

# Acts 9:26-43



Acts 9:26–31

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.

30 But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

## The Courage of Barnabas



26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles

Saul understandably is an outcast back in Jerusalem. A Christian without a church. The desperate situation should sit heavy on us. Saul needs a church, you need a church, no Christian can survive without fellowship. The Jews want to kill him, the Christians are afraid he's out to kill them. There's nowhere for him to go. But Barnabas.

You can almost see the scene. Saul's world has collapsed. Friendless and homeless in the city he used to rule. A thunderstorm looms overhead, the rain begins as Paul aimless and hopeless turns and begins a slow walk, to where? Nowhere. Right then a large man approaches, fearless, brash, he grasps Saul and in that moment Saul winces, awaiting what could only be the knife to end his life. The embrace tightens, there is no knife, and then the words he longs most to hear but dare never expect or hope to hear. "Brother Saul, let's go to church".

## The Proof of Conversion



and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

What comes next is Barnabas's argument for Saul, his defense of true conversion. It's an incredible, concise list of attributes which when backed on the reputation of Barnabas is sufficient to welcome Saul the murderer as Saul the brother into the very church he had striven so hard to hack apart.

- Seen Jesus
- Spoken to Jesus
- Spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus

- The Lord had chosen Saul
- Saul has received the Spirit
- Saul was bearing fruit

It really is as simple as that. Chosen of God, received the Spirit, bearing the fruit of that Spirit.

## More of the Same



28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.  
 29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.  
 30 But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

Once Saul is welcomed in, protected, included, encouraged, he immediately gets back to the same task as Damascus. You might expect the tactics to change, a new strategy, something more mature, something that would produce a less deadly result. But no, more of the same and unsurprisingly to the same end. Even the death threats resolve in the same outcome of getting sent off, always on the move, always under threat, because the message cannot change, the offer of eternal life through the forgiveness of sin. Seeking out those who, like Saul, the Lord has chosen, who would receive the Spirit and who would themselves begin to bear fruit.

## Peace in the Church



31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

And so our time with Saul in Acts 9 comes to a close, from murderous threats to peace. From getting hacked apart to being built up, growing in the fear and comfort of the Spirit. From decrease to increase. What an absolutely insane turn of events. The days of persecution are not over, but the conversion of Saul marks a distinct and definite turning point for the church. From teetering on the verge of extinction, always one purge away from being snuffed out, to being a thriving increasing global force major world religion. What had begun as a dozen men was now an unstoppable force of God for the call of salvation to all men everywhere.

Or nearly. There is yet one more barrier which must fall. The divide between Jew and Gentile. And it is no petty fence. It is a wall high, thick and embedded into the DNA of every early believer. For this final progression in the original call of Christ to his apostles we turn again to Peter.



Acts 1:8  
 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."



### Acts 9:32–43

32 Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.  
33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.  
34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.  
35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.  
36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.  
37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.  
38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."  
39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.  
40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.  
41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.  
42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.  
43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.

The narrative now switches, quite abruptly to Peter. We're on this trajectory from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria now about to begin the launch into the rest of the world. Saul will carry the gospel to the Gentiles but Peter will lay the first brick. We've taken a pause to focus and familiarize ourselves with Saul and now we turn back to Peter and focus on the narrative which will fling wide the doors for Saul to take the gospel further than any Jew would have ever dreamed permissible.

## Peter vs Saul

An immediate obvious contrast in our narrative shift is Peter is performing miracles while Saul was sharing the gospel. Peter appears to be strengthening existing believers while Saul was evangelizing unbelievers. I don't think there's anything terribly significant in this contrast other than both aspects of Christian ministry are essential. Evangelizing and striving for the conversion of unbelievers as well as encouraging, strengthening and building up established believers. Our work doesn't end at conversion because conversion is only the beginning.

It can be easy to idolize or prioritize one ministry over another. Or maybe more commonly to assign one ministry over the other. I'm an evangelist or I'm an encourager and therefore I do not need to engage in the other aspect of ministry.

Incorrect. Both Saul and Peter engaged in both evangelism and encouragement according to the immediate needs before them. They were in tune with the Spirit, willing, able and eager to engage in whatever activity to which they were led. I can hear my dad's voice saying it like this. "If you see a job needing to be done, do it." There's a time and a place for optimization, for assigning tasks and matching skills, talent and time, but as soon as those become excuses for you not doing the work that you see needs to be done you've gone too far.

## Aeneas

Quick, low detail miracles like this one always puzzle me. Was Aeneas a well known guy? Would folks reading Acts be like oh wow no way I had no idea, everyone knows Aeneas, he's a great guy, really loves the Lord, you'd never have known we was once cripple or that he'd been healed by Peter. How did Peter pick? The church was so large. Aeneas wasn't the only crippled believer. Others weren't healed. Others stayed in bed. Why Aeneas?

We'll never know, he's not mentioned again, all we know is when people saw him they turned to the Lord.

## Dorcas

The second miracle in the narrative includes a bit more color yet still puzzles me slightly. Why Dorcas/Tabitha? Death in the church wasn't uncommon. Death by sickness wasn't unique. What made Dorcas so special? Why did the disciples feel in this case such a strong urge to send men to Peter imploring him to come quickly to be close to a dead person? Why did Peter go? Why this dead person? Why not Stephen? Why not all the believers dying at the hand of Saul or other religious leaders?

We'll never know, she's not mentioned again, all we know is her resurrection became known all over Joppa and many believed in the Lord.

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So what of those who are not raised or healed? Those given to suffer and struggle. Those for whom Peter is not coming.

### James 1:12

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

### Galatians 6:9–10

9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary  
10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Do not lose heart. The Lord makes each of his children most effective for the ministry to which he has called them. He equips, both sickness and health, wealth and poverty, the scale between the two is smaller than it seems when measured against eternity. And always remember. Peter may not be coming, but Jesus is.

### Revelation 21:3–7

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,  
4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."  
5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."  
6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.  
7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son."

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As we close the page on Acts 9 I want you to remember this chapter. In it we learn what it means to be Christian. Namely to be chosen of God, to receive his Spirit and then to bear fruit, specifically in evangelism. We've seen the essential nature of Christian fellowship as the foundation for all Christian activity and we've closed with a hopeful sunrise of Christianity about to rise over the Gentiles. What a wild ride, I hope you're encouraged, that the clarity brings you conviction, that you're able to better focus on what's most important. Stay in church and share the gospel.