

The Truth that Changes Everything

Acts: The Spirit Moving / Acts 9:19-22 / August 10, 2025

Introduction:

The book of Acts is a powerful narrative recounting, as Luke inferred in chapter 1, all that Jesus Christ continued to say and do through those called by His name to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. When we study narrative literature in Scripture, we primarily want to look at whole stories to keep the main point in focus. Yet, there are moments when a phrase or statement demands specific attention. This morning, we are going to cover only three verses in the middle of the story of the apostle Paul's conversion, call, and initial preaching to consider a statement that shapes our doctrine and theology. Sadly, in modern Christianity, doctrine and theology have been traded for easy believism. Many are comfortable hearing about God's love through Jesus and can get on board with Jesus' way of life. They may be open to lightly touching on the crucifixion but be careful how you describe what it accomplished. However, they don't see a need dig too deep into Scripture and wrestle with its claims of who Jesus is and what that means. The modern church has convinced itself deep theology is not needed for life and faith, yet Scripture consistently reveals doctrine, and theology deeply shaped the life of believers. Acts 9:19-22 holds a snapshot of Saul's initial preaching ministry which we could easily breeze through. Yet, in this short summary, we discover the theological truth that changed everything for Saul,

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

These verses are full of shocking details. Look at the second half of verse 19, "For some days he [Saul] was with the disciples at Damascus." This seems like a simple statement of fact but consider where Paul was only a handful of days prior to this. He was breathing threats and murder against the disciples and came to Damascus to bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now he is spending time with those very disciples. We're not told what took place in these days, but it appears Saul found unity and fellowship with the disciples in Damascus. Notice the next shocking detail in verse 20, "And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues." Pause there. Do you remember where Paul was heading with the letters from the high priest? Verse 2 of chapter 9 tells us it was the synagogues at Damascus. Instead of walking in with those letters and proclaiming his authority to bind all who called on the name of Jesus, Saul, himself, proclaim that very name in those synagogues. Look at the rest of verses 20-22, "And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' 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?' But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ." Two aspects of Saul's proclamation in the synagogues book end the awe of those who heard them to draw out the shock of them. He was saying Jesus is the Son of God and proving Jesus was the Christ. What makes this so shocking? These points were the focus of Jesus' trial before His crucifixion. Matthew 26:63-66 holds the most vivid summary of what sealed their condemnation of Jesus. Listen closely to Matthew's account of the final moments, "And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes and said, 'He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?' They answered, 'He deserves death.'" While acknowledging He was the Christ was significant, it was Jesus' claim to be God's Son that brought the charges of blasphemy. Both claims are vital to the gospel. However, Son of God claimed an authority and nature the Jews weren't ready to receive. Especially of someone from Nazareth, who looked nothing like they had hoped. Family, this was the claim that drove Saul and others to kill Steven in chapter 7, and Saul is now openly declaring his belief in its truth.

The response of all who heard this proclamation highlights how shocking it was for this to come from Saul, as they recount the havoc he made in Jerusalem for those who held to this truth and his original plans for Damascus. Now, note how the flow of Luke's narrative focuses in on this truth. The last thing Saul says before his conversion was, "Who are you, Lord?" in verse 5, and the next thing we hear from his lips is "He is the Son of God." And not only is Saul proclaiming this, but he increased in his ability to defend it, confounding all the Jews as he proved Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Here is a question I think we should ask. Why aren't more details of what Saul was saying to prove these things provided? I believe Luke leaves those details out to keep our minds on the truth that changed everything for Saul. Verse 20 is the only time the title "Son of God" is recorded in Acts. And, outside of Paul's quote of Psalm 2 in Acts 13, Luke doesn't choose to focus on it. Why is it the focus here? This truth about Jesus becomes a distinctive feature in Saul's, or the apostle Paul's letters to the churches. He points to Jesus as God's Son in Romans 1 and Galatians 1 when solidifying his calling, as well as throughout Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians when confirming what God accomplished through Jesus and will accomplish at His return. For Paul, the importance of this title in understanding the gospel cannot be understated. So, I want to spend the rest of our time considering what it communicates and why it is important to understand this is who Jesus is. First, this title communicates Jesus' unique status as God the Son. Turn in your bibles to John 1:1-5. It is on page 1052 in the pew bibles, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Turn now to Colossians 1:13-20 on page 1168 in the pew bibles, "He [God] has delivered us from darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He [The Son] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." Lastly, turn to Hebrews 1:1-4 on page 1187, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." Each passage speaks to the divine nature of Jesus. John 1 tells us He was both with God and was God. Colossians 1 says He is the image of God and all of God's fullness dwelled in Him. And Hebrews 1 describes him as the radiance of God's glory and exact imprint of His nature. Each passage also helps us understand how that divine nature speaks to His power to create and sustain all things. John 1 says every created thing is made through Him. Colossians 1 says he made all things and holds all things together. Hebrews 1 says He upholds the universe by the word of His power. Finally, each passage declares how His divine nature secures all that we need for salvation and life. John 1 says He is the light of men and overcomes the darkness. Colossians 1 tells us we have redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace through His blood. And Hebrews 1 says He has spoken to us and made purifications for sin. Church, the Jesus' divinity is non-negotiable, and it is what ensures us that we have life and peace. That truth could consume hours of study, but we need to consider the second thing this communicates. This title also communicates His intimate perfectly loving relationship with God the Father. Prior to Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist was raised up to prepare the way for His revealing. As he was baptizing people, Jesus comes to be baptized and Luke records God the Father saying, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

The Father communicates this again on the mount of transfiguration in Matthew 17:5, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” This repeated statement communicates the Father’s eternal love and pleasure in the Son. Why is this important? One reason is that the Father’s love for the Son speaks to the authority given to Him. John the Baptist proclaimed in John 3:35, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.” In John 5:19-21, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.” The authority of Jesus is tied up in His personhood, as the Son of God. Another reason this is important is because that intimate perfectly loving relationship means we can trust the Son does and says what the Father has designed. Jesus said in John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” In John 8:28-29, he says, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” And that which is most pleasing was securing out redemption on the cross. Turn to Philippians 2:6-11 on page 1165 and look at what Paul says, “though [Christ Jesus] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Family, Jesus must be understood to be more than a gifted, blessed, and altruistic person. His eternal nature as God the Son is what makes His atoning work on our behalf trustworthy. It is what secures peace with God and overcomes the powers of darkness. This truth is what places Him at God’s right hand as our intercessor. And this truth relays to our hearts His authority. What should we do with all this? Turn to Psalm 2, page 528, and let it speak to our hearts again, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” Psalm 2 speaks to the foolishness of rejecting the grace of God and authority of His Christ, His Son. Then, it calls for us to fear the Lord and pay homage to the Son, taking refuge in Him. Family, after declaring His pleasure in the Son, the Father said, “listen to him.” The truths we have considered this morning call for our obedience and worship. God the Father commands us to listen to Jesus. We should listen to all He said recorded in the gospels, and as Jesus told us He would, all that He continued to say through His apostles. Do you want to believe in Jesus? Do you have trouble obeying His Word? Do you long to worship Him with deeper affections? The place to start is by searching our hearts to see if we see Him as God the Son, because that truth changes everything.

Conclusion:

As the worship team is coming to lead us in a time of reflection and response, I want to end by letting God’s Word speak. After reading a selection of passages that speak of Jesus as the Son and what that means for us, we will move into our time of response. This is also a time to prepare for communion, which is an act of remembrance and connection with Jesus Christ.

As you reflect and prepare to take communion, consider the magnitude of what was accomplished through the death and resurrection of the Son. Remember Jesus as He truly is and respond as the Spirit leads. As always you are welcome to sit and reflect as long as needed, stand and sing, or come and kneel before the Lord. We also have a team of people ready to pray with you worshipping on the front rows with lanyards on. They can also share how to call upon the name of Christ for the first time if that is what you need. Let these truths wash over your heart and mind to change everything for you like they did for Saul. John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." John 5:25, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." 1 John 2:23, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also." 1 John 3:8, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 5:5, "Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:12-13, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." Romans 5:8-10, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Psalm 2:12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Let's pray.