

## *Transformation*

**A long, slow transformation**



**An instantaneous transformation**



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**A long, slow transformation**



Of a person:

- What are examples of how a person may be transformed slowly?

## *Transformation*

Of a person:

- What are examples of how a person may be transformed in an instant?

**An instantaneous transformation**



## *Transformation*

- What kinds of transformations are hardest?
  - Changing the heart:
    - someone's deepest attitudes, from which all of life flows
  - Especially changing the heart toward God

### **A case study in transformation**

the startling transformation  
of a powerful opponent  
of God and His people



# Transformed by God

## Acts 9:1-19a

Chinese: page 1779

Spanish: page 1397

Brown: page 1100

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### *Flow of the book of Acts*

- The Good News spread to people in Jerusalem (1-7)
- Persecution of Christians began (8)
  - “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.  
**Saul began to destroy the church.** Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.” *Acts 8:1, 3*
- The Good News came to Judea and Samaria (8)
  - Philip told Samaritans, an Ethiopian eunuch, and more

*Acts 9:1-19a*

1-2: Saul intensifies his persecution of followers of Jesus

3-6: • “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact,

7-9: the time is coming when anyone who kills you will

10-12: think they are offering a service to God.” *John 16:2*

13-16: • More than simply not seeking Jesus,

17-19a: Saul was actively fighting against Jesus!

- Damascus is a hub, so Saul is trying to prevent further spread of Christianity

- Apparently women also had influential roles

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*Acts 9:1-19a*

1-2: Saul intensifies his persecution of followers of Jesus

3-6: Jesus halted Saul’s journey to Damascus (and life)

7-9: • “Weighty light” + voice from heaven: must be God!

10-12: • Saul must have wondered...

13-16: – How was he persecuting God?

17-19a: – Who was really speaking to him?

- Emphasis: Saul is persecuting **Jesus** (God)
  - Stephen was right! Saul is attacking God Himself!
- Saul was only told the next step: wait
  - Time to reflect (on himself and on God) & pray



***Acts 9:1-19a***

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7-9: Saul and his men are stunned

10-12: • Men can't speak; Saul can't see

13-16:

17-19a:

God's appearances sometimes only communicated with some, while others just heard noise

- "I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves." *Daniel 10:7*

***Acts 9:1-19a***

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7-9: Saul and his men are stunned

10-12: • Men can't speak; Saul can't see

13-16: • From being in power, Saul now must be led by the

17-19a: hand, in darkness

- Saul obeyed, yet he was in a crisis

- He certainly would have expected judgment!

***Acts 9:1-19a***

1-2: Saul intensifies his persecution of followers of Jesus

3-6: Jesus halted Saul's journey to Damascus (and life)

7-9: Saul and his men are stunned

10-12: Jesus calls Ananias to bless Saul (his enemy)

13-16: • God prepares both Ananias and Saul

17-19a: – God confirms the reality of Saul's conversion

- 2 independent witnesses, with details

- Confirmed for both Saul and Ananias

- God's work in Saul comes through Ananias

- God made Saul dependent upon the ones he rejected



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13-16: Ananias resists, and God helps him obey

- 17-19a:
- God is patient as Ananias adjusts his heart
    - God didn't bend, but neither did He judge Ananias
  - God reveals His plans for Saul to Ananias
    - Chosen tool (just as Ananias is here)
    - Carry Jesus' name: Gentiles (!) & their rulers (!), Jews
    - Much suffering for Jesus' name

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13-16: Ananias resists, and God helps him obey

- 17-19a: Ananias blesses Saul, brings healing of body and soul
- Full obedience: blessing (laying hands on him) & welcome ("Brother Saul")
  - God's work in Saul comes through Ananias
  - Baptism sealed what God had already done

*The Big Idea*

**God is able to transform anyone  
by His sovereign action  
using people as His hands and voice**

*Application*

- **Have faith in God's power to transform people**
  - Even the most unlikely



Saul (later Paul) described God's work in His life:

- “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” *1 Timothy 1:15*
  - A blasphemer: arrogant disrespect against God
  - A persecutor: attacking God's people because they were God's people
  - A violent man: leading to people's arrest and even execution

### *Application*

- **Have faith in God's power to transform people**
  - Even the most unlikely
  - Pray for and anticipate conversion and transformation
    - Who is on your heart?
    - Whom does God call to mind?
  - Paul's prayer for King Agrippa
 

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul replied, “**Short time or long—I pray to God** that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am (a Christian), except for these chains.” *Acts 26:28-29*

*Application*

- **Have faith in God's power to transform people**
- **Sometimes God blinds us to help us see**
  - God may take away what we desperately want
    - to get our attention
    - to help us see our brokenness & need for God
  - God may use a crisis to gives us spiritual life
  - Ask God to use the crisis for the good of knowing Him more

*Application*

- **Have faith in God's power to transform people**
- **Sometimes God blinds us to help us see**
- **Trust in (and depend on) God's transforming work**
  - in others: taking a great risk
  - in yourself: taking a great risk
  - **Courageously obey God, depending upon His work**
    - To speak truth and grace
    - To welcome and love as brothers and sisters in Christ
    - To submit to God's will, even when it isn't clear yet



*The Big Idea*

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