

THE BOOK OF ACTS

CHAPTER 9

THE CHALLENGE OF CHAPTER NINE

God's mercy, forgiveness, and salvation are extended to all who will receive them, even to the worst of sinners. No place in the Bible can we see this as clearly as we do with Saul, one of the biggest enemies of the early church.

Saul's dramatic conversion caused many to believe in Jesus Christ, and the letters written by the Holy Spirit through his hand still instruct and encourage saints today.

Ananias's willingness to obey God in ministering to Saul, even through the fear and doubt he experienced, is a lesson to us that our obedience can be the difference between heaven and hell for someone's soul. In leading a person to the Lord, we may never know in this lifetime how God might use that life to impact the kingdom of God.

Even when faced with the most severe persecution, we must never stop boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ.

Part of the salvation Jesus provided includes healing, and just as the healings of Aeneas and Dorcas in this chapter result in salvations, the same is true today of healings and miracles. We believers need to be bold to do as the Bible instructs and lay hands on the sick and expect to see them recover.

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS (1-19)

Saul is still threatening and murdering the disciples of Jesus. He has gone to the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem and asked for letters to give to the leaders of the synagogues in Damascus. These letters would give him the right to bind up any follower of Jesus and bring them back to Jerusalem.

But as he approaches Damascus, a light shines from heaven, he falls to the ground, and he has a direct encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contrasts the emerging ministry of Saul (1-31) with the disappearing ministry of Peter (32-43). Because of the deteriorating conditions in Jerusalem, Peter, who is called to the Jews, finds his calling moving toward the Gentiles, beginning at Caesarea. In contrast, Saul's main call will be to the emerging Gentile nations. His call will also include the Jews, but Saul's

main priority is the Gentiles (verse 15). His ministry begins with the Gentiles and eventually leads to a few opportunities to minister to the Jews.

In this chapter, Saul becomes the twelfth apostle.

SAUL'S PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

Act 9:1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

In 1 Timothy 1:12-15, Saul refers to himself as the worst of all sinners because of his early persecution of the church. Prior to his conversion, his name is the same as that of King Saul of the Old Testament. Just as King Saul was possessed with hatred for David, this Saul is possessed with hatred for the church and is breathing out his anger against it.

Act 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And desired of (from) him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way (5:20: “. . . this life”), whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Damascus is 150 miles north of Jerusalem. This shows Saul's dedication to arrest Christians and put them in jail.

A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

Act 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

The light mentioned in this verse is the glory of God manifesting, and it causes Saul to fall to the ground.

Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Saul was so stubborn Jesus had to lay him on his back to get his attention. When Saul persecutes the church, he is persecuting the Lord Jesus himself. Jesus did not say, “Why are you persecuting Christians?” (See Matthew 25:40).

JESUS SPEAKS

Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

The phrase “. . . it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” is not found in many of the oldest manuscripts. The Greek word for “pricks” means an ox goad. The Lord had been goading Saul like a farmer goads a plowing ox headed in the wrong direction. A rebellious ox will turn and kick against the goad. The idea behind goading an ox is that the farmer knows best.

The Lord knows what is best, and Saul has reached a crossroads in his life. He will either continue to kick against the goad and be put to death like a rebellious ox, or he will submit his will to God's. Saul has reached the end of God's patience towards him. If Saul is not stopped or is unwilling to change, many more Christians will die at his command, and the work of the Lord will suffer great harm.

Saul asks who is speaking to him. He is confused because he realizes it is the Lord but does not know who the Lord is. He has fought the concept that Jesus Christ is the Lord Jehovah. Now that he has experienced a taste of God's power, he is willing to ask and except any answer he receives. Saul, who has worshiped the Lord for many years, misunderstood who the Lord was. He had been worshiping the Lord of religion. He is now confronted by what he had feared, the Lord is Jesus Christ.

SAUL OBEYS

Act 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Act 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

The men with Saul do not see the vision he has. They do hear the sound of a voice, but cannot distinguish the words that are spoken. This also happened in Jesus' ministry when God spoke to him from heaven; some in the crowd heard the voice as thunder and others as the voice of an angel (John 12: 28-29).!

Act 9:8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

Saul is immediately obedient to the command of the Lord. He now becomes submissive to the one he has fought for many years. Saul opens his natural eyes and is blind. This is part of the divine plan of the Lord. God wants Saul to experience three days of natural blindness as a demonstration of the spiritual blindness Saul walked in his entire life (1 John 4:4).

Even though Saul believes himself to be a spiritual leader, he is really in the position of a blind person leading the blind (Matthew 15:14). Religion and its leaders are blind. Those who follow religion are blind and head toward hell and ultimately to the Lake of Fire. Saul is physically experiencing the blindness he has walked in for so many years.

During these early days, Saul does not eat or drink, but prays until Ananias comes and lays hands on him for the recovery of his sight.

ANANIAS INSTRUCTED TO GO TO SAUL

Act 9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Act 9:10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

The name “Ananias” means protected by the Lord. He is not in the fivefold ministry. He is a layman, a church worker the Lord uses to point Saul in the right direction.

Because of his arrogance, Saul might expect a minister from the local church like Peter, John, or one of the original disciples to come and lay hands on him. But God wants Saul to learn early the power of any man or woman dedicated to the Lord. A man’s position and power before he is born-again is of no value to the Lord. God will invest much time to work the religious background and pride out of Saul of Tarsus. Just as Moses had to learn humility in the backside of the wilderness, Saul also learns humility and becomes the apostle Paul.

Ananias is referred to as a “certain” disciple because God uses him to direct one of God’s most influential ministers (22:12-13). Ananias receives a vision from God (2:17) and is obedient to it. He also understands grace and will lay hands on Saul, yet will keep this fact hidden from others. Most men, if given this task would brag about being used by God to lay hands on a figure as prominent as Saul of Tarsus. But Ananias is humble, and God knows he can be trusted.

Act 9:11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

All but one street in Damascus wound and curved through the city. This street was called “Straight Street” and still exists in Damascus today, one of the oldest cities in the world.

Saul is still blind and still praying, waiting to hear from the Lord. He refuses to move until he knows with a certainty he is responding to the will of God. Saul continues to be obedient to what he knows, which is very little.

Act 9:12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

God prepares both Saul, who will be prayed for, and Ananias, who does the praying. God in His goodness verifies His will with both parties involved. God will do the same thing with Peter and Cornelius when the new birth and infilling come to the city of Caesarea in chapter 10.

Distance does not bother the Lord. In matters of great importance, He will work over many miles to verify His will.

Act 9:13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

Saul has saturated the city of Jerusalem with his evil toward believers, and his reputation has spread to many cities. Ananias has also heard in advance of the coming persecution Saul is bringing to the saints at Damascus.

Act 9:14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

The answer Ananias gives is typical of many that God speaks to. He immediately begins to expound on the circumstances from his human viewpoint. He informs God of the details as if God is completely ignorant of the circumstances. In verses 15 and 16, God gives Ananias the divine viewpoint.

ANANIAS OBEYS THE LORD'S COMMAND

Act 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

God doesn't give Ananias any more information. Even though Ananias is reluctant, God simply instructs him to go.

Saul will "bear" the Lord's name. The Greek word for "bear" is *bastazo*, which means to lift with the hands a flag or standard. God reveals to Ananias something that will not be seen for another 15 years: First, Saul (Paul) will carry the gospel to the Gentiles, Romans and Greeks. Second, he will carry the gospel to kings, Nero and Agrippa. Finally, he will carry redemption to the children of Israel, the religious leaders of Gentile capitals and Jerusalem.

God lists these according to their priority. God's main call on Paul's life is to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul will eventually become confused through pride and put ministering to the Jewish people above ministering to the Gentiles. Because of it Paul will end up being shipwrecked and thrown into prison for five years.

Act 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Before Paul ever ministers, God shows him that he will suffer greatly.

Act 9:17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

This is one of the first recorded cases of laying on of hands by someone outside of the fivefold ministry. Peter and John have laid hands on the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit (8:17), but until now, no layman has used this ministry. However, the ministry of laying on of hands is available to all believers (Mark 16:18) and Ananias uses it to lift the scales from Saul's eyes and get him filled with the Holy Spirit. (Jesus must have instructed him to lay his hands on Saul).

Ananias also calls Saul "brother." Ananias took the Lord at His word. Saul is now a believer and called into the ministry. Ananias has to forget everything he had heard about Saul and refuse to be moved by what he sees. He chooses to accept the word of the Holy Spirit.

9:17 The Apostle Paul Is Filled with the Holy Spirit, HOLY SPIRIT FULLNESS. Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Holy Spirit as a result of Ananias's receiving a vision (verse 10). Saul (later Paul the apostle) was filled with the Holy Spirit as Ananias laid hands on him. The accompanying sign recorded here was the return of Saul's sight (verse 18). Some also note that the apostle Paul valued the fact that he spoke with other tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18), so the absence of mentioning as much here might be interpreted as 1) evidence of the commonality of this experience in the early church---not necessarily requiring mention every time; or 2) that this followed later in Paul's experience.

SAUL'S EYES OPENED

Act 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Saul's eyes are immediately opened as if someone has lifted blinders from them.

Act 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Saul's first teacher is Ananias. Next, he is taught by disciples in Damascus. None of the disciples who instructs Saul are well-known in the churches. At this time, there is not even an organized church in Damascus, even though there is a great concentration of believers.

In Galatians 1:17, Paul writes that he does not counsel with anyone who was an apostle. The disciples in Damascus lay a foundation in him of the simple truths of the Word of God and the new birth. Although Saul is very knowledgeable about the Old Testament, he is a baby and the kingdom of God.

Many of the gaps in Saul's timeline from this period can be filled in by also looking at Galatians 1. After Saul is instructed by Ananias and many of the disciples, he leaves Damascus and travels to Arabia in the desert (Galatians 1:17). He then returns to Damascus (Galatians 1:17; Acts 9:23-25) where he receives death threats from the Jews who lived there. Saul then travels to Jerusalem after escaping from Damascus by a rope over the wall (Galatians 1:18; Acts 9:26-29). Then, from Jerusalem, he travels to Tarsus (9:30-31) and there spends six to nine years.

SAUL PREACHES (20-22)

Saul immediately begins preaching Jesus is the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus. Saul continues to increase in strength, confounding the Jews in Damascus and proving Jesus is the Christ.

Act 9:20 And straightway he **preached** Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

And straightway (immediately) he preached Christ (Greek: Jesus) in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

As a new convert, Saul is eager to preach. He proclaims Jesus in the only place he knows to preach, the synagogue. Since his audience knows him well, they are shocked and begin to spread the news that Saul is now a Christian and preaching the gospel he once refuted.

9:20 preached, *kerusso* (kay-roos-oh); To herald, tell abroad, publish, propagate, publicly proclaim, exhort, callout with a clear voice, communicate, preach. The herald is to give a public announcement of an official message and to issue whatever demands the message entails. The Christian herald is to proclaim the message of salvation through Jesus Christ and issue a summons to repent and receive forgiveness of sins.

Act 9:21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

These Jewish religious leaders in Damascus are shocked to hear of Paul's change from Judaism to Christianity on his short journey from Jerusalem to Damascus. They had expected him to speak of arrests and prison terms for Christians, but instead they hear his testimony.

Act 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving (demonstrating) that this is very (indeed) Christ.

Saul increased in spiritual strength, the ability to preach the gospel with greater clarity, and in the teaching of the Word of God. The very scriptures Saul once used to teach against Jesus he now used as a defense for Jesus. His demonstration of the gospel to the Jews had to be signs and wonders. Just as Stephen had performed miracles in the sight of the Jewish leaders (6:8), Saul is now teaching and preaching the same Old Testament as a defense of Jesus and performing the same miracles, signs, and wonders.

SAUL ESCAPES TO JERUSALEM (23-31)

Between verses 22 and 23, Saul travels to Arabia for a time (Galatians 1:17). When he gets back, the Jews at Damascus plot to kill Saul, but he is helped to escape and he flees to Jerusalem.

Once there, Saul tries to join the disciples, but they do not believe he has truly converted. Barnabas comes to Saul's defense, confirming that he has truly had an encounter with the Lord and has been boldly preaching in Damascus in the name of Jesus.

The Hellenists in Jerusalem try to kill Saul, and when the believers learn of it, they take him to Caesarea and then send him to Tarsus. Following this, the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria have peace and are multiplied.

THE DISCIPLES HELP SAUL ESCAPE

Act 9:23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

Saul was in Arabia for the "many days" referred to in this verse. He now returns to Damascus and the Jews decide the only way to eliminate this situation is to kill Saul.

Act 9:24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

Either one of the disciples learn of the Jews' plot or it is revealed to Saul through a word of knowledge, and the Jews are watching the gates (main entrance and exit of the city) day and night. They are so infuriated with Saul they are ready to kill him even in broad daylight.

Act 9:25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

The disciples let Saul down by a rope usually used to transfer people from one ship to another at sea. Saul is let down over the wall in a remote area where it is difficult for anyone to observe his escape. This location is far from the gates, and the Jews watch for many days, not realizing Saul has already escaped.

BARNABAS CONFIRMS SAUL'S CONVERSION

Act 9:26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

These are the same disciples Saul had tried to kill just a few years earlier. They still fear him.

Act 9:27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Barnabas is a forgiving man. He operates in the grace of God (4:30) and will be the one who quickly forgives John Mark when he fails on the first missionary journey (15:38-39). He now defends this new convert before his accusers. Barnabas most likely reminded them of the grace of God, which extends forgiveness and salvation to them.

Every child of God begins as a sinner and we cannot blame or condemn others for their evil past. Once a sinner has confessed Jesus, it doesn't take long before the fruits of his righteousness become apparent. Saul has demonstrated these fruits of righteousness in his life. Barnabas testifies to the reality of it as evidenced in Paul's preaching, teaching, and the signs and wonders performed through him in the city of Damascus.

Act 9:28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

Saul wins the confidence of the people by association before he ever speaks in the church at Jerusalem.

Act 9:29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians (Hellenists: Greek-speaking Jews): but they went about to slay him.

Apparently, the church has experienced trouble with the Hellenistic leaders. They can handle the religious Jews, but the converted Jews could debate them and win! Saul however argues so convincingly against them, they resort to violence in an attempt to stop him.

Saul's gift is to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7) as revealed in this verse.

SAUL SENT TO TARSUS

Act 9:30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Just as the believers had at Damascus, the believers at Jerusalem now help Saul escape with his life.

Act 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the **comfort** of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

This was the immediate purpose for Saul's conversion. The chief leader of the persecution is now a believer and the Jews have to go home, lick their wounds, and regroup. During this time there is great peace in the body of Christ and souls are won and disciplined with little or no persecution.

9:31 comfort, *paraklesis* (par-ak-lay-sis); A calling alongside to help, to comfort, to give consolation or encouragement. The *paraklete* is a strengthening presence, one who upholds those appealing for assistance. *Paraklesis* (comfort) can come to us both by the Holy Spirit (verse 31) and by the Scriptures (Romans 15:4).

AENEAS AND TABITHA (32-43)

Act 9:32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

Lydda is the same place as Lud in 1 Chronicles 1:17.

Act 9:33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

Aeneas has been paralyzed for eight years and is bedfast. Since verse 32 says Peter passed through and came to the "saints" at Lydda, it seems Aeneas is already a believer.

Act 9:34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh (Greek: has made) thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

Peter introduces Jesus as the healer of Aeneas' body. The same redemption that forgave sin also heals the man's body (Psalm 103:3). Aeneas needs to accept his healing just as he received his righteousness.

Act 9:35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

This is the Valley of Sharon, which produces grapes and other crops. In this place of great commerce, Aeneas is well known. When people witness he is now walking, many accept the Lord as their Savior. Again, signs and wonders serve as a tool to bring people to salvation.

The healing and consequent salvations here parallel the results Philip participates in at Samaria in chapter 8. Many times the book of Acts records an act of healing which results in a revival and great multitudes being saved.

9:32-35 Power Evangelism, GOD'S POWER MINISTRY. There is a clear pattern in the NT in which evangelism or even mass evangelism follows demonstrations of God's kingdom power (Mark 16:14-20; Acts 5:12, 14; 9:35, 42; 13:4-12; 19:11-20). Faith in the power of God in parentheses 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 4:20) or "power evangelism" does not diminish the importance of preaching about sin, the Cross, or Christ's resurrection. It does affirm that seeing God act opens people's hearts. Once their hearts are opened, we can more fully instruct them (Acts 18:24-26). As we are available to be used of God in this way, we need to be aware that the words and works of God function together (John 14:8-11); we cannot "use" God to make Him act for us; and seeing signs and wonders does not convince everyone (Matthew 11:20-24).

TABITHA RAISED FROM THE DEAD

Act 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Tabitha's name means "gazelle." She is apparently very pretty and gracious. She is known throughout the area for her care of other Christians and her giving to the poor.

9:36 Practical Ministry (Dorcas), BIBLICAL WOMEN. Dorcas was a devout and compassionate woman whose acts of generosity improved the quality of life for the disenfranchised in the community. Her concern extended beyond prayer to various sorts of practical service. She is noted for her aid to the poor, in particular to widows, for whom she served and did noble deeds (Proverbs 31:20). The great display of sorrow at her sudden death show the level of esteem held for her and conveyed her value in the community (Hebrews 6:10). The urgent plea to Peter, who raised her from the dead, speaks of the integral role God had given her in meeting the needs of those who relied

on her acts of charity (Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 25:40). Through her ministry of service, the faith community experience the manifested love of God.

Act 9:37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick (astheneo), and died (suddenly died): whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber (upstairs bedroom).

Her sickness had been progressive. The Greek word for sickness, astheneo, means to be weak or sickly (James 5:14). Apparently, Dorcas had become sick and, over several days, became weak. No one had been overly concerned about her because they do not realize the seriousness of her condition until she dies suddenly. She is laid in an upstairs bedroom until she can be buried.

Her situation is similar to what had transpired with Lazarus. When Peter arrived, she has not been dead for as long as Lazarus had been, but she has been dead long enough for people to know. There is no way her death could be mistaken for a coma. She will be raised from the dead, and everyone will know it.

Act 9:38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

Peter will go and raise Dorcas from the dead because messengers have been sent to him about her death. Peter responds because of a need. In the next story, Peter will be prepared by the Lord through a vision to meet a need in Caesarea. Whether we have a vision or not, God wants us to use the authority He has given us to bring deliverance to people.

Act 9:39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

Many who come for healing tried to prove their worth but are no more worthy to receive healing than they are salvation. Even when the Jews were sent to represent the Roman centurion, they besought Jesus by saying the centurion was working (Luke 7:3-5). However, worthiness is never a requirement for healing or salvation. Peter does not raise Dorcas from the dead because of her good deeds but because of the finished work of Jesus. Peter had just healed a man who was lame and paralyzed. Because of his condition, this man had been unable to do any good works or give to the poor. In fact, he had probably even begged for years, yet Jesus healed him. The same will occur with Dorcas.

Act 9:40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

In the story of Jarius's daughter, Jesus had removed the mourners because of their unbelief and ridicule (Matthew 9:25). However, Peter removes the mourners here because they confuse the issue.

Act 9:41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

Peter touches her hand, then takes it to lift Dorcas up.

MANY BELIEVED

Act 9:42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

Again, the purpose of miracles, signs, and wonders is to bring about the greatest miracle of all: salvation. Signs and wonders are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end -- the new birth.

Act 9:43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

A tanner is one who deals with the hides of animals. According to Jewish law, a tanner is unclean because to tan animal hides requires dead (unclean) animals to be touched. Peter is staying in the home of a man whose shop would be forbidden to enter by many Peter knows in Jerusalem. Because Peter has raised Dorcas from the dead, the people have opened their city and this particular home to him, Peter is staying with the tanner as an act of courtesy for the people of Joppa. Not only is the home considered unclean, the smells in the home are probably offensive. This is a good place for God to give Peter a house top vision and open his eyes to the needs of the "unclean" people, the Gentiles.