

## Telling Your Story pt3

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Ryan Abernathy / General

Telling Your Story / Acts 9:19b–31

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Real change. Ever experienced it or seen it? When someone who previously was one way is suddenly a completely different person. What happened?

We see this a lot in sci-fi movies- gamma rays, Super Soldier serum, radioactive spider bites. Or in dramas where someone just snaps...I always think about the old movie Falling Down...the mild mannered software programmer suddenly loses it and becomes a killer...or Regarding Henry where the philandering career obsessed main character is suddenly a committed family man.

Something drastic happens and a transformation occurs.

This is Paul's conversion.

But it is not like that for everyone. For some, following Jesus is a gradual series of changes vs a violent U-turn. But all stories of what happens after redemption have some things in common. So let's follow Paul on his journey and see them as they occur...

(Read [Acts 9:19b-31](#))

**First**, Paul now knows who Jesus is and is open and honest about that (v20)

**Acts The Former Persecutor's Witness to Christ (9:19b–22)**

Evidently he was soon ready because we find him “at once” preaching in the Jewish synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

**It is noteworthy that Luke described Paul as preaching Christ as “Son of God.”** This is the only occurrence of the title in all of Acts, and yet for Paul it was a central concept. In fact, Paul connected the term “Son of God” with his call as an apostle in Gal 1:16 and in Rom 1:1–4. Luke’s close connection of this term with Paul’s conversion and call would seem to be a rather accurate reminiscence of Paul’s distinctive views

We spoke a little about this last week, but I want to repeat it this week. before we are saved, we can know ABOUT Jesus, but we do not know Jesus. When He has saved us, our perspective changes. He goes from a good teacher or philosopher or moral example to Savior and God. **We treat the words of God a little different than those other people.**

*A changed perspective leads to a new kind of life- one of obedience to someone other than ourselves.*

**Second**, there were noticeable changes in Paul’s life that made others take notice as well (v21-22)

That changed perspective leads to this. **We start to see our former life thru different eyes.** Choices become rebellion. Words are more measured. Former coping mechanisms are revealed as idols. And our life begins to change.

### **Acts The Former Persecutor's Witness to Christ (9:19b–22)**

One could even say that his zeal as a Christian was even stronger than his former zeal as persecutor. **Luke described him as “proving” (symbibazō) that Jesus is the Christ. The Greek word means to join or put together and seems to picture his assembling Old Testament texts to demonstrate how Christ fulfilled them.** No wonder the Damascene Jews were astounded and totally unable to respond to the skillful interpretations of the former student of Gamaliel.

**Third**, there were people from Paul's former life who were NOT happy about the changes they saw. (v23-25)

### **Acts Persecuted in Damascus (9:23–25)**

Unable to refute Paul (cf. 6:10), the exasperated Damascene Jews finally “conspired to kill him

And that is going to make some people very unhappy. We were seen in one way and **now with these changes we are a threat- that maybe something is wrong with them as well- conviction, guilt, etc bring out the worst in people and they are probably the people we want to win the most**, because we know where they are...but they may be the hardest on us...stay with them...but do not let them lead you back to what you know is death.

**Fourth**, Paul wanted to be with other Christians (v26)

### **Acts Persecuted in Jerusalem (9:26–31)**

On arriving in Jerusalem, Paul attempted to join up with the Christian community there but was at first spurned. Like Ananias, they knew his reputation as persecutor and were not convinced that so vehement an enemy could now be a Christian brother

By this point 3 years or so have passed since Paul's conversion, and he has enjoyed the fellowship of the church in Damascus. Since he cannot be there any longer, he seeks out a new place to worship as he comes to Jerusalem. He could have used their fear and rebuff as a reason to shut himself off but he doesn't. **Paul knows he needs a church family.**

There should be a desire to be with God's family, His church. We are now a part of that, and they may be slow to invite us in, but don't be deterred...this is where you belong. We need one another...and as you will see the Church needs you too.

**There is no such practice in the Bible as Christians following Jesus solo without being a part of a church.** None. And though we have the benefit of tech to be absent and still hear a service, that does not replace gathering with the Body physically if at all possible.

We need the blessing of presence.

**Fifth**, someone discipled Paul and helped him to grow in his faith (v27-28)

Barnabas steps in to bring Paul into the church and to continue his discipleship.

And part of that is because we need to have other believers in our lives to build us up and teach us. This is non-negotiable and not programmable. This is about relationship, not attendance.

We grow in our faith by building off of each other. **Everyone needs someone who helps them grow in their faith.** And all of us have a lot to learn from one another. Do not deny the Body the blessing of your presence.

**Finally**, Paul's salvation made the church stronger. (v29-31)

### **Acts Persecuted in Jerusalem (9:26–31)**

the pattern begun in Damascus again repeats itself. Paul witnessed in the synagogues and was resisted. This time Paul debated with his fellow Greek-speaking Jews. *One is reminded of Stephen, and it may have been in the same synagogue that Paul gave his testimony for Christ* (cf. 6:9–10). Earlier they had succeeded in having Stephen killed. Now they determined to do the same to Paul

Full circle. **Paul returns to the scene of the crime.**

The church is stronger when we are all together and going the same direction. The picture of a Body is not an accident for Paul. ([1 Corinthians 12:12-31a](#))

We cannot grow together or suffer together without being together. And all of us have our parts to play. Paul knew this as a baby Christian...we should know that as mature believers.

### **Acts Persecuted in Jerusalem (9:26–31)**

The “peace” of the church is described in terms of the encouragement of the Spirit, the growth of the church, and its reverence and worship (“the fear of the Lord”), terms reminiscent of the earlier summaries in Acts (cf. 2:43–47). It is a familiar pattern. The Lord brings his people through a time of crisis. Through his deliverance the church finds peace and continues to flourish

What's amazing is- as radical as some of what happened to Paul- it is true of all of us who know Jesus in our lives. **The Spirit works in the same way because the Spirit is the same.**

Where does God need to work in you today to further your growth in your faith?