



The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 9:19 Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. 20 **And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!”** 21 **All who heard him were amazed.** “Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?” they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?” 22 **Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful,** and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. 23 **After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him.** 24 They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, **but Saul was told about their plot.** 25 So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues”**
- Saul was chosen for this work and he was equipped from birth for it – one such trait was that he had a natural brazenness and boldness.
- Saul wrote this to the Judaizers in the Galatian church – “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”

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- Saul had just seen Jesus and he now has a fire burning inside him that could not be contained.
- He had already been party to jailing, humiliating, and murdering Christians – he must have sensed that he had a lot to make up for.
- So, using his knowledge of the old testament and his first-hand view of the risen Jesus, he goes right into the synagogue and lets loose.

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- **“All who heard him were amazed”** – I’ll bet they were because this one who had been denying Christ and persecuting his followers has been radically changed!!
- 2nd Cor 5:16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 **This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!** NLT

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“One must wonder how many times Saul would recall all of the innocent people he condemned – how many were thrown into prisons and how many were stoned to death on the spot. Surely such acts would haunt any sane person, and this perhaps explains why he was so driven and was never deterred by those who mistreated him.”

Unknown

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- **“Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful”** – we are not told here how much time passed between his sermons, but he was quickly perfecting his message.
- Saul was an unusual Christian in some ways, but in other ways he would have been like all other converts – this whole thing of relying on the Holy Spirit was new territory.
- So as he goes from synagogue to synagogue he is learning to “walk in the Spirit”.

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- He is no doubt learning how to rely on the Holy Spirit as he goes – the same way all of us have to.
- Whether you are a preacher, a teacher, an administrator, or one with the gift of helps this does not change – as new Christians no one is accustomed to being led by the Spirit.
- The normal Christian experience is that we learn there is a Holy Spirit, then we learn to know Him, and then we learn how to rely on Him.

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- So here is the potential reward of all who obey the Spirit – **“After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him”**.
- Being obedient and walking in the Spirit is not appreciated in all settings and by all people – some actually hate it.
- This is what we’ve been seeing as the gospel message spreads – when evil people have no arguments, they become violent.

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- **“but Saul was told about their plot”** – we have no information as to who outed the plot to kill Saul, but it is evident that God moved someone in the know to tell him.
- Now this is interesting – think of all that goes into moving Saul out of harms way. No one will be forced, but everyone will cooperate.
- God is going to prompt one of the unsaved conspirators to get the information on the assassination of Saul to Saul.

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- Now multiply what God did in that situation by trillions, or quadrillions, or whatever and we will have some idea of all that God does for us.
- In Job 26, Job says things like, **“How you have helped the powerless”, “How you have enlightened my stupidity”, and “Where have you gotten all these wise sayings?”**.
- Then in verse #14 we read, **“These are just the beginning of all that he does, merely a whisper of his power.”** NLT

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- God moves people in and out of life’s situations so that the truth of Romans 8:28 comes alive and is even made practical to us.
- **“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”**
- We can stand in awe of his work and we should, but just to know he is working for us is about as settling as any thing we can know.

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• Think of God as the great conductor of human history, and even the small events in our lives!



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²² Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. ²³ After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. ²⁴ They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. ²⁵ So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

More than 1,000 events take place right here between verse #25 and #26 – what are they?

²⁶ When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! ²⁷ Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

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There is a gap of roughly three years between Acts 9:25 and Acts 9:26 – this is to account for the time Saul was in Arabia receiving one-on-one teaching from Jesus.

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Galatians 1:11 Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. **12 I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.** 13 You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God’s church. I did my best to destroy it. 14 I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him 16 to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. **When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being. 17 Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus. 18 Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days.** 19 The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord’s brother. 20 I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie. NLT

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• Acts 9:26 **When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him.** They did not believe he had truly become a believer! 27 **Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul.** He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus. 28 **So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.** 29 He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, **but they tried to murder him.** 30 When the believers heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown. 31 **The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.** NLT

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- **“When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him.”**
- Matt 10:16 **“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.”**
- It is okay to be skeptical of people and their motives – especially when you know them to have a bad reputation. Professing Christians deserve some benefit of the doubt but be wise!

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- It is unquestionable that God can reform anyone – even the self-proclaimed “chief of sinners”, but when the risk is great, don’t be foolish.
- What is not mentioned in the text is what was probably true – that Saul would have completely understood their hesitation.
- I mean talk about a potential “wolf in sheep’s clothing”!

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- **“Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul”**
- It always helps us to gain acceptance in a new group if someone in the group knows us and vouches for us.
- We should give Barnabas some credit – he was willing to meet with Saul and hear his testimony and that would not have been without potential risk.

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- Let us now circle back once again to the orchestration of God, he caused the paths of Saul and Barnabas to intersect and would have moved Barnabas to meet with Saul.
- I doubt that Saul knew Barnabas in the past, but still God arranges for their paths to cross.
- It is a small thing in the whole of the Bible, but it is one more example of a sovereign God **causing** things to happen. (Romans 8:28)

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- **“So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.”**
- With Barnabas’ stamp of approval Saul gains acceptance with the apostles and is immediately embraced as preacher.
- Saul had a compelling testimony – “look, I used to kill believers of The Way, but now I am one, and like you I’ve spent time with none other than Jesus himself!”

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- At this point Saul was just as knowledgeable of Jesus as the Apostles – they all spent 3 years with him.
- And at this point his message would be a simple one – **“you know all of the teaching you’ve had that Messiah would come? Well his name is Jesus and I’ve seen him!”**
- To be effective as an evangelist one needs the power of the Holy Spirit, but evangelists rarely go deep into the Word.

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- The day would come when Saul’s preaching and teaching would no longer be simple – He would later author the rather deep epistles of Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and probably Hebrews.
- Hebrews 5:11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. **12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!** 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. NIV

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"The liberty and justice that are enjoyed by humans in Western societies and in some non-Western countries are increasingly seen as the products of a benevolent, secular government that is the provider of all things. There seems to be no awareness that the liberties and rights that are currently operative in free societies of the West are to a great degree the result of Christianity's influence" Alvin J. Schmidt

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- **"The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord."**
- If the church becomes stronger when we live in the fear of the Lord, we should probably learn what that means and what it looks like.
- I was sure when I went for the Greek word behind the English "fear" in this verse it would be limited to the idea of reverence, but it's not.

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Word: *foboj*
Pronounce: *fob'-os*
Strong's Number: [G5401](#)
Orig: from a primary *phobomai* (to be put in fear); alarm or fright--be afraid, + exceedingly, fear, terror.
Use: TDNT:9-189,1272 Noun Masculine
Heb Strong: [H1367](#) [H1763](#) [H2730](#) [H7844](#) [H3374](#) [H6184](#) [H6343](#) [H7413](#)
1) fear, dread, terror
1a) that which strikes terror
2) reverence for one's husband

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- I don't think it makes sense to assume the primary definition (terror, dread) is what is intended here, so "reverence" seems more likely.
- However, I am not sure we can fully know what Luke had in mind because of how the church grew immediately after the slaying of Ananias and Sapphira.
- The truth be told there is a time for both reverence and terror – just not in our modern western world. 😊

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- Acts 9:32 Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of Lydda. 33 There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!" **And he was healed instantly.** 35 Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, **and they turned to the Lord.** NLT
- **Miraculous healings are always instant and permanent until death** – the only exception was when Jesus healed a blind man in Mark 14 and the man said, "I see men like trees" and then Jesus fully healed him.

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- I make a distinction between miraculous healing and divine healing. (both **caused** by God, but in different ways)
- **Miracles are instant and complete** – divine healing, God moving in a person’s body often because we have asked, may be progressive and use medicine or surgeons.
- In the book Acts God was often authenticating the preaching of the Apostles through miracles, signs, and wonders as evidenced in the text. (**and they turned to the Lord**)

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- Acts 9:36 There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. 37 About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room. 38 But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, “Please come as soon as possible!” 39 So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them. **40 But Peter asked them all to leave the room;** then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, “Get up, Tabitha.” And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! 41 He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive. **42 The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord.** 43 And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides. NLT

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- Dorcas was the first person we know of to be raised from the dead by an Apostle – Eutychus (raised by Paul in Acts 20) will be the second.
- It is easy to see why God raised her from the dead – **“The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord.”** It certainly wasn’t for Dorcas’ sake!
- It seems that God always has a purpose in miracles – in most, if not all cases he shows his miraculous power to build faith, or to authenticate his word.

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- Did you notice what Peter did, **“But Peter asked them all to leave the room.”** He wasn’t interested in a show.
- Matt 9:23 When Jesus arrived at the official’s home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. 24 “Get out!” he told them. “The girl isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.” But the crowd laughed at him. 25 **After the crowd was put outside**, however, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she stood up! 26 The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside.

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- You should not conclude that its probably useless to expect God to do miracles amongst us – that would be wrong.
- If I, or Jackie, or one of you suddenly becomes ill and the prognosis is not good you can rest assured that I will be first in line to ask God for a miracle.
- **And if one doesn’t come, let it never be because we didn’t ask!**

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Questions

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