

Acts 9:20-43

V20-22

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, 20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." 21 All who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" 22 Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

As a skilled student of Gamaliel, Saul makes use of the opportunity to preach in the synagogues.

People are astonished at his transformation. Infact even Saul is, an so in 2 Corinthians 5:17 he says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

We see how Saul used all his skills to debate and prove the Lordship of Jesus. For that he must have used his in-depth and authoritative knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures and his oratory skills. Now we can see why God chose Saul. But that's not the only reason? We see the next reason further in the verses.

V23-25

23 After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

The persecutor becomes the persecuted.

At times he willingly suffered imprisonment and beatings; whereas at other times he escaped.

V26-28

26 When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

In Gal 1:13-18, Paul did not immediately go to Jerusalem, but rather spent some time in Arabia and then again in Damascus before he actually went to Jerusalem after 3 years.

Interestingly, the apostles and church in Jerusalem are hesitant to trust Paul even 3 years after his conversion.

Role of Barnabas as an encourager true to his name.

V29-30

29 He spoke and argued with the Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill him. 30 When the believers learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Several persecutions and assassination attempts may have taken place. That would have become a recurring pattern in his life. We have to remember that these events would have happened over many years and Paul spent years of hard work as an unknown and persecuted figure before he became a popular apostle.

V31

31 Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

What a contrast to the beginning of this chapter.

It doesn't mean that all persecution ended. It only means that the churches had peace inspite of persecution.

Emphases

The willingness to preach – used all his skills for that

The willingness to listen to the Spirit and obey – go forward or withdraw according to the leading of the Spirit.

The willingness to suffer -

The willingness to give God the glory – never did he seek self praise.

V32-42

32 Now as Peter went here and there among all the believers, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!" And immediately he got up. 35 And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. 37 At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." 39 So Peter got up and went with them; and when he

arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. 41 He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. 42 This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

Peter goes through the regions the scattered disciples would have evangelized.

Similarities with Jesus's healing miracles – similar to Jesus's healing of the paralytic – Like 5:24

And Jesus's healing of Jairus's daughter – "*Talitha cumi*"

These accounts shows how Jesus is working through the disciples.

Questions:

1. How do you think the church could survive and thrive in the midst of difficulties?
2. What does Acts teach about suffering in the church and Christian life?