

I. Saul Becomes Part of The Church (20-25)

A. Saul Begins Being a Witness (20)

1. Saul Immediately Begins Preaching Christ in the Synagogues

- a. No doubt he would grow and learn but Paul already had a commanding knowledge of the Old Testament. When He understood Christ as the Messiah, it would have fit all the pieces together
- b. Saul probably understood well what the Christians believed, especially after hearing Stephen's Sermon
- c. He would not have needed to be instructed in the same way as other converts might (although surely some instruction was necessary)
- d. Instead of presenting letters from the High Priest in the Synagogues, he is presenting Jesus as the Messiah

2. Saul Preaches that Jesus is the Son of God

- a. This is the first time in Acts that Jesus is proclaimed as the Son of God
- b. Already, Saul realizes the significance of Jesus as the divine Messiah and the true Israel

B. Saul Witnesses in Christ's Power (21-22)

1. Saul's Transformation Amazes the People (21)

- a. Christ had Truly Done a miraculous work in Saul
 - i. The people hearing him were amazed that he was actually preaching Jesus
 - ii. The people knew well the reputation of Saul of Tarsus as one who violently persecuted Christians
 - iii. The people knew he destroyed those who "call on the name" in Jerusalem
 - "call on his name" is taken from Old Testament prophecies of God's deliverance
 - It became shorthand for trusting in Christ
 - iv. The people also knew that he had come to Damascus expressly to destroy the believers there
- b. Christ Receives the Glory for Saul's Conversion
 - i. No one could believe that the terrible Saul would have been converted
 - ii. They were amazed by his conversion and no doubt marveled in the power of God to change even the darkest heart

2. Christ's Power in Saul Confounds the Jews (22)

- a. Saul increased in Strength as He grew in Christ

- i. This could mean that he continued to get stronger from his blindness and three days fasting
 - ii. More likely, it means he grew stronger in the Lord and the preaching of his name
 - iii. There is a connection between his confounding the Jews and his growing stronger as though it was Christ's power in him that caused him to prevail over those who argued against him
 - Today, the smartest person doesn't win the argument. The power of the Spirit is the only one who can change hearts
 - Rather than focusing only on intelligence and theological arguments, we should pray for guidance and power from God
 - b. Saul Confounded the Jews Who Opposed Him
 - i. Saul's testimony and spiritual understanding of the Messiah confounded the Jews
 - "The Jews" here is not taken to just mean Jewish people. These were the synagogue Jews who opposed the preaching of the cross
 - Saul didn't confound them by earthly wisdom but by presenting Christ in the OT scripture and sharing his own conversion story
 - ii. Saul's Testimony was simply to prove Jesus was the Christ
- C. Saul's Witness Brings Persecution (23-24)
- 1. Like Stephen, Saul's new Christianity soon brings persecution
 - a. He continued preaching for many days
 - b. He made a lifestyle out of persuading others to follow Christ
 - c. Saul is just as zealous for God's truth as he was in persecuting God's people
 - 2. The Jews convene together and plot to kill him
 - a. Like Stephen, they couldn't overcome his preaching
 - b. Like Stephen, they decided it would be easier just to get rid of him
 - c. NOTE: Luke doesn't mention it but Saul went to Arabia (which was close to Damascus) after his conversion and preached there as well. Then he returned to Damascus to continue preaching. 2 Co. 11:32 tells us that Aretas, the king of the Nabateans (in Arabia) colluded with the Jews in Damascus to kill Paul.
 - d. The great hunter has become the hunted

D. Saul is Aided By His New Fellowship (25)

1. The same people Saul came to Damascus to kill help him escape death himself
2. The disciples snuck him out of the city by letting him down in a basket because the Jews were watching the city gates for him
 - a. Three years ago Saul was a conqueror of the Church, a man to be feared
 - b. Now Saul is hiding in a basket and sneaking out of the city because he is threatened with death
 - c. Jesus told him that he would suffer for His name
3. Saul has become part of the church in every way
 - a. He is preaching the gospel
 - b. He is persecuted by the enemy
 - c. He is fellowshiping with believers

II. The Church Receives Saul (26-31)

A. Saul is Supported by A Sincere Believer (26-27)

1. The Jerusalem Church Rejects Saul (26)
 - a. Paul Desires Fellowship with Jerusalem Disciples (26)
 - i. Saul arrives in Jerusalem and immediately seeks to connect with the believers there
 - ii. Remember, this is the same man who once wreaked havoc in the Christian community in Jerusalem
 - iii. Now as a believer, his heart desired to fellowship with the people he once persecuted
 - He probably knew that many would blame him for the death or imprisonment of their loved ones
 - He probably knew that many would still see him as the enemy of Christ
 - He had received a new heart and he longed to be part of the community anyway – Amazing that people today claim to be part of the church but don't want to be in fellowship with them
 - iv. He left Jerusalem three years earlier to kill Christians and returns now as one
 - b. The Disciples Refuse to Accept Saul
 - i. The disciples were afraid of Him
 - No doubt they thought he was just putting on a show to get inside and persecute them
 - They probably still remembered being persecuted by him or having their fellow believers persecuted by him.

- ii. The disciples did not believe Saul was truly converted
 - Remember Saul has not just been a Christians for a few weeks
 - For over three years, Saul has preached the gospel, been persecuted for the faith, and been in fellowship with believers
 - But the Jerusalem disciples still didn't believe he was genuine – they weren't willing to take the risk – they weren't willing to take in a believer with Saul's history
 - Do we take risks like that today?
- 2. Barnabas Takes A Risk For Saul (27)
 - a. Barnabas sees Saul through "Gospel eyes"
 - i. He knows Paul's history and reputation
 - ii. He still believes that God is powerful enough to save anyone –
 - iii. He puts his own reputation on the line by believing in Saul and accepting his testimony
 - b. Barnabas Takes Saul to the Apostles
 - i. Barnabas takes a huge risk in bringing Saul to the Apostles
 - Galatians 1:18-19 tell us that it was only Peter and James that Saul met
 - Barnabas brought the greatest persecutor of the church, right to the Apostle Peter – he could have turned and killed Peter easily
 - Barnabas risks his own reputation in trusting Saul's conversion
 - ii. Barnabas had taken the time to invest in Saul
 - Barnabas himself told Peter and James Saul's testimony and his Christian activities in Damascus
 - This means Barnabas must have taken time and listened to Saul's story
 - Barnabas invested in the life of the believer that no one else would touch with a 10 foot pole.
 - iii. Barnabas' efforts must have been successful because Saul was accepted after that
- B. The Church Again Safeguards Saul (28-30)
 - 1. Saul Continues His Witness in Jerusalem (28)
 - a. Saul invests himself in the life of the Jerusalem church
 - b. Saul's heart still desires fellowship with the brethren

- c. Saul's heart still continues to preach and teach about Jesus (see v.29)
 - 2. Saul's Witness Brings Persecution (29)
 - a. Saul continues speaking boldly in the name of Jesus
 - i. Even among the people of Jerusalem, Saul continues preaching the truth
 - ii. Saul's heart cannot keep from preaching truth, desiring the conversion of the people of Israel
 - b. Saul disputes Christ with the Grecians
 - i. Grecians are the same Hellenistic Jews to whom Stephen ministered – they were part of the Jews from other countries that were in synagogues in Jerusalem
 - ii. These are the same Grecians that turned Stephen over and brought about his execution
 - iii. Saul continues to defend the gospel against those who would oppose it
 - c. Saul is once again threatened with death
 - i. Like Stephen, the Hellenistic Jews sought to kill him in Jerusalem
 - ii. So far, Saul has preached in three regions. He has preached in Damascus, Arabia, and Jerusalem – and in all three places, the people tried to kill him (and each time, Saul is saved by the believers)
 - 3. Saul is Again Aided By Disciples (30)
 - a. The believers in Jerusalem, who at first rejected Saul, now come to his aid and send him away to protect his life
 - b. Notice that Saul is taken to Caesarea (a coastal town) and shipped off to Tarsus
 - i. Remember Tarsus was Saul's hometown
 - ii. They were sending him back to his homeland because everywhere he went there was persecution, strife, and threats on his life
- C. The Church Finally Enjoys Peace (31)
 - 1. The persecution which began with Stephen's death finally ends
 - 2. The persecution has been ongoing for a number of years
 - 3. A number of factors contributed to the peace the church enjoyed
 - a. Saul's conversion
 - i. Saul was the initiator and the spearhead of the persecution of believers in Jerusalem and Damascus – when he is converted, the greatest enemy of Christ becomes part of the church

- ii. Saul became as zealous preaching Christ as he had been persecuting Him
- b. Saul's Leaving for Tarsus
 - i. Saul was so bold and forceful with his preaching and his life of Christian service that his presence and ministry brought persecution down upon him
 - ii. Saul was causing turmoil in Jerusalem by his boldly proclaiming the name of Christ
 - iii. The believers sent Saul to Tarsus to protect him and when Saul was gone, the persecution died down (We will continue to see that where Paul goes with the gospel, he will continually be persecuted)
 - iv. Here we will see the gospel ministry move away from Jerusalem, out into the other areas of the world

NOTE: We will try to do the rest of chapter nine, although if I were preaching, I would probably separate the outline here. From v. 32, Luke switches and focuses on Christ's activity through Peter.

I say Christ working through Peter because these two miracles mirror two miracles that Jesus did in the gospels. It seems like Luke records these particular miracles to show that Jesus' ministry is continuing through the Apostles.

III. The Church Continues To Grow Through Christ's Ministry (32-43)

A. Jesus' Ministry Continues in Lydda (32-35)

- 1. Peter Finds Aeneas, a Paralyzed Man (32-33)
 - a. Aeneas is a man paralyzed for 8 years
 - b. This man is similar to the paralyzed man in Mark 2:11
- 2. Jesus Heals Aeneas Through Peter (34)
 - a. In Mark 2:11, Jesus heals the paralyzed man
 - b. Here Peter tells Aeneas "Jesus Christ heals you"
 - c. In Mark 2:11, Jesus tells the paralyzed man to pick up your bed and walk
 - d. Here Peter tells Aeneas to arise and make your bed
- 3. Jesus' Ministry Converts Many in Lydda (35)
 - a. The effect of the miracle is the conversion of many in the area
 - b. It was Jesus through Peter that did this

B. Jesus' Ministry Continues in Joppa (36-43)

- 1. A Devout Disciple Dies in Joppa (36-37)
 - a. Tabitha is a Model of Faith in Jesus (36)
 - i. Tabitha and Dorcas both mean "Gazelle"
 - ii. She was full of good works and alms giving

- b. Tabitha dies and is Prepared for Burial (37)
- 2. Peter is Brought To Tabitha's Body (38-39)
 - a. The Church Sends For Peter (38)
 - b. Peter Sees the Testimony of Tabitha (39)
 - i. The widows of Tabitha's fellowship show Peter her works of love
 - ii. She made garments for the widows who would have no other way to provide for themselves
- 3. Jesus Heals Tabitha through Peter (40)
 - a. Peter puts everyone out of the upper room just like Jesus did to Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:51; Mark 5:40)
 - b. Jesus healed Jairus' daughter by saying arise – Peter knelt and prayed to Jesus and then said, Tabitha Arise
 - c. In Mark 5:41 – Jesus says in Aramaic "Talitha Cumi" which means "little girl, arise" – If Peter spoke to her in Aramaic, he said "Tabitha Cumi" which means "Tabitha Arise" – there is only one letter's difference between the two statements
- 4. Jesus' Ministry Converts Many in Joppa (41-43)
 - a. The ministry and work of Jesus continues through his people in the life of Saul, the cities of Lydda and Joppa, Judea and Samaria, and we will see that it still continues to the ends of the earth.