

THE TRUTH MARCHES ON!
Acts 9:20-43

Introduction:

1. Satan uses many methods in his attempts to destroy the Cause of Christ.
2. He was behind the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem.
3. This once thriving congregation was scattered, but its members “went everywhere preaching the Word.”
4. Saul, the chief persecutor, was converted to Christ.
5. He will become Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, and will suffer much persecution from the Jews (cf. verse 16).

Discussion:

- I. SAUL PREACHED CHRIST AND WAS PERSECUTED (20-31).
 - A. Immediately upon being baptized, Saul began to preach.
 1. New converts are often very zealous.
 2. His message was one he once denied - that Jesus is the Son of God.
 3. The conversion of Saul is a great evidence of the truth of the Christian religion.
 - B. Those who heard Saul in the synagogues were amazed.
 1. They could not account for the remarkable change.
 2. He became stronger and stronger in proving that Jesus is the Christ.
 - C. Rather than accept the truth he spoke, the Jews determined to kill Saul as they had killed Jesus and Stephen.
 1. They watched for Saul at the city gates intending to arrest him as he left the city.
 2. The disciples helped him escape by letting him over the wall in a basket during the night.
 - D. Saul returned to Jerusalem where he tried to “join the disciples.”
 1. When one obeys the Gospel he is added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47).
 2. However, one must join a local congregation and this was what Paul was attempting to do.
 3. The Christians only remembered him as a persecutor and thought his conversion was only a ploy.

4. Barnabas vouched for Saul and the church accepted him.
5. Saul's former friends and fellow persecutors sought to kill him.
6. The Christians took him to Caesarea and sent him back to his home in Tarsus where he would be safe.

E. The church now entered into a period of peace and growth.

“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.”

II. PETER MADE AN EVANGELISTIC TOUR (32-43).

A. He came to Lydda about 25 miles of Jerusalem.

1. Philip the evangelist had preached in this area (8:40).
2. Peter found a man named Aeneas who had been paralyzed for eight years.
 - a. He may have been a Christian.
 - b. The cause of his paralysis was not known.
 - c. Peter simply said, “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed” (cf. Mark 2:1-12).
 - d. Aeneas was healed instantly and completely without any declaration of faith on his part.
 - e. Many obeyed the Lord as a result of this miracle.

B. Peter next evangelized in Joppa, a seaport city 10 miles north of Lydda.

1. Likely Philip the evangelist was also responsible for planting the church in Joppa.
2. A godly Christian woman named Dorcas died in Joppa and the Christians sent for Peter.

C. Dorcas was a model of Christian womanhood.

1. No mention is made of her husband or family so she was possibly one of the widows who were taken care of by the church (cf. 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 5:3-16).
2. “Dorcas” is Greek; “Tabitha” is Hebrew; it means gazelle, the name of a lovely, graceful animal.
3. The widows wept while showing Peter the clothing this good woman had made for the poor.
4. Dorcas had practiced “pure and undefiled religion” (Jam. 1:27).

D. Peter sent all the mourners out of the room (cf. Mark 5:35-43).

1. He knelt and prayed beside the body.
2. He then said, “Tabitha, arise.”
3. She opened her eyes and Peter took her by the hand and raised her up.

4. He presented her alive to the saints and the widows.
5. Many believed because of this miracle.

E. Let us observe some things about life and death in this case.

1. Verse 39 tells of the widows showing Peter the garments Dorcas had made “while she was with them.”
2. Dorcas’ body was there in their presence, but Dorcas was not there.

- a. Man is more than mere body.
- b. The poet observed, “Dust thou art was not spoken of the soul.”
- c. Man is made up of “body, soul, and spirit.”

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jam. 2:26).

- d. The spirit of Dorcas re-entered her body when God heard Peter’s prayer.
3. When one dies, his body returns to dust, but his spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7).

Conclusion:

1. Through the ages, Satan has brought about the persecution of God’s people.
 - a. Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:10-12).
 - b. Paul warned: “Yes, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).
 - c. Persecution cannot destroy the Cause of Christ; God’s people will ultimately be victorious.
2. Let us not “fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell” (Matt.10:28).
3. Are you a Christian?