

Acts 9:1-19a

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[0 : 00] So, let me give you a brief intro on what we're going to be doing in the next three weeks, because unfortunately you're stuck with me today and the next two weeks.! Because Nathan is going to be over at Oakwood.

And so, if you look in Acts 9, you're going to see some of the subtitles. And subtitles aren't inspired by God, so we're going to break this up a little differently than some of the other things do.

But today, we're going to look at just verse 1 through 19. And then the following week, we're going to basically go down to verse 31. And then we'll go 32 through the end of the chapter.

And so, this week and next week are going to be about Saul turning into Paul. And then the following week, we will look at, you see that there's a couple of healings.

There's a healing of Annias, and then there's Dorcas, who is restored to life. And we're actually going to use that text to actually talk about having a proper knowledge, a proper theology of what healing is.

[1 : 12] It's a subject that's meant a lot to me. For those of you who know it, I've kind of gone through in my life. But I want you to understand, like, biblically what healing is.

And so, we're going to unpack that and hopefully destroy a lot of the myth and then return to a lot of the truth about the biblical view of what healing is. So, I promise not to call anybody up here, and I'm not going to hit you with a jacket and knock you over or try to make you all fall over.

So, lay blankets over your face. But that'll be the next three weeks, basically. So, this week and next week will be Saul turning into Paul.

And most of us here are not unfamiliar with the story of Saul. But I really pray, I've been praying that you would please, please just pause to look very closely at the life of this man and how God saved him and how God used him in hopes that it will touch your own soul this morning.

So, let's just read the text together. Starting in verse 1, we'll go through verse 19. It says, But Saul, still breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus.

[2 : 39] So, if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now, as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.

And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, Who are you, Lord?

And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do. And the men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one.

And Saul rose from the ground. Although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord.

[3 : 47] And the Lord said to him, Rise and go to the street called Straight. And at the house of Judas, look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. For behold, he is praying.

And he has seen me in a vision. And a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on your name. 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 Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me, so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized. And taking food, he was strengthened.

[5 : 09] Pray with me. Father, as always, it's a joy, a deep joy, and a pleasure to be with those who have come to encounter the same Jesus and to worship you together with them.

And God, I ask this morning that by your Spirit and for your glory, you would work in our hearts and remind us of our salvation.

And remind us of where you brought us from and where you're taking us. Lord, as we offer at this time to you as an act of worship, may my speech be pleasing to you.

And may the listening of those who are here also be honoring. We love you, Lord, in Christ's name. Amen. So a few things that we're going to look at to just sort of help you.

Like I'm going to make, we're going to walk through this story, but I want you to stop and basically contemplate each point in regard to your own life and in regard to your own salvation.

[6 : 19] So that's what I hope this morning will happen is that you will leave here really contemplating like the pit that Jesus has drawn you from and that your soul will be even more thankful, more gracious for the work of God in your life.

So, y'all know me. Number one, I want you to contemplate this. You can see this in verses one and two, but really simply, our former life.

So those of you who have been around the church for a number of years or not how long, like one of the first things in a lot of discipleship groups is they will teach you how to share your testimony, your story with other people, which is very, very valuable.

And so number one is our former life, and we can see this in verses one and two. And so if you look back, just for a second, back at chapter 8, this is where Saul was first introduced, and he is seen on the scene of the execution of Stephen, and he is giving approval to Stephen's execution in verse 1 of chapter 8.

And this execution triggered a region-wide persecution of the church, and Saul was one of the main guys who took off after this.

[7 : 40] If you look at verse 3 of chapter 8, it says this. Amidst this persecution, this is what happened. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

If you see the word ravaging, I guess in most of your ESV Bibles, ravaging really means like to the idea of havoc. It's the idea of even use of a wild boar going into a vineyard and tearing things apart, and also of use of animals tearing people apart.

It's the same word that's used in Greek literature. So you can literally say that Saul was tearing the church apart. And this was not necessarily an empire persecution from Rome.

It was more of a Jewish persecution just in this region that happened. And so Luke connects, reconnects Saul here at the beginning of this chapter. And it says right here, as you can see, he was breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.

Right? Yet we see the persecution in Jerusalem alone wasn't enough for Saul. He wanted to kind of extend that beyond Jerusalem itself and into the regions. And that's why he went to the chief priests and the elders and got permission to go.

[9 : 03] So he had legal authority to go and to round up all these people who were claiming to belong to the way, which was an early term for followers of Jesus.

Meaning that they followed the way of Jesus. This understanding that Christ was the only way to God. And that they should follow the way of how Jesus lived and his teachings, etc.

And so he was going for these people. And he had no regard. Whether you're a woman, whether you're a child, whether you're a man, old or young. He didn't care.

If you claimed to belong to Christ, he was coming for you. He was tearing the church apart. And indeed, you really could call him the terrorist of his day.

And as if he was saying, if you're a follower of this Christ, know I'm coming for you. And if I find you, it's not going to be pretty. I'm going to wipe your filthy kind off the face of the earth.

[10:06] You have blasphemed the God that I serve. And you have gone against the law of Moses. So I'm coming for you. It's as if he's got that condom mentality.

And a lot of it, as we know, some of the worst persecution in the world and some of the worst acts of terror are from religious zealots. Because they really believe in what they're doing.

And believe that somehow they're serving God in the process. So briefly, I know, again, most of you are very aware of this. I'm not going to bore you with a lot of history facts.

But you should sort of know Saul's background a little bit. But he was born in Tarsus, a city known for its schools and its education, Greco-Roman thinking and philosophy.

So he was exposed to all of this. And like his father, he was a Roman citizen. Which, if you don't really study that, you don't really know how significant that is. But it was huge.

[11:03] He had a lot of rights and a lot of privileges that other Jews didn't have at all. So he was a master of the languages of the day, including Greek and the Roman world, as well as Hebrew and Aramaic.

He was very learned and well-read in the Greco-Roman thinking, culture, philosophy. And as a Jew, he grew up as a Pharisee in the house of Pharisees.

He called himself a son of a Pharisee. And he wanted to be in the top religious elite of his day.

Pharisee means separated ones. People that call themselves out from the main group to be extra zealous, extra holy, away from the others.

And to add to that, around the age of 14, he studied under the rabbi of his day, like the top guy, Gamaliel. So Saul was the most driven and the most zealous.

In Galatians 1, let me just read to you. So Paul, at this point, reflecting back on who he was, Galatians 1, verse 13, he says, For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

[12:23] And 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. So he was among the greatest persecutors ever in the church.

And as the church was still small but spreading at this time, he thought, This is the time to end this nonsense. So that's his background.

But if you notice what I just read in Galatians 1, he says, Many of you have heard of my former life. Which is where we get the first point here, our former life.

So what about you? If you're in Christ today, you have a former life. You have a life that you lived and when you did not belong to Jesus, there was a time you were not in Christ at all.

And notice, I have noticed like over the years that people who forget and don't remember where they came from and who they were, they grow very cold in their affections towards Christ over a period of time.

[13:36] Have you forgotten? Have you forgotten the sin and bondage that you were in before Christ delivered you? So as you grow in your relationship with Christ, you also should grow more and more of your awareness of how much you need him, not vice versa.

All of us had different idols that we served, things that we loved more than God, things that we gave our life to that were not worthy. And all of us were slaves to sin.

And Jesus says, he who commits sin is a slave to sin. But most of us come from several different scenarios.

I don't want to be so bold to say you had to come from one of these scenarios. But it either starts off, I grew up in the church and in a Christian home, or I didn't grow up in the church or a Christian home.

But for a lot of us, some of you may have become a believer at a very young age, legitimately. You walk with the Lord for a long time, never really do anything too crazy.

[14:45] But you are aware of your sin, and you really do trust in Christ as the Savior. And if that is you this morning, don't be one of those ridiculous people who say, well, I don't have that great of a testimony.

When you hear someone get up and talk about drugs and sex and prison, don't ever compare like that, ever. It dishonors the work that God has done in your life.

And it should actually cause you extreme joy and thanksgiving, because you didn't have to go through that. God could have just allowed you to be crazy and do all the stuff, but he didn't.

He saved you at an early time. And he put people around you that taught you the gospel. Well, anyone who has lived the other life would tell you, like, you don't want to do that. Like, praise God. It's not like I needed to have this crazy life so I could come out and tell people about Jesus. Give thanks to him that he spared you a life of sin and brokenness.

[15 : 45] Others of you may have grown up in the church, and this is more like my story for the most part. And you just kind of play the game. Showed up on Sunday, Sunday school, did the deal, went on Wednesday nights just for extra credit.

Mainly went because your parents made you. And later on, you just rebelled against that. You had a secret life off to the side, and that was me. And then later on, God humbled you and brought you back.

And that was more or less my story. And then there's another type that grew up in the church, in a Christian home. And this is the people who, for a time, thought that their religious deeds made them right with God.

I'm the goody-two-shoes. I don't drink, cuss, or chew, or go to those who do. Like, that's the old saying, right? And I have a really good friend of mine who grew up kind of like that.

She was always the finger-pointer at me and my brother, which she should have been, but she was always like, you know, you guys aren't really living the life. But later on, she would tell you that she really doesn't think that she was born again most of her life until a few years ago because she was so full of her own self-righteousness and piety that she really didn't see her need for Jesus until God exposed that to her.

[17 : 04] Like, you're no different than the Pharisees. You're no different than the religious elite. And so God humbled you and brought you down and showed you that you really weren't that moral, really weren't that religious, and you came to know Christ.

And the other scenario was you didn't grow up in the church or a Christian home. And you might have lived a pretty moral life. I know some guys that are, like, probably better guys than I am. Like, they haven't done as many crazy things as me. They're very nice. They're very patient. And I find almost that to be the hardest group to share the gospel with because they don't really see their need.

They have to be able to see that their morality is nothing compared to God's holiness. And some of you, that might have been you. You might have been a good person before Jesus, but not really good compared to the blazing glory of the holiness of God.

And then others of you, you might have lived that crazy life. You might have done some things that are very harmful to yourself, to your family.

[18 : 09] You lived in darkness and loved the darkness and were unashamed of it. And then at some point, God humbled you and brought you to himself. All of us have that story, so you need to value your story.

You may have some similarities to others, but you have your own story. Only you are you. And it's not that God had to exercise more power to save other people than you.

God doesn't have that problem. But at some point, he brought you down to your knees. So be amazed at his grace in your life. The psalmist said, Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands. So celebrate what Christ has done in your life.

What he is doing and what he will do for the glory of his name. Never forget that goodness.

Remember, remember your story and what God has brought you from, the pit that he has brought you out of.

[19 : 23] We all have a former life. So that's the first point. Number two is our encounter with the living Christ.

And we see this verses 3 through 9 in our story in Acts. Verses 3 through 9. So Paul's on the road. He encounters Jesus, the risen Son of God.

So the language that's used in this story is anything but boring and casual. It's vivid. It's intense. It's dramatic. It's meant to shock the reader.

So Saul has gone on about his agenda. They carry out his plans. And God abruptly, suddenly stops him in his tracks. It says, So how did that happen?

A light from heaven shone. This idea of it flashing, right? And this isn't a light from the material creation. Because later on we read that this was brighter than the noonday sun.

[20 : 26] It was a radiance of light that seemed to be something that Saul would have known about from the Old Testament. Something that Isaiah or Ezekiel or Daniel would have encountered.

This intense, bright light. And it's a sign of like the holy presence of God. And he seems to almost be aware that something like that is going on. But he's terrified.

So on the Damascus road, Saul of Tarsus was confronted with the blazing glory of the risen Son of God. Saul, so abrupt that he fell to the ground, probably off a horse.

Which if you've ridden a horse and fallen, it hurts. It's something you've got to just get back up and keep doing or quit. But, so, that itself can be startling.

But also, he's blinded by the sheer holy radiance from the man that's standing in front of him. But observe, he doesn't stop there. He gets called out.

[21 : 23] Saul, Saul. Right? Called him by his name. Specifically, have you ever noticed this while I was studying this? Do you see the sovereign grace of God here?

Why didn't he address the other men? He just addresses Saul. And not these other unbelievers who are with him. They hear it, but they don't see him. So, Saul is called out by name.

And he hears the charge against him. Why are you persecuting me? Confused. Bewildered.

Scared. He asks, who are you?

Sir, our Lord. And in terror, imagine this. He hears the voice. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. So, imagine that horror of encountering the risen Son of God who you rejected and mocked.

And that you gave approval to the man, for them to kill the very man who was telling you about Jesus, Stephen. You cheered that on. But, wait a minute.

[22 : 30] Saul is persecuting the church. Right? But Jesus says, you're persecuting me. And why is that? And most of us understand that to persecute the church is to also persecute Christ himself.

Because we are members of his body. We are the bride of Christ. We are one with Christ. And so, anything done to Christ is something done to the church. And vice versa.

And so, shock. This is like his worst nightmare coming true. Like the Jesus that he had preached against. And the persecutors that he had been arresting and putting to death.

All of a sudden, he's wrong. Stephen was right. Imagine that. So, he's confronted with all these violent crimes that he has committed against the risen Son of God.

So, Saul set out to arrest Christians. But instead, Christ arrests Saul instead. Flip that. Christ literally arrests Saul on the road.

[23 : 33] He uses language in the New Testament saying, like, I was apprehended by Jesus. So, he is broken and traumatized. And you kind of see that his companions sort of pick him up, take him on to Damascus.

And he stays there for three days. And he's blind. He doesn't sleep or eat. Not sure if he was fasting and he was just reflecting over his life. Or if that trauma was so intense that he just couldn't eat.

Couldn't sleep. Or maybe even both. Nonetheless, he expected to come into that city a conquering hero. But instead, he comes crawling literally on his knees.

Because he has met King Jesus on the road. Just hold your hand in Acts 9. But just flip over to Acts 26 really quick. So, later on in Acts, Paul is giving an account before King Agrippa.

And he reflects back on this story. And it kind of gives us a little bigger picture of what happened. Acts 26, verse 12.

[24 : 42] And this is Paul talking. Who was Saul. I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.

And when we had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

It is hard for you to kick against the goads. So, to kick against the goads was a phrase. A goat is this long, pointy stick that was used by a herdsman to move cattle and to move stubborn livestock.

But in the Greco-Roman world, this was a phrase that was used to basically say, by your actions and by your life, you are opposing a deity. So, he understood, I'm opposing God in some way.

And he said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant

and witness to the things in which you have seen me and those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

[26 : 23] So, another picture of what story just happened. And so, just remember that regardless of your story, we all have had some encounter with the risen Son of God.

If Jesus was dead, in fact, and not living, you wouldn't have an encounter with Him. So, regardless of that, according to God's sovereign plan, at some point, He began working in your heart, convincing you, showing you your need, guilt in your life.

Shame in your life. Worry and burdens that you were carrying in your life. Showing you that you needed a Savior. And this is what's going on. He's moving in Saul's life, convicting him of sin. Right? But some of us, I don't ever want you just to compare just to Saul, because a big mistake that a lot of people make is thinking, I hadn't had that Damascus Road experience, so am I actually a believer or not?

Well, the truth is that God saves the same way, but yet that process may look differently. Some of you may have had an experience like this, like God knocks you down, literally, and you came on your knees, and you literally gave your life to Christ at that time.

[27 : 42] Some of you may have had that. Others, it's been a more gradual process, where Christ was slowly knocking down the idols in your life, making you more and more aware of your need.

And at some point, you were converted. You came to Christ. So, something I also want you to notice in this text is that regardless, God took the initiative, not you.

God hunted Saul down. He didn't just say, you know, just kind of waited like, Saul, I really would like you to possibly be a missionary. How do you feel about that? He, like, literally hunts Saul down and knocks him off the horse.

And regardless of how you feel about it, that's the same way he did to you. At some point in your life, he showed you. He convinced you of your need for him.

So, God took that initiative. God sought us and bought us. A Puritan, great writer John Flavel, contemplating on this idea of when we came to know Christ, he said, A remarkable performance of God's providence for his people is the ordering of the occasion, the instrument, and the means of their conversion.

[29 : 01] You are more beholden to him for this than all your other mercies. I cannot but think that your heart must be deeply affected by the thought of it.

Every gracious heart loves to meditate on this. It is certainly the sweetest history that was ever told. Oh, what a sweet remembrance it should bring to your soul to remember that encounter with the living Christ.

Thirdly, back in Acts 9, thirdly, our faithful helpers, our faithful helpers, and you see this just in the following verses, verses 19 through, excuse me, I wrote that wrong, just to give you the correct, 10 through 14.

So, there was a servant of God, a believer in Damascus, Ananias, a faithful follower of the Lord, that God sort of wakes up, basically, and says, Ananias, it's like a picture of almost in the Old Testament where God called out the prophet Samuel as a young boy and said, Samuel, and woke him up, right, in a vision.

So he responded, Here am I, Lord, indicating he was ready and eager and available to serve God at that moment. So Ananias had heard of Saul.

[30 : 24] He heard of how scary he was and all the acts of terror he had been taking out on the church. And he is like, he's done this in Jerusalem, and I know that he's come here to Damascus to do the same thing, even to people like me.

So he had a lot of reasons to think twice before going to Saul. So even though he was afraid, though, he chooses to trust the Lord and to go. And notice this, it says Saul was praying.

And so in a way, Ananias would be the means by which God answered that prayer. So can you imagine, like just stop, just think about this, imagine God calling you to go and share Christ with an Islamic extremist who has made it his duty in the past to kill and arrest all people who didn't obey the Quran and Muhammad.

Just imagine that. Like that's about the intensity of what is going on here. So the application is, again, no matter what your story is, all of us can look back.

I know I can. I can name them for you. Of people that God sent at the right time to listen to you, to love you, to speak the truth to you, to pray with you, to show you how to walk with Jesus.

[31 : 41] They embodied the love and compassion of Christ before you, taught you the truth, warned you about your sin, warned you about the coming judgment, and pointed to the cross and said, God has made a way for you to be reconciled to himself.

A man named Daryl Johnson, Larry Trammell, Josh Stringer, or Zach Watson, all were men who God placed in my path when I was around 18 to help me see my need for Christ and to point me to Christ.

And then the end of the figure of speech almost took my hand and walked me to Jesus. Just contemplate who that is. Men and women who love you and disciples you. It may have even been your parents.

So I challenge you just to do something, okay? Like this week, whoever God has used in your life to help you know Christ that may have been a part of your conversion experience, call them, reach out to them, and thank them for just being obedient and being faithful and available and not afraid even to come to you and to talk to you.

Reach out to those people. It will cultivate a deeper joy in your own salvation. Number four, verses 15 through 18, our conversion.

[33 : 02] Our conversion. So, what was Saul's chosen purpose? We've kind of read about it. It says it right here. He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles, kings, and children of Israel.

Literally, it means like a vessel of election. The religious zealot, Saul, who became the apostle Paul, carrying the gospel of Jesus across the Roman world.

That was going to be his mission. Planning churches, pastoring, teaching. I don't mean building buildings. I mean planting churches. That's what he was going to do throughout the Roman world. And because of that task, because of that task, he would suffer for the sake of Christ like we just read right here. It's possible no other believer suffered as Paul suffered, taking the gospel to a sinful world.

You can read in 2 Corinthians 11, this account of all the stuff that he's been through up to that point. Imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death, 40 lashes five times over, he said, beaten with rods three times, stoned once, and shipwrecked three times, and on and on he goes, all for the sake of Christ.

[34 : 22] When most of us have a hard time crossing the street or crossing the hallway in our dorm room just to talk to someone about Christ. But this man was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God and was convinced that eternity was weighing in the balance.

He was so grateful for his own salvation that he couldn't just keep it to himself. So we have to cultivate those things in our life. So conversion, right? Most would say at this point, this is when Saul was actually converted, not on the road, but at the time the Holy Spirit was convincing him and showing him, working in him, and at some point he was born again.

He was regenerated, which was all an act of God. Not something that we cooperate with, but it was all an act of God. And this is, conversion is basically, basically this.

You want a definition. It's like our willing, our willing response to Christ and to the gospel where we place our total trust and faith in Christ alone.

It kind of has two sides, faith and repentance, like conversion, faith and repentance is seen in the scripture. So we throw ourselves before Jesus, trusting in him alone to save us.

[35 : 35] We repent of our sins. We renounce our former way of life and we follow Christ and follow his way. And it's all because of the initiative of God's working in us to be born again.

It's the evidence of our regeneration. So, a couple things here. Ananias went to Saul and he called him his dear brother.

Like a very, like, tender phrase. This man who was an enemy, right? He's just calling dear brother. And so, he healed him physically, but the Holy Spirit entered Saul's soul.

Do you believe, like in the power of the gospel, do you believe there's no one out there who is not fair game for God? A lot of us do. We write them off, think, oh, they're too far gone, they're too religious, or they're too much into the world.

No. This story is meant to just trump that and show you that the gospel is the power of God's salvation. Don't underestimate the power of the gospel.

[36 : 42] It can change anyone, literally. So, the application here is that he was converted at this point, but some of you may remember, like I said, that exact time it happened, or it might have been over a period of time, but regardless, you cannot encounter the risen Lord and remain unchanged.

It's just not going to happen. So, examine your own life, and I'm going to just steal an illustration from Paul Washer, but he said, imagine if I came in here late to be here, and I said, I apologize for being late because on the way here I had a flat tire, I had to get out, and while I was changing my tire, an 18-wheeler came by going 100 miles an hour and hit me.

But, I'm okay, and that's why I was late though. He said, there's only two options. One is you're lying, because no one can encounter an 18-wheeler like that and just walk away unchanged, or you're crazy.

But here is his question. What is bigger, an 18-wheeler or the Lord God Almighty who created heaven and earth? You cannot encounter God and just walk away unchanged.

Your change may not be as dramatic, but you're going to change. You're not going to remain who you were. God is going to give you more love and more joy for Him and His ways, and it will change you over time.

[38 : 08] All of us have been transformed by Jesus, and we shouldn't be who we once were. Number five, this is the last thing. We'll see some more of this next week, but number five is our new family, 18-19.

It says, immediately something like, scales fell from His eyes and He regained His sight. Then He rose and was baptized. In taking food, He was strengthened, and for some days He was with the disciples at Damascus.

So, this is what happened. He regained His sight, He was filled with the Spirit, and then in response, He was baptized as a demonstration of that inward change that had occurred in His life. And very cool, it says He got up, He ate, and He was strengthened. So, if you know anything about the Old Testament, a lot of the narratives, like Elijah, for example, this was like symbolic of sort of breaking a fast, like your time that you've been struggling is over, and so you eat, and you get up, and you move on.

David did that after his child died, very similar. He got up, and he ate a meal. And so, his attitude, not just toward Christ, changed, but his attitude towards the church changed.

[39 : 22] He began to see them as family, as brothers and sisters, and he learned that they were not who he thought he was. You know, learned that they were not who he thought they were at all.

Because where he thought they were outlaws and blasphemers, he actually learned that they weren't. So, applying this, I hope that all of you have a deep love for the church.

Not this, but this, and outside of that, the people of God. It is said in Scripture that all those who are truly born again will love the church.

And people would say, I love Jesus, but I hate the church. Like, you need to examine your heart. Need to examine your heart. But, it's a sign of true conversion that you love the people of God.

So, do you love the church? I know that when I became a believer, like, you couldn't keep me away. Like, if you were, I was seeking people out, like, hey, share with me, teach me.

[40 : 22] I want to hang out with you. I don't care if you don't want me to hang out with you. I'm going to. Every Bible study that happened, I was at it. Whether it was a bad Bible study or a good one, I was there. Couldn't keep me away.

Like, I wanted to be with the people of God. They were like a new family to me. And they loved me more than a lot of my buddies from my old life ever did at all. And so, you should love the church if you have been truly born again.

So, in closing, just a couple of things. So, God can use anyone, no matter how obscure, to reach others for Christ.

Ananias had no idea exactly what this man, he was going to be with, would become. Right? But God used this humble man to go and to share with the man who would become the Apostle Paul. And secondly, never underestimate the power of the gospel to save anyone. We've already talked about that. Never underestimate the power of the gospel to save anyone. And if you're in need of that, if you're in need of God reviving you a little bit in your own walk, He can do that too.

[41 : 32] He can give you a clean, new heart today. So, the other thing is to treasure your story in Christ. Treasure your story.

Don't forget who you were in the darkness that you once walked in. So, as Jesus said to the man who He healed of demons in Luke 8, He said, this says, the man for whom the demons had gone out begged that he might stay with Jesus.

But Jesus sent him away saying, return to your home and declare how much God has done for you. And he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. do that. Go and proclaim how much Jesus has done for you. And do it now and do it this week. Let's pray together.