



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
By Pastor Jody May 04/16/2023**

Acts 9:19-31 ESV

Saul Proclaims Jesus in Synagogues

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" ²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Saul Escapes from Damascus

²³ When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, ²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, ²⁵ but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Saul in Jerusalem

²⁶ And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. ³⁰ And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

[INTRODUCTION]

Main Point for the Morning:



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**Transformation is all about taking the things you do well,
and now you do them for God.**

1. Transformed people spend time learning, obeying, and growing.

A Transformed life is never idle it is always changing, it is always growing, a Christian should never be static. If one is in a healthy church, where challenges of the world are being faced, then it calls for a body that will adapt and grow to meet those needs all the time. Let's talk about the three ways in which the transformed life grows to help the body meet those needs.

Learning:

¹⁹ For **some days** he was **with the disciples** at Damascus.

Transformed people may be saved, may be fully converted, they may have been chosen before time, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are equipped to do all of what God has called them to do **yet**. Even Saul, master of OT theology, spent time with disciples of Christ before venturing into his public speaking life. Spending time with the Disciples would mean spending time with other people to hear the testimonies of other converted Jews, to hear and appreciate other people's stories of how they were drawn to Christ, **to develop a love for those that also love Jesus**. Spending time with the Disciples means they would have gotten a chance to love on and appreciate Saul for who he is, in that way **they practice the love of Christ towards others**. They would have conferred the things in Paul that would have been recognized for ministry and they would have warned him of areas of pride. Yes, Saul would have been given time to become known among the believers and in that way the new graft for this body would have become sure **(Illustration of new graft)**.

[PROBLEM] Ancient world Christianity (**2 – 3 yr. baptism class**) is totally opposite I think of the modern evangelical church. The church in the west many times will welcome people wholeheartedly BUT both parties often start off with the westernized way of living slogan of, **"What can you do for me?"**



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Unhealthy churches that perhaps have lived for a while with a bad dose of ecclesiology, or how the church should function, have grown **too** dependent on a large number of **volunteers** to pull off bigger and bigger events. The problem with that is it has made the church weak in some cases cheapening discipleship, opening the doors to people not ready for responsibility, all the while watering down the call to live holy lives.

On the other hand, sometimes people saved out of a westernized culture come to their new family like a Burger King whose tag line used to be, *“have it your way.”* They come to the church seeking a good vibe to counter all the modern negativity, or to find that ministry which they think will serve them best, all the while ignoring the invite to live in community for accountability. Both of these views are bad and harmful for the church.

Learning from other disciples gives time for your heart to heal, to get over grievances, and to learn to love others. Learning to love new disciples the church practices how to love like Christ and it strengthens their ability to be compassionate.

Obeying

²⁰ And **immediately he proclaimed** Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

Saul **immediately**, after taking a moment to get acquainted with his new family gets to work. He starts off where he left off, in the synagogues teaching. Notice he doesn't take on a new profession. Not everyone can do that but living a transformed life **doesn't** necessarily **call** you out of the job or even the life where you were, because many times that is **exactly where God wants you** ministering. Saul now influences his people, the Jews, for the Gospel instead of trying to keep them from it.

²¹ And all who heard him **were amazed** and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
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That's part of the testimony of a transformed life, their obedience to live in the world, not hide from it. They minister to people that once knew them as lost, unregenerate, and depraved. As much as Saul loved to share the gospel, he has now returned to a group of people that at one time thought he was something special for attacking the gospel, but now he looks just as brainwashed as every other Christian.

How many of us would be able to go back to the place where those we bad-mouthed; we now praise? What would it look like for you to try and get people to like those you once hated? As polarized as our country is right now, imagine whatever side you're on right now, trying to convince them why you switched sides and why they should too? Transformed lives are lives are marked **by obedience to Jesus**, even in light of **embarrassing or uncomfortable** circumstances.

[CHALLENGE] The church has a real problem today if we are not willing to get a little embarrassed or uncomfortable. As just **one example**, when the **Aggressive Transgender Community** is **not embarrassed or uncomfortable** to mock/slander/harass Christians, promote mutilation of children, sponsor and demand drag queen shows in the public square, soften and delegitimize our military and foreign policy, and then blame the church universal for shooting sprees as if our attitude called for it, **BUT** we are afraid to just raise our voices and call their actions wrong! Obedience to Christ yes, starts off by loving others, **but loving others demands that we tell them the truth**, call out lies, and still be ok when they get angry with you. That is not only loving but it mirrors Christ. To know the Gospel is to know what it saves you from, meaning we have a responsibility to preach where ever we are, even if it is embarrassing or intimidating.

Growing:

²² But Saul **increased** all the more in **strength**, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.



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Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
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What type of strength are we talking about, was Paul starting a workout regimen, did he join a CrossFit Tribe? No, when this word is used for strength in the NT it is usually in reference to spiritual strength, that's a combination of **faith, hope, and love** three things Paul loves to talk about and that everyone shares as the Core of being a Christ Follower (1 Cor. 13). When you have faith in Christ, and a hope to get more of Him, it will help you love even when love is hard. That is **strength, to love others when they do not love in return**, because your love is based in Christ and your unseen hope is Him loving you back.

When a Transformed individual is committed to learning, when they are obedient to share the Gospel, the result is that they will grow, they will grow in faith, hope, and love; Spiritual Strength needed as the church body faces the challenge of its' day.

Also notice God didn't reverse this order either. Strength is not required for you to go and do something for God, obedience is though. As a matter of fact, God prefers you weak sometimes in order to show His strength.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 ESV

⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this (**removal of the thorn**), that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Transformed lives are growing lives, they are people that are constantly getting stronger by going through trials and tests, they are constantly moving in a direction of **progressive sanctification**. But to be strong we have to be obedient, we also have had to learn some basics about the Christian life so we would know what to expect. That will lead us to the next blessing of the transformed life.

2. Transformed people spend time developing relationships.



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
By Pastor Jody May 04/16/2023

Sometimes this is not the focus, but often it is the **end result of pursuing Christ IN the church**. Just think about that for a moment. One of the **greatest needs** you and I have is: for authentic relationships, a deep friendship, to be understood in a world that wants nothing but conformity from you. One of the great benefits of a Transformed life, when you are obedient and find a church family, is you will develop friendships that can be **lifelong** and **life sustaining!** That's good news because Saul definitely needed that!

Saul Escapes from Damascus

²³When many days had passed (**3 years see Galatians 1**), the Jews plotted to kill him, ²⁴but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, ²⁵but **his disciples** took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

We don't have time to turn there today but if you were to go to Galatians 1:11-23, Saul gives a description of his Damascus ministry which was over the course of three years. That's a lot of time to make a lot of friends and a lot of enemies.

Saul developed some great relationships though, to the point they were willing to protect him and shield him from the ruling powers. In Damascus you will see that Saul has begun a pattern of behavior that he is guilty of in all his letters. He goes in, preaches the gospel, usually engaging in intense spiritual warfare, to the point it disrupts not just the religious practices of the locals but it disrupts the commerce of the day, which usually gets him chased by an angry mob (**Green Beret Work!**)! Saul was definitely in desperate need for friends and God provided.

It happens again in Jerusalem as well.

²⁹And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists (**those he once belonged to, those that once thought of him as their hero**). But they were seeking to kill him. ³⁰And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
By Pastor Jody May 04/16/2023

And just like before Saul's friends were the ones that got him out of hot water! I have been in a church family consistently, as a contributing member, for almost 25 years. During those years, I have only moved my membership 3 times and that was because of a geographical move. At every church I have experienced the love of Christ, as real and tangible force provided by flesh and blood wherein Christ dwells, his body, His bride, the church.

3 observations of transformed people and their relationships.

Point 1 if you want a deep relationship you have to commit to **time in one place**. There are people and friendships over those years that I know that when I need something, or I need to just talk there are people I still can call.

Point two relationships you develop in the church will often **out last** and **out perform** your **biological family relationships**. Saul experienced both of these blessings throughout his years of ministry and so can you, that is a blessing of the gospel that God gives to his people.

These two aspects are important because not only will you develop good relationships as you grow BUT the old relationships you had will dissipate and can even become hostile over the years. **Point 3** when you employ your gifts whatever they are, because they have been redeemed, you will most likely **make people mad at you**. Sharing the Gospel, no matter how winsome will gain you enemies, make no mistake. Don't just take my word for it listen to our Lord.

Jesus said:

Matthew 10:34-39 ESV

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not **worthy** of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not **worthy** of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not **worthy** of me.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
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³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

A Transformed life will develop new relationships, some for the good, and others will go bad, but all of them will still bring God glory, and that is ultimately what you and I are looking for.

[WARNINGS]

- If we spend all our time in this world worrying about being liked, then you have missed modeling the Gospel, for people hated our Lord when He said He is the only way.
- If we spend all our time trying to avoid confrontation, then we are not living the gospel accurately, for it calls us to proclaim the truth boldly as our master did.
- BUT if we spend our time loving Jesus, and patiently enduring with His church, then we will get more from this life than we had coming into it, and that is, friends and family that will endure eternity!

Transformed people, they learn, they obey, they grow, and they develop new relationships and when you add that all together it will reap a great reward!

3. Transformed people spend time having Kingdom Impact.

²⁶ And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

²⁷ But **Barnabas** took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

Saul arrives at Jerusalem, after spending three years growing in Grace, has fled Damascus for fear of his life, and now the disciples won't accept him. It seems they either have not heard of his change or they don't believe it. It takes the help of another transformed life to get Saul to Peter.

Barnabas (son of encouragement) becomes Saul's good friend, and they start the great work of preaching to the gentiles together. You met Barnabas in Acts 4, when he sells a field and gives all he had to the church, he is a Levite



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Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
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as well. He and Saul would have a lot in common as being lovers of the old ways, they cherished their Jewish ancestry while being Christian. Barnabas had probably started out life as a Joseph, and gained the nickname Barnabas because of how he affected the brothers and sisters. Now God takes that which is good in Barnabas, and He puts it in Saul's service, and together they change the Spiritual landscape of Asia Minor.

First, he got Saul the meeting he needed with the Apostles so they would trust him and know his loyalties.

Galatians 1:18-19 ESV

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

That got him the 'Green Light' to speak in the name of Christ and the church.

²⁸ So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists...

That almost got Saul killed, so the church preserves their new **apologetic champion**, and they send him home where there was another large Jewish contingency, Tarsus. Later the Apostles send Barnabas, in Acts 11, to go get Saul from Tarsus and they become traveling companions. Over the years they worked tirelessly to spread the influence of the Gospel only to split ways in Acts 15 not as enemies, but as men that saw different roads for their ministry futures.

Acts 15:39-41 ESV

³⁹ And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
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Because of Barnabas' work of encouragement and amendment making there would be much kingdom impact. But that **impact** wasn't just through the years it **was immediate**.

³¹So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

The effect of the Transformed lives of men like Barnabas, Saul, Phillip, Stephen, Peter, James, & John, all the Apostles, the new board of Deacons, is that even amidst persecution, even amidst family dissolvments, loss of status in the Jewish communities (baptism), loss of titles, loss of the ability to do business among their cultural peers, and not to mention letters for arrest, it all caused the church to FEAR God more than man, and they grew in their comfort in trusting the HS, and the church GREW!

Persecution causes proclamation and the more a transformed life proclaims the Gospel in their own unique way, the more the church is strengthened and the more she lives in spiritual peace!

Today family if you want the peace of the Spirit there is a path that Acts is letting us see.

Path for Church Maturity:

1st **spend time** developing your walk, learn, obey, and grow in the fear of the Lord. If you never put any thought on how you need to grow, you cannot experience the peace of the Holy Spirit nor see the growth of this church.

- **Fundamentals of the Faith**

2nd **spend time** being a friend to someone that needs you, as much as you **spend time** waiting to see if someone will love you first. **COMMIT** to loving Jesus above all which means accepting others as they are and love them, and then you will see how your life will change.



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Wk. 29 Living the Transformed Life
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- **Community Groups / Men's & Ladies groupings / Mission Involvement**

3rd **pray, plan, and proceed** with what you may think your calling is in this world to spread the Kingdom, and do it with a person that encourages you at least as much as you encourage them.

- **Don't wait for the church to set up a ministry opportunity, go and find one.**

Then learn and discover and cherish what we have learned this morning:

**Transformation is all about taking the things you do well,
and now GO do them for God.**

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that created you wonderfully for works prepared before time.

Go in the name of the Son, that loves you and wants you to know the love of His people so both parties are changed.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that is seeking to make kingdom impact with whomever and wherever you go.