldn't miss the church if it went missing.**

THE UNEXPECTED RESUSCITATION

After seeing the grieving widows, Peter sent everyone out of the room.

- He got on his knees, prayed in humility, then turned toward the body of Tabitha.
- Much like he spoke to Aeneas, he told her to "get up" and took her hand to help her stand.
- **We may not raise the dead, but we will see people come to life as we share Christ. What will we do next?**

"PETER STAYED FOR SOME TIME"

Peter stood with Tabitha and presented her to the other Believers and the widows who seemed the most broken-hearted.

- Afterward, he stayed and continued to teach those who became Believers after the miracle.
- **Miracles may open our eyes, but they aren't the best foundation. Discipleship is essential to growing and being alive as a follower of Christ. Do we believe that people can become alive in Christ?**

UNBELIEF

- Unbelief comes in many forms.
- **Some don't believe in God; others won't believe that some are Believers.**
- **Where is our unbelief? If we say that we believe in God but don't believe He can save others, what do we really believe about God?**

CHANGE

- It's hard to believe new things.
- **To believe something new, we need to see something change.**
- **The problem is that we want proof more than we want to see truth. Change happens to Believers because of our obedience to Christ. We don't live to prove who we are; we live because of who we have become in Christ.**

FRUIT

- We like to judge the change we can see.
- **We are always on the lookout for fresh fruit.**
- **The problem is that we keep looking at other people's branches! So many are broken, damaged, exposed, or bandaged because of the storms of life. When God saves, He loves, changes, and produces fruit. The only past that determines a Believer's future is Christ's. What will it take for us to believe that about others—and maybe even ourselves?**