

ACTS *THE SPREAD OF THE CHURCH* **Transformed by the Power of the Gospel** **Acts 9:1-30**

One of the great movie series of all times is Star Wars. At the heart of Star Wars is the battle between good and evil and central to the story line are Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker. The movie cuts back and forth between the activities of the resistance and the actions of the dark side to crush the resistance. As the resistance seems to be gaining traction and on the verge of victory the dark side is simultaneously moving to crush their efforts and bring an end to good forever! The book of Acts in many ways develops much like Star Wars as we see Peter and Philip spread the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and as they do this, Saul, the persecutor of Christians is close on their heels seeking to destroy the new converts. Acts 9 records the miraculous conversion of Saul in an unexpected twist, the archrival of Christianity becomes its newest and boldest witness!

- ✚ The gospel demands a transformation in how you view and value Jesus**
- ✚ The gospel calls for a transformation of your life's purpose**
- ✚ The gospel provides transformation for every enemy of God who repents**



Big Idea

**The Gospel Has The Power
To Transform Any Life**

Acts 9:1–30 (ESV)

¹ But Saul, still breathing threats (*Acts 8:3, But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.*) and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² 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.

*Acts 9:1b–2 (BKC): 9:1b–2. So great was Saul’s hatred for the church that he went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus. Damascus (see its location on the map) was not under the control of Judea, Galilee, or the Decapolis. What jurisdiction would the high priest have over synagogues in Damascus? This is usually answered by saying Rome recognized the right of extradition when the high priest in Jerusalem demanded it. But this can also be explained in another way. At that time Damascus may have been under the Nabatean king, Aretas IV (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32–33). In order to gain favor with the anti-Roman Jews, Aretas, who hated the Romans, would have conceded this favor to the high priest. The mention of “synagogues in Damascus” indicates that Christianity was still closely associated with Judaism (in James 2:2 the word “meeting” renders the Gr. *synagōgēn*, “synagogue”). Mention of Damascus shows that Christianity had spread rapidly. Strangely, Saul referred to Christianity as the Way, a term used only in Acts (19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22*

³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

Acts 9:7 (BKC): An apparent discrepancy stands between verse 7 and 22:9. In 9:7 Luke recorded that the men who traveled with Saul ... heard the sound (phōnēs), but in 22:9 Luke wrote that “they did not understand the voice” (phōnēn). Literally, that clause in 22:9 may be translated, “They did not hear the sound.” The NIV correctly translates the verse, because the verb “to hear” with the genitive case may mean “to hear a sound” and with the accusative case “to hear with understanding.” The genitive case is employed in 9:7, and the accusative is used in 22:9. So the travelers with Saul heard the sound (9:7) but did not understand what Christ said (22:9).

⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, *(one of the two parallel streets that ran from the western to the eastern wall.)* and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² 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.” ¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your **saints** *(this is the first time the word saints is used of believers in the book of Acts)* at Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

It is interesting to see how the gospel was spread at first by persecution of which Saul seemed to be central to, and beginning in Chapter 9 we see the chief persecutor of Christians become the chief Christian witness and in many ways taking the baton from those he had been persecuting and running hard until the end of his life for the gospel.

¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” ¹⁷ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his

hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Between verses 22 and 23 it is likely that Paul’s 3 year training in the wilderness of Arabia took place that Paul wrote about in Galatians 1:17, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

²³ When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him,²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him,²⁵ but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

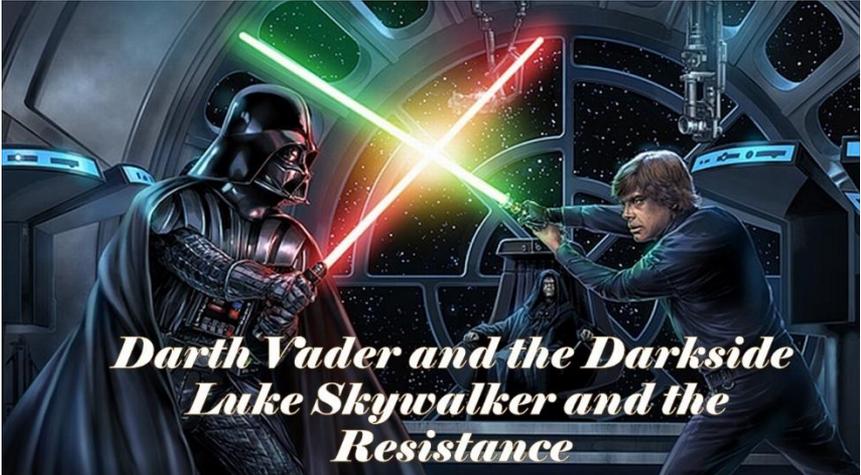
²⁶ And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.²⁸ So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.²⁹ And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him.³⁰ And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

After just a short time in Jerusalem Saul was sent away again from the believers because his presence brought increased persecution and scrutiny.

Transformed by the Power of the Gospel

ACTS 9

Pastor David King
September 27, 2020

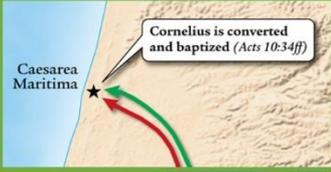
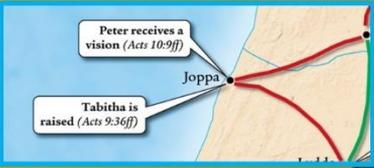
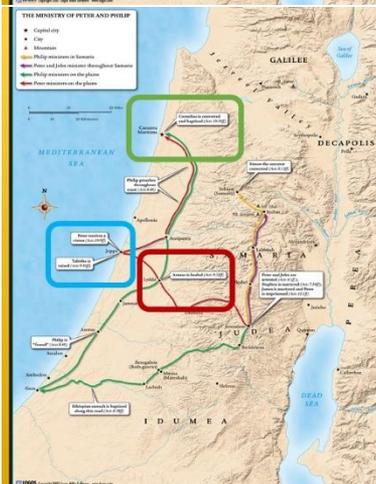
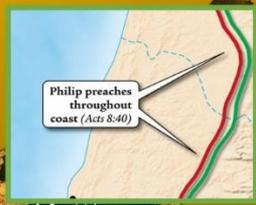
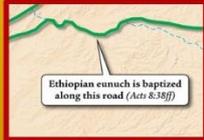
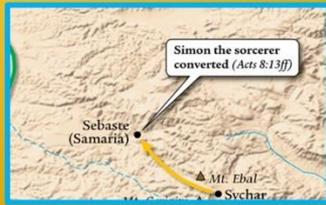
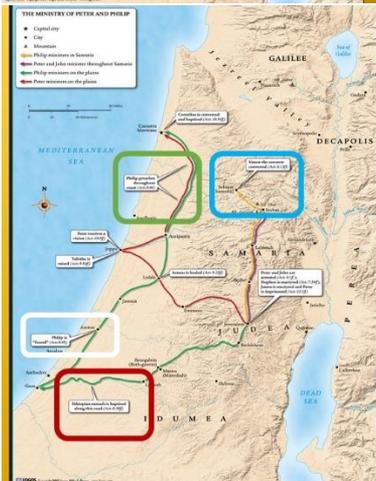
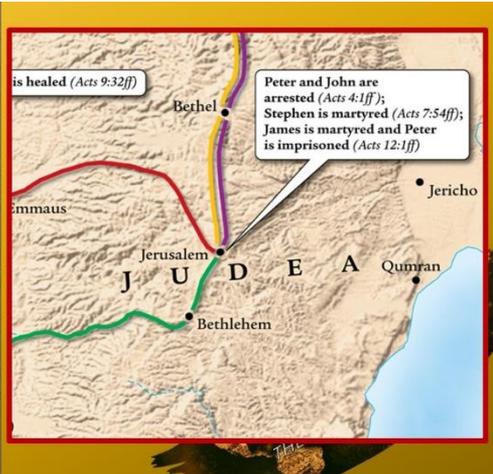
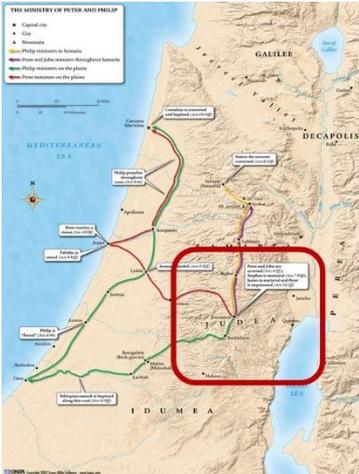


*Darth Vader and the Darkside
Luke Skywalker and the
Resistance*



But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8



OF THE CHURCH

The gospel demands a transformation in how you view and value Jesus



The gospel calls for a transformation of your life's purpose



The gospel provides transformation for every enemy of God who repents



The Gospel Has The Power To Transform Any Life

Big Idea



The story of John Newton: read from Christianity.com

<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/john-newton-discovered-amazing-grace-11630253.html>

Newton Lost at Sea

The *Greyhound* had been thrashing about in the north Atlantic storm for over a week. Its canvas sails were ripped, and the wood on one side of the ship had been torn away and splintered. The sailors had little hope of survival, but they mechanically worked the pumps, trying to keep the vessel afloat. On the eleventh day of the storm, sailor John Newton was too exhausted to pump, so he was tied to the helm and tried to hold the ship to its course. From one o'clock until midnight he was at the helm.



With the storm raging fiercely, Newton had time to think. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked as the battered ship he was trying to steer through the storm. Since the age of eleven, he had lived a life at sea. Sailors were not noted for the refinement of their manners, but Newton had a reputation for profanity, coarseness, and debauchery which even shocked many a sailor.

Recalling Scripture

John Newton was known as "The Great Blasphemer." He sank so low at one point that he was even a servant to slaves in Africa for a brief period. His mother had prayed he would become a minister and had early taught him the Scriptures and Isaac Watts' Divine Songs for Children. Some of those early childhood teachings came to mind now. He remembered [Proverbs 1:24-31](#), and in the midst of that storm, those verses seemed to confirm Newton in his despair:

"Because I have called, and ye refused . . . ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also laughed at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer."

John Newton had rejected his mother's teachings and had led other sailors into unbelief. Certainly, he was beyond hope and beyond saving, even if the Scriptures were true. Yet, Newton's thoughts began to turn to [Christ](#). He found a New Testament and began to read. [Luke 11:13](#) seemed to assure him that God might still hear him: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

That day at the helm, March 21, 1748, was a day Newton remembered ever after, for "On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters." Many years later, as an old man, Newton wrote in his diary of March 21, 1805: "Not well able to write; but I endeavor to observe the return of this day with humiliation, prayer, and praise." Only God's amazing grace could and would take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into a child of God. Newton never ceased to stand in awe of God's work in his life.

New Directions - John Newton's Conversion

Though Newton continued in his profession of sailing and slave-trading for a time, his life was transformed. He began a disciplined schedule of [Bible](#) study, prayer, and Christian reading and tried to be a Christian example to the sailors under his command. Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* provided much spiritual comfort, and a fellow-Christian captain he met off the coast of Africa guided Newton further in his Christian faith.

Newton left slave-trading and took the job of tide surveyor at Liverpool, but he began to think he had been called to the ministry. His mother's prayers for her son were answered, and in 1764, at the age of thirty-nine, John Newton began forty-three years of preaching the Gospel of Christ.

John and his beloved wife Mary (At the end of his life John would write that their love "equaled all that the writers of romance have imagined") moved to the little market town of Olney. He spent his mornings in Bible study and his afternoons in visiting his parishioners. There were regular Sunday morning and afternoon services as well as meetings for children and young people. There was also a Tuesday evening prayer meeting which was always well attended.

World's Most Famous Hymn - Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace
"...through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." -Acts 15:11

John Newton Wm. Walker

1. A - maz - ing grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me!
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears re - lieved;
 3. Thru man - y dangers toils and snares, I have al - read - y come;
 4. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun;

I once was lost but now I'm found, Was blind and now I see.
 How pre - cious did that grace ap - pear The hour I first be - lieved.
 'Tis grace has bro't me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
 We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first be - gun.

For the Sunday evening services, Newton often composed a hymn which developed the lessons and Scripture for the evening. In 1779, two hundred and eighty of these were collected and combined with sixty-eight hymns by Newton's friend and parishioner, William Cowper, and published as the *Olney*

Hymns. The most famous of all the *Olney Hymns*, "Faith's Review and Expectation," grew out of David's exclamation in [1 Chronicles 17:16-17](#). We know it today as "Amazing Grace." Several other of the Olney hymns by Newton continues in use today, including "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds," and "Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken."

Rector John Newton - Abolition of Slavery

In 1779 Newton left Olney to become rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in London. His ministry included not only the London poor and the merchant class but also the wealthy and influential. William Wilberforce, a member of Parliament and a prime mover in the abolition of slavery, was strongly influenced by John Newton's life and preaching. Newton's *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, based on his own experiences as a slave trader, was very important in securing British abolition of slavery. Missionaries William Carey and Henry Martyn also gained strength from Newton's counsel.

Newton lived to be eighty-two years old and continued to preach and have an active ministry until beset by fading health in the last two or three years of his life. Even then, Newton never ceased to be amazed by God's grace and told his friends, "My memory is nearly gone; but **I remember two things: That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior.**"