

Acts 9:19b-31

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[0 : 00] I've been praying that this morning, that each one of us here, whether we belong to Christ and have known Him and experienced Him or we don't know where we stand with God.

We're still thinking it over or we still are rejecting God. Praying that our minds would be all here right now and not what's to follow, not where you're going to go eat later or who you're going to go hang out with.

But our minds would be totally stuck in the Word of God this morning and that He would just use me to try to truthfully unpack some things that are before us and that our faces would light up when we think of Jesus this morning.

It was really cool this morning when the kids were sitting there when we actually said the name Jesus. At least six or seven of them were just like their faces lit up with joy just by hearing that name.

And I pray that that would be the same for us as well. So just to give you what's going on today, we're going to finish this story that we started last week of the conversion of Saul and how he met Jesus and how he was changed by Jesus.

[1 : 24] We're going to finish the story of Saul. But then next week, if you look like in your Bibles going down to verse 32 onto the rest of the chapter, there's some passages in regard to healing, physical healing and even raising from the dead.

And next week, I'm going to take a special time to use this text and explain it, but at the same time, actually talk about like, does God still heal?

Does God still do miracles? And I really hope that during that time, a lot of the myths would be exposed and rejected as well as like, what does God's word actually say about these things?

And what can we believe and what can we take hope in and faith in? So it's something that has been very dear to me. Most of you know my past with all the physical trials I've been through and how that topic has been thrown in my face countless times over the years.

And I've had to really pray and think over what does God say about these things. So that's next week. And then Nathan will be back to you to go on going through Acts.

[2 : 40] So just join me in a word of prayer. Father, I pray that as we approach you together this morning to worship you through listening to your word, soaring it up in our hearts and seeking to be obedient to it.

Lord, I pray that you would help me just expose what's there in your word, that you would be seeing clearly and that no one would just walk away in disregard to what you have said this morning.

Lord, we offer up this time to you. We love you. And we thank you for being ever present with us, even as we sit here this morning. In Christ's name, amen.

So last week, we began the story of Saul in Acts 9. If you remember, he was a persecutor of the church.

He was out to basically arrest, to throw in prison and or kill the followers of Jesus. He was on a mission to ravage and to tear the church apart.

[3 : 53] And as he was on his way to Damascus to carry out this persecution, he encountered the risen Son of God on the road. And all of a sudden, he was faced with this blazing, glorious light that was coming from the person of Christ.

And he was blinded, thrown to the ground. And Jesus said to him, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he was going to persecute the followers of Jesus.

And so he was that encounter, not just blinded him, but like traumatized him, really shook him up bad. And when he went to Damascus, on to Damascus, God sent one of his people, Ananias, to go and to heal him of his blindness and then to encourage him.

So he was, he got up, he was baptized. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. And he actually began starting a ministry, I guess, here in Damascus.

But we read, just look at verse 18 of chapter 9. It says, he rose and was baptized. And taking food, he was strengthened for some days, was with the disciples at Damascus.

[5 : 06] So this inward change that Saul experienced, all of us who know Christ have experienced. It may have been a little slower, a little more gradual, or it would have more have been like a bolt of lightning hit you and you were different.

And, but regardless of our story, we all have encountered Christ. And so what's the rest of this story? But before we dive into Acts, we're going to read verses 20 through 31 today.

All of us here, I think I could safely say that all of us aren't always really happy with who we are. We always want to change.

We always want to be transformed. We're never normally content with where we are as people. So we spend thousands and maybe even millions of dollars at, like, on psychiatric help for people who are trying to change their behavior.

Cosmetics, people trying to change how they look and how attractive they are. All these things, we always want to change how we think, how we look, and how we act. And we're looking at the wrong things.

[6 : 19] Jesus said in the Gospels, in Mark, that our problems come from within. They can't be fixed from these outward, superficial means.

And all of us need to be transformed. And none of the things that this world offers can do that. Only Christ, only Christ can change us.

Only Christ can change us. And so, we want to read from verses 20 through 31 today. Just kind of pick up and here we go.

It says, look at verse 19. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue, saying, He is the Son of God.

And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of all those who called upon this name?

[7 : 17] And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests? But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him.

But the disciples took him by night and led him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. And when he had come up 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. 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 in Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

So he went out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists, but they were seeking to kill him.

[8 : 24] And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and were being built up.

And walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. So that's where we are this morning. So the rest of that story.

And there is evidence in the life of this man of a transformed life, a life that's been changed. And I want us to do a few things while you're listening.

I want you to look for a similar transformation in your own life. Think about how Christ has changed you. Because it is impossible, impossible for you to actually encounter Jesus and just walk away unchanged.

It's not ever going to happen. So if you say, like, I know Christ, I've experienced him, but you don't look any different than the rest of the world around you. You don't act different, think different, talk different, live for something different.

[9 : 33] There could be a problem. But all of us who have encountered Christ are not the people we once were. And again, that change may be gradual. It doesn't have to be like in a flash, necessarily.

Paul's story is rare. Very few people have, like, encountered Christ in this way and literally changed overnight. But it can happen. So as we do this, let's look at how Paul was transformed by the risen Christ and then look into our own lives as well.

And so if we can see, at least I pulled out three things. I could have probably done more, but just three things this morning. But number one, Saul's message is transformed.

Saul's message is transformed. And you see this 20 through 22 and 27 through 29. But let's contemplate the previous message that Paul, or Saul, excuse me, was proclaiming with his life. His message before this was to discredit the person of Jesus as the Messiah. It was to uphold the teachings and traditions of the Pharisees and of the law.

[10:46] Saul, he was zealous for these things. He was proclaiming the message that the only way for you to be made right with God is a strict, obedient observance of the law of Moses.

You have to maintain these standards to be right with God. That was his former message. So what? Let me close the question this way.

Why do you think Saul was so hostile to the idea of Jesus being the Messiah? Why did he want to exterminate the followers of Jesus? And here's why. Because for him to affirm that Jesus was the Messiah was to assign Jesus a saving role in salvation that in his mind robbed the law of the power to save.

That's what his whole life was dedicated to. Keeping the rules, keeping the law. And if Jesus was the Savior, all that was going out the door. Because the gospel of Christ struck at the very essence of what he'd been taught his whole life by the Pharisees and by the rabbinical traditions.

So Saul's extreme devotion to the Jewish religious system is what triggered that adamant persecution against Christ and against his followers. So that was his former message.

[12:03] If you want to be right with God, you've got to observe the law of Moses. You have to be righteous. You have to make yourself righteous. Today you might just say, be good enough.

Be a good person. Keep all the rules. So what is the new message? What's Paul's or Saul's new message now? It says, we read right there, he was preaching, proclaiming, and he was proving that Jesus was, in fact, the Son of God and the long-awaited Messiah.

And that salvation and right standing with God is only found in Christ alone. It's the exact opposite of what he was preaching a few days prior. Pretty crazy.

Not by strict observance of the law of Moses, but only in Christ alone. So very shortly after he recovered his sight, he went out, right after that almost, and was telling people that Jesus is the Christ, he is the Messiah.

A drastic switch. Immediately, he said, he went and proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues. And just imagine the shock. Can you imagine, like, a person in our nation that is most adamant about pro-choice and abortion and who thinks that babies are a waste of time?

[13:21] And they were studied, they were well-read, they were well-respected, and they were cruel, and they just showed up at, like, the most liberal university in the U.S., and they just said, I know you thought I was going to say this today, but I'm wrong.

And just totally switched what they believed almost in a day. It's their shock. They're like, they're surprised. Like, wait a minute, wait a minute. Isn't this the guy who came to bring persecution to the name of Jesus?

And now he's saying the very opposite? And so it is the exact opposite. Saul's encounter with the risen Christ had changed him drastically. His convictions, it compelled him to believe the opposite of what he had.

And as I said last week, Jesus hunted down Saul. And he hunted down you, too, whether you know it or not. And if we're out there today and some of us may be thinking, not me.

Jesus won't hunt me down. I'm strong enough to resist that. No, you're not. God spoke life into you. He can take it away from you, and he can change you if he wants to.

[14:28] He is the Son of God. None of us can stand before him if he wants us. And when he saves us, what joy comes from that.

Aren't we glad that he didn't let us just go on our way, seeking our own destruction, loving stupid things of this world? But they were shocked, and they were amazed, and they were confounded, like, by his words.

They were saying, this is the exact guy who came here to stop this kind of stuff. So what was the new message? Well, at least a couple of things.

The new message was Jesus was the Son of God. He was the Son of God. And that he was the Messiah. So the term Son of God, if you ever did a study on this in the Old Testament, it's used in a lot of different ways.

But most people would agree that Saul here is not trying to use it in every single sense that the Old Testament does. The main idea Saul is trying to convey from the Old Testament is that the long-expected Messiah would, in fact, be the Son of God.

[15:37] It was connection to his deity. Jesus is completely the same in his being as the Father, the exact expression of the Father. He is divine, fully God, yet became fully man as well.

The mystery of all of that. And the New Testament idea of sonship is also linked to how a son would reflect his father, represent his father, as well as do the will of his father.

That's a New Testament idea of the Son. And Jesus fulfilled that role perfectly. He perfectly represented God before man. He said, if you want to see the Father, look at me.

And he also said, I've come to do the will of my Father. And no one did that perfectly but Jesus. And that's why, you know, in the Gospels it says, when he was baptized, he heard the word from heaven.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. So it's this transcendent aspect of Christ's relationship with the Father.

[16:40] He is the Son of God. And as Paul wrote later on, convinced of this, he said, But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

So this Messiah, the Savior, was the Son of God. He was divine, sent from God himself. And that he was the Christ. The Hebrew word for that was the Messiah, the Anointed One, the one that the Spirit of God would rest on without measure.

The one whom God would empower to come and do his will on the earth. He was the Deliverer, the Savior, not just for Jews, but for all the nations, for people from all nations, to deliver them from the power of death, hell, and sin.

So fallen man cannot save himself. And that's what he was realizing. I can't do it. This is my new message. Convinced that Jesus is the Savior, the Deliverer. And he saves us from the judgment of God and restores us to God.

So that was one of the things in his new message. But another one, this one I want to spend a lot of time on. The new message that Saul was proclaiming was that salvation is not by strict observance of the law of Moses, being good, trying to keep all the rules.

[18:09] His new message was that salvation comes completely through faith alone in Christ alone. Completely. If anyone was qualified to talk to the Jewish audience, it was Saul.

So later on, writing as the Apostle Paul, he explains, like, if anybody could take confidence in their own ability and their own morality, it was me.

It was me. And he did that to kind of silence anybody else and make take confidence in their own flesh to earn right standing with God. So hold your hand in Acts and turn to Philippians chapter 3. And this is where Paul kind of lists out his pedigree and all his qualifications that he thought were going to make him right with God. Philippians chapter 3.

So, although some of these things Paul is about to list aren't bad things, they were bad in the sense that he was trusting in them to make him right with God.

[19:18] He was studying the signposts that pointed to Jesus, but he never traveled the road to where the signs were pointing. And that's what this was. This was all a fulfillment of Jesus.

And he had woven a garment of self-righteousness for himself that he thought he could stand before God with one day. And if he had, that garment of self-righteousness would have just melted under the holy presence of God and he would have been damned.

So, as we read through this, we're going to compare, like, what would that sort of look like in our culture, right, as opposed to this, this time.

But we're going to read Philippians 3, 3 through 9. He says, this was Saul, not writing as Paul. For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[20 : 29] Like, you think that you had it all together? I had it more together than you ever could imagine. And then he says, circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, and as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

So, let's just stop there for a second. I want you to just unpack this with me. Because to us, it's like, what does all that mean? You know, big deal. So what? Well, let's walk by it.

And what I want you to see is that he's counting all these things as loss. Like, he's saying, these aren't the things that made me right with God. These aren't the things that can restore me back to fellowship with God again.

And so, under this title, just list out these things in your mind or on your notes or whatever. But the first thing he says that cannot make you right with God is rituals.

Rituals cannot make you right with God. He says, I was circumcised on the eighth day. This was the prescribed day for a boy, a Jewish boy, to be circumcised under the Levitical law.

[21 : 43] So he was an eighth dayer, literally, in the Greek. He followed all the rituals and all the ceremonies from day one, from the beginning, that he thought would make him right with God.

And now, in our context, understand that no ritual, no ceremony held in this building or in any building can make you right with God. No infant baptism or adult baptism, for that matter, can make you right with God.

No taking the Lord's Supper every week does not make you right with God. It's not by attending church services, that make you right with God. So it's not by ritual.

Secondly, it's not by race. A big one. Second one, not by race. He says, I was of the nation of Israel. So he was a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He was born into this race that God chose to manifest himself to, to give them his laws and his ways so they would know him. So Jews strongly relied on their heritage, in a sense, to make them right with God.

[22 : 49] And some of them still do to this day. Then he goes on, he says, of the tribe of Benjamin. And so Benjamin was the second son of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife.

And most, why is this a big deal? Because at this time, in the first century A.D., most Jews had no idea what tribe they came from at all. Because of the exiles and because of them being conquered over and over and intermarriages that the nation went through, most people had no idea what tribe they came from.

Ephraim, Dan, Levi had no idea. But Paul was like, oh, we know who we are. We remain true to, like, the tribe of Benjamin from the very beginning.

He says, a Hebrew of Hebrews, Hebrew-speaking parents, grandparents, taught all the traditions and customs from day one, from the very beginning. So a rich heritage, right?

But understand, back in our context, no racial heritage can make you right with God. Neither can living in a certain nation, like America, or in the Bible Belt, make you right with God.

[23 : 54] No rank in society or in the church can make you right with God. It doesn't matter if you're a well-known person in the community.

Again, don't put your hope in those things. If you've been taught all the right, proper Christian language and Christian norms, don't put your hope in those. No value before the judgment seat of God. Thirdly, he says, not by religion can you make yourself right with God.

He says, as to the law, I was a Pharisee, the most orthodox and strict of all the sects at this time. As I said last week, Pharisees literally means like separated ones, people who get themselves away from the average and say that we are extremely devoted to the law and to God.

Paul was a Pharisee, one of the top ones of his time. He lived a very strict, disciplined life. He had the scripture memorized, and he taught it by the interpretation of the elders at the time.

So, in our world, even if you are the most talented, popular Christian teacher, pastor, writer, theological scholar, that can't bring you salvation.

[25 : 08] Cannot bring you salvation. No strict religious lifestyle of, like, don't touch this, don't eat that, don't behave this way or that way, don't drink alcohol, whatever, cannot make you right with God.

Going on mission trips, not by religion. Number four, not by sincerity. He says, as to zeal, I was a persecutor of the church.

He makes a point to say, of all these people who think they have a lot of zeal, I had far more, because I didn't just say what I believed from my mouth. I actually went to persecute the people who disagree with me.

So, you can be very passionate about something and be wrong. So, just because you feel it, doesn't mean you're right. You have to put your zeal and your passion in the right place, which is Christ, and not by religion or sincerity.

And then a big one, number five, is not by legalistic righteousness. He says, as to righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless.

[26 : 12] So, he had perfected the outward keeping of the law. The outward keeping. And most of the Pharisees had, and that's when Jesus was here, he was saying, you may be out here, but inward, you're not.

Your heart is far from these things. You don't belong to God. So, our own morality and our own keeping of all the rules cannot make us right with God.

You cannot be good enough. Cannot. You can't do enough good works or be moral enough to make yourself right with God. Paul is trying to tell you that.

Do not place your hope in these things. Because he's saying, I was the best. So, let's look at the rest of the text in Philippians. And I want you to see that he's sort of using like an accounting term here.

He used the term gain and loss a few times. Then he also used the word count. So, all these things we just read, he throws them in the loss column, like worthless.

[27 : 13] And then he picks up what he's gained. Verse 7, he says, But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. That's dung. That's what he's trying to say, as refuge. I count them as that in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him.

Here it is. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith.

So, this is it. This is the message. We come to God helpless, not bringing anything of our own with us and saying, I cannot do this. I come to you.

I repent. I place my total trust and faith in your life, your death, and your resurrection. Make me righteous before God because I can't make myself righteous.

[28 : 25] So, all of us are preaching a message with our lives, whether you believe it or not. You're preaching like this is the most valuable thing in life or this is the most valuable thing in life. But how you talk, how you act, how you dress, what you spend your time and money on.

But more importantly, what is the message you're relying on to make you right before God? It only can be in Christ. This is what Saul is telling you.

Paul is telling you. Please don't put your hope in any of those things. It cannot make you right with God. Only by faith and the righteousness of Christ can you be made right. So, looking to Christ through faith, completely trusting in him to provide for you, which you cannot provide for yourself.

He is the Savior. He is the Messiah. That's why he came here. Not to enable you to save yourself, but to save you. To save you. That's number one.

The other ones are shorter. So, his message was transformed. Exact opposite as the previous day, right? So, secondly, Saul's mission is transformed.

[29 : 34] If you go back to Acts, Saul's mission is transformed. And you see this in verses, if you back up a little bit, verse 15 and 16. Verse 15 and 16.

So, how do you know what the mission of your life is? The mission, really, is just how you propagate the message of your life. It's the means by which you propagate the message of your life.

And remember that Saul's previous message, or his mission was to uphold the law, uphold the tradition of the Pharisees, and to hate all those who were actually placing their faith in Christ.

But it goes a little further. He also, most Jews consider Gentiles as like outsiders. You know, that God has cursed them, that they were unclean before God, disregarded by God and outside of God's grace.

They had confused belief systems. They were inferior to the Jewish people. And they, so Saul's mission was to put an end to the followers of Christ and to keep the Gentiles out.

[30 : 44] To keep them out. So, what was his new mission? So, he was also highly qualified to go to the Gentiles, if you remember. Because he was raised learning the ways of the Greco-Roman societies and traditions.

He understood that culture. So, after this encounter with Jesus, Saul fervently dedicated his life to building the church and to going to the Gentiles.

Like, crazy transformation. The exact opposite, again, of what he was doing. So, opposed to tearing down the church and from a hater of the Gentiles to a missionary to the Gentiles.

Look at verse 15. This is what God said to Ananias. But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is my chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and the kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. So, Saul was God's vessel of election for the task of carrying the gospel of Jesus across the Roman world.

[31 : 52] Not just to the Jews, but to the Gentiles. And as we read in our text today, that suffering started early. Twice they wanted to kill him for doing this. This early in his ministry. So, again, what is the mission of your life?

What message are you propagating through all the stuff that you do in your life? Where do you spend your time, money, energy, emotion? What do you put it into? Or are you seeking to take all the areas of your life, all that you do, to display the supreme worth of Christ in them?

That's the mission of your life. Thirdly, something else is transformed. Saul's relationship with the church is transformed.

See that through 23 through 31. So, we all know the previous relationship with the church. He hated them. Wanted to silence them. Wanted to imprison them. He thought that they were blaspheming the name of God.

And he wanted nothing to do with the church whatsoever. So, what is his new relationship? So, after he recovered his sight, we see a serious change in regard to his relationship with the church.

[33 : 06] He began to see them as family, as brothers and sisters in Christ. And if you observe the story, the brothers, the disciples, they saved his life twice in this story.

Like, well, before, like, why would they have done that, right? But in Damascus, they lowered him down in the opening of the wall to escape the wrath of the Jews there. But then when he went up to Jerusalem, the same thing happened.

They wanted to kill him again and again. And the church helped him escape. And so, and they sent them on to Tarsus. So, the result of all of this was verse 31.

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

So, this, if you remember, was more of a Jewish persecution. It wasn't a Roman persecution. And what a lot of the historians will tell you is that when Rome kind of found out this was going on, they kind of said, hey, Jews, like, chill out.

[34 : 11] You're causing a lot of unrest. Until the persecution from Rome came around 70 A.D. And so, the church kind of enjoyed this little tiny period where there was actually peace.

So, Saul's attitude towards the church had changed drastically overnight. No longer enemies, but friends. So, the application for us is, is your relationship with the people of God changed?

Do you still think they're just a bunch of weirdos and people that have no idea about reality? Or have you actually come up to them, been around them, and see if they're not the people that you thought they were?

And not only that, but they loved you and wanted to serve you and wanted to walk with Christ with you, help you grow in your walk with Christ. So, a fourth thing I could throw out there, but if you just make a note, I won't really spend any time on it.

But Paul's character was also transformed. He went from like an arrogant religious bigot to like a loving, humble, and compassionate man.

[35 : 19] Which, again, doesn't just happen overnight. But when you encounter Jesus, he changes you from the inside out. But that could be a fourth thing that just sort of came into my head. So, the conclusion of all this.

The last place we're going to look before we close. Look at Galatians chapter 1. Galatians chapter 1. So, many years later, Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, is riding to the church at Galatia.

And a lot of the Jews in this area were trying to get the believers to come back to the old system of making themselves right with God.

So, Paul is telling them like, no, don't go back. Don't go back. Don't say the gospel is Jesus plus this. It's Jesus.

And so, what happens to Saul after this section in Acts? Because he disappears for a while. He disappears for a while.

[36 : 25] And it kind of goes, Luke goes back to Peter. And then Paul resurfaces in chapter 11 as the Apostle Paul. So, where does Saul go? What does he do during this?

Some people would say almost an 8 to 10 year period. Like, where does he go? What happens? And think about this. To be an Apostle, capital A, to be an Apostle, for Paul to be on the same level with other Apostles, he had to be personally chosen and taught by Jesus himself.

And if you remember, all the other Apostles spent three years with Jesus. So, what happened? How could he actually get on par with the other Apostles? Well, many Pauline scholars believe that it was during this season where Paul goes off the stage and acts, is where the risen Christ actually communes with Paul, talks with him, and teaches him, in explaining, like, how all the Scriptures point to him.

And as we read this section, I want you to look for that. Look for these ideas. And he says these things like, I didn't just learn this from somebody.

I was taught this by Jesus himself. Like, I was taught all the things I'm writing from Jesus himself. So, he is full throttle taking the gospel to the lost world in Acts 11.

[37 : 55] But observe and see if you see any of this. Verse 11, chapter 1. He says, There he is, reflecting on his former life.

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

But when he who had set me apart before I was born and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were the apostles before me.

But I went away to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. And then after three years, there's the three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit with Cephas and remain with him 15 days.

But I saw none of the other apostles except for James, the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie.

[39 : 28] I'm just telling you, I'm not lying. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Sicilia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea who are in Christ.

They only were hearing it said, He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me.

That is the evidence of a transformed life. There was a time where you were God's enemy and he saved you and he made you a son. He washed you and cleansed you in the blood of Christ.

The only way that you can be changed and made right with God is through Christ. Encounter Christ. Be transformed by his presence. He is your only hope.

In this life and definitely in the next life. So what is the message? What is the mission of your life? Is it Christ? The gospel of Jesus Christ.

[40 : 33] I want to just close with a quote from John Newton. The guy who wrote Amazing Grace. Who was a bigot, a brawler, a drunkard, and a slave trader before he came to know Jesus.

And many of you may feel this way. I definitely do. But I think you'll agree. He said, I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I wish to be.

I am not even what I hope to be. Yet, I can truly say I am not what I once was. A slave to sin and Satan.

And I can certainly join with the apostle by acknowledging by the grace of God, I am who I am. So none of us are there, but we're all on our way.

Right? So let's rejoice that Christ is enough for us. That Christ has changed us. And if you don't know Christ, I just pray he is constantly bringing himself up to you.

[41 : 35] That he is seeking you. And that he is revealing himself to you. Let's just pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.