

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (Acts 9:31)

I. God Uses Whom He Chooses

- a. "He is in the wrong place". "He does not belong with us." God uses the most unlikely characters.
- b. Barnabas defends Saul and gives evidence of his transformation. (vv.26-27)
- c. The spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire could not be imagined apart from Saul's work.
- d. The disciples, who originally opposed Saul provide for his escape to Tarsus. (v.29-30)
- e. The Holy Spirit is making all of this possible to progress the church. (v.30-31)
 1. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to forgive and advance.
 2. The Holy Spirit brings understanding in the midst of confusion.
 3. The Holy Spirit establishes peace, comfort and increase to the church.

II. Restoration That Brings Glory to God (9:32-43)

- a. We last heard of Peter in 8:25 when he visited Samaria with John. Now he is engaged in itinerant ministry visiting dispersed Christian communities. One of these communities was in Lydda.
- b. Peter cured Aeneas, a man with eight years of paralysis, in Lydda.
 1. Many of the people came to see Aeneas, which resulted in further access to believers. (v.35)
- c. Peter healed *Tabitha* (Dorcas, gazelle), a faithful woman known charitable deeds in Joppa (*Yapo*).
 1. Widows, who were the primary receivers of charity in the church, witnessed to the kindness and giving heart of Dorcas.
 2. Just as Peter observed Jesus raise Jarius's daughter (Mark 5:41; *Talitha koum*) from her deathbed, Peter now said, *Tabitha koum* to Dorcas.
- d. What testimony Aeneas, Tabitha, Simon and the saints of Lydda and Joppa could share?
- e. People heard the Word, saw the signs and believed.

III. Thoughts and Considerations for Action

- a. This text presents to us the challenge to welcome and befriend newcomers, especially those from a different religious, ethnic or social background. The church needs "Ananias" and "Barnabases."
- b. Two characteristics of Saul's witness are worth noting:
 1. Saul's witness was Christ-centered. Testimony is not a synonym for autobiography.
 2. His witness was courageous first in Damascus and then in Jerusalem.
- c. Every new convert becomes a changed person and has "new titles" to *live out* that demonstrate they have been changed – disciple, saint, brother, sisters and witness.
- d. If we do not see these titles lived out in those that profess they are Christians do we have reason to question their conversion? Also note, that these titles reflect connectedness not isolation.