The Transformed Life (Part 1)

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[0:00] If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Acts chapter 9.

! And the reason why we're going to be in Acts chapter 9, because about two years ago or longer, when I was still with Lee going back and forth, creating the Bible studies on Wednesday nights, I was in Acts, and we got through Acts chapter 8.
So here we are two years later. I've been with the youth during that time. We've been blessed to have Willard come, and Willard, and Tom, and Lee. They do a great job on Wednesday night. So for the time being, while we determine when we're going to start having our regular Wednesday night meetings again, we'll be meeting in here, and we'll go through the book of Acts.
And wherever we end up, who knows? I mean, this is going to be a really long Bible study in Acts, as far as me leading it. But Acts chapter 9. And tonight we're going to cover verses 1 through 5.
So if you have your Bible, go ahead, like I said, turn to Acts chapter 9. And I'm going to read verses 1 through 5. And it helps if I'm in the right book.
[1:30] Yeah. This is always that nightmare that you have as a pastor. As you get up, and everybody's waiting for you to preach, and then you can't find where you're supposed to be. And then everybody gets up and walks out.

I have that dream all the time. And I've talked to others who've had that dream as well. All right, so nobody leave. I'm there. Acts 9, verses 1 through 5. But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that 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. Many of you know or have heard of John Newton, the man who wrote one of the most famous and loved hymns in the history of the church, Amazing Grace.
But few have heard his story of conversion. John Newton, at a young age, went out to sea. And like most sailors during that time, and probably still today, he lived recklessly and he drank excessively.
[3:00] For several years, he worked on slave ships, capturing slaves and then selling them to plantations in the New World. At one point, he even became a slave himself, eventually becoming the slave of another slave trader.

However, he eventually escaped that situation and became a captain of his own slave ship. At some point in time, he came across a copy of Thomas Kempis' book, Imitation of Christ.
And God used that book, along with a frightening storm, to bring John Newton to salvation. He was converted in that moment.
Newton went on to become one of the great leaders in the church of England during the 18th century. And he was an advocate, along with William Wilberforce, to bring about the end of the slave trade in England.
He is obviously, again, so well known because of Amazing Grace. But, you know, when you hear those verses and you know his story, it's an amazing, it adds another depth, another layer to how wonderful that song is.
[4:17] And on his tombstone, the inscription says this, John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slavers in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.

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Another interesting story of a marvelous conversion is that of Mel Trotter. Have any of you ever heard of Mel Trotter before? I see a lot of heads nodding yes and shaking no.
Well, let me tell you about Mel Trotter. Mel Trotter was a barber who spent just about every dime that he earned on alcohol. He was so possessed by his addiction that when his young daughter died, he took the shoes off of her body and he went and pawned them so that he could afford enough money to buy another drink.
One night, Mel Trotter, as he was staggering around the streets of Chicago, drunk and broke and shoeless, he was nudged inside the Pacific Garden Mission where there he was converted.
And then Mel Trotter felt so burdened for many other men who were living in that same situation that he was prior to his conversion that he went on to found and then also to supervise 60 missions that sprawled from Boston to San Francisco.
[5:50] And those are just two examples of the many that are scattered throughout the history of the church that highlight the power of God to save the vilest of sinners and to transform them into one of his saints.

But none of them, I believe, as great as those were, as amazing as those turnarounds were, had as far-reaching an impact and implications for the church as that of the conversion, which we've just read of Saul of Tarsus, who we know as the Apostle Paul.
Saul was a Pharisee, and he was a Pharisee on his way up. He had a lot going for him. He had advanced in that area.
He was seen, I think, by the Jewish hierarchy of the time as being one of those up-and-coming guys that they had their eye on. He was going to make it big in that way.
Anyway, he was well-educated. He was a citizen of Rome, which, you know, was a very big deal during that time, and he was overly zealous for his work.
[7:07] He was totally and completely passionate and sold out to the work that he was doing. Again, he had the education, he had the drive, and he had the social connections to make it big in the Pharisaical world.

Saul makes his first appearance in Scripture in connection with Stephen. When Stephen was executed, when he was martyred in Acts chapter 7, Paul, if you remember, was there.
He was guarding the robes of those who were involved in throwing stones at Stephen. His position was so close to the action that it suggests that he was not only there, but he was deeply involved in that situation.
He was deeply a part of the martyrdom of Stephen in total agreement with what was happening or what happened to him. Stephen's persecution, if you remember, led to a greater and a more widespread persecution and intense assault against the church in Jerusalem, which, again, Saul was very much a part of.
In fact, Saul may have been one of the primary instigators in that persecution. So we read, we backtrack to Acts chapter 8, verses 1 through 3.
[8:25] There it says, And Saul approved of his execution, speaking of Stephen. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, except the apostles.

Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house, and he dragged off men and women, and he committed them to prison.
So we see here that Saul, unfortunately for the church, was very good at his job. He was very adept at persecuting the church.
And as a result of how good he was at his job, the fellowship of believers in Jerusalem was broken up, and they were scattered throughout that area, which, again, we know God is sovereign, and God had a great plan in that.
More people were going to hear the gospel as a result of their going, but Paul was ravaging the church. And many of those Christians, again, they left Jerusalem.
[9:30] However, as they left, Paul wasn't satisfied with merely kicking them out of Jerusalem. He was hot on their trail. He was following them wherever they went because he wanted and was determined that he was going to put an end to the church, that he was going to put an end to the Christian faith.

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And so here we see that he's hot on the trail of some Christians who have left as a result of this persecution and have gone to Damascus, where they, again, continue to share the gospel.
And so Paul, Saul, was after them. Damascus is about 136 miles northeast of Jerusalem. So to try to put that into perspective for us, Bartlesville is about 150 miles away from Oklahoma City.
At least that's what Google Maps told me. So, you know, that was back then. That's a long way to go. And so, again, Saul was so intent to get them that he was willing to go wherever he had to go and do whatever he had to do to bring an end to the church.
Later in Acts chapter 26, verses 9 through 11, Paul gives his testimony to King Agrippa. And there he articulates the ferocity with which he attacked the church.
[10:48] I want to read that portion of Scripture with you. He says there, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.
And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme. And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.
So we see this man hated the church. This man hated Christians. This man made himself out to be public enemy number one of every believer during that time.
And so after the interlude of chapter 8, where we were two years ago, and there if you remember, and you've probably read Acts chapter 8 by then, maybe, that's where Philip is ministering to the Ethiopian eunuch and where the Ethiopian eunuch is converted and baptized.
[11:55] And so after that, the attention shifts back to the disciples and to Saul, who was still breathing threats and seeking to put an end to the church and was ferocious in his work in trying to do that.

Saul, again, was so consumed and possessed with persecuting Christians that he was totally on board with whatever was needed to do in order to put an end to the church.
Just like we see today, unfortunately, in our world, where there are places where people, governments, try really, really hard to do whatever they can to put an end to Christianity, to try to destroy the church.
And so, you know, you think about them today and you could lump Saul prior to his conversion right there with them. He would have been in total agreement with whatever we see China doing to the church and China, North Korea, and all these other places.
He would have been right there with them in what they are doing today. Saul absolutely, again, hated and detested Christians. As we've seen, Saul was a very intelligent man and he used all of his intellectual faculties and he poured all of his intellectual faculties, all that he was, into whatever he could do, finding ways to put an end to Christianity, finding ways to capture Christians, imprison them, and then, as we've seen, if they wanted to, to put them to death, which was what he had hoped for.
[13:45] His attitude towards Christians, I think, is comparable to the attitude that Nazis had to Jews back during World War II, if you remember.

And so to try to help us realize how much Saul hated the church, how much Saul hated Christians. That's a good comparison. You see how much Nazis hated the Jews and what they were willing to do to try to exterminate them.
Well, Saul's hatred towards Christians and Christianity was on par with that. And so somehow, Saul finds out that there are Christians in Damascus, and again, driven by his ambition and his twisted desire to eradicate the earth of Christians.
It says that Saul went to the high priest. He asked him for letters to the synagogue at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, and the way is what Christians referred to themselves as, because Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, that if he found anyone belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
And so the high priest was the head of the Sanhedrin, which was the group of Pharisees, made up of Pharisees and Sadducees that served as the high ruling council of the Jews.
[15:07] And they viewed the high priest, the Romans did, as being, in a way, sort of the head of the Jewish state, still, though, very much under the control and authority and influence of the Romans.

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So having obtained now this necessary paperwork, Saul assembled his entourage and he set out for Damascus. But little did he know that as he goes out to do this, on his way, he will meet Jesus. And as a result of that meeting, he will be totally transformed by meeting Jesus Christ. And so the main idea for our study tonight from this passage is this.
Saul's conversion reveals several features of the transformed life. Saul's conversion reveals several features of the transformed life.
Anyone who is genuinely saved today will exhibit the same features. So as we go through Acts chapter 9 and we look at the conversion of Saul, we'll see that anyone today who is genuinely saved will be able to see the same features in their salvation as well.
[16:22] And so the first feature that we see in regard to genuine salvation is that it's faith in Jesus.

The first feature of genuine salvation is faith in Jesus. Again, Saul was charging full speed ahead into Damascus.
He was ready. He was eager. He was willing to seize Christians there and drag them back to Jerusalem where they would be imprisoned and maybe killed.
But on his way to doing that, he was stopped in his tracks. As verse 3 says, suddenly there was a light from heaven and it shone all around him and all around the people who were in his honorage. As big and as bad as Saul was at this point and as fearful as Christians were of him at this point, we see that he was no match for Jesus and nobody is ever a match for Jesus whose sudden appearance brought Saul to the ground, brought him face down in the dirt and speechless before the Lord.
[17:54] What's interesting to note here is that for Max chapter 22, verse 6, we learn that Paul encountered Jesus at noon. So when this event took place as Paul was going to Damascus, it was noontime.

You guys know noontime, the sun is out. Right? Typically. I know it's April and April showers bring May flowers, but we've got to understand that the sun was shining. It was bright.
However, this light from heaven was brighter than the sun. It shone all around them. This was a brilliant light from heaven that was glorious and powerful that made the sun seem like a flashlight by comparison to how bright and brilliant this moment was, this supernatural moment where Jesus stops Saul from what he's doing and he's about to transform his life.
Jesus' glory is greater than any light that we've ever seen. One day we'll see it. But all we know right now is that this is a powerful and brilliant light.
The glory of Jesus is fantastic. It's supernatural. It's not of this world. And so Saul's companions hear something, yet they did not see what Saul saw.
[19:19] Why couldn't they see or understand? Well, apparently, it was the Lord's will that only Saul hear and see him.

This was an encounter that was only meant for Saul. Saul was the only one, again, whom he appeared to and the only one who heard fully what Jesus had to say to him.
Ironically, in how the Lord works, the last person recorded in Scripture to this point, to have seen the resurrected, glorified Jesus was who? Stephen, whom Paul was there, whom Paul was participating in fully in his martyrdom.
That's the last time in Acts that we see the resurrected Jesus until this point where Jesus appears before Saul and stops him in his track.
We need to think about this in our dealings with one another. What amazing grace that Jesus displays here to a man who hated everything that he stood for.
[20:32] Saul hated Jesus. Saul hated Christians. And yet, Jesus in his grace appeared before him, stopped him from what he was doing, and as we'll see, saved him from his sins, saved him from God's judgment that would come against him.

And so we need to think about that when we share the gospel with unbelievers and also when we interact with one another in the church.
Because sometimes the church can be ungracious. We can be ungracious towards unbelievers, treating them as if they're always on the outside, unworthy of hearing the gospel and believing it and being saved.
Sometimes we think that people are just too far gone and too messed up to be saved. And this example of our Lord saving Saul tells us that we should never think that way about anybody.

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We should never think that they're beyond God's ability to save, and we should never think that they're not worth our being gracious to. And also we need to be super gracious to one another in the church as well.
[21:49] We need to model our Lord's character and behavior not just to our world but if we can't do it here we're not going to do a good job of doing it out in the world.

So we've got to love each other well and extremely graciously. We see here that genuine saving faith is initiated by God who makes the first contact in salvation.
So the next thing we learn here about Saul's conversion is that genuine saving faith is initiated by God who makes the first contact in salvation.
In verse 3 again it says now as he went on his way he approached Damascus and suddenly a light shone around him. So who makes the first contact here?
Well it's Jesus. Saul wanted nothing to do with Jesus or the church. It's Jesus who makes the first contact. And we see that all over scripture.
[22:52] Turn in your Bibles with me to John chapter 6 verse 37 Jesus speaking here says all that the father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

And then you go to verse 44 Jesus says there no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day.
So again we see this is God initiating salvation. it's God who draws. It's God who makes that first contact. Turn to John chapter 10 verses 27 through 29 again Jesus says my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.
I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. So again speaking of the fact that in salvation the Lord is the one who makes that first contact.
Turn to John 17 verse 2 Jesus in his high priestly prayer says this since you have given him authority over all flesh speaking to himself to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.
[24:23] Go down to verse 6. So that same chapter I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of this world. Yours they were and you gave them to me and they have kept your word.

And so again we see God is the one initiating. God is the one who makes the first contact. Look at verse 9. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given to me for they are yours.
verse 11. And I am no longer in the world but they are in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one.
Verse 24. Father I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
And so we see again this continuing theme that it's God who makes the contact. It's God who draws. It's God who gives. Right? These people their salvation.
[25:33] And that's not all the Bible has to say about this. Go to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 6. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 6.

For God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
So again we see God being the giver. God being the initiator. Philippians 1.29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.
So again we're speaking of salvation as being granted to us. How is it granted to us unless God is the one who initiates unless God is the one who makes that first contact.
James 1.18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of creatures.
[27:03] And so in all of these verses we see the same thing. God is the one who initiates. God is the one who is making that first contact. God is not only of God being the initiator of salvation but also it speaks of people's inability to go to God on their own.

Romans chapter 3 verses 10 through 12 As it is written none is righteous no not one no one understands no one seeks for God no one initiates the conversation with God about their salvation all have turned aside together they have become worthless no one does good not even one 1st Corinthians 2 14 the natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God for they are folly

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to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned again speaking of the fact that God is the initiator that we would not come to
God unless he was the one who did the initiating in our salvation Ephesians chapter 2 verses 4 through 10 but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing this is not a result of your initiating right this is not a result of your making the first contact it is also it's a gift of God Paul says not a result of works so that no one may boast for we are his workmanship created in
Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them and I'm not done Colossians chapter 2 verse 13 and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh God made a life together with him having forgiven us of all our trespasses again speaking to our inability and God's initiating our salvation God making the first contact and then finally Titus chapter 3 verses 3 through 5 for we ourselves were once foolish disobedient let us let us stray slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared he saved us he appeared he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but according to his own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit so faith in God then requires his first making contact with us and when he makes that contact with us what follows in genuine salvation is conviction so genuine salvation genuine saving faith involves conviction first it's contact now what follows is conviction which we see in verse four and Saul having seen our Lord resurrected falls to the ground he heard a voice saying to him Saul Saul why are you persecuting me what is Saul going to be convicted about by Christ well he's convicted because he realized of what he's done and what's interesting here is that whenever [31:37] Jesus repeats a name that's his way of issuing a rebuke so when he's saying Saul Saul he's issuing a rebuke against Saul and against what he is doing we see that in a couple of other places where Jesus does this and when he does it it's in rebuke of whoever is doing this bad thing Martha if you remember Martha and Mary Martha is growing angry because she sees that Mary is not helping her with serving the guest but is instead listening intently at the feet of Jesus and remember as she's huffing and puffing and storming around what does Jesus say Martha Martha Martha Martha we see him why are you anxious and troubled about all of these different things right Jesus also does this when he laments over Jerusalem for rejecting him as it's Messiah remember he says Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it likewise he said to

Peter remember when Peter was in trouble Jesus wouldn't call him Peter he would call him Simon and you knew he was in trouble and so when he rebuked Peter for trying to tell him no it's not going to happen we're not going to let you so whenever Jesus repeats a name it's not a good thing so whenever you see that it's not a good thing and what it brings to mind for me is whenever your mom usually mom sometimes dad but usually mom you guys know where I'm going with this uses your full first name and your middle name right if you hear Michael Edmund that meant trouble for me and so it's the same thing and so Jesus is obviously not happy with what Saul has been doing and so he lets him know right there at the beginning Saul he's rebuking him for what he is going to do and what he has done and so here in doing that
Jesus brings Saul face to face with the wrongness of what he's been doing of the wrongness of what he is going to with guilt it will lead him to repentance and in leading him to repentance it will bring him to genuine salvation which again does not take place unless repentance has occurred Saul was persecuting the church and Jesus linked that persecution of his church with himself so you see Saul Jesus doesn't ask Saul Saul why are you persecuting Christians why are you persecuting my church no he says Saul why are you persecuting me and so we see there how closely connected we as believers are with our Lord whatever pain and suffering we endure in this life it's not as if
Jesus is in heaven thinking well that's just too bad I'm sorry that that's happening but I know it'll be better one day right no I think he feels it he feels it and it and it breaks his heart and it hurts him what Saul was doing to Christians Jesus it was like he was doing it to Jesus himself that's how

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closely linked we are to our Lord and Savior each blow that is struck against the church then and still today is felt in heaven every single blow is felt in heaven Saul's persecution and his affliction that believers felt as a result of what he was doing every one of them was felt by the Lord true salvation must include conviction of sin it must why because sin separates us from
God sin is a big deal Saul knew enough about Christians and their faith to hate it he knew the claims that Jesus made and he heard Stephen even preach that message before he was stoned to death he heard him talk about the history of God's redemption culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ and his dying and his rising again and all of that information that Saul had laid the groundwork for this moment when Jesus meets him and confronts him and so when this happens Saul is overcome with a sense of conviction he's realized that he has been terribly wrong about everything that he had thought prior he thought that what he was doing he thought in pursuing Christians arresting them being a part of their executions
[36:57] Saul thought genuinely thought that what he was doing he was doing for God he thought that what he was doing he was doing for God he thought he was doing a good thing and so now he's struck by the reality of what he has done in fact he has not been on God's side at all this whole time he has been totally against him the God whom he claimed to know and serve he realizes that he had no idea all along without conviction there is no salvation and listen this is not something that we can produce for someone else we can't force a person to be convicted I remember not too long ago there was a man that I had met with on occasion he was married to a Christian woman and she desperately wanted him to be saved everybody in the church desperately wanted this man to be saved and at first he refused to come to church at all and then he started to come and then he started to like it and that was an encouraging thing but not too long afterwards he fell back into some old habits that threatened his marriage and so I remember meeting with him one last time to try to drill the gospel home to him and just being there and you know as much as I could muster just trying to pour the truth trying to share the gospel with him as passionately as I could sharing my testimony sharing the testimonies of all of those people that

I've known of the amazing transformation how much better Jesus is in giving it my all and thinking that maybe a connection was happening there and then at the end of that conversation I remember him looking at me and saying well maybe I'll give it another try maybe I'll give Jesus another try and I thought in that moment that's not that's not it if you're genuinely saved you're not just giving Jesus a try to see if it works if you're genuinely saved you're genuinely convicted of your sin because you realize that it was your sin that put Jesus on the cross that he that he literally died in your place for the sins that you've committed and you're remorseful over that you're repentant over that the good thing about what happens in salvation is that remorse is quickly is quickly swallowed up in joy right we realize that God loves us so much that he willingly did this for us and it was heartbreaking when that conversation is over but a reminder that we cannot produce this within people this is the work of the
Holy Spirit and again Jesus doesn't ask us merely to try him Jesus never says hey why don't you give me a chance see if I can make your life better remember what Jesus said about following him he said deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me you know what that means total commitment Jesus isn't interested in half hearted commitment he's not saying just give me a try and let me prove myself to you no if you're going to follow Christ Jesus says you're going to have to be completely committed to me and you won't be completely committed to him unless you've truly and genuinely been saved and you realize what the Lord has done for you in salvation next we see that genuine salvation results in true conversion so we've seen that God makes the first contact that when he does so in genuine salvation there's conviction over sin and then next we see in the example of
Saul that there is true conversion in verse 5 it says there and Saul said who are you Lord and Jesus responded I am Jesus whom you are persecuting Saul's question to Jesus was a recognition of the fact that the person whom he was speaking to was God that this was deity that he was speaking to that the one who he was speaking with was in fact the Lord prior to that encounter with Jesus Saul saw the gospel in a negative way in an only negative way he saw Christ as his enemy and Christians as a problem that needed to be eradicated and so in this moment Saul's greatest fear again was realized he saw that Christ whom he treated as his enemy and he realized that he thought this whole time that he had been serving God when in reality he had been fighting against

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God this entire time and you know this encounter would cost him everything that he held dear everything he held dear would be gone his position his status amongst the Pharisees his job and his reputation even his family relationships they were all going to change now as a result of his coming to the realization that Jesus is the Christ this all took place in Saul's mind as Jesus confirmed that the gospel was in fact true and so how would he respond well he did what we all do when God makes that contact when we are convicted of our sin he came to faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior he was converted and I won't go to Philippians 3 4 through 11 I encourage you to look that up later for the sake of time to see Saul talk again about his testimony what [43:27] God did in a miraculous way to save him and so there's three points of application that I want to conclude with here okay we've read this hopefully we've understood it so now what should we do with it what does God want us to do with this passage!

well I think at least three things first of all genuine salvation we must realize is the work of God genuine salvation is the work of God now you and I we've been commanded as you see right here to go and to make disciples and God uses us to share the good news of Jesus Christ but we must realize that it's not up to us to save the people whom we're talking to right we cannot force a person to be saved we cannot force a person to be convicted of their sin this is God's doing and we hope and we pray that the people whom he sends us to that they will come to faith in Jesus Christ but now listen just because we know that this is God's doing this does not mean that we should ever this is the Lord's doing you share the gospel and you've done your job it's not like in baseball where you're like man
I witnessed to ten people and I only could save three you know I guess I'm batting 300 and that's okay for baseball right it's bad in every other situation no if you share the gospel with ten people ten out of ten you've done your job completely you're we must be careful in our discernment of who has been truly saved we must be careful in our discernment of who has been truly saved and so here what I'm talking about is the assurance of salvation now listen just because someone responds to an altar call and then proceeds to be baptized and take communion and has repeated a prayer a sinner's prayer for example right just because a person has done that does not mean that they've been genuinely saved does not mean that they've been genuinely saved right what does the Bible say about how will we know who is saved and who is not it doesn't say well because they responded to that altar call and they repeated that prayer and then they were baptized and they took communion right they did all of those works no it says you will know them by what their fruits you will know them by their fruits so how their life matches their confession that Jesus is the Christ in 2 Corinthians 15 5 Paul commands believers to examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith test yourselves or do you not realize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail to meet the test so how do we take this test well first as already been mentioned examine your life do you see the fruits of the spirit evident in your life love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness and self control are those fruits evident in your life now I need to say as well we still battle and wrestle with the sinful nature right so will you always be these fruits no I know that I'm not right you can ask my wife just in case you don't believe me which I think that you do right but you understand but they should be evident they should characterize you more so than the others right you should be more kind than you are bitter and angry more gracious than you are critical and so these fruits should be evident in your life and also hopefully what should be the case if you've been genuinely saved is that from the moment of your salvation you've seen yourself increasing and bearing these fruits of the!
[48:02] another test is how you wrestle with sin if you are fighting sin today if you are feeling guilty when you do sin if you are seeking to try to flee from temptation right if you feel that struggle within you I think that's another test evidence that you've been saved because you realize the sin that you've committed and you realize that you don't like it and then thirdly we must model the Lord's graciousness in dealing with our enemies let me back up for a second before I go there I want to say one more thing that I think is important okay back to application point number two using discernment in making sure that people have truly been saved now this does not mean that all of a sudden when somebody comes down in response to an altar I doubt it or you know okay we'll baptize you but you know we don't really believe that you've been saved until we've seen you for a year or two doing the things that you need to do so let's not when somebody comes down and think

I don't know maybe maybe not no instead let's rejoice right let's be thankful and hopeful that that that person is coming forward having now let's move on to the last point of application we must

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model the Lord's graciousness in dealing with our enemies again look this was the greatest enemy of the church and how would any of us normally respond if somebody was ruining your life if somebody was ruining your friends and your family if somebody was making your life miserable what would be your initial towards that person!
Yeah! poof you're gone right I wish you were dead honestly that would be most of our first response and listen Jesus had the power to do that did he not instead of appearing before Saul on his road to Damascus he could have snapped his finger and he could have dropped dead of a heart attack and the Saul problem would have been gone but Jesus decided not to do that Instead the amazing grace of our Lord and Savior that he would save such a person that he would contact such a person that he would convict such a person so that he could bring them to conversion and listen God used the apostle Paul's life in amazing ways that nobody thought or could see coming and he's capable of doing the same thing today so the final point of application let's love unbelievers well let's be gracious to people in our workplaces in our neighborhoods people whom we come into contact with let us be known by our graciousness as the
Lord has been so incredibly gracious to us and then along with that if we struggle with being gracious people to one another we're going to fail miserably at being gracious with the world around us people ought to be able to look at Christians in the church and judge by their behavior that these are people who are supernaturally different than anybody else I've ever seen they love each other and they're so incredibly gracious towards one another and when they see that that's a powerful testimony that what we claim to believe we truly and actually believe and so when Jesus says through the apostle Paul right we should outdo one another and loving and being gracious towards one another because listen just like Saul we too were all enemies of Christ and it was only by his grace that we've been saved and so who are we to not be gracious with unbelievers and gracious towards one another
Thank you.

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