

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
**NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP STUDY**  
**PART TEN - CHAPTERS 9 AND 10**

Saul of Tarsus was driven by terrible anger to try to destroy the Christian church. His religious background as a Pharisee, (Gal.1:13,14; Acts 22:3; 26:4,5; Phil.3:5,6) made him sure he was right before God. The Holy Spirit convicting him in his conscience told him he was wrong. The memory of Stephen and others dying for their faith, with love on their faces and forgiveness in their words, was a powerful instrument of the Spirit's conviction - one of the sharpest goads against which he was kicking. (Acts 26:14)

The Lord Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus to make it clear that Saul's anger was against God alone. It was 'high noon' on the road as Saul faced Jesus; Saul blinked first. He fell blind to the ground convicted but not yet converted. The blindness of his eyes showed him the blindness of his heart. The Lord gave him three days to think about what he had been doing. (9:1-9)

Ananias demonstrated beautifully what God does with people available to Him. Because he was unreservedly available, even before he knew his task, God gave him instructions. The instructions were detailed because God is fair and does not spring unpleasant jobs on us without some time to prepare. (9:10-13) He argued that the instructions were ridiculous but because he expressed his doubts to God, not to himself or to others, God honoured his honest doubt with further explanation. (9:14-16) Ananias obeyed confidently and accepted Saul the persecutor as a new brother in Christ. He urged him to have his sin washed away immediately and to accept God's Spirit into his life to assume control. (9:17; 22:16)

Saul saw physically again, and spiritually for the first time. (9:18) Because he saw so clearly how wrong he had been he had an immediate desire to reverse the damage he had done by convincing his fellow Jews that the New Testament Jesus was the Old Testament Christ, the Son of God. He was hungry to learn and so he grew fast. He was a normal Christian. (9:19-22)

After a time away in Arabia rediscovering his Bible with God as his teacher, (Gal.1:17) Paul returned to Damascus where he discovered that he, the persecutor, had now become one of the persecuted. (9:23-25) He moved on to Jerusalem expecting a warm welcome from his fellow Christians only to discover, as many Christians have since, that it is often easier to enter the kingdom of heaven that it is to be accepted in the Christian church. Barnabas showed again his skill as an encourager by reconciling the church and the new Christian. (9:26-28)

Three people had played key roles in Saul's conversion - Stephen at the cost of his life, Ananias at the risk of his life, and Barnabas at the risk of his reputation. When Saul's life was again in danger, the church sent him off for further missionary training - at home. (9:29,30)

Luke closed his second 'chapter' with another progress report. (9:31) The Christians grew in their relationship with Christ, and therefore in strength and number. This is still the normal way God works.

For the next two chapters the story focuses on Peter's ministry again. First there is a description of two miracles of healing, each full of spiritual significance. Aeneas was paralysed but in Christ's strength he walked again. Those of us who are spiritually paralysed the Lord wants to teach and empower to walk again. (Col.2:6; II Cor.5:7) Those who saw Aeneas walk again were deeply impressed by their need of Jesus. Those who see us walking in His strength today will also be moved towards Him. (9:32-35) Tabitha was dead but the Lord gave her life again and many believed. We were dead in our trespasses and sins,

(Eph.2:1) but He made us alive together with Christ,(Eph.2:5) and many will believe as that spiritual life shows as it did in Tabitha.(9:36-43)

Chapter 10 describes the conversion of just one household but it was a watershed in the history of the Christian church.

10:1-4 Q.1 What do we know about Cornelius' spiritual condition before he met Peter? What does this tell us about how God sees people who have not yet heard of Jesus but fear Him? Who else in the Bible was in a similar position to Cornelius?

10:5-8 Q.2 Cornelius was sent by God to a Christian for help. Where else in the New Testament does the Lord work in this way? How can we recognise someone whom God has sent to us looking for spiritual help?

10:9-16 Q.3 Why would Peter have felt very confused by his vision? Why should he have known that since Jesus came he was allowed to eat all foods? (Mark.7:19) What greater problem than food was God speaking to him about? How do we have a similar problem? How does God reveal it to us?

10:17-23 Q.4 A soldier and two of Cornelius' servants arrived at the house where Peter was staying. How do you suppose Jews normally reacted when Roman soldiers came with orders to bring them before their commander? What was Peter's reaction? Why was it so different?

10:24-26 Q.5 How would a Jew normally have felt if a Roman soldier fell at his feet and worshipped him? What was Peter's response? Why was it so different? How can we as Christian leaders make serious mistakes in allowing people to treat us as if we were God? What effect do such mistakes have on us and them?

10:27-29 Q.6 What had God taught Peter through his vision? How had it changed his attitude to Cornelius? Do you think Peter was aware of his problem before God spoke to him through the vision? How does God show us the same problem in our attitude to anyone who is different from us?

10:30-33 Q.7 No-one ever had a clearer invitation to explain the gospel than Cornelius gave Peter. What would you have found the most encouraging feature of Cornelius's words? How in different ways do people still make the same invitation today?

10:34,35 Q.8 What great characteristic of God had Peter discovered? Why is this discovery so important in any Christian ministry?

10:36-43 Q.9 What did Peter say Cornelius already knew about Jesus? What did he not know that Peter was so concerned to teach him? How did Peter link the two areas of knowledge together and apply them to Cornelius' life? What can we learn about evangelism from Peter's example?

10:44-48 Q.10 In what way did God show Peter and his friends that the Gentiles had become just as much Christians as they had? What tongues do you suppose Cornelius and his family spoke in? How does God show us today that someone else has really become a believer?