

Sermon Title: When God Transforms A Life
Scripture Text: Acts 9:10-22 (Acts #22)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 9-17-23

With a little vacation time and our "Provoke the Pastor" season and our 20th Anniversary celebration, it has been awhile since we have made our last visit to the Book of Acts. Well, I found it again in my Bible this week, and found where we had left off; and it is with one of the most significant events of early church history: It's the day that Saul of Tarsus met Jesus on the road, just outside the city of Damascus.

It was a *spectacular* conversion that transformed a self-righteous, murderous Pharisee into the unique man we know as the Apostle Paul. He wasn't called that, yet; he will be when we get his life and ministry in full focus in Chapter 13 and following. But while his conversion was unique, while there is more detail about his conversion and some ancillary miracles that went along with it, I want you to recognize that *all* the elements of God's work in saving *any* soul show up in the passage today before us. Throughout this passage, you are going to see characteristics of the changed life of a person who follows Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). And if you know Him—and I trust you do—this can be part of *your* testimony, if you will.

So, here is how I have chosen to look at Verses 10-22, with a running start in Verses 1-9 that we looked at last time: When God Transforms A Life, several things happen:

1. He Arranges The Circumstances (vss. 1-3a)
2. He Sends The Gospel (vss. 3b-9)
3. He Connects People (vss. 10-16)
4. He Removes Spiritual Blindness (vss. 17-18a)
5. He Provokes Obedience (vss. 18b – 19a)
6. He Turns You To Christ (vss. 19b-22)

Let's look back to the beginning of the chapter, where you can go back and review the sermon from about 5 weeks ago, if you would like to. Acts Chapter 9, starting at Verse 1. When God Transforms A Life, He Arranges The Circumstances. Follow with me at the beginning of the chapter: "Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder..." The idea is that whenever he spoke, everything he did was about murdering and threatening and arresting Christians. "Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus..." (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

At that time, the believers in Christ were still a part of the synagogue; it's analogous to how the Christians in Jerusalem that we saw in Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were all meeting in the Temple in Jerusalem; so it was still a subset, if you will, of the Jews.

We know there was a large population of Jews in the city of Damascus, Syria at that time. Saul related to them in that he, himself, was one of those Hellenized Jews. That meant he was a Greek-speaking Jew who did not live in Jerusalem, Judea, the Palestine area; he was from elsewhere—part of the "scattering," if you will (cf. Jn. 7:35). And nevertheless, even though he was not part of the hubbub of religious hypocrisy *in* Jerusalem, he was *extremely* highly regarded among the Pharisees (Acts 26:4-5; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5-6).

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And so, he chose to target that place because it had become known that the Gospel had gone to Damascus. It's not *really* a surprise, because certainly people from Damascus had been present on the day recorded in Acts Chapter 2, and they would have taken the Gospel home with them. And now, there were some there among the Jews who were, as Luke describes here, "belonging to the Way"—one way of describing a Christian (cf. Jn. 14:6; Acts 16:17; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; 2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21).

Now, here is my point: God arranges the circumstances for salvation because God is in control (Ps. 103:19; 135:6). Even the *wickedness* of the plans of Saul to seek out and imprison and maybe even kill Christians—all of that was under God's control (Eph. 1:11b; cf. Gen. 50:20; Prov. 16:9; 20:24; 21:1; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). He arranged to have Saul get almost to Damascus at *precisely* the time that He chose. The implication is that he is right outside the city of Damascus when this happened. This even involved Saul's horribly misguided and downright evil plot to harm Christians. It involved the added wickedness of "the high priest" who signed off on this; and that same wicked high priest authorized sending people along with Saul to arrest these Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem—all under His control.

If you have come to Christ, think back on what He did to arrange the circumstances of *your* life to bring *you* to Himself (Jn. 6:44; Gal. 1:15-16). Now, maybe you were born into a Christian home, and you heard the Gospel from the beginning. I'm jealous, if that is the case for you. Maybe it was a youth group. Maybe it was a Vacation Bible School. Maybe it was through a friend at work or at school or in your neighborhood. Maybe you got yourself into trouble, and God sent someone to you in the midst of a major crisis. For me, I accepted an offer of a free ride one night from somebody that had just become a Christian and could not wait to tell me. *God* arranged all of that!

When God Transforms A Life, He Arranges The Circumstances. Go back and review that if you would like.

Secondly: Notice, He Sends The Gospel. Yeah, okay, I might have *squeezed* that point in here because, in Saul's situation, he already knew the Gospel. If nothing else—and I think there was *plenty* else; I think he had heard it many times—he would have heard a profound Gospel message through Stephen on the day that Stephen was stoned, where Saul was *at least* looking on, and he was probably the one who orchestrated it.

Saul's situation was unique, commensurate with the unique plans that God had for this man, but it was launched with this astounding encounter with Jesus Himself. I know he knew the words of the Gospel, but he met the Lord Himself. So pick it up in the middle of Verse 3—"and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and 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 get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.' The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank." That is where we left off.

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As I said then, Saul's conversion is *just like yours*. Okay—you didn't see a blinding light, you weren't knocked to the ground, Jesus didn't appear to you physically, He didn't talk to you audibly, didn't take away your eyesight for three days. But everything *important* is the same.

God arranged for you to be in the right place at the right time of His choosing (cf. Prov. 20:24; Jer. 10:23). For someone, it might be today, in *this* place, that God has arranged for you to hear the Gospel and repent from your sin and turn to Christ.

God arranged for you to be *convicted* of your sin (Jn. 16:8). If that has never happened to you, if that has never been the case for you, then I ask you to ponder this: Ask yourself, "Do I meet God's standard?" You know, theoretically, you can go to Heaven and spend eternity with God *on your own*—as long as you are "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48; cf. Ps. 5:4). So, perfect obedience to all of God's laws, all of the time, without even a bad attitude, every second of your life—*that* is the standard (Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10). Anything less, and you validate the famous words of Romans 3:23—"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (cf. Ecc. 7:20)

When you hear the Gospel, then—that Christ died for your sins—He arranged for someone to *tell you* the Gospel. If you don't know what that is, it's that "Jesus Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried, and...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

So, let's start at the beginning: Have you cried out to Him? (Lk. 18:13; Rom. 10:23) Have you confessed your sinfulness to Him? (Prov. 28:13) Have you admitted you are a sinner, and you cannot do anything about that—you can't be good enough on your own? (Prov. 20:9) Have you embraced "the free gift" of "eternal life in Christ Jesus"? (Rom. 6:23) If you have not, then please don't let another day go by before you *do* that!

But for us who have come to Christ, understand: This is God's work (Jonah 2:9; Jn. 6:65; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Thess. 2:13; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3); and When God Transforms A Life, He Arranges The Circumstances, He Sends The Gospel. All of that has been review. Now we are going to pick it up at Verse 10. Thirdly: He Connects People.

To be saved from your sin and the penalty of your sin (Jn. 3:18; Rom. 5:9; 8:1), to be "born again" (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23), to have "eternal life" (Jn. 5:24), to become a Christian—that is an *individual* thing; no one can do it for you (Jn. 3:36; cf. Prov. 9:12). It has to be *you* and *you alone* who places faith in Jesus Christ in order for *you* to avoid "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14-15). It is a *totally* individual thing.

But while it is an individual commitment to Christ, everyone who *makes* that commitment immediately becomes part of something *much bigger*: You become part of "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12; cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18, 24). And whether you knew it or not when you first believed—I know I *didn't*—when you come to Christ, you are spiritually connected to the "Church" that Jesus Christ is building (Matt. 16:18; cf. Acts 2:47). And you need to learn to live as what we truly are: It says at least twice in the New Testament that you are "members of one another" (Eph. 4:25; cf. Rom. 12:5).

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So, just as the Lord appeared miraculously to Saul, He also arranged for a miraculous communication with a man named Ananias, whom He used as the bridge to connect Saul to the people of God. Chapter 9, Verse 10—"Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Here I am, Lord.' "

We know about this Ananias a little bit. One easy question: No, it is not the same Ananias that was in Chapter 5, because he sort of died in that chapter. It was a fairly common name. He was "a disciple"; and we are told up in Acts 22, when Paul recounts this in one of his times of testimony, he says that Ananias "was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there" (vs. 12). So probably, he had been a leader among one of the synagogues in Damascus (cf. Acts 18:8), and he was probably a leader among the fledgling church among the Jews of Damascus.

So it was analogous, then, to what it was like in Jerusalem, as I said: When the believers first came to Christ, they met in the Temple, right?—in the Jewish Temple (Acts 2:46). Well, until the sifting and the separation was worked out, the Christians in places like Damascus met as a subset of the synagogues there.

So the Lord comes to Ananias, and He "said to him in a vision" what He wanted him to do. A "vision" is an *extremely rare* phenomenon; it is very rare, even in the early church, even in the Old Testament, as well. We are specifically told now—and you can read it at the end of Colossians Chapter 2—that we are to pay no attention to people who act on what they *say* is a "vision" from the Lord (cf. Jer. 14:14). Why is that? It's because we don't *need* a vision from the Lord; we have "everything" we need for "life and godliness" in His Word (2 Pet. 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). So the "vision" part of this is very rare. But Ananias' *response* here is *not* a rare thing for a Christian. He said, "Here I am, Lord." Kind of reminds you of Isaiah in Isaiah Chapter 6; he gets to see the Lord lifted up on His throne; and the Lord calls him, and he says, "Here am I" (vs. 8).

Ananias says, "Here I am, Lord." That needs to be our everyday attitude. "Lord, here I am!" I remember on my first missions trip out of the country, I woke up the first morning in a strange place. I could not communicate without a translator. I had no access to even making my own breakfast. My wife was not next to me when I woke up. I could not drive anywhere. I did not know what was going to unfold that day. There were no cell phones back then—that was a different *millennium*! And so, I found myself that morning praying a simple prayer: "Lord, I'm Yours—and I trust You to finish this sentence as You see fit today." I'm Yours! Here I am!

Now, in Ananias' case, he got *very* specific instructions, and they were a *total shock to him*! Look at it, starting in Verse 11—"And the Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight...'" What is that? Well, it's a "street" that is named "Straight Street." It has actually survived; it still exists today, and it runs from east to west through the ancient city of Damascus. "Go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

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So the message to Ananias and the message to Saul were the flip sides of each other. While he was waiting, Saul received his side of this; he is told, "A stranger—a guy you have never met, a guy you have never seen 'named Ananias' is coming. Get ready."

What else would you do, except be "praying"? It says, "for he is praying." Well, if you were blinded by the light of Christ, if you could not see where you were, if you were being led by the hand, *what else would you do?* Add to that the fact that you are coming to the realization that *all your friends* were about to be your enemies, and the ones to whom you now are forced to entrust yourself—they are the people whom you were seeking to throw in prison two days ago! *Of course*, he was "praying."

Notice another connection that is already being orchestrated by the providential hand of God involving *another* man named "Judas." All we know about him is that he was named "Judas." It was a fairly common name; two of the Disciples were named "Judas"—the bad guy and the good guy. The half-brother of the Lord was named "Judas" (Matt. 13:55), who was also known as "Jude," who wrote the Book of Jude. It was a common name. All we know about this guy is that he lived in Damascus, his name was Judas, and it is implied that he was among the believers there.

Saul is "praying"—absolutely helpless to do anything else while he awaits a stranger named "Ananias." These two parallel visions were about to bring two men together who had been poles apart. Saul was coming to arrest the likes of people like Ananias. Ananias was braced for being arrested and dragged to Jerusalem for trial, and possibly to die (cf. Acts 22:4).

Go back to Ananias. Not surprisingly, he had some questions. Look at Verse 13 and 14—"But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.' "

Just *imagine* what a *shock* this was to Ananias! News had preceded Saul's arrival in Damascus, as to what he was intending to do, what he was authorized to do; and now, Ananias is being called to go minister to the one he was expecting to come arrest him! That had to sound like a *suicide* assignment. But what did he say? "Here I am, Lord," and he got his instructions.

Now, we are graciously granted access to what God said to Ananias after his questions. And this tells us the reason why so much attention is given to the conversion of Saul here in the Book of Acts. Verses 15 and 16—"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.' "

If you are a Gentile—[which means] not a Jew; that is all of us here, essentially, I don't think there are any exceptions—well, then, your spiritual family tree can be traced back to the ministry of this guy: Saul, who became Paul the Apostle (Acts 13:9; cf. Acts 13:47; 14:27; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 15:15-19; Gal. 1:16; 2:8-9; Eph. 3:1, 8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

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He explains to Ananias in advance—and to us, by extension—His plan for Saul, and it is unlike any other Christian in the Bible. When you come to Jesus Christ by faith, you immediately become a member of the Body of Christ; and it is imperative that we help new believers get connected to the church, and that is what God directed Ananias to do—hence our point: When God Transforms A Life, He Connects People. You become part of something new, different than you ever planned. And notice His specific plan for Paul: "for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

One of the reasons why there is so much spiritual weakness and fluffiness in so many churches is that they are trying to make disciples of people *who don't belong to Christ* because they have heard a watered-down pseudo-gospel—Gospel presentations that begin with something like, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!" When I was in college, I was told: "Well, that's Number 1 of the 'Four Spiritual Laws!'" Nobody ever found the *chapter* on the "Four Spiritual Laws." And now, it's more like, "Well, whatever your greatest need is, come to Jesus, and He will meet that need." Well, that's not *wrong*, completely. But you only "come to Jesus" *on Jesus' terms* (Ps. 145:18)—and that is that you "confess" your "sins" (Ps. 32:5; Prov. 28:13) and you "repent" (Mk. 1:15; Acts 17:30) and you put your "faith" in Him and Him alone (Acts 20:21; 26:18; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Now, if you went to people and you said, "Okay, come to Christ. He wants to make you a chosen instrument, and you are going to testify to kings and Gentiles and the sons of Israel," a lot of people might buy into *that*! "Oh, yeah, God—good choice! I'm Your guy! Yeah—talk to kings? No problem! Take the Gospel—I'll go!"

But don't miss *the rest of the description*: "for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." Yes, when God Transforms A Life, He not only connects it to the Body of Christ, but He makes you a partaker of the *life* of Christ (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20)—which is "eternal life" (Jn. 3:15; 4:14) and "abundant life" (Jn. 10:10), *and* it comes with *suffering* (Mk. 10:30), because the more effectively you are identified with Jesus Christ, the more *you* will attract the hatred of those who hate Christ; and since they can't get to Him, they'll go for His people (Matt. 5:11; Lk. 6:22; 1 Pet. 4:4; cf. Rev. 12:17).

Any alleged Gospel presentation that begins with "you" is *highly* questionable. It's not, "What do *you* want?" It's not, "What do you think *you* need?" It's, "Do you understand that you are alienated from your Creator?" The Gospel is *not* centered around man; it's *not* around *my* wants, *my* feelings. It's around God and the fact that I am estranged from Him (Ps. 5:4; Is. 59:2), but *He* has made a way for me to be forgiven and restored to Him, and to be given new life at *His* expense (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:32). That was all part of the package with Paul. It is all part of the package with you and me.

Now, don't get me wrong: There is *no better life* than to walk with Jesus Christ (e.g., Jn. 8:12; Rom. 8:37; 15:13; 2 Cor. 2:14). There is *no other way* to eternal life, except through Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). There is *no other way* to have true "joy" in this world than to come to Christ (Jn. 15:11). Yes, He meets your needs! Yes, He gives you peace and all of that. But, to live for Christ involves *suffering* (Acts 14:22).

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This was a specific message to Ananias about Paul, but there is one to you and me, too. Second Timothy 3:12—"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." If you want to be what God wants you to be in Christ, it *will* involve some suffering! Romans 8:16-17—"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we *suffer with Him* so that we may also be glorified with Him." (cf. Heb. 10:32) Our observation here is that whenever God transforms a life, part of that transformation is getting connected with like-minded Christians, but also connected with Christ Himself—who is "hated" in this "world" (Jn. 15:18-19).

So, When God Transforms A Life, He Arranges The Circumstances, He Sends The Gospel, He Connects People, *and* He Removes Spiritual Blindness.

Now, what happened to Saul at the home of Judas, at the hands of Ananias—it was profound. But what happened to him *physically* pictures the *spiritual* reality for *everyone* who is transformed by God. Verse 17 and the beginning of 18—"So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul...' " Can you imagine the goosebumps for *both* of those guys? "He just called me his *brother!*" And Ananias is saying, "Okay, God! You *said* he's okay!" " 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight."

Now, "laying hands on him"—that wasn't something magical; it wasn't something mystical. That's not how spiritual *power* is conveyed. To "lay hands on" someone is simply to identify with him or her (e.g., Num. 8:10; 1 Tim. 5:22), to show that you care (Matt. 19:13), to connect with that person—understanding what they are going through and identifying with it. Jesus often touched people that He healed (e.g., Matt. 8:3; 20:34). And when someone is ordained, when we set them aside for Gospel ministry, the elders typically "lay hands on" them (1 Tim. 4:14); it's a way to say, "We are in this together. We are 'members of one another.' We stand with you. We speak with you. We support you. We are connected with you."

Now, for Ananias, it was quite an act of faith and humility to *visibly, physically* connect with Saul, whom he had *every* human reason to fear. But he calls him "Brother Saul." That's remarkable!

Saul's "sight" was "immediately" restored. Remember, it said "his eyes were open" but "he could see nothing" (vs. 8). It says it was as if fish scales were removed physically from his eyes, but I'm sure that in those three days of his blindness, people were not saying, "Saul, do you know you have fish scales over your face?" No, it was just saying it was like, as if blinders were removed—kind of like when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus as He came out of the water at His baptism; it says the Holy Spirit descended on Him "like a dove" or "as a dove" (Matt. 3:16). Whatever physical phenomenon they saw, it looked like the way that a dove flutters when it lands. But the Holy Spirit is *not* a dove—all the pictures notwithstanding.

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There's one lady that says the Holy Spirit is "blue"—kind of like a Smurf. If you haven't seen that video, don't bother! But I'm not kidding! There is someone who says that.

It's *as if* "scales" were removed from his eyes, and *instantly*—he hasn't seen for three days, and now he is looking in the face of this man named Ananias, whom he has never met, but God said would come and restore his sight.

That was quite dramatic. That was profound. But you know what? Something even more profound has happened to *you*, if you have come to Christ. You have gone from spiritual darkness to spiritual sight. Second Corinthians 4:3-4 puts it this way: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

That's a great conflation of metaphors: "blinded the minds." But that is what has happened; and when you come to Christ, *your eyes are opened!* You can see now, spiritually! (2 Cor. 4:6; cf. Jn. 8:12; 9:39a; Eph. 5:8) *It makes sense!* (cf. Jer. 24:7a; Jn. 6:45; Acts 16:14; 2 Tim. 2:25)

In Christ, your everyday prayer should be like what is recorded in Psalm 119, Verse 18—"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." (cf. Lk. 24:45) Every time I open this Word of God, even if it is something I have seen *hundreds* of times, it *feeds my soul* (1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:2). You can *always* go deeper, you can *always* make more connections (1 Tim. 4:15). It's a wonderful thing!

And to be transformed by God is to be brought from the blindness of spiritual "darkness" into full "light" (Jn. 12:46; 1 Thess. 5:5). Or, in the words of First John 1:5—"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

So, the "darkness" of Paul's blindness was removed; now he knew the Lord (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9).

So, When God Transforms A Life, He Arranges The Circumstances, He Sends The Gospel, He Connects People, He Removes Spiritual Blindness, *and* He Provokes Obedience.

Once you hear the Gospel, and you embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, part of the transformation is that you *want* to obey Him (Deut. 30:6 with Jn. 14:15 and 1 Jn. 5:3; cf. Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13), and that was the case with Saul. He knew full well that people who commit to Christ were baptized in His name. That might have been how he developed his "hit list"—sit around and eavesdrop on who is getting baptized in Jerusalem. The middle of Verse 18 says: "and he got up and was baptized."

Then, after three days of blindness and prayer and fasting, he begins to enjoy the "fellowship of the Spirit" (Phil. 2:1) "in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Verse 19—"and he took food and was strengthened."

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If you are following along in the notes, I don't want you to get too amused here at this point. I have had a problem that I have been fighting for *years*, and I still haven't defeated it: When I am typing, when I type the word "peace," my fingers tend to put an "h" on the end instead of an "e." I can't tell you how many times I have found in my own notes, "that God will give you His peach." I outdid myself! If you are looking at your notes, it says, "in the bond of beach." Trust me: There is no beach in Damascus. There is no *ocean* around Damascus.

It was the "fellowship...in the bond of peace." They sat down and they ate together (cf. Acts 2:46). If you have professed Christ as your Savior and Lord, welcome! You are part of the family (Eph. 2:19). We celebrate "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3; cf. Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; Col. 3:13).

But the next thing for you to do, if you have not already, is to "be baptized" (Acts 2:38)—to symbolize and proclaim your allegiance to Him (Matt. 28:19-20; cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12; Rom. 6:3-5). And you are ready to be joined to the fellowship of His people.

Now, I looked at this passage and went over it a whole bunch of times, and I came up with a nice six-point outline so that we could look at this whole pericope; but my eyes were bigger than time allows—so, Point #6 today is *also* going to be Point #1 next week, but I didn't want to leave this out. I'll read the verses to you now, and we can plan to begin with them next week.

When God Transforms A Life, He Arranges The Circumstances, He Sends The Gospel, He Connects People, He Removes Spiritual Blindness, He Provokes Obedience—and He Turns You To Christ.

Suddenly this Christ-hater is a Christ-proclaimer! And he won't talk about anything else, except introducing people to Jesus. Middle of Verse 19 through Verse 22—"Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, 'Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?' But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ."

Now, the obvious and crucial question here is: Have *you* been transformed by God through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ? (2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13; Titus 3:5) Have you recognized His providential hand on your life? (Ps. 37:23) Have you heard the Gospel of His "sacrifice" for your "sins" (Heb. 10:12, 14) and His invitation that you can have His "righteousness" in place of your "sin"? (2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Phil. 3:9) Are you connected to His people? (1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Acts 2:44-46; Rom. 12:10) Are your spiritual eyes open to see and to feast upon His "Word" (1 Thess. 2:13), which feeds your soul (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:16) and gives you "everything" you need for "life and godliness"? (2 Pet. 1:3; cf. Matt. 4:4) Have you proclaimed your faith through baptism? (Acts 8:12, 36; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33-34; 18:8) Are you increasing in your faith? (2 Cor. 3:18; cf. Prov. 4:18)

Sermon Title: When God Transforms A Life
Scripture Text: Acts 9:10-22 (Acts #22)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 9-17-23

You see, it isn't that hard to figure out what a transformed life really is, because all of the evidence is here before us, to understand what happens When God Transforms A Life.

Let's call upon Him:

Father, thank You for that transformation, continuing to be repeated day by day in every man or woman, boy or girl, who turns to You in faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ, who is the One who "became sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Father, what a message we have! May our lives back up the words that we say. May our words build upon the testimony of our transformed lives by our behavior. And above all, would You bring more souls, in the next spiritual generation, into the Body of Christ, and let us be Your servants to that end? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.