

Acts 9 | "Saul's Conversion"

I. SAUL APPREHENDED BY JESUS. (v. 1-18)

A. (v. 1)

1. **"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,"**

a. "Saul"

1) At this time, Saul is a "young man" (7:58) under 40 years old, and he had *consented unto the death* of Stephen (8:1), the first martyr of the Church. Saul then began a crusade against the church and "made havock" of the church (8:3-4) through vicious persecution, even entering into the house church meetings and *dragging off men and women* (8:4). Saul was well known for his persecution (9:13-14, 20-21, 26)!

b. "breathing out" - Gr. "breathing upon; taking breath in; inhaling"

1) Luke is saying that Saul's threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord had come to be his very breath! This is what he lived for!

2) Later on, Saul would confess that he was *exceedingly mad* against the believers (Acts 26:11).

c. MORE BACKGROUND OF SAUL:

1) Saul was born in TARSUS, a city in Cilicia (22:3), thus a freeborn Roman citizen (16:37-38; 22:25-28).

a) *Tarsus was a city in Cilicia (22:3)* located in Asia Minor, which is modern-day in southeast Turkey.

i. The Cydnus River ran through the city of Tarsus, making it a river city, as well as a seaport.

ii. Tarsus was taken by Alexander the Great in 334 B.C., and became a Greek city.

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- iii. It became a university town and was one of the 3 cities with a medical school, along with Athens and Alexandria.
 - b) According to tradition, Saul's parents came from Gush Halav (Gischala) in Upper Galilee,¹ and they fled to Tarsus during the Roman takeover of the country in the first century B.C.
 - c) This means that when Saul was a young boy, he was raised in the Hellenist/Grecian culture and all the little boys that he played with were part of the Grecian culture.
 - d) Also, being a Roman citizen, he would have been given a full Roman name:
 - i. First name = Saul
 - ii. Middle Name = Paulus/Paul ([Acts 13:9](#))
 - iii. Last/Family Name = Unknown
- 2) Saul was from the Tribe of Benjamin and brought up a PHARISEE ([Phil. 3:5](#)).
- a) He would have begun his study of the Scriptures at 5 years old.²
 - b) At the age of 10, he began to study rabbinic tradition.
 - c) At the age of 12, he learned a manual trade, which in his case was tent-making ([Acts 18:3](#)).
 - d) At the age of 13, he had his bar mitzvah, and Saul's parents sent him to Jerusalem to study at the feet of Gamaliel ([Acts 22:3](#)).
- 3) He learned FOUR LANGUAGES: *Hebrew* and *Aramaic* from the Jewish community, and *Greek* and *Latin* from the streets of Tarsus.

¹ F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 43. (Excerpt From: Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. "Commentary Series: The Book of Acts." Apple Books.)

² Pirkei Avot 5:21 (*Sefaria*, [www.sefaria.org](https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.5.21?lang=bi)) https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.5.21?lang=bi

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- a) **NOTE:** Saul had extensive knowledge of the Grecian culture that he grew up in, but he also had extensive knowledge in the Hebrew culture. Thus, God began Paul preparation early on to be used as a great instrument as a missionary throughout the Roman Empire as an adult!
- 4) He had a sister in Jerusalem and may even have lived with her ([Acts 16:37-38](#); [22:25-29](#)).
- 5) Saul was probably SHORT.
 - a) Later on in the city of Lystra, the people thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods, so they called Barnabas, *Jupiter*, and Paul, *Mercury* ([Acts 14:12](#)). It could be that they called Barnabas, *Jupiter*, because he looked older and was a larger guy, whereas Paul was shorter and younger, thus called *Mercury*.
 - b) Saul also described himself as physically weak in appearance ([2 Cor. 10:10](#)), and his body will be marked because of much persecution ([Gal. 6:17](#); [2 Cor. 11:23](#)).
- 6) Saul was not a great orator ([1 Cor. 2:1](#); [2 Cor. 10:10](#); [11:6](#)), yet he was a brilliant man and rabbinic logic was part of his thinking.
- 7) He would become known by his Roman name as "the Apostle *Paul*" ([Acts 13:9](#)), and was a great instrument used in the hand of God to plant churches all throughout the known world and writing most of the New Testament.

B. (v. 2)

1. ***"And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."***

a. "letters" - Gr. *epistolas* - "epistles; messages"

- 1) Because of a treaty between Rome and the High Priest, the high priest was given the right of extradition in

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religious cases, so Saul received letters from the High Priest to extradite these Jewish believers and bring them back under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin so they could be persecuted, and even martyred like Stephen.

- b. "this Way"
 - 1) This was the most common, early name for the new faith.
 - 2) "The Way" is a very Jewish expression found six times in the book of Acts (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22), and it emphasizes a Jewish form of lifestyle.
 - a) In the O.T., the term "the way" is found many times.
 - i. "The Way of Jehovah" (Isa. 40:3).
 - ii. "The way of the righteous" and "the way of the wicked" (Psalm 1:6).
 - b) In this case, these Jewish believers followed the Way of Jesus the Messiah, and it was these followers of the Way whom Saul came to arrest.

C. (v. 3)

- 1. **"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:"**
 - a. Paul was apprehended by Jesus Christ!
 - 1) Cf. **Philippians 3:12** - Paul would write, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."
 - b. "a light from heaven" - i.e. the Shechinah glory of God
 - 1) In recounting his testimony later, Paul said that this happened "at midday" about noon (22:6; 26:13), and the

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brightness of the light was "above the brightness of the sun" (26:13).

D. (v. 4)

1. "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

a. "why persecutest thou Me?"

1) **KEY:** Jesus is totally identifying Himself with His Church. When His people are persecuted, He takes it personally!

a) Receiving one that Jesus has sent is equivalent to receiving Him.

i. Cf. **John 13:20** - Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

ii. Cf. **Matthew 18:5** - He also said, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

iii. Cf. **Matthew 25:40** - Jesus also said, "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

b) On the other hand, rejecting or persecuting a servant of God is equivalent to rejecting Him.

i. Cf. **Luke 10:16** - Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

ii. Cf. **1 Thessalonians 4:7-8** - Paul later wrote to the church in Thessalonica, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth,

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despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."

- iii. Cf. **1 Corinthians 8:12** - Paul also wrote to the church at Corinth, "*But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*"
- 2) We have a tendency to feel rejected because our testimony of Jesus is rejected.
 - a) **NOTE:** It is not *you* they are rejecting, but Jesus Christ.
 - b) **KEY:** You never suffer alone. The abuse that is poured on you for the sake of Jesus is abuse poured upon Him, and you because you represent Him.
- 3) **KEY:** Jesus totally identifies with YOU and what YOU are going through! He takes it personally!

E. (v. 5)

- 1. **"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."**
 - a. "pricks" - Gr. "goads; stings"
 - 1) When an ox would be yoked, they often would kick, so the farmers would attach goads so when the ox would kick the goad would stick the back of his leg. The ox would soon learn not to kick.
 - 2) **NOTE:** The Holy Spirit had been *goading* Saul. He was fighting against what deep down he knew was true.
 - a) Stephen, no doubt, made a deep impression upon him (**6:9-7:60**).
 - b) Saul was well-schooled in the Scriptures, but hearing Stephen's exposition of the Word of God and his love for his enemies, even while being

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martyred, no doubt made him wonder deep down if Jesus could possibly be the Messiah.

F. (v. 6)

1. ***"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."***

a. "Lord" - Gr. *kurios* - "Master"

1) Saul calls Jesus "Lord", thus an instant conversion!

a) Conversion is an instant experience.

i. There must come a definite moment and time in your life where you acknowledge and submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

b) Cf. **Romans 10:9** - "*that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;*" (NASB)

b. **NOTE:** These TWO QUESTIONS in **verses 5-6** drove Paul his whole life (**Phil. 3:4-14; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:7**)!

1) He only wanted to know Jesus more and more, and do what Jesus told him to do.

G. (v. 7)

1. ***"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."***

a. Some claim that there is a contradiction between **Acts 9:7** and **Acts 22:9**, which says, "*they heard not the voice.*" However, the Greek language clears is up easily.

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- 1) Here in **verse 7**, the Greek word "voice" (*phōnēs*) is used with the genitive, which means "to hear a sound."
- 2) In **Acts 22:9**, it uses the accusative, which means "to hear with understanding".
- 3) Thus, they *heard* it, but did not *understand* it!
 - a) **Illust.** - Years ago, my wife used to get so frustrated with me early on in our marriage because I would be reading or watching something, and she would tell me a whole paragraph of what she wanted me to do, then I would look up and say, "What?"... I would *hear* her, but I wasn't *listening*! I learned pretty quick!
- 4) **Q** = Why did Saul's companions not *understand* what was *heard*?...
 - a) Cf. **Acts 26:14** - When Paul was telling King Agrippa of this same event, he said, "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, **and saying in the Hebrew tongue**, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."
 - b) **KEY:** The men with Paul heard the sound of the voice, but did not understand because they did not speak Hebrew.
 - i. The common people spoke Aramaic.
 - ii. Only scholars in that day spoke Hebrew, thus these men wouldn't understand what the voice was saying.

H. (v. 8)

1. "And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus."
 - a. "and brought him into Damascus"

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- 1) On his way to Damascus, he was breathing out slaughter *against* the Christians, but by the time he arrived in Damascus, he *was* a Christian!
- 2) He was coming to Damascus with the power and authority of *the High Priest*, but he arrives in Damascus with the authority and power of *Jesus Christ*!
- 3) He left Jerusalem *proud and arrogant*, but he arrived in Damascus *broken and humbled*.
- 4) He was supposed to arrive in Damascus as a persecutor, but he arrived as a proclaimer, and ended up having to leave as a persecuted believer!

I. (v. 9)

1. "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

- a. I wonder what was going through his mind for those three days. I'm sure it was 3 days of recalibrating and thinking about the ramifications of this new reality!

J. (v. 11)

1. "...for, behold, he prayeth."

- a. **NOTE:** When Jesus declares "*behold, he prayeth*," it is as though Saul had not truly prayed before! For the first time in Saul's religious life, Jesus could now say, "*Behold, he prayeth*," and it was a true prayer!
 - 1) As a Pharisee, Saul would have gone to the Temple 3x each day for the customary times of prayer.
 - 2) They had special prayers for all occasions.
 - 3) They were noted for long prayers.
- b. **KEY:** God only hears those prayers that are offered through His Son Jesus.

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- 1) People are greatly deceived who think that they have direct access to the Father.
 - a) Any devout Jew in the O.T. knew better than that! The veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies bore witness that a mortal sinful man could not approach the Holy, infinite God.
- 2) Cf. **Proverbs 15:29** - "*The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.*"
- 3) Cf. **Proverbs 28:9** - "*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*"
 - a) **Q** = If God only hears the prayers of the righteous, then how do you become righteous? How do I gain access to God?... By your faith in Jesus Christ!
 - i. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.*" (**John 14:6**)
 - ii. The Bible says, "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*" (**1 Tim 2:5**)
 - iii. Jesus said, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it...*" (**John 14:13-14**), and later on, "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*" (**John 16:24**)

K. (v. 13)

1. **"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:"**
 - a. "saints" - Gr. *hagios* - "holy ones; those set apart"

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- 1) This is the 1st mention of the word *saints* in the N.T., and this term became the most common designation of the believers in the New Testament.³
- 2) **NOTE:** You are a saint if you are a believer in Jesus Christ!
 - a) You don't have to be canonized by any Church to be a saint.
 - b) You are called a *saint* by the Lord Jesus.
 - i. "Saint Richard" has a nice ring to it! 😂

L. (v. 15)

1. **"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:"**

- a. Saul was God's chosen vessel to bear His Name:
 - 1) Before THE GENTILES.
 - a) This became the chief part of his calling, which he even mentioned in his epistles (**Rom. 11:11-14; Eph. 2:11-3:6**).
 - 2) Before KINGS.
 - a) Paul's testimony would ultimately bring him to Rome, and he will bring testimony to Aretas IV, to Felix, to Festus, to Herod Agrippa II, and ultimately to Caesar Nero.
 - 3) Before THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.
 - a) Paul always went "to the Jew first"⁴ (**Rom. 1:16**), and then to the Gentiles.

³ Acts 9:32, 41; 26:10; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; Philemon 5; Jude 3; Rev. 5:8; etc.

⁴ Acts 9:20-22, 26-29; 13:5, 14; 14:1-3; 17:1-2, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8; 20:21-22; 28:17-23; Romans 1:16; 9-11; 1 Cor. 1:23-24; 2 Cor. 3:13-16; Galatians 2:1-2

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M. (v. 16)

1. **"For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."**

a. Cf. **2 Corinthians 11:22-33** - Paul *suffered* many things!!

N. (v. 21)

1. **"But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"**

a. These people were *amazed* at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus!

1) **NOTE:** The conversion of Saul of Tarsus should show us that the Lord can reach those that SEEM IMPOSSIBLE to reach! If Saul of Tarsus could get saved, anybody can get saved!

2) **KEY:** Your testimony, and your changed life, can be a great witness to the reality of the gospel!

a) He changed my life and He can change your life too — no matter who you are or what you've done!

II. SAUL'S EARLY MINISTRY. (v. 19-31)

A. (v. 23)

1. **"And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:"**

a. "many days"⁵ = 3 years

1) There is a 3-year gap between verses 22 & 23 (cf. **Galatians 1:11-18**).

⁵ This same Hebrew idiom is used in the O.T., with one instance used for a period of 3 years (1 Kings 2:38-39).

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- a) Saul went to Arabia.
 - b) He returned again to Damascus.
 - c) Then, 3 years after his conversion, he went to Jerusalem.⁶
- 2) **Q** = What was Paul doing in *Arabia* for all that time?...
- a) He had an extensive background in the Scriptures, but this was a time of REEVALUATING HIS INTERPRETATION of the Scriptures.
 - i. A lot of times, after our conversion to Christ, we have to DEPROGRAM all the things we had been taught and come to the Scriptures fresh and just study what the Text actually says.
 - ii. **Illust.** - When I got saved, I had a lot of traditionalism and demoninationalism that I had to unlearn. I determined and prayed, and said, "Lord, I want to forget everything I've been taught and just come to Your Bible and study what it says. I only want to believe what the Bible teaches, not what my previous church teaches."
 - b) He was processing it all in his mind and LEARNING FROM THE LORD BY DIRECT REVELATION, about this glorious gospel of grace. (cf. **Gal. 1:11-12, 16-17**)
 - i. **NOTE:** Saul received 3 years of direct teaching from Jesus Christ just like the 12 Apostles did during His earthly ministry!
- b. "took counsel" - Gr. "passed a formal resolution"

B. (v. 25)

⁶ Galatians 1:18. In the Greek "after three years", it's referring to Paul's conversion (Gal 1:15-16), not his return to Damascus (Gal 1:17).
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1. **"Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket."**
 - a. In Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, he describes what happened in more detail.
 - 1) Cf. **2 Corinthians 11:32-33** - *"In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."*
 - a) Aretas was the king of Arabia Nabatea, which included Damascus (9 B.C. — A.D. 40).
 - i. His daughter married Herod Antipas, but Herod divorced her to marry Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.
 - ii. This led to war between Aretas and Herod Antipas, and Herod's army was destroyed (A.D. 36). At this point, Herod asked Caesar Tiberius to dispatch Vitellius to attack Aretas and catch him dead or alive.
 - b) However, Caesar Tiberius died, (37 A.D.) , and when Vitellius received intelligence of Tiberius' death, he stopped all warlike proceedings⁷ and the order was never carried out.
 - c) Then, Caligula, the new Emperor, made changes in the region and gave Damascus back to Aretas (38 A.D.).
 - i. He also banished Herod Antipas to Lyons, and his kingdom was given to Agrippa (39 A.D.).⁸
 - d) Aretas then appointed a Jewish man to be governor over the city that would rule the large Jewish population according to their Law, and used his power to seal the gates of the city so that Saul could not escape.

⁷ Josephus (Ant., XVIII, v, 1,3) - ISBE

⁸ Josephus. (Ant. xviii.7.2) - Henry Alford

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C. (v. 28)

1. **"And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."**

- a. Cf. **Galatians 1:18** - Paul told the Galatians that he stayed at Peter's house during this time, which lasted only 15 days.

D. (v. 29)

1. **"And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him."**

- a. It was at this time that Saul had a VISION and was told by God to leave Jerusalem and would be sent to the *Gentiles* (**Acts 22:17-21**).

E. (v. 30)

1. **"Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."**

- a. *"and sent him forth to Tarsus"*
 - 1) **NOTE:** Saul will spend about **5** more SILENT YEARS in Tarsus.
 - a) Saul's Timeline:
 - i. **35 A.D.** - Conversion (**Acts 9:1-18**)
 - ii. **38 A.D.** - Returned to Damascus after 3 years in Arabia (**Gal. 1:17-18**).
 - iii. **43 A.D.** - Barnabas goes to get Saul in Tarsus to bring him to Antioch, where he would spend a whole year teaching (**Acts 11:26**).
 - a. 44 A.D. - 1 year = 43 A.D. (see below)

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iv. **44 A.D.** - Herod Agrippa I died ([Acts 12:20-23](#)), and Saul and Barnabas return to Antioch ([Acts 12:25](#)).

b) Saul was in Tarsus from **38—43 A.D. = 5 years!**

Chronology of the Apostle Paul

Year	Events	Scriptures
32 A.D.	Birth of Church at Pentecost.	Acts 2:1-4
	Stoning of Stephen. Saul "a young man", thus under 40 years old.	Acts 7:58-60
35 A.D.	Saul's conversion. Preaches in the synagogues in Damascus for a short time.	Acts 9:1-22
38 A.D.	Saul returned to Damascus after 3 years in Arabia.	Galatians 1:17-18
	Saul escapes from Damascus and visits Jerusalem.	Acts 9:23-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32-33
	Saul visits Jerusalem and stays with Peter for 15 days and preaching in Jerusalem.	Acts 9:26-28; Galatians 1:18
	Because of the hostility in Jerusalem, Saul receives a vision from the Lord to leave Jerusalem and that he would be sent to the Gentiles.	Acts 9:29; 22:17-21
	Saul brought by church in Jerusalem to Caesarea, and then sent back home to Tarsus.	Acts 9:29-30; Galatians 1:21
43 A.D.	Barnabas goes to get Saul in Tarsus to bring him to Antioch, where he would spend a whole year teaching. (*Herod Agrippa I died in 44 A.D., so 44 A.D. - 1 year = 43 A.D.)	Acts 11:25-26
	Prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch and told them that there would be a great famine, so Barnabas and Saul were sent by the elders in Antioch to bring financial support to the churches in Judea and Jerusalem.	Acts 11:27-30
44 A.D.	Herod Agrippa I died, and Saul and Barnabas return to Antioch.	Acts 12:20-25
52 A.D.	Saul and Barnabas left Antioch to go to Jerusalem for the First Jerusalem Council, taking Titus with them.	Galatians 2:1

2) **Q** = What was Saul doing during that 5 years?... The Bible is silent. We don't know, but God was using that time to prepare Saul.

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- a) **NOTE:** It took God a total of about **8 years** to prepare Paul for the ministry he was calling him to.
 - i. 3 years (Arabia) + 5 years (Tarsus) = 8 years of *preparation!*
- b) **KEY:** I believe that God *prepares* the instrument before He *uses* the instrument.
 - i. On the surface, it seems that Paul was ready the moment he got saved:
 - a. Had background and grew up in Greek culture.
 - b. Had background in the Hebrew culture.
 - c. Had extensive training in the Scriptures.
 - ii. But, God need to prepare Paul in that time of waiting that he couldn't have learned otherwise.
- 3) **NOTE:** God has been working in your life and preparing you for the work that He wants to accomplish through you. Be patient, and like Paul, just sit at the Lord's feet, learning the Word by the Holy Spirit, and then do what He tells you to do.

F. (v. 31)

- 1. **"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."**
 - a. "churches" - Gr. *ekklesiai* (plural in Textus Receptus)
 - 1) **NOTE:** The churches *were multiplied!*
 - a) Many fellowships/churches were being planted throughout the Land of Israel!

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- 2) **KEY:** Not only were *disciples* being multiplied (6:7), but now *churches* were multiplied (9:31)!

III. PETER'S COASTAL MINISTRY. (v. 32-43)

THE MINISTRY AT LYDDA (v. 32-35)

A. (v. 32)

1. **"And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda."**
 - a. "Lydda"
 - 1) This city's Hebrew name was Lod, located about 10 miles southeast of Tel Aviv.⁹
 - a) Cf. 1 Chron. 8:12; Ezra 2:33; Neh. 7:37; 11:35
 - 2) Later, the city was renamed Diospolis.
 - 3) Today, the main Israeli airport is there.
 - b. "the saints"
 - 1) There is a congregation there, either because of 1) the dispersion of believers during the persecution (8:4), or 2) as a result of Philip's ministry through this territory (8:40).

THE MINISTRY AT JOPPA (v. 36-43)

B. (v. 36)

1. **"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."**
 - a. "Joppa"

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- 1) Also called *Jaffa* (in Hebrew *Yafo*), is an ancient port city located¹⁰ on the outskirts of Tel Aviv about 10 miles northwest of Lydda.
 - a) **NOTE:** This is the town where Jonah boarded a ship for Tarshish to escape the presence of the Lord ([Jonah 1:3](#)).
 - b. "Tabitha" - Aramaic (Chaldean origin) - "Gazelle"
 - c. "Dorcas" - Gr. *Dorkas* - "Gazelle", the Greek translation of the name Tabitha.

C. (v. 43)

1. **"And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner."**
 - a. According to Jewish Law, the tanning of hides was considered an unclean occupation because tanners would handle carcasses all the time ([Lev. 11:39-40](#)). Thus, they had to live 50 cubits outside the city.¹¹
 - b. **NOTE:** The fact that Peter is staying with a *tanner* shows that he is already abandoning some of his Judaistic prejudices. The walls are starting to come down, thus preparing Peter for bringing the Gentiles into the Church in chapter 10! The walls of prejudice are starting to come down!

¹⁰ DMS 32° 3' 8" N, 34° 45' 11" E Decimal 32.052222, 34.753056

¹¹ b. Bava Bathra, 25a.