

## Acts 9 - John Karmelich

1. I like to call Chapter 9 "The ministry to the great and small".
  - a) Chapter 9 features the first account of one of the greatest events in human history.
    - i) The conversion of Saul, who later became known as Paul (Acts 13:9).
    - ii) Of all the events recorded in human history, *this one* is among the greatest, as it converted one of the biggest *persecutors* of the church to its greatest leader.
  - b) Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, has had more influence over Western Civilization than anyone other than Jesus himself. Much of what we know about the Christian belief system comes from Paul's letters.
  - c) From Chapters 13 to the end of Acts (Chapter 28), is mostly about Paul.
    - i) Some of the greatest examples and life lessons we learn about Christianity are not just about what Paul *said* in his epistles, but what Paul *does and doesn't do* in the Book of Acts. *That* is one of the main reasons to study Acts.
  - d) The last part of Chapter 9 goes back to Peter. It tells very briefly about two miracles performed by Peter.
    - i) Remember that Luke, the author of Acts, was a traveling companion of Paul.
    - ii) In another chapter or two, Peter will fade out of the picture as most of Acts focuses on Paul. Why would Luke record these 2 relatively minor miracles?
      - a) The first thought that entered my mind is that God is *not* just focusing on the major historical facts of the church, but also on the minor.
        - (1) Acts was *never* intended to be a complete history of the early apostles. Luke selects specific stories and examples from early church history as patterns for Christian living and doctrine.
      - b) God was busy working on Paul, and that major influence he would have on the church. God is also interested in other things *simultaneously*. I think a big part of the reason to include these 2 little stories was to show that while God was launching Saul's (Paul's) ministry, *God was not ignoring other ministries* that were taking place at the same time.
2. One of the big things to see in this chapter is impact and timing.
  - a) God did not convert Paul until *after* he had already committed a lot of persecution to the church! Why didn't God step in earlier and save a lot of grief (and lives!)?
  - b) Also, we are going to read of Peter bringing a woman back to life after she died.
    - i) Why her? All that is said about her is that she gave a lot of her time making garments for widows in need. That's a very nice ministry, but is that more important than say, some preachers, teachers, church leaders? As you read about this story, think about "why her?"
3. With that intro, let's get started. Acts Chapter 9, Verse 1: Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.
  - a) The "meanwhile" refers to the last chapter. Remember Chapter 8 focuses on Phillip taking the Gospel to Samaria and to the Ethiopian official.
  - b) Don't take this verse lightly. "Breathing out murderous threats" means Saul was on a violent rampage. People were being killed for their belief.
    - i) Suppose it was a capital crime for you to go to church on Sunday, or owning a Bible. Would you still meet? What about your kids? While you consider that, remember there are places in the world *today* where those conditions exist!

- c) What made Saul so obsessed with punishing, and wanting the death sentence for Christians?
  - i) There are stories in the Old Testament where God called for the leaders to kill those who blasphemed his name. Saul could have rationalized that he was fulfilling that ministry. The Law does call for a death sentence for those who blaspheme God's name (Leviticus 24:16) and Saul felt he was "doing his duty".
  - ii) Some suggested when he heard Stephen's speech, he felt a sense of guilt because he knew it was the truth, and "something snapped".
  - iii) Some suggest demonic influences. Remember Satan's "overall game plan" is to oppose God's "overall game plan". Jesus announced in Chapter 1 that the Gospel would be taken to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the outer parts of the world (Acts 1:8). Satan heard that too. His job was to thwart that plan as much as possible. Saul was his instrument.
- 4. End of Verse 1: He went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.
  - a) Notice in the middle of verse 2 the expression "the Way". This was the nickname for Christians prior to being called "Christians". The origin is unknown. I suspect it is from Jesus' mouth where he said"
    - i) "I am *the way* and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6 NIV)
  - b) Saul's obsession with arresting Christians can be noticed in these verses.
    - i) Remember that Saul was a Pharisee. The High Priest was a Sadducee. (Acts 5:17). These 2 groups hated each other and were on opposite ends of religious views. (Pharisee's were very conservative, Sadducee's were liberal.)
      - a) Saul had to work with "the enemy" to arrest Christians.
        - (1) This tidbit helps to show Saul's obsession with Christians.
    - ii) In Verse 2 Saul asks for letters to hunt down Christians in Damascus.
      - a) Damascus is 130-140 miles away and (roughly) a 6-day journey!
      - b) I suspect if Saul is hunting down those in Damascus, he's already terrorized every town closer than Damascus.
      - c) Damascus is *not* part of Israel. It is part of Syria. Paul is now obsessed to the point of going outside of Israel's boundaries.
- 5. Verse 3, the big moment: As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
  - a) Here is Saul (or Paul) close to Damascus. All of a sudden, there was a huge bright light and there was the voice of God.
  - b) Some questions to ponder: First why a bright light? Couldn't God just send an army of angels with swords and say "Whoa there Saul, it's time we had a little chat!" ☺
    - i) In Old & New Testament God Himself is associated with light. Genesis Chapter 1 as well as Gospel of John Chapter 1 associates God with light.
      - a) In Genesis 1, "light" is introduced in Verse 3.
      - b) It wasn't until the 4<sup>th</sup> day of creation where the sun & stars were created, so the "light of the world" of Verse 3 is something different all together!
      - c) In the 1st Letter of John, Chapter 1, Verse 5, John says the following:
        - (1) "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." (NIV)
    - ii) There are also many a sermon preached how Saul was living in the darkness of sin until "he saw the light".

- c) Here's the big question, why Damascus?
    - i) Let's face it; Saul/Paul has probably already put a lot of Christians in jail.
      - a) He may have even sent some to their death sentence.
      - b) He's the one who is responsible for Christians to flee everywhere.
      - c) Why did God wait so long to stop his attacks?
        - (1) Part of it, was God *wanted* the Christians spreading out, preaching the Word. God used Saul as "an incentive factor". ☺
        - (2) God also held Saul accountable for his actions. God *did* forgive Saul of those sins, but the sins cost him lack of trust among the apostles. The same applies for us. Does God forgive us of our sins? Of course, but the lingering affect of the past often takes a long time to go away.
    - ii) Back to the basic question, Why Damascus?
      - a) When you study the Bible, you'll find that God works a lot in word-pictures, or "puns".
      - b) The key is that Damascus is Gentile (non-Jewish) Country!
      - c) God, primarily wanted Paul to be his witness to Gentiles, and not Jews.
        - (1) Thus, the word-picture of his conversion outside Jewish territory!
6. Verse 4: He (Saul) fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
- a) The double name emphasis of "Saul Saul" is a very Jewish thing. Many times in the Old Testament God will repeat a name twice for emphasis. Saul/Paul being an Old Testament scholar would recognize this.
    - i) As an example, when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, God's first words were "Moses Moses" (Exodus 3:4).
  - b) We will discover in a few verses that this was the voice of Jesus.
    - i) Let's stop and think about the word "me" in "why do you persecute *me*?"
    - ii) Jesus wasn't being persecuted by Saul, Christians were!
    - iii) The point Jesus is making is, (modern paraphrase)
      - a) "You're messing with my people. They are part of me. You mess with them, you mess with me!"
      - b) We need to take *great comfort* in our affliction that God is not only *aware* of our pain, but he takes it *personally*. When we are afflicted for the sake of the Gospel, Jesus *himself* is being persecuted.
      - c) The great prayer of Jesus to the Father in John 17 includes the following: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: (John 17:22 NIV)
7. Saul's response, Verse 5: "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.
- a) I personally see a *long pause* in that comma. Who are you (pause, pause pause) Lord???
    - i) Saul knew that a light from heaven, the double name, all meant that he was speaking to a divine being.
    - ii) Some translations paraphrase and say "Who are you, sir?" Sometimes the use of the word "Lord" can simply be a title of respect.
8. Verse 5, cont.: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. <sup>6</sup> "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
- a) Notice what Jesus doesn't say "Hey Saul, you idiot, you'll fry in eternity for what you did! The forgiveness of sins begins here!"

- i) It's hard for me to imagine any sin, in God's eye *worse* than persecuting and killing other Christians. But God forgave Saul *because he repented*. The grace of God abounds in this verse.
  - b) Also notice that Jesus simply tells Saul to go into the city, and you'll receive further instructions.
    - i) I think Jesus wanted Saul to let this moment just sink in.
    - ii) God works that way in our life. If he told us everything we're doing wrong all at once, the stress would probably kill us. God will often reveal our sins one step at a time for us to meditate upon its effects before going further.
  - c) In the King James Verses, there are 2 other sentences that are part of the text. One is Jesus saying "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" and the other is Saul responding, " Lord, what do you want me to do".
    - i) "The insertion of *it is hard for you to kick against the goads* and *Lord, what do you want me to do?* In 9:5-6 text is accurate, but not in Luke's original text. They were added by scribes, based on Acts 22:10 and 26:14, who thought they were doing God a favor by putting it in here." David Guzik
- 9. Verse 7: The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.
  - a) It makes sense that Saul was not traveling alone. If you are going to arrest someone and *then* take them to jail 130+ miles away *on foot*, you are going to need a "police escort" just in case the prisoners don't cooperate! ☺
  - b) The story of Saul's conversion is retold in Acts 22 and Acts 26. In each of those two recounts more details are given.
    - i) One of the details said in Acts 22 was: "My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. "(Acts 22:9 NIV)
      - a) I suspect Jesus spoke in Hebrew, which Saul knew, and his companions only knew Greek.
      - ii) For whatever purpose, God didn't want the police-escort to hear this message. He did want them to be scared enough to not take up the persecution where Saul left off.
        - a) Why didn't he want the others to understand? Possibly because God wants to spread the Gospel *through us* and not direct intervention, as much as possible. The witness of the *change* in Saul converted many a person, and possibly his traveling companions.
- 10. Verse 8: Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.
  - a) God blinded Saul. If you suddenly can't see, I suspect you spend a lot of time *thinking about the last thing you saw!* God did this so Saul can think about this event.
  - b) Why didn't he eat or drink? I suspect he was scared to death. He probably thought he was eternally damned for his actions.
  - c) I've also heard stories that when people do dramatic shifts in their beliefs, there is often a period of mediation, and thoughts on their lives. Here, Saul is coming to the realization that much of what he knew about the Messiah, Jesus, and Judaism was wrong. Given the fact he was the equivalent of a Jewish seminary graduate, that *had* to take time to sink in.
  - d) There are also many sermons preached on the word-picture of Saul being "dead" for 3 days until he saw the light again. This is a Bible "pun" or word-picture of being resurrected into a new spiritual life.

11. Meanwhile, over in another part of Damascus, our story continues. Verse 10: In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"
  - a) Nothing is given on this man's background. How did Christianity spread to Damascus? Was he part of the persecuted that ran here? Was he part of the "tongues of fire" visitors on Pentecost? We can only speculate.
  - b) One never knows *when and where* God will use believers. Part of being a Christian is being *available* when God calls us!
12. Verse 10, continued. "Yes, Lord," he (Ananias) answered. <sup>11</sup> The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. <sup>12</sup> In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."
  - a) One of the interesting things in the Bible is that God "redeems" bad-names.
    - i) Saul, in the Old Testament, is a king associated with failure and lack of trust
    - ii) Ananias was the one who lied to the Apostles about how much money he got for a piece of land in a church donation. He died on the spot. (Acts 5).
    - iii) Judas is forever associated with the one who betrayed Jesus.
  - b) In a few verses all 3 names are now "redeemed" and associated with new people.
    - i) We have a new Saul, a new Judas and a new Ananias introduced.
    - ii) I'm not sure what to do with that information, but it's interesting! ☺
    - iii) Notice also Jesus told Ananias to go to Saul *because he is praying*.
      - a) That's important right there. God *does* hear our prayers, but does not always answer them in the way we suspect.
13. Verse 13: "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."
  - a) I always love places in the Bible where someone says in effect, "Lord, I can't do that".
    - i) You have to see the humor in calling someone your Lord, and then saying No!"
      - a) We do the same thing. We call him "Lord", but then disobey!
    - ii) Peter was guilty of this (Matthew 26:33), so was Moses (Exodus 4:13)
      - a) Remember that being a Christian is not to give God "lip service" but to be *obedient* to what he calls us to do
      - b) "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46 NIV)
  - b) From a humanistic standpoint, Ananias asked a good question.
    - i) Stop and put yourself in Ananias place. He heard about Saul. He probably has friends in jail because of him. He has friends who have lost their home and are on the run because of this guy and now "Lord", you want me to help him?!
    - ii) For those who know the story of Jonah, there are a lot of similarities. God called Jonah to witness to the Assyrians, who were cruel and ruthless people. Jonah rebelled against God for that reason, but after God explained his "whale of an incentive plan ☺", Jonah cooperates, and God's plans get accomplished.
      - a) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. (Isaiah 55:8 NIV)
      - b) God may call us to do something that doesn't make sense to us. The reason is that we don't see things from *His* perspective.

14. Verse 15: But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.
- a) John's very very loose translation: "Stop complaining and get going! I don't see those feet moving. I am God, and "go" means "GO"! ☺
  - b) This verse is actually an outline of much of the remainder of the Books of Acts.
    - i) God says Saul is *my chosen instrument* to carry *my name* to (notice the priority)
      - a) 1. The Gentiles (non-Jews)
      - b) 2. *Their* kings (Gentile leaders)
      - c) 3. The people of Israel.
    - ii) Saul/Paul's *heart* was to witness to the Jews, but he was only effective in his ministry to the Gentiles.
  - c) Remember that this verse was given to Ananias, and *not* Paul.
    - i) This verse had to come as a little of a shock to Ananias. First the Gospel had not spread to the Gentiles yet, and it may have been a shock at this point that one could be a Christian *without* also accepting Judaism.
    - ii) Second, Ananias had to stop and think, "*This* guy is your "chosen instrument"?"
15. Verse 16: I (Jesus) will show him (Saul) how much he (Saul) must suffer for my name."
- a) I have to admit, I misunderstood this verse. It sounds like God is saying "Don't worry, Ananias, I'm going make Saul *pay* for all that persecution he did.
  - b) Reading the verse in context of Saul's life after this verse, I don't think that is what God meant at all. Saul did suffer, as it is clear in the New Testament, possibly more than any other Christian who has ever lived. (For Paul's' suffering-resume, see 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 11, Verses: 23-33!)
    - i) Paul said it best near the end of his life: "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. "(2 Tim 3:12 NKJV)
    - ii) Why is suffering necessary?
      - a) First of all, there is opposition to the Gospel. Both by demonic forces, but more often, simply by people not wanting to repent of their lifestyle.
      - b) Such people will often want to "kill the messenger". The guilt of not repenting swarms to the surface and hatred of Christianity then abounds.
      - c) I also think suffering is necessary as a part of growth. There is a lot of truth to the statement of "what will not kill you only makes you stronger". We often learn the most from the most difficult times of our lives and suffering, although not desired, often lead us closer to God.
16. Verse 17: Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
- a) One of my favorite words in this chapter is "Brother". Ananias says "Brother Saul."
    - i) In that one word, Ananias is accepting Saul as a brother in Christ.
    - ii) He has forgiven Saul for his actions.
    - iii) He has accepted God's orders, although he doesn't fully understand them.
    - iv) I will further argue that this type of forgiveness is only possible through the Holy Spirit. Our "flesh" wants revenge. It is only through the Spirit of God working through us that we can have the power to forgive.
  - b) Again we see another "pun". Ananias is telling Saul that God has sent him so that he may "see again". *Then* he announces that Saul will be filled with the Holy Spirit. The "pun" refers to Saul gaining new physical sight and spiritual site.

17. Verse 18: Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,<sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength.
- a) Again, God uses word pictures. Scales are associated with judgement. Scales are used to weigh something prior to a decision for fairness. The US Supreme Court has a large statue of a blind lady holding a scale. This is a word-picture of God *judging* Saul's sins and forgiving him. The scales are removed for physical & spiritual sight.
  - b) Remember Saul has not eaten nor drank for 3 days. What would be the first thing *you* would want to do here?
    - i) Saul's first priority? Baptism! Even before eating or drinking again.
    - ii) I believe Saul was so grateful that God did not condemn him for his actions *and* re-gave Saul his eyesight, that he wanted to start his new life *immediately* as a Christian, and thus the desire for baptism before anything else.
      - a) Now *that's* the attitude we all need with our new life in Christ!
18. Verse 19: Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.<sup>20</sup> At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.
- a) At this point, Saul was not an expert on Christian apologetics. If anything, all he knew was arguments *against* Jesus being the Messiah.
    - i) With Saul's limited knowledge at this point, he headed straight to the nearest Synagogue to preach that Jesus is *that* Messiah the Jews were waiting for!
  - b) I've always heard that sometimes the best "on-fire" Christians are often ones who, at one time in their lives were equally *zealous against* Christianity. If you know someone like that, pray for them. God can often use that energy source for His glory!
19. Notice the Jews response, Verse 21: All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"
- a) We are seeing prejudice and self-justification here. To paraphrase the Jewish response: "Wait a minute. We *know* our views are right. This guy was supposed to come here to *arrest* those Christian-heretics. Now he's one of them."
  - b) Notice there is no mention of any conversion or of any comment on the Saul's sermon.
    - i) The shock may have been too much for them to pay attention to the message.
20. Verse 22. Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.
- a) I suspect that in this period Saul was starting to see the Old Testament Scriptures from a Christian, prophetic perspective.
  - b) There is an important point in witnessing, be it a large group or one-on-one: That is "know your audience". Saul used the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. Later we'll read when Paul or Paul was speaking to non-Jewish audiences, he didn't even reference the Old Testament.
21. Verse 23: After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him,
- a) You can take this as a sign Saul's message didn't go over very well.
  - b) Hey Saul, how did your sermon go over down at the Synagogue?
    - i) Not good. They tried to kill me.
    - ii) From our perspective, that's not a good reaction to a speech! ☺
  - c) Verse 23 says "after many days had gone by: In Galatians, Chapter 1, Verses 17-18 we learn that *there is a 3 year gap between Verses 22 and 23.*
    - i) "I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. (Galatians 1:17b-18 NKJV)"
    - ii) In Verse 26 of this Chapter we'll read of Saul's visit to the apostles.

22. Back to the Jews trying to kill Saul, Verse 24: but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. <sup>25</sup> But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.
- a) Saul's sermon was *so* unsuccessful, that they called for his death and he had to be sneaked out of the city in a large basket.
  - b) That had to be an embarrassment to Saul.
  - c) Why is God allowing this to happen?
    - i) This is the beginning of a long maturation process where Saul had to learn that God wasn't interested in his talents.
    - ii) Here was Saul. He was an Old Testament Scholar. He figured if *anyone* could witness to the Jews, he can. Yet every time we are going to read about his witnessing to the Jews, it will turn out to be a failure.
      - a) God called Saul primarily to the Gentiles. Saul was, in effect, fighting God's plan for his life, and thus was a large cause of his suffering.
      - b) We'll build more on this theme in later lessons.
  - d) Paul makes reference to this incident in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33. He used it as an example of his being persecuted for his commitment to Christ.
23. Next, we read of Saul's first trip to Jerusalem. Verse 26: When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.
- a) His reputation preceded him. Like Ananias, the disciples had to get past their fear, and probably their hatred of Saul and accept him as one of their own.
24. Verse 27: But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.
- a) It took the testimony of somebody the apostles knew (Barnabas) to get Saul accepted.
  - b) Galatians 1:18 states that Saul only saw Peter (of the 12). The word "apostles" here in Verse 27 is a generic reference as they brought Saul to the leaders of the church.
  - c) It's interesting to study Saul/Paul's relationship with the Apostles.
    - i) Saul waited 3 years + before visiting Peter and the others. You would think before he started preaching he would talk to them and "get the story straight".
    - ii) It shows the boldness of Saul's character. He probably knew very little about Jesus and his ministry during those first 3 years. He wasn't that interested in meeting the Apostles, all be it, possibly out of fear of retribution. He simply started preaching Jesus based on what he *did* know.
25. Verse 28: So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. <sup>29</sup> He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. <sup>30</sup> When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.
- a) Once again, Saul was a big flop in preaching the Gospel. He was causing such a problem that *the other disciples* sent him off to another town! (That's got to hurt your ego!)
    - i) Grant it, they may have been doing it for Saul/Paul's safety.
  - b) Remember that Saul was also a Grecian Jew. He was from Tarsus, which is in Asia Minor. We'll discover later he was sent to Jerusalem to study Judaism. Therefore he spoke fluent Greek and Hebrew. You would think with that background God would make *him* the #1 apostle to the Jews, and let somebody else focus on non-Jews.
  - c) Why did God do it this way?
    - i) Partially to teach Paul (and us!) that God doesn't need our talents. He wants us to depend upon *him* for our spiritual growth.
    - ii) This way God gets all the credit, not us!

26. Verse 31: Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.
- a) Historically, this was a time where Rome was putting in a new High Priest who was hostile to the Jews. It may have been a time of peace while the Jewish leaders had other problems.
  - b) Some commentators interpret "time of peace" as a peaceful state of mind during continuous persecution. I happen to disagree, but that's just me ☺!
  - c) Notice it took Saul's *leaving* to enjoy a time of peace! I suspect the conversion of Saul was a big blow to the forces of Satan. Remember back on page 2 of this lesson I stated that Satan was well aware of God's plan to spread the Gospel. He must have been overjoyed at Saul "breathing murderous threats" at Christians. Now, "his #1 guy", is working for Jesus! I suspect this "brief time of peace" was a time for the enemy to think up a new strategy!
27. During this time of peace, the author Luke goes back to Peter. The remainder of the chapter is about 2 miracles performed by Peter.
28. Peter's miracle #1, Verse 32: As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. <sup>34</sup> "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up. <sup>35</sup> All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.
- a) This fascinates me. Peter never even *asks* this guy to accept Jesus or if he wants Jesus to heal him! In all fairness, there is the possibility that Peter's reputation as a healer preceded him and this guy Aeneas was looking to Peter in hope of a miracle.
  - b) The first part of the sentence is also interesting "As Peter traveled about the country". Peter was traveling *looking* for ways to minister. He didn't just hang out in Jerusalem saying "I'm Peter, I'm in charge now, and I have to be busy running the church"! ☺
    - i) No! Peter *went out* in search of new opportunities and new disciples. He saw an opportunity and took it.
    - ii) There is a story in John, Chapter 5 that is similar to this. Jesus heals a paralytic. Peter was a witness to that miracle. Some of the wording is even similar to what Jesus said.
  - c) Notice there is no mention any sermon by Peter. Again, this supports the argument that Peter's reputation was already in this town. People heard about Christianity. They heard about Jesus. They heard about the miracles that were done in His name. When they had seen it first hand, they accepted Jesus.
    - i) There may have been sermons preached, it is simply not recorded for us.
  - d) The lesson to learn is that *our* reputation as Christians also supercedes us. People know that we go to church, read our Bible, etc. They *watch us*. Grant it, we aren't performing healing like Peter, but we are in *our own lives*. It is *the changed lifestyle*, the joyous attitude that makes people want to see Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit working *through us* to make us walk in a new life, just like this paralytic!
29. Peter's Miracle #2, Verse 36: In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

- a) I find some humor in this. Here's my paraphrase: "The preacher sick? We'll pray over him. One of the elders? We'll deal with that, but Tabitha? *We need her!* She makes clothes for the widows. She does the *real stuff!* Quick, somebody get Peter!" ☺
  - b) I'm sure Tabitha was simply a wonderful woman, full of love.
    - i) What a great way to be remembered in history (verse 36) "always doing good and helping the poor". This practical ministry, is one of the greatest witnesses for Jesus, and also one of the greatest needs.
30. The story continues, verse 39: Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.
- a) This may have been the first time Peter heard of Tabitha (or Dorcas). Here we have widows crying and showing Peter all the beautiful clothes she made.
    - i) Often, we don't realize the extent of our witness for Jesus!
  - b) Again we see the humility of Peter. There is no "I'm too important to deal with this seamstress" attitude!
31. Verse 40: Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.
- a) I wonder what inspired Peter to do this. He *had* seen Jesus raise several people from the dead. Notice that Peter prayed first. He may have prayed over what to do, and God called Peter to perform this miracle.
32. Verse 42: This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.
- a) Again, we see the extent of the miracle and its effect upon the surrounding community.
33. One of the things I said in the beginning of this lesson is "impact and timing".
- a) With the conversion of Saul, we see one of the greatest impacts to western civilization, by a person we would think would be the least likely to impact the church!
  - b) God's sense of *timing* with Saul was to wait until *after* he spent some time persecuting Christians and *only when he went to Gentile country*, did the conversion take place.
    - i) The *timing* was to teach Saul, over many years, that his education and background would *not* be of any benefit to converting Jews.
    - ii) It is also one of the *greatest examples* of the forgiveness of God. God takes one of the worst sinners imaginable, and uses him in a mighty way.
      - a) Near the end of his life, Paul said: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. (1st Timothy 1:15 NIV)
      - b) As Paul grew and matured, he grew in his realization of just how sinful himself (and mankind) is, and how great and how *necessary* was Jesus paying the price for our salvation.
  - c) Last, we have Peter's miracles in terms of "impact and timing".
    - i) You get the impression in the first miracle by Peter that he was just wandering around, *looking for an opportunity to be used by God!* That is how this occurred, and many people turned to Christ for that reason. A Christian proverb goes: "God is not looking for ability, God is looking for *availability*"
    - ii) Finally, we have the 2nd miracle where Peter was sought out for a miracle.
      - a) A major point is that no Christian, great or small, is beyond impacting their community, as was this woman.

34. Wow, I made it in 10 pages! ☺ Let's Pray. Heavenly father, we thank you for these stories of miracles, and conversions. Like Saul, like Peter, like Tabitha, may we be *available* for your service, so that, in your timing, and in your Grace, may be we be used in a mighty way. Guide us to be part of *your* redemptive plan. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.