



The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

ACTS 9:26-31

"THE REUNION"

NOVEMBER 12, 2023

AT A GLANCE

Knowing Jesus changes our relationship with God, relationship to other people, and our relationship to the world.

CONTEXT

The Book of Acts is the theological history of the Church. In previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the Church) have become where heaven and earth meet. The Church is multiplying rapidly, and with it, opposition from the outside and obstacles from within. Despite the opposition, these followers of Christ are sown, not scattered, into areas and people groups in need of hearing the Gospel.

But the expansion of the Church is at a dramatic turning point. Saul, the former zealous church persecutor, has radically come to faith in Jesus through the ordinary faithfulness of a follower named Ananias. And despite everyone's bewilderment, Saul has now joined the team of teachers/missionaries who are taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Today, we will see how the Gospel makes peace between the persecuted and the persecutor.

SERMON SUMMARY

Saul/Paul returns to Jerusalem for the most difficult reunion ever – he wants to join the group he was trying to kill, but that group wants nothing to do with him, and the group he used to be part of wants to kill him. This was a true test of the Gospel's power for this body of believers, because anyone who truly sees Jesus is changed.

Seeing Jesus changes how we see everything. We know God not as a harsh judge, but a loving Father whom we trust and obey; so we want what God wants. And what God wants is peace, forgiveness, and unity. That means we see others not as enemies to be judged, conquered, or avoided, but as people whom Jesus loves and wants to reconcile. God uses us to bring reconciliation. Then we go into the world as peacemakers sent by God to people and situations he wants to transform through us.



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DISCUSSION

Expand Your Awareness

Over time, we often read the scriptures and miss the wonder and drama of how Jesus radically changes lives. In today's Sermon, the radical implication of Paul's conversion (from persecutor to brother) is tested as he confronts his spiritual family in Jerusalem for the first time.

If we fail to grasp the full context of this moment, we will miss the trust of what it means for our lives today. Together, let's read the text and envision, hypothetically, what it might have been like to be in the room where it happened.

Read Acts 9:26-31

- Despite understanding the Gospel, do you think the believers in Jerusalem ever anticipated having to reconcile with such an ardent enemy?
- What do you think both parties (Paul/Believers in Jerusalem) felt in the hours leading up to the meeting?
 - What do you think Paul said? What do you think was said by the believers?
 - What do you think led Barnabas to feel the need to speak up for Paul?
- How do you think that meeting ended?
- What do you think everyone felt/experienced in the weeks and months after?
- How do you think they addressed any lingering tension?

Explore Your Experience

We have no way of knowing what transpired in that room, but because of our understanding of the scripture and our own human experience, we can infer what it might have been like as both the trespasser and the trespassed.

When it comes to biblical peacemaking, we can often miss the mark. In our everyday midwestern life, we can often be more prone to peace-fake, which is to say that we forgive but do not experience it in our hearts. We also peace-fake when minimizing the transgression and the need for reconciliation, which only leads to halfhearted restoration.



This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.



ACTS 9:26-31

- In your own words, what is the difference between peacemaking and peace-faking?
- How have you experienced peace-faking as both the trespasser and the trespassed?
- Why do you believe we are prone to peace fake instead of peace make?
- How is new life in Jesus necessary to genuinely make peace?

Pastor Jeff stressed that we are only changed only through seeing and experiencing Jesus. Once we have cultivated that type of relationship with God, we will have the courage and confidence to be peacemakers in the world. We "peace-make" in three different ways:

The trespasser: being willing to ask for forgiveness.
The Trespassed: being willing to offer forgiveness
The Peace Makers: Barnabus-like peacemakers for others.

- Which of these areas do you need to step into in your life right now?
- What do you need God to supply for you to be able to take action in that area?

Experience Transformation

Here are the steps we can take to experience transformation as such:

Experience Peace: Experience Jesus and his peace won through the cross daily.
Practice Peace: To cultivate the fruits of the spirit in everyday life with God.
Peaceful Purpose: See your purpose as a "sent" peacemaker into the world.
Peace-make: See opportunities and take action to create peace.

- Which one of these is the next step you should focus on to grow spiritually?
- What is one small action step you can take to pursue that this week?
- Who is one person you will move towards in peace this week?

Pray For:

Experience Peace: Experience Jesus and his peace won through the cross daily.
Practice Peace: To cultivate the fruits of the spirit in everyday life with God.
Peaceful Purpose: See your purpose as a "sent" peacemaker into the world.
Peace-make: See opportunities and take action to create peace.



**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**

Read Acts 9:32-43