

The Book of Acts part 27
The Beauty of Forgiveness
Acts 9:23-35 | Lon Solomon – Senior Pastor

Acts 9:19b

“Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus and immediately, he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He IS the Son of God.’”

Acts 9:21a

“And all who heard him (Paul) were amazed, and said, ‘Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name (i.e. Jesus) in Jerusalem, and who came here for that purpose?’”

Acts 9:22

“But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus, by proving that Jesus IS the Messiah.”

Acts 9:23-24a

“And after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul.”

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we learn that there is actually 3 years in between Acts 9:22 and Acts 9:23.

Galatians 1:11

“I want you to know, brethren, that the Gospel which is preached by me is not according to man.”

Galatians 1:12

“For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it by man, but it came to me by revelation from Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 1:13

“For you’ve heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the Church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it.”

Galatians 1:15

“But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me [Damascus Road] so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles . . .”

Galatians 1:16-17a

“ . . . I did not consult with any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were Apostles before me . . .”

Galatians 1:17b

“ . . . but I immediately went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”

When Paul says, “Arabia” here in Acts 9, he doesn’t mean “Saudi Arabia” – but he is referring to the Arabian “Kingdom of Nabatea.”



2 Corinthians 12:4

“. . .caught up into PARADISE and heard inexpressible things which a man is not permitted to speak.”

The Arabian Theological Seminary

- One classroom = in “Paradise”
- One professor = the Risen Lord Jesus
- One graduate = the Apostle Paul

After “graduation” – Paul returned to Damascus and began preaching Jesus again!

Acts 9:24b-25

“They (Jews) were watching the gates day and night, to kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down over the wall, lowering him in a basket.”

Acts 9:26

“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.”

Acts 9:27

“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.”

Acts 9:28, “So Saul stayed with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out among them.”

Acts 9:29, “And he talked and argued with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him.”

These Hellenistic Jews were the very same people who stoned Stephen to death in Acts 7.

These guys knew Paul well – because he had been part of that “lynch mob.”

But they hated Jesus so much – that their previous kinship with Paul was irrelevant.

Paul knew how these guys felt about the Gospel – but he preached Jesus to them anyway!

It took Paul months to get the people in Damascus to want to kill him – but (Galatians 1:18) it only took him 15 days to accomplish that in Jerusalem!

Acts 9:30

“And when the brethren learned of it, they brought him (Paul) down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus (home town).”



Acts 9:31

“So the church throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up [because the “1-man wrecking machine” = gone!]. And walking in fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”

SO WHAT?

Acts 9:26

“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.”

Acts 9:28

“So Saul stayed with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out among them.”

What happened = the Christians in Jerusalem forgave Paul.

Forgiveness is a beautiful thing! Empowered by the Holy Spirit, it's the greatest healing force in the universe.

“I could dismiss half my patients today if I could get them to forgive.”

The path to freedom is the path of forgiveness.

#1 – “What is the greatest hindrance to forgiveness?”

The greatest hindrance to forgiveness is our stubborn human pride.

#2 – “Why should I forgive?”

Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, [WHY?] just as God in Christ forgave you.”

Colossians 3:13

“. . . bearing with one another, and forgiving each other . . . just as the Lord forgave YOU, so also do ye.”

Experiencing God's forgiveness is where we get the motivation to grant forgiveness to others.

But Jesus didn't just forgive us once at the cross!

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins (daily), He is faithful and just (everyday) to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.”

As followers of Jesus, God's forgiveness is every moment of every day of every year of our life – and our forgiveness of others must be the same!

#3 – “Where does the power of forgiveness come from?”

When we've been hurt deep – it takes deep power to overcome it – and that means the power of the Holy Spirit!

Only the power of the Holy Spirit can soften our stony, unforgiving hearts.

Ezekiel 36:26

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

If we truly want to forgive a person – and we beseech God to give us the power to do so – we will get that power!

#1 – Forgiving a person does not mean that we automatically re-enter a close relationship with that person.

Forgiveness means that (1) we let go of it; (2) we let God have it; (3) we begin moving on with our life.

#2 – Forgiving a person does not mean that we are granting them immunity for what they did.

Romans 12:19

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

Forgiveness means that we release people from our repayment – and that we entrust them to the Lord, who promises that He WILL repay!

If Jesus could give these early Christians the power to forgive Paul – after all he did to them – then there is not a person alive that we can't forgive if we tap into the power of the Holy Spirit as they did.