

Acts 9:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. The Jerusalem church's initial skepticism toward Saul demonstrates appropriate caution while highlighting conversion's radical nature and difficulty of overcoming reputational history.

He assayed to join indicates Saul's initiative in seeking church fellowship. Genuine conversion produces desire for communion with believers, not isolation. The verb join (Greek: *kollaō*) means to glue or cement together, indicating desire for genuine union with Christ's body, not superficial association.

They were all afraid reveals understandable suspicion—Saul's persecution had traumatized Jerusalem Christians. Fear mingled with doubt: was this elaborate deception to infiltrate and destroy from within? Their caution wasn't faithless cynicism but appropriate prudence given Saul's history.

Believed not that he was disciple shows requiring evidence beyond profession. Reformed theology emphasizes true conversion produces fruit validating profession (Matthew 7:16-20). The church's wariness, while initially excluding genuine believer, demonstrates healthy discernment against false professors. Resolution required credible witness—Barnabas's testimony (Acts 9:27) bridged credibility gap.

Historical Context

Saul's arrival in Jerusalem occurred approximately three years post-conversion (Galatians 1:18), around 37 CE. Jerusalem Christians remembered his devastation of the church (Acts 8:1-3)—imprisonments, beatings, Stephen's martyrdom. Saul's reputation as violent persecutor made instant trust impossible.

The church's fear was realistic—Roman authorities and Jewish leaders still persecuted Christians. A infiltrator could identify leaders for arrest. Their caution protected vulnerable community. Barnabas, originally Joseph from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), had established credibility enabling him to vouch for Saul. This illustrates the vital role of established believers bridging credibility gaps for new converts, especially those with problematic pasts.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How should churches balance appropriate caution against false professors with welcoming genuine converts?
2. What role do established believers play in vouching for new converts with troubled pasts?
3. In what ways does genuine conversion produce desire for church fellowship despite potential rejection?
4. How should believers with criminal or immoral pasts demonstrate transformed lives to skeptical communities?
5. What distinguishes faithful caution from unforgiving refusal to accept repentant sinners?

Interlinear Text

Παραγενόμενος δὲ ὁ Σαῦλος εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐπείρατο
was come And G3588 when Saul to Jerusalem he assayed
G3854 G1161 G4569 G1519 G2419 G3987

κολλᾶσθαι τοῖς μαθητής καὶ πάντες ἐφοβοῦντο αὐτόν
to join himself G3588 a disciple but all afraid of him
G2853 G3101 G2532 G3956 G5399 G846

μὴ πιστεύοντες ὅτι ἐστὶν μαθητής
not and believed that he was a disciple
G3361 G4100 G3754 G2076 G3101

Additional Cross-References

Acts 26:20 (References Jerusalem): But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org