

A perspective view of a dark asphalt road that starts as a single path in the foreground and then splits into two separate paths that lead towards a horizon. The road is flanked by lush green grass. The sky is a clear, light blue. The overall scene suggests a choice or a divergence in a path.

The CHURCH Series

Part 8 – DIVERGENCE....

Introduction...

- In the last session, we looked at the conversion of Saul who later became Paul the Apostle.
- We examined the extraordinary circumstances that turned a known terrorist into a stunning vessel of Christ.
- We then homed in on Ananias as a remarkable model for all Christians.
- A simple unknown disciple who was available for one of the most historic moments for the Church – the transformation of Saul into Paul!



Introduction...

- Chapters 9 and 10 focus on three men which shifts the narrative of the Gospel
- from Jerusalem and the Jewish believers unto Gentile Believers beyond the Capital.
- The move of the Spirit of God starts to show the magnanimous heart of God for the nations
- and people outside the known boundaries of the Jewish community.



Saul

- *17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said,*
- *“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*
- *18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.*
- *19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.*
- *20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*
- *21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”*
- *22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*
- Acts 9:17-22

Saul...

- Saul stayed in Damascus and spent time with the Believers there.
- I remember after converting from Islam to Christianity; everything was new to me.
- The Love of the Brethren was real and I just wanted to read my Bible and fellowship with my new Brothers and Sisters
- Saul must have felt the same way. The people who he was harassing and killing, were now his family!



Immediately....

- *20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*
 - One of the first signs of true conversion, is the insatiable desire to share the Truth with others!
 - This desire to share the Gospel is one of the sure signs that you are on fire for God.
 - One of the first signs of backsliding in your life as a Believer is when you lose this passion!
 - The cares of this world replace your desire to save souls. The need to pay bills, take care of loved ones and family replace the love for Christ and His Gospel:
- *32 But I want you to be without ^[b]care. He who is unmarried ^[c]cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.*
 - *33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.*
 - *34 There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.*
 - *But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.*
 - 1 Corinthians 7:32-34

Confounded the Jews....

- *But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*
- *Saul was highly anointed because he had been taught by the best!*
- *Now he was able to use his knowledge of the Scriptures to prove Jesus was the Messiah in their own Scrolls.*
- *He was like an Agent who defected from one side to another, carrying privileged intelligence and information to dismantle his former arguments!!*
- *We will examine all of these brilliant presentations in the Epistles, starting from the Book of Romans.*



Reaction...

- *23 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.*
- *24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.*
- *25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.*
Acts 9:23-25



To Kill...

- This murderous spirit is an antichrist demonic force which seeks to silence all true light bearers and Truth tellers!
- It is the same spirit that murdered the Prophets of old and continues in all false religions and philosophies of men.
- It has its roots from the pit of hell and hatred.
- The enemy comes but to steal, kill and destroy...John 10:10
- We will keep running into this spirit as we continue through the book of Acts.
- Remember Gamaliel?:
- *³³ When they heard this, they were furious^[g] and plotted to kill them. ³⁴ Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, Acts 5:33*



Barnabas...

- *23 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. 24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.*
- *25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.*
- *26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.*
- *27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*
- *28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. 29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.*
- *30 When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.*
- Acts 9:23-30



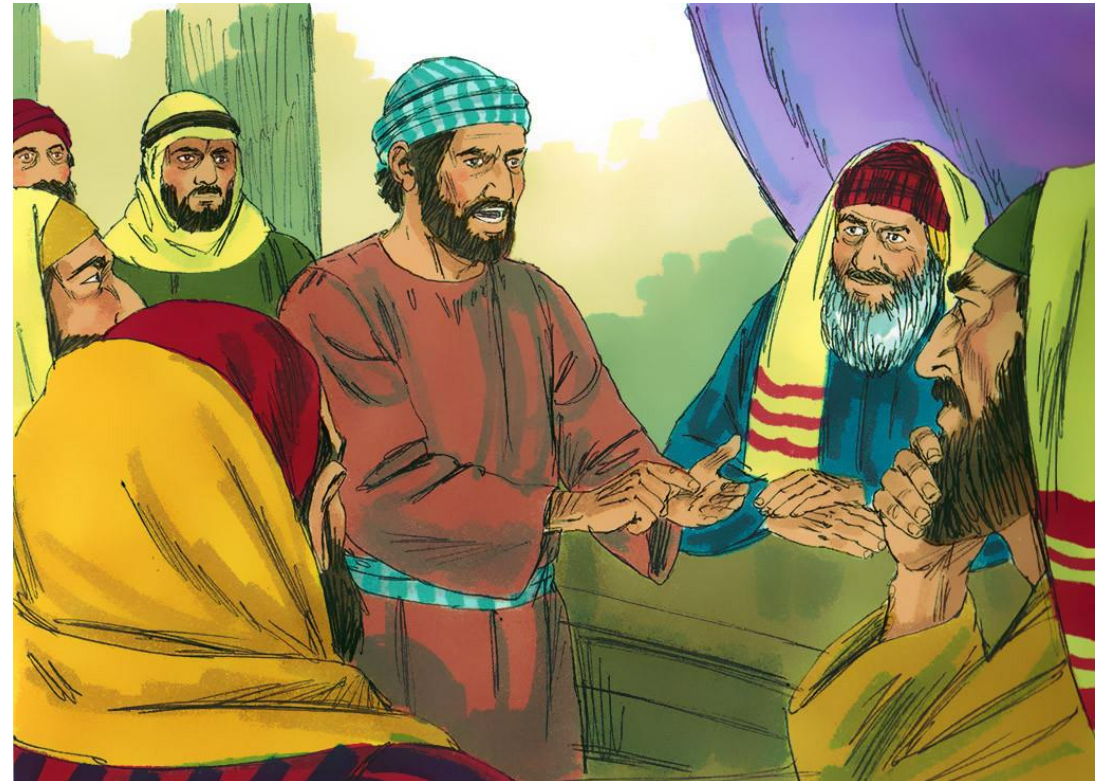
Barnabas...

- This was the same man from Acts 4 who sponsored the Church by selling lots of property.
- May God use more Barnabas' in this era who act as bridge builders and as a go between.
- Barnabas was able to decipher lies from truth, gossip from reality.
- With all their anointing and power, none of the Apostles could hear God about Saul's true identity?
- Jesus was able to use Barnabas to connect the foremost Apostle with the Church in Jerusalem.
- This was a big deal!!



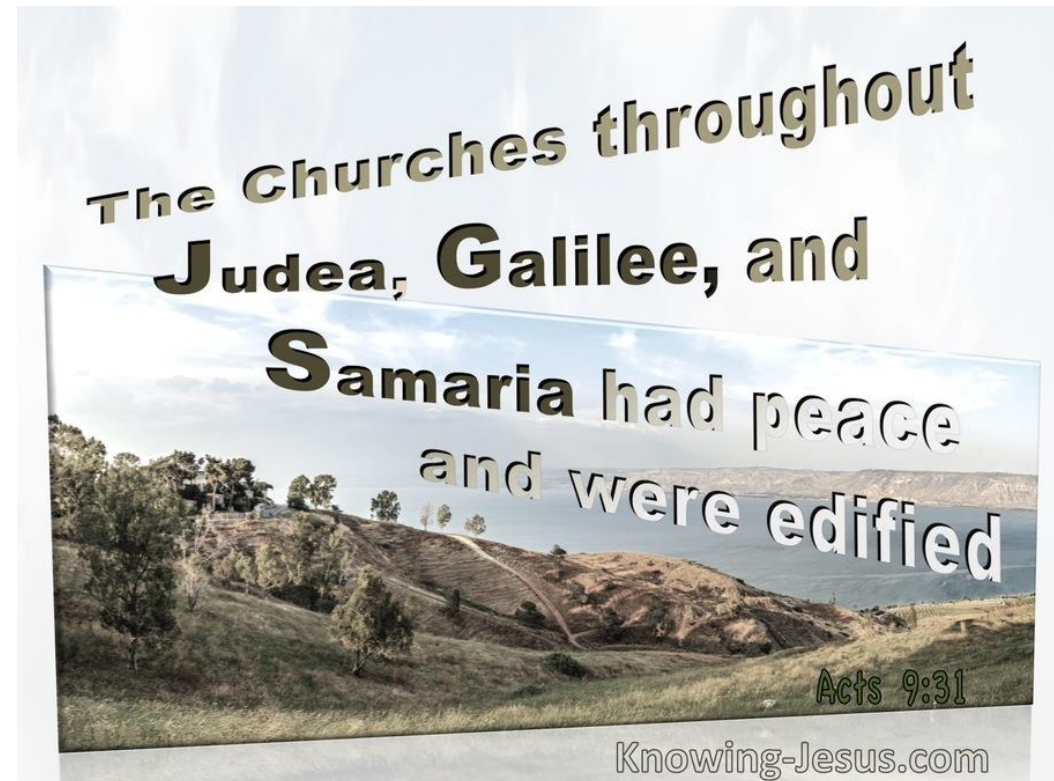
To Kill...

- *28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. 29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.*
- *This connection strengthened the Church all the more and expanded Saul's ministry in Jerusalem.*
- *The same murderous spirit in Damascus resurfaces in the Capital and wants to terminate Saul again!!*
- *So they get him out via Caesarea and smuggle him into Tarsus where he is from.*



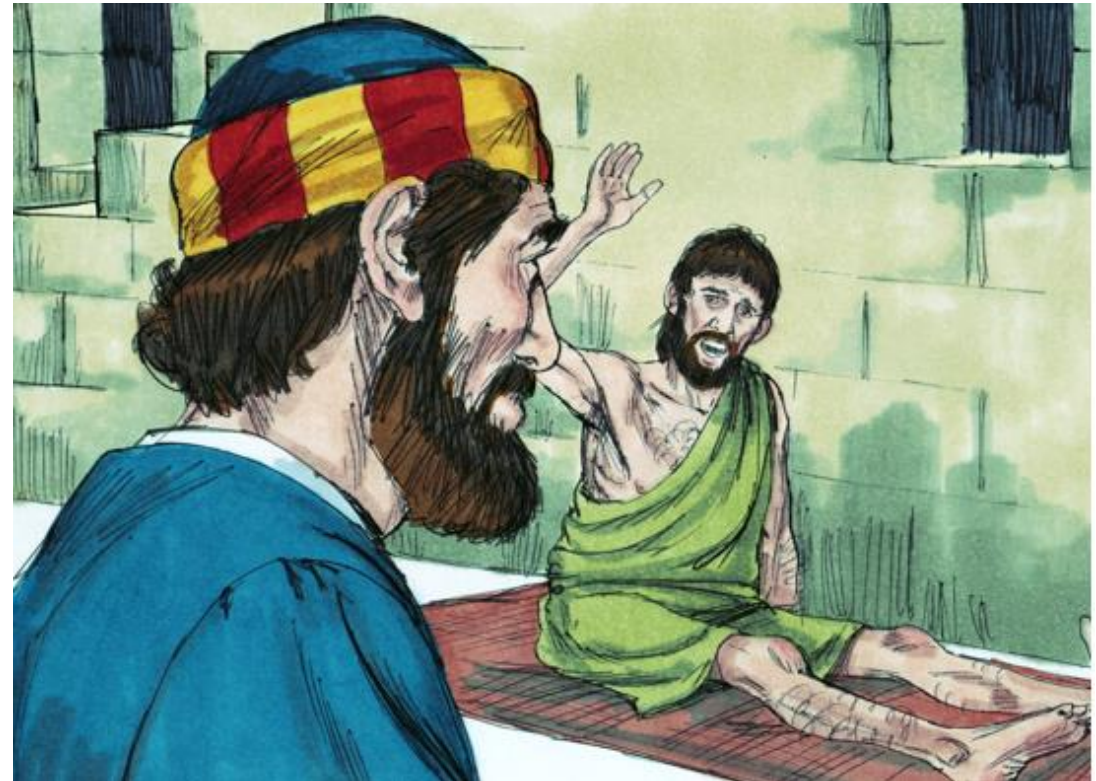
Peace...

- *31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified.*
- *And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*
- This is a very key period in the life of the Early Church.
- It allows the growth to continue unabated. It helps to stabilise the Churches and their expansion.
- This was a season of multiplication, and it stopped the murderous spirit of satan in its tracks.
- Before that spirit returns again, the Church of the Living God had moved on in leaps and bounds!
- Spiritual warfare is real, and we will all see the cycles of the evil one in the next few chapters.



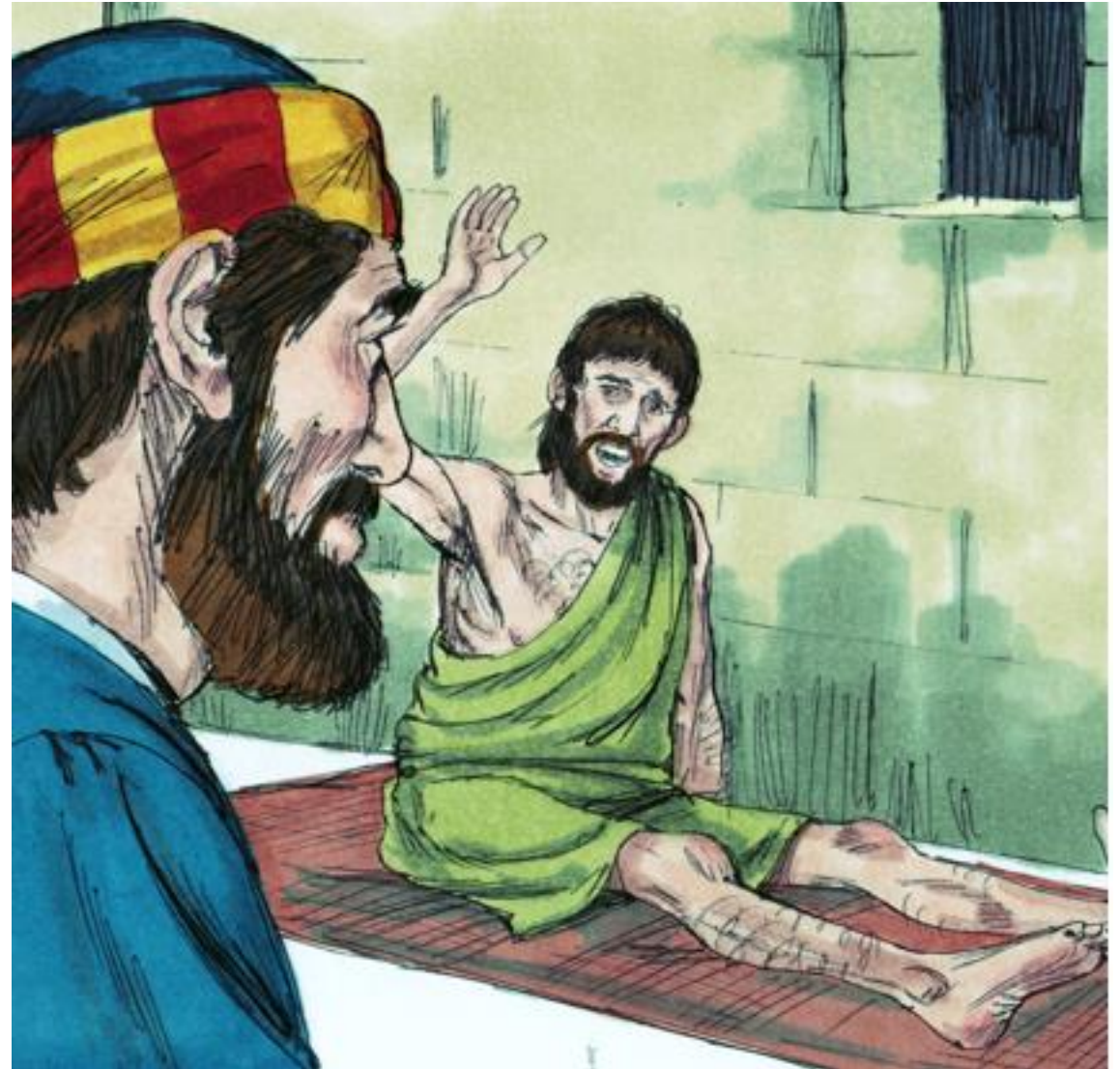
Peter...

- ³² Now it came to pass, as Peter **went through all parts of the country**, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda.
- ³³ There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed.
- ³⁴ And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he arose immediately.
- ³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord
Acts 9:32-35



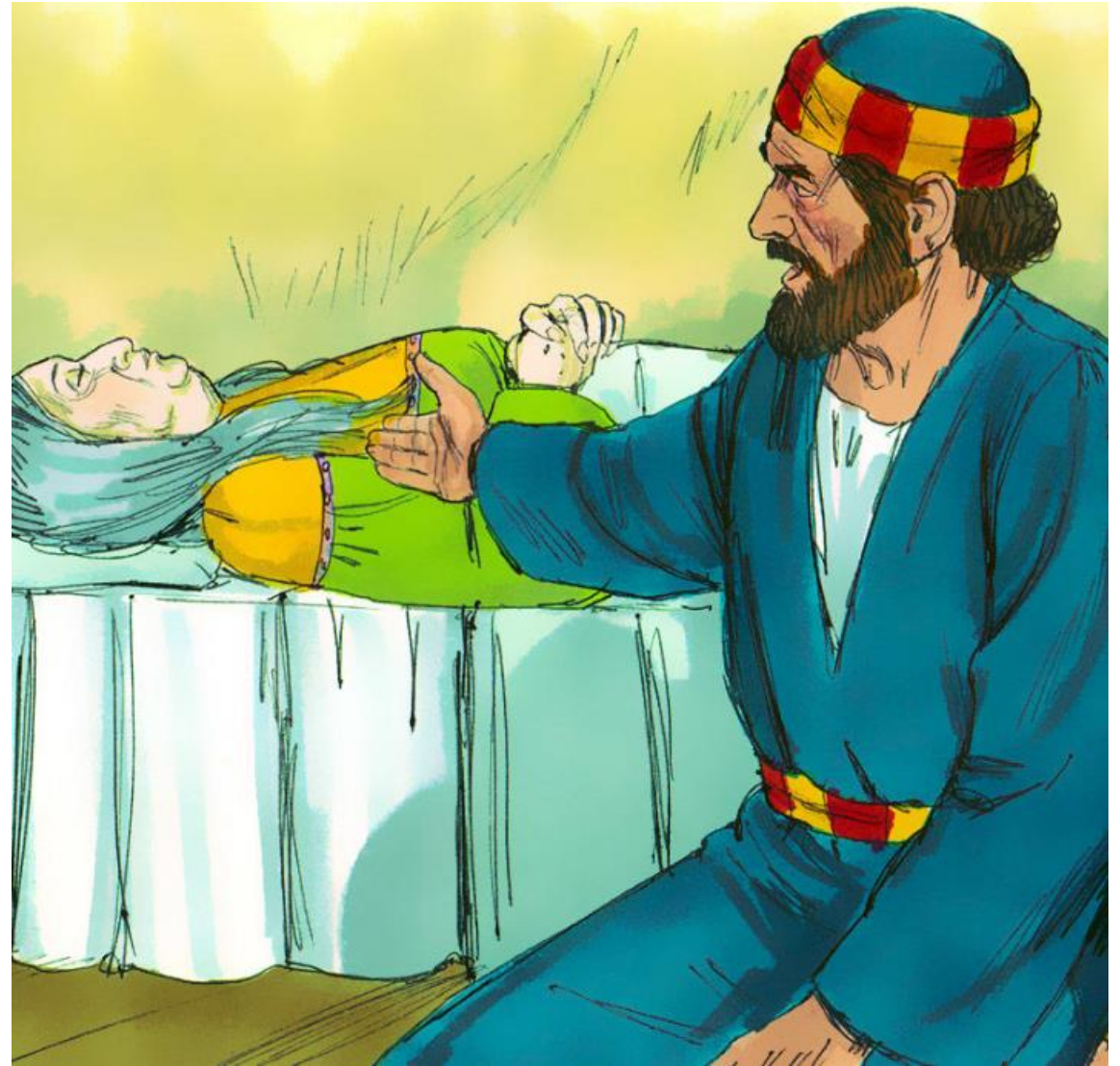
Peter...

- Peter is highlighted here with two remarkable stories.
- The first is Aeneas whom everyone knows as a paralytic
- The Holy Spirit moves through Peter to heal him because he is a walking advert for the power of God.
- When they saw he who was bedridden now walking, they turned to the Lord in droves.
- This shows how God can use a miracle to touch many lives.



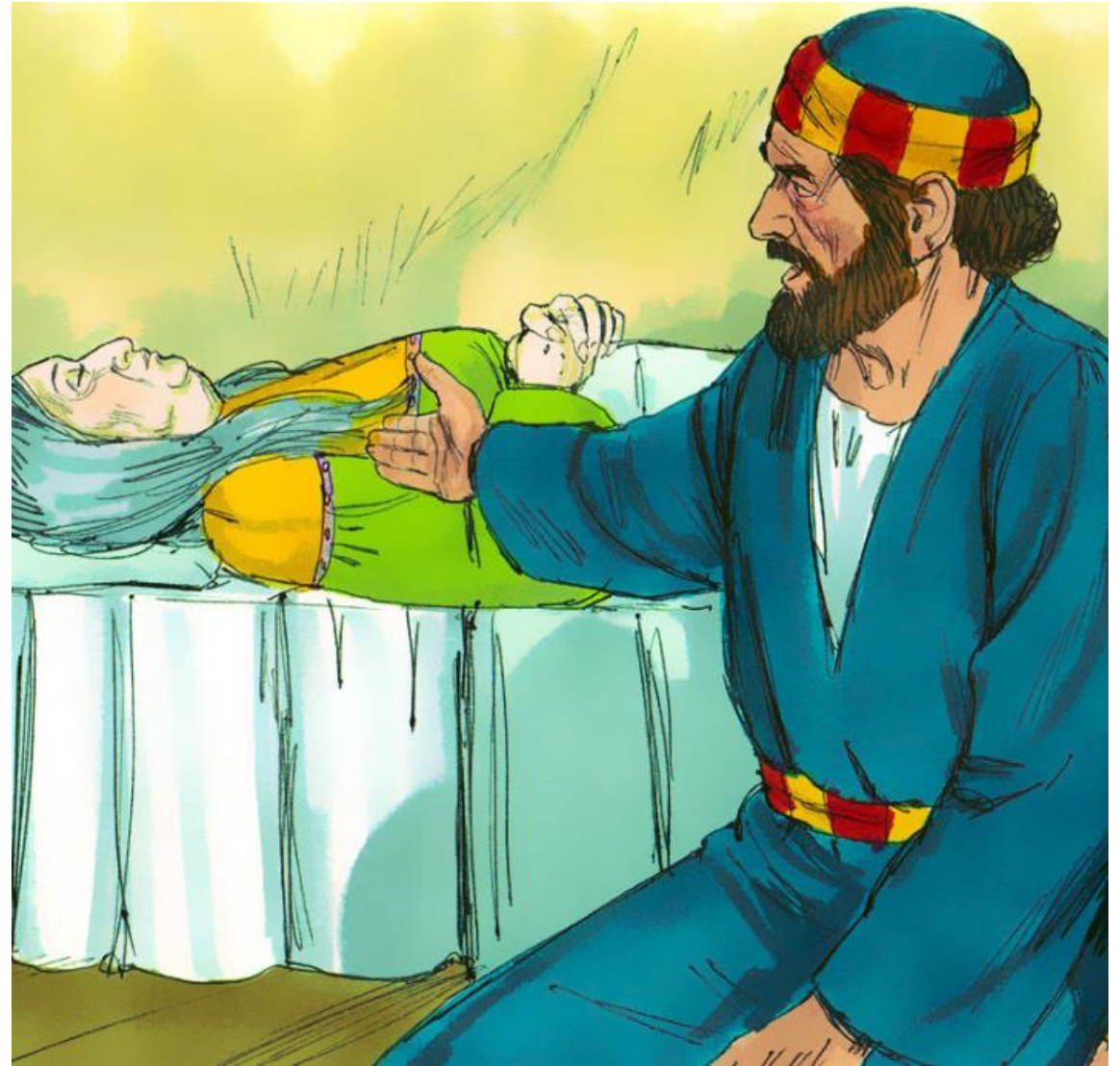
Dorcas...

- ³⁶ At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.
- ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room
- ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.
- ⁴¹ Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.
- ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. ⁴³ So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.
- Acts 9:36-42



Again LORD!!

- Dorcas was a disciple that died before her time.
- God used Peter to raise her back to life.
- Many who were not Christians saw what happened and turned to Christ.
- Across Joppa, Lydda and Sharon, this notable miracle made an indelible mark on people.
- May God grant us this Grace again as the Church to move in this power to raise the dead and heal the sick so that many may come to Christ!



New Chapter...

- *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,*
 - *² a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.*
 - *³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”*
 - *⁴ And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?”*
 - *So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.*
 - *⁵ Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. ⁶ He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He^[a] will tell you what you must do.”*
- Acts 10:1-5



Cornelius...

- Chapter ten marks a complete change of direction of the Holy Spirit in the Church.
- There are so many lessons to learn across this major chapter in the Book of Acts.
- Christians in the modern era must meditate these principles very deeply because their parallels in our day are far reaching.
- When God moves to touch those whom we deem 'untouchable' we need to go back to this chapter.



How can...?

- A non-Jew be able touch God whom he does not know?
- How can the Bible call a non-Jew a devout man?
- How can someone who is not in the covenant have a register in Heaven?
- “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.”
- Note that this account is NOT in the Old Testament!
- Which means there can be Cornelius around us who fit this criteria.
- Note that despite all his good works, God provides a way for him to receive the Gospel.



Prayed to God...

- How can a non-believer pray to God?
- According to Acts 10:2, Cornelius did exactly that!
- God sent an Angel who spoke to him.
- Your prayers and alms have come up before God!
- Which means, those who do not yet know Jesus can communicate with Angels.
- Cornelius opens up a whole new chapter of how God interacts with those who are not yet redeemed.



Send to Joppa...

- *⁵ Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.*
- *⁶ He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.”*
- *⁷ And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.*
- *⁸ So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.*
- Acts 10:5-8



To Joppa...

- Accurate communication with heaven about Peter and where he was staying and with who!
- We must be careful how we view people who do not yet come to our churches.
- We must be on the lookout for those who are like Cornelius in our day!
- We never know those whom heaven is talking to!



Unclean...!

- ⁹The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.
- ¹⁰ Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹ and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.
- ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³ And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”
- ¹⁴ But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”
- ¹⁵ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has ¹⁴cleansed you must not call common.” ¹⁶ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. Acts 10:9-15



Unclean...?

- This vision is the prevailing attitude of many Christians in the modern era
- We have labelled certain people as UNCLEAN!
- They cannot and will not come into what we deem as sanctified space.
- May God open our eyes to see what He has declared clean.
- As we walk with God, we will be amazed at His generosity of Grace.
- We must think and meditate deeply on this account.
- We will continue this lesson in the next class.



Memory Verse..

- *And the Voice spoke again;*
- *Do not call something unclean*
- *If God has made it clean!*
- *Acts 10:15*

