

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 25TH–26TH // THE BOOK OF ACTS

CONFOUNDED (ACTS 9:19–25)

SAUL IMMEDIATELY BEGAN PROCLAIMING

Saul's encounter with Jesus was so dramatic that he was certain Jesus was the "Son of God."

- The phrase "son of" signifies complete identification with that person or thing.
- **While it's important not to rush into ministry unprepared after conversion, that doesn't mean we shouldn't share our faith and tell others about Jesus.**

THE MAN WHO CAUSED HAVOC

Picture the astonishment of the people when the man who had once opposed Christianity became its passionate messenger.

- Saul was able to share the gospel effectively, but **it was his transformed life that served as a powerful testament to everything he was saying.**
- **What do our lives say?**

AFTER MANY DAYS

We gain more insight into what Luke means by "many days" through the timeline in Galatians 1, where Paul provides further details.

- Paul states that he went to Arabia for a period of time and then returned to Damascus. This entire process took approximately three years.
- **God teaches us valuable lessons in what may seem like quiet moments in our lives.**

SAUL FACES DEATH

From the very beginning of Saul's walk, he faced danger, marking the first of many challenges, as Paul reveals in 2 Corinthians.

- Living in a fallen world is challenging, particularly when we consider the trials we will encounter. **However, Christ's power is perfected in our weakness. We can be confident that nothing can hinder what God is doing.**

BROTHERS (ACTS 9:26–31)

A FAKER?

It can be difficult to fully trust the transformation of some Believers, especially when their past actions caused significant harm and pain.

- This hesitation mirrors the doubt the disciples in Jerusalem felt about Saul. Was his transformation genuine? Or was it merely a scheme to continue exploiting them as Christians?
- It can be difficult to be on the receiving end of this doubt, especially when we feel we've already endured a lot for our faith.
- **If people are lacking in love, it's our responsibility to demonstrate a little more love, which only can come from Christ.**
- **We can't expect others to accept us as changed until our past behavior has shown what our future behavior will look like.**

AN ENCOURAGING FRIEND

In the midst of the scrutiny, Saul had a friend named Barnabas who had been walking alongside him. He encouraged Saul and helped bridge the gap between him and the apostles.

- Barnabas boldly stood up for Saul, sharing the incredible journey of the past three years and helping the apostles see the truth of his conversion.
- **Who is walking with us?**
- **Who are we walking with?**

SPEAKING BOLDLY IN JERUSALEM

Saul boldly begins to share the message of Christ with the very Hellenists who orchestrated Stephen's stoning—the same individuals who once placed their trust in his leadership.

- They plot to kill Saul, forcing him to flee to Caesarea and then his hometown of Tarsus.
- The story of Saul's conversion starts with him leaving Jerusalem to persecute the church and culminates with him departing Jerusalem, persecuted for his newfound faith.

THE CHURCH GREW

Although the Church still faced external threats, it was experiencing the peace of God within.

- We are invited to enter God's rest, a source of peace for all who believe. This belief, along with the fear of God, brings forth the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, fostering growth.
- **The question is this: do we really believe?**

RESPONSE (ACTS 9:32–42)

PETER ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS

The ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem is beginning to shift as Peter starts to travel to encourage Believers outside the city of Jerusalem.

- **This shift highlights the importance of encouraging one another in our faith, a necessity for new Believers as well as those who have walked in their faith for 50 years.**

A PARALYTIC

We are introduced to a man named Aeneas, who is unable to walk due to paralysis.

- Peter, remembering Jesus at the pool of Bethesda, tells Aeneas to get up and make his bed. Witnessing this caused many people to turn to the Lord.
- **Peter's participation in the miracle stems from his readiness to go out. Where is God calling us to go out?**

TABITHA (DORCAS)

Then, we are introduced rather quickly to another inspiring figure—a woman named Tabitha who was held in high esteem for her extraordinary gift of kindness and her dedication to helping the poor.

- We see the impactful roles Saul and Peter play, but we also get to see the impact Tabitha had for the Kingdom. **This illustrates that God uses all types of individuals to carry out His work. Where has God gifted us to serve His purposes?**

TABITHA RAISED

Since Peter was in a nearby town, some of the disciples from Joppa found him and brought him to them. When he arrived, he saw a woman lying dead.

- Remembering what Jesus did with the little girl, Peter spoke to the woman, saying almost exactly what Jesus said, telling her to "get up."

CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE

Peter was gaining a deeper understanding of what it meant to be led by Jesus. Initially, he often tried to take the lead, but now he was learning to submit more to His authority.

- **It can be easy to get caught up in what we are doing for Jesus instead of allowing Him guide us in what He is doing.**

A LEATHER TANNER

Peter remained in Joppa to continue ministering to the locals. While he was there, he stayed with a man who was considered unclean because being a leather worker involved regular contact with dead animals.

- **This was God transforming Peter's heart, preparing him for the important work ahead.**
- **Do we have prejudices against certain people that prevent us from ministering to them?**

TRANSFORMATION

- The story begins with a heart being transformed into something new.
- **This transformation brings with it a sense of excitement to share what God has done, even if others find it difficult to accept that change has occurred.**
- **Do we have passion and boldness to share the incredible ways God is working in our lives?**

ENCOURAGEMENT

- As we share, it can be easy to feel discouraged, especially when it seems like we are fulfilling what God has called us to do.
- **Do we have people in our lives who act as advocates, walking alongside us and helping us through difficult times? Are we walking with others to encourage and strengthen them?**
- **Do we have a healthy fear of the Lord that allows us to be encouraged by the Holy Spirit?**

BEING LED

- When we allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, it becomes easier to be led by Jesus through the Spirit.
- **The challenge lies in our desire to take the lead.**
- **If we are willing to let go of control, we will find ourselves in positions where we get to see God at work and doing miraculous things. God is inviting us to be part of what He is doing. Do we want to participate? It is far more fulfilling than anything we could do on our own.**