

Katamares: Acts 9:22-31.

9:20 *Immediately Paul Proclaimed Jesus*

PAUL PREACHES THE FULL GOSPEL FROM THE BEGINNING.

CHRYSOSTOM: “And immediately,” it says, “in the synagogues he preached Jesus.” Not that he is risen— not this. No, nor that he lives. What then? Immediately he strictly expounded the doctrine that this “is the Son of God.” HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 20.2

9:24 *Their Plot Known to Saul*

THEY SOUGHT TO KILL HIM WITHOUT A TRIAL.

CHRYSOSTOM: When they saw that it was spreading, they did not even use the form of a trial. “But their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night, to kill him.” For this, more than anything, was intolerable to them— more than the miracles that had already taken place, more than the five thousand, more than the three thousand, in short, more than everything. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 20.3

9:25 *Escape by Night*

PRUDENCE FOR THE SAKE OF THE PREACHING.

CHRYSOSTOM: Let us imitate this man. Let us take our souls in our hands, ready to confront all dangers. His flight was not an act of cowardice; he was saving himself for the preaching. Had he been a coward, he would not have gone to Jerusalem. He would not have immediately resumed teaching. He would have compromised his vehemence. He would have learned a lesson from Stephen’s suffering. No, on the contrary, he was being prudent. He considered it no great thing to die for the gospel, unless one could do this to great advantage. He was even willing not to see Christ, whom [more than anything] he was most eager to see, while the work of his stewardship among people was not yet complete. 4 Such must be the soul of a Christian. From the beginning and at the very outset, the character of Paul declared itself. No, even before this, even in what he did “not according to knowledge,” 5 it was not by human reasoning that he was moved to act as he did. For if after such a long time he was unwilling to weigh anchor, much more unwilling was he at the start of his trading voyage, when he had just left the harbor. Many things Christ

leaves to be done by human wisdom, so that we may learn that his disciples were human beings and that it was not all [a direct act of divine intervention] at every turn, since otherwise they would have been merely motionless logs. But in fact they often managed matters themselves. It is not less than martyrdom to decline no suffering for the sake of the salvation of the many. Nothing so delights God. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 20.6

THE ZEAL OF HIM WHO HAS BEEN FORGIVEN MUCH.

CHRYSOSTOM: "But his disciples took him by night and let him down over the wall, lowering him in a basket." . . . For they sent him out alone, and no one was with him. This was fortunate, because it resulted in him showing himself to the apostles in Jerusalem. Now his disciples sent him out on the assumption that he ought to procure safety by flight, but he himself did just the opposite: he leaped into the midst of those raging against him. This is what it means to be on fire, to be fervent! From that day on he knew all the commands that the apostles had heard, "Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me." 7 The very fact that he had been slower to come than the rest made him more zealous (for "to whom much is forgiven, he will show more love" 8), so that the later he came, the more he loved. But an ambush [against Christians] he had made in his former life, and thinking he had done ten thousand wrongs, he believed he could never do enough to efface his previous deeds. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 20.9

PAUL PRESERVED HIMSELF FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH.

AUGUSTINE: He would not have fled from the snares laid for him by the prince, his persecutor, 10 except that he wished to save himself for others who needed him, and that is why he said, "But I am pulled between the two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better; but to abide still in the flesh is needful for you." 11 LETTER 228.12

9:26 When Paul Came to Jerusalem

RECONCILING ACTS AND THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS.

CHRYSOSTOM: One may well be much at a loss here to understand how it is that, whereas in the epistle to the Galatians Paul says, "I went, not to Jerusalem" but "into Arabia" and "to Damascus," and, "After three years I went up to Jerusalem," and "to see Peter," 2 here [in Acts] the writer says the contrary. There, Paul says, "And I saw none of the apostles," but here, it is said that Barnabas "brought him to the

apostles.” Well, [among several alternatives] either Paul means, “I went up,” not with the intent to refer or attach myself to them—for what does he say? “I did not refer myself, nor did I go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me”—or else, that the laying await for him in Damascus was after his return from Arabia. Or another alternative is that the visit to Jerusalem was after he came from Arabia. Certainly of his own accord he went not to the apostles but “sought to join himself to the disciples” as a teacher, not a disciple. “I went,” he says, “not for this purpose, that I should go to those who were apostles before me. Certainly, I learned nothing from them.” Or he does not speak of this visit but passes it by, so that the order is, “I went into Arabia, then I came to Damascus, then to Jerusalem, then to Syria.” Or else, again, that he went up to Jerusalem, then was sent to Damascus, then to Arabia, then again to Damascus, then to Caesarea. Also, the visit “after fourteen years” probably was when he brought up the alms to the brothers together with Barnabas. ³ Or else he means a different occasion. ⁴ For the historian, for conciseness, often omits incidents and condenses the times. Observe how unambitious the writer is, and how he does not even relate that vision ⁵ but passes it by. “He sought,” it says, “to join himself to the disciples. And they were afraid of him.” By this again is shown the ardor of Paul’s character, for not only from the mouth of Ananias and of those who wondered at him there but also of those in Jerusalem came the statement that “they did not believe that he was a disciple.” For truly that was beyond all human expectation. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 21.⁶

9:27 *Barnabas Took Him*

A KIND MAN

CHRYSOSTOM: Barnabas was called “son of encouragement”; accordingly, he was accessible to Paul. His exceeding kindness ¹¹ is revealed both in the present instance and in the case of John (Mark). ¹² Why was Barnabas not afraid? (For Paul was a man whose very look inspired fear.) It is likely that Barnabas, also at Damascus, had heard all about him. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 21.¹³

9:29 *Preaching Boldly*

MAKING NO EXCUSES.

CHRYSOSTOM: “But they,” it says, “went about to slay him.” This is a sign of his energy and triumphant victory and of their exceeding annoyance at what had happened. Fearing that the issue should be the

same as in the case of Stephen, they sent him to Caesarea. For it says, “When the brothers were aware of this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus,” ¹⁶ at the same time to preach, and likely to be more in safety, as being in his own country. But observe, I pray you, how far it is from being the case that everything is done by grace [particular acts of providence]. Note how, on the contrary, God does in many things leave them to manage for themselves by their own wisdom and in a human way, so to cut off the excuse of idle people, for if it was so in the case of Paul, much more in theirs. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 21.17

9:31 *The Church Had Peace*

UNAFRAID, PETER LEAVES JERUSALEM.

CHRYSOSTOM: He is about to relate that Peter goes down [from Jerusalem]. Therefore, that you may not impute this to fear, he first says this. For while there was persecution, he was in Jerusalem, but when the affairs of the church are everywhere in security, then it is that he leaves Jerusalem. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 21.18