

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Nine – The Conversion of Saul

ACTS 9:32-43:

In our last lesson, we left Saul of Tarsus in his hometown, which concluded the events of his conversion, his education by the Lord (**Galatians 1:11-12**), and first acts as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Luke will now return to Peter as the focus of the narrative. In the remainder of the rest of this chapter, Luke will record a series of miracles performed at Lydda and Joppa, which will in turn establish the opportunity to preach the Gospel (the purpose of the miracles – confirm the word, **Mark 16:20**).

Text #1:

Acts 9:32-35 “Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. ³³ There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he arose immediately. ³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.”

Lydda: Referred to as “A village not less than a city,” by Josephus; it was about 30 miles NW of Jerusalem, and was on an important trade route or highway.

Aeneas: All that is known about this man is described here by Luke. Luke, being a physician, describes his paralytic condition as eight years in length.

Jesus Christ heals you: Peter’s statement of the authority behind the miracle coincides with the teaching of Paul concerning the preeminence of Christ alone, as having authority in all things (**Mathew 28:18**) – **Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18**. It would also serve to introduce, by power, the focus of the Gospel that was about to be preached at Lydda and Sharon (Sharon was the coastal plain between Joppa and Mount Carmel, with the cities of Dor, Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, and Anitpatris found there).

Turned to the Lord:

The illustration of turning to the Lord is in fact the very definition of conversion. Initially, it was instructed as:

Acts 2:38-41 “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly

received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

The very next time, Peter would illustrate it this way:

Acts 3:19-21 “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

As the Gospel would continue to spread, Luke would illustrate the act of conversion as:

Acts 5:14 “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women”

We have addition specific recorded accounts of conversion, such as: **Acts 8:34-39; 9:18**; however, whether from the beginning to here, the term “**Turning to the Lord**”, in all its forms, is describing the complete acts of man in submission to the Grace of God extended through the true Gospel message –

Mark 16:15-16 “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Text #2:

Acts 9:36-43 “At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸ And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹ Then Peter arose and went with all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put 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 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. ⁴³ So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.”

Joppa: Joppa was a principal seaport of Judea that is located about 40 miles from Jerusalem and about 12 miles from Lydda.

Tabitha: “Tabitha” is the rendering of her name in Hebrew; then Luke, for the sake of Theophilus, renders her name in the Greek equivalent (“Dorcas”). She is referred to by Luke as

a disciple, which designates that she was already a convert and now a practitioner of the teaching of Christ's doctrine.

She is described as a classic example, by her charitable deeds, and good works of what all women in sound "**Bodies of Christ**" should be trying to attain!

Titus 2:3-4 "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things – ⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children."

Sent for Peter: After Tabitha's subsequent death and the preparation being begun for her funeral, it was found out that Peter was near; so, he was sent for. Now, there had not been a demonstration of raising the dead since the Lord raised Lazarus (**John 11:38-44**). So, it was far more likely that Peter had been sent for, in order to comfort the brethren.

Peter Put Them All Out: This was not an attempt to hide anything; it was however, for the simple fact that these brethren were Jews, and there were very specific guidelines for contact with the dead.

Under the Law of Moses, that these brethren had been converted out of, but still held the practices as sacred, a dead person, regardless of the cause of death, made anyone who contacted them unclean (**Numbers 19:22**). In addition, anything they then touched was also made unclean. Even the enclosure where the body was kept was made unclean and all un-covered vessels inside (**Numbers 19:14**). Provisions were made to for cleansing of the unclean (**Numbers 19:17-19**).

Peter used this tact for expediency, in order to perform this miracle without the distraction of offending any who was here.

Presented Her Alive: Once her life was restored and the issue of the dead body was no longer a concern, she is presented to everyone. The result is as it should have been, and word of this event spread throughout the entire city. This, as it has happened in every case, also provided the way for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached.

"**Many believed on the Lord**", is another designation for "**Turned to the Lord**"; and as before, is describing the complete acts of man in submission to the Grace of God extended through the true Gospel message; which is also the only way to God (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**) –

Mark 16:15-16 "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Peter would stay at Joppa with a tanner, named Simon. A tanner was one who is skilled in dressing and preserving hides and skins of animals. We will find Peter here until he will be summoned for by Cornelius in the next chapter.