

Acts Volume 2 - The Visual Bible (Acts 8:4-13:52)

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. Acts 8:4-6 NIV

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-17 NIV

Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Acts 9:1-4 NIV Saul thought he was protecting the church from being corrupted by the Christians. He was zealous to honor God and keep their religion pure from what he thought was dishonoring to their traditions. God was about to show him something new.

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," He replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. Acts 9:5-9 NIV God was calling Saul to change his ways and believe in Him.

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Acts 9:17-19 NIV God sent Ananias to pray for Saul. Saul was healed of his blindness and became a believer in Christ and one of the most zealous missionary apostles. God changed his name to Paul.

Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. Acts 12:5-7, 9-10 NIV The church was praying earnestly for Peter. When the angel came and released him from prison even Peter was surprised and thought it was just a vision. Has God ever rescued you?

In Acts 12:21-24 when Herod gave a speech the people shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not a man." Because Herod did not give God praise, but kept it for himself, an angel struck him down and he died. When we do something wrong there won't always be immediate repercussions, but wrong actions will always have consequences. The Bible tells us to "be careful how we live." Ephesians 5:15 NIV.

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Acts 12:44-45 NIV The teachers of the law and the high priests were jealous that the people wanted to hear about Jesus instead of following them. They had crucified Jesus and were now intent on killing the apostles, too.

Dear Lord, thank You for changing the heart of the murderous Saul into the missionary heart of Paul. Change the wrongs in our hearts, also. Reveal the truth of Your love and grace to people all over the world. Help us to not seek glory for ourselves, but rather let us give all glory, honor, and praise to You. Let Your word spread throughout the earth changing hearts and lives, Amen.