

Love of God Transforms 2

(preached 6/26/22)

Please turn to *Exodus 2:11* and *Acts 7:54*.

LAST WEEK:

- The Love of God transforms us from our old selves to the new Christ self.
- God's love transforms us from old lifestyles & goals to the pursuit of holiness and the plan of God.
- Remember St. Augustine—"ladies man" before he was Saved, then transformed into a saint of God.
- God loves us just as we are and is timeless, meaning He loved us before we were born, even knew He existed, ever did anything good or bad.
- God's love never affirms anything He calls sin in the Bible, no matter what, whether said sin is nature, nurture, or choice.
- God's love doesn't affirm any identity we take on that's outside of He's spoken of in the Scriptures.
- Any "Gospel" claiming that God's Love affirms sin or false identities is heresy and should be categorically rejected.
- God loves me just as I am! **Yet He wants me to change.** He hates my short temper, my self-serving attitude, and my pride. He HATES those things about me, because they don't resemble His Son Jesus. He wants me to repent and to have patience, serve others, and be humble like Christ.
- God's love isn't compromised by truth or justice, and God's truth & justice aren't compromised by His love.
- God's love promises transformational inclusion in the Church, meaning every Christian should be pursuing their personal Sanctification and subject themselves to course corrections by fellow church members and especially those in authority.
- We are 100% secure in the love of God! He will never take it away, turn it down, or divert it from us! He never runs out and we cannot wear God down! We don't make Him tired, He isn't sick of us, nor does He avoid us for any reason.

TODAY we'll see examples of God's transformational love in the Bible.

Exodus 2:11-15 (ESV)

¹¹ One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.

¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³ When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?"

¹⁴ He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you

killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known."

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Moses commits murder and please don't think that just because he was sticking up for a fellow Hebrew being beaten, that it was justified. Moses was an authority figure at the time, some say a Prince of Egypt. Not only could he have commanded the Egyptian to stop, but he could have called guards to come handle the situation. Verse 12 shows us this murder was premeditated because Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching...so it wasn't a crime of passion. As soon as Moses realizes someone did see his crime, he flees to escape punishment.

CRY OUT FOR DELIVERANCE. A few years later, Pharaoh dies and the Hebrew people cry out to God for deliverance. Verses 24-25 of the same chapter reads that God hears their cries and remembers them.

Exodus 3:1-6 (ESV)

¹ Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

MOSES THE MURDERER IS BEING CONTACTED BY GOD, THE CREATOR OF ALL, AND INVITED TO STEP INTO HOLY GROUND?

Exodus 3:7-12 (ESV)

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,

⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of

Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

COMMISSIONING MOSES? Not only does God contact Moses and allow him onto Holy Ground, but He’s commissioning Moses to be the deliverer of the Hebrew people. To go the most powerful man in the world and say “let My people go.” It goes even further than that: the SIGN God prophesies to confirm all will be that Moses will bring the entire Hebrew population to Sinai to worship God.

He’s giving this momentous, ginormous, amazing role to a murderer who fled the scene of the crime.

“GOD CAN USE ANYONE!” Let’s have a time out. It’s popular modern theology to say that God can and will use anyone to carry out His plans. People often make this statement either before or after pointing out their own sins, flaws, and insecurities and attest that God uses them despite all those things.

I do agree and the Lord Himself continues to work through me despite my sins, flaws, and insecurities, praise Him! He does the same with all of you too, hallelujah!

YET MOSES DIDN’T CONTINUE TO MURDER BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD TRANSFORMS US.

SENT BACK TO EGYPT. He didn’t continue in hiding on his father-in-law’s land, living out his days as a shepherd. The love and purpose of God transformed him from a criminal seeking to preserve his own life into someone sent back to the country where he was raised, still guilty of his crime, and right into Pharaoh’s court. Moses would go on to perform great miracles including turning the Nile to blood, parting the Red Sea, and much more.

CAME BACK TO SINAI. Fulfilling God’s prophecy, Pharaoh eventually let the Hebrew people go and they came to the foot of Sinai where the Lord Himself descended from Heaven and rested on the summit. The Old Covenant was made, the Law was given, and Moses is called to this day “the Lawgiver.”

God transformed Moses from a murderer to a great man of God.

PARTNERED WITH GOD. Moses partnered with God in this transformation, being humble and willing to allow the Lord to mold and shape him into the holy leader and prophet God wanted him to be.

STEPHEN STONED. In Acts chapter 7, a young and faithful disciple named Stephen begins preaching the Gospel and performing great signs and wonders. At one point he's brought before the Sanhedrin and High Priest of Israel himself, where Stephen delivers an impassioned sermon that ends with a stiff rebuke. Upon hearing that, this happens:

Acts 7:54-60 (ESV)

⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.

⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

⁵⁶ And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.

⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Saul, who would later become Paul, was part of the stoning of Stephen and some scholars even say it was Saul who arrested him. Then this happens:

Acts 8:1-3 (ESV)

¹ And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

² Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Look at verse 3: Saul was "ravaging" the church, the word here comparing him to a hungry wolf who is tearing apart the body of Christ. Men and women alike were dragged off to prison and none were spared!

Acts 9:1-2 (ESV)

¹ But Saul, still breathing threats 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.

Commissioned and authorized by the High Priest himself, Saul goes forth in murderous hatred to do everything he can to stop the spread of the Gospel and the preaching of Christ! But...

Acts 9:3-9 (ESV)

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.

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.

Pay close attention to verse 5: Saul knew this was Jesus Who appeared to Him. Saul knew it was the same Jesus that this cult he was trying to stop was preaching as the Messiah and Savior. The same Jesus Saul had already decided was an imposter, fake, possessed by a demon, insane, and Whose Name needed to be silenced once and for all. Same Jesus!

Yet here Saul calls Him "Lord"...even while asking Him Who He is.

Isn't that a little confusing? Not really and here's why: Saul's spirit knew Who Jesus was and it was his spirit who made him identify the Being talking to him as "Lord." He realized he was in the presence of God, yet it was only Saul's mind that was confused and asking "who are you?"

RADICAL SHIFT. After a fast and a word of prophecy & some laying on of hands by Ananias, this radical thing takes place:

Acts 9:19-22 (ESV)

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.

PERSECUTOR TO PROCLAIMER. People are astonished at the bigtime turnaround of Saul! With the same zeal in which he persecuted Christ, Saul is now proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God and the only way to Salvation.

PAUL. Saul is first called Paul in Acts 13:9 and is referred to as Paul thereafter.

The name Saul's translation just means "Hebrew/Jewish."

The name Paul's translation is a Latin name, given to him by the Romans, and is interesting: "desist, restrain, come to an end."

It's a name of transformation from old to new—of Paul's old self dying and being born again into the likeness of Jesus.

DAMASCUS. Let's go back to Saul's first meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus—did Jesus sound angry? No, but He had every right to be. Did He threaten Saul or do something to punish him? No, but He would have been just to do so. The Lord of all only asked "why are you persecuting me?"

It was the love of Jesus that converted Saul and turned him into Paul.

That diverted the raging river of his zeal from murder to Salvation.

That transformed him from persecutor of Jesus to proclaimer of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Paul relies on the Grace of God more than the other Apostles, because his transformation was the greatest.

Philippians 3:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

OLD LIFE GONE! These 3 verses show what Paul thinks of his transformation: everything in his old life he sees as rubbish and that he's gained so much more being a follower of Jesus!

AGRIPPA. Acts 26 gives us a more detailed account of Paul's conversion, told by Paul himself to King Agrippa:

Acts 26:1-11 (ESV)

¹ So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

² "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews,

³ especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴ "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

⁶ And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,

⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

⁸ Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

⁹ "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

Acts 26:12-23 (ESV)

¹² "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

¹³ At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.

¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

¹⁵ And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you

¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

¹⁹ "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

²¹ For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

²² To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:

²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

Just like Moses, God chose a murderer to be a light to the world.

Paul ended up founding more churches than the other Apostles and writing 2/3rd of the NT Bible for which we heavily rely upon to this day.

Paul didn't remain a Pharisee or murderer after his conversion—the love of God transformed him from Saul to Paul.

HOPE FOR ME AND YOU. The hope this gives to both you and I is that the same Love lives inside of us in the form of the Holy Spirit, just like Paul. The same God, Whom John called Love, is with us and will never leave or forsake us.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

ALTAR CALL?