

Holy Terror to Holy Man

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[0 : 0 0] soon as I get home home that implies that this is not our home it's our home but it's not our ultimate home we are citizens of the kingdom soon to be residents of the new heaven and new earth come Lord Jesus he is risen okay we can try that again hope you don't mind I'm not beating up on you I just wanted to try it again he is risen God bless your hearts amen amen amen this morning we're going to be looking at an incredible passage Acts chapter 9 it's one of the most important passages in all of scripture actually especially the new testament and you'll see why if you don't already know so if you would stand with me one more time for the reading of God's word and prayer come to it father in the name of Jesus

Lord we are looking forward to home we're going to put more you're going to put on our robe you're going to clothe us with a white robe the Bible says we know it doesn't mean a literal robe we know we are clothed fully with the righteousness of Christ we will stand before you perfect all that day in the new heavens and new earth when our bodies are resurrected from the ground to join our souls forever we will be perfected in your presence forever and Lord make it so Lord we long for that day oh we long to be home to be clothed fully to see you in all of your glory Lord Jesus to behold you oh some of us are grieved right now because we've some of our loved ones have left us and they are beholding you right now so we rejoice with them but Lord some of us are grieving help us to fight for joy help us to rejoice in the resurrection some of us are just weighed down we got to fight for joy too because you are worthy

Lord we don't leave our burdens at the door of the church we bring our burdens into the worship and we offer them to you we cast them upon you oh may we see the glory of Jesus may we hear his voice now Father as you've always done be with your servant and help me to preach Christ to preach your word to exalt him who is life you do the work of touching hearts and changing lives you do it may no one leave here unscathed because we've they've been in the presence of God throughout this service as we sung your glory now as your word goes forth may it go forth with your power and love and penetrating work save someone today set someone free build up your people get the glory in Jesus name amen amen

Acts chapter 9 beginning at verse 1 but Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way that is that's what the Christians were called followers of the way men or women he might bring them bound to Jerusalem now as he went on his way he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him and falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him Saul Saul why are you persecuting me and he said who are you Lord and he said I am Jesus whom you are persecuting but rise and enter the city and you will be told what you are to do the men who were traveling with him stood speechless hearing the voice but seeing no one

Saul rose from the ground and although his eyes were opened he saw nothing so he led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus and for three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias the Lord said to him in a vision Ananias he said here I am Lord Lord said to him rise and go to the street called Straight and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul for behold he is praying and he had seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight but Ananias answered Lord I have heard from many about this man how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem and here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on your name 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 for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name 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 and immediately something like scales fell from his eyes he regained his sight then he arose and was baptized and taking food he was strengthened for some days he was with the disciples at Damascus and immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue saying he is the son of God and all who heard him were amazed and said is this not the man who made who made havoc in Jerusalem over those who called upon this name and has he got has he now come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priest but Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ wow that is the word of the Lord please be seated choir choir we all love stories of rags to riches or even better when someone who did horrible crimes becomes a different person he ends up leaving an imprint on society and people for good the evil he or she may have done isn't forgotten but it gets eclipsed by the good and how they ended nowhere do we find this more gloriously illustrated than in the life of a man named Saul whom the world would come to know as the apostle

[8 : 32] Paul his transformation is actually considered one of the many proofs that Jesus really did rise from the dead you see Christianity is not about reforming your life it's not about making yourself a better person it's about divine transformation because of an initial and then ongoing encounter with the risen Lord Jesus this is one of the great messages of Easter have you encountered the risen Jesus and if you have are you living each day in the power of his resurrection that's not a guarantee remember where we are in Acts briefly the church is growing people are believing in Jesus mostly Jews at this point it's going to spread to the

Gentiles in the next chapter chapter 10 the non-Jews are going to start hearing the gospel but mostly up until now this is mostly a Jewish phenomenon but there is opposition a young man likely one of the first deacons in chapter 7 is put to death because of his testimony about Jesus his name was Stephen at that point persecution really breaks out against the followers of the way that's who we were called in the very beginning why because Jesus is the way the truth the life we were followers of the way that's how the chapter begins here in chapter 9 I'm going to use the word holy in all four of my points this morning in all but one in all but one of those points I will use that word to mean special to God holy means special to God literally in the Bible it means set apart that is you're no longer something or someone is no longer for common everyday use it is now set apart set aside for God's use alone so I'm using the phrase special to

God that's what that's what it means just think about it like that now keep in mind not everything in this passage is normative some things are particular to how God dealt with Saul but we're also going to look at things that are normative that we can remember for our own lives amen first of all I want you to notice something a life this is a life before a resurrection encounter holy a holy terror remember this is verses 1 and 2 here you got a wonderful picture of this guy named Saul remember again like I said the early Christians were Jews who believed in Jesus as their long awaited Messiah they were excited about him wasn't all of them wasn't most of them but a lot had believed in Jesus and they're excited and because most Jews rejected the idea especially the leadership of the

Jews they persecuted these Jewish believers these Jewish followers of the way they were considered as heretics and traitors to their people that's how Saul felt about Christians they were traitors and heretics so in Acts chapter 7 and 8 we see Saul mentioned a few times three times Acts 7 58 they were killing Stephen then they cast him out of the city stoned him and the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul he was holding their garments because he was giving consent watching the cloaks I got I got your coat man in Acts chapter 8 verse 1 it says and Saul approved of his execution same scene Acts chapter 8 3 but Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison

I don't think Saul wanted to have Bible study with these Christians he wasn't trying to start his own small group and now here's this guy who's so hot and bothered by these believers he's on his way to a city called Damascus about 150 miles from Jerusalem he's heard there's an enclave of followers of the way an enclave of followers of the Jesus in that city and Saul like a bounty hunter is going there to root them out he's going to bring them to justice now listen let's be honest most people don't oppose Jesus like this but we're all still holy terrors until we encounter Jesus Jesus because our sins that is our rebellion against God and thought word and deed make us all holy terrors before

[13 : 59] God we're all described like this in the Bible before meeting Jesus there's several passages let me just give one or two Titus 3 3 is how we describe Paul preaching here he said for we ourselves including himself were once foolish disobedient led astray slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another holy terror he's talking about all people at one point in Romans 3 12 he says all have turned aside together they have become worthless no one does good not even one holy terror all mankind all people kind fall into this category so whether you attack Christians or not we're all holy terrorists and listen if you don't see yourself in this life you will have a hard time truly appreciating

God's grace grace meaning his unearned undeserved favor and kindness this is where we all find ourselves but listen God is merciful and notice what he brings now he brings a resurrection encounter what I call a holy encounter in verses 3-9 Saul's on his way he's got a plan he's got a wonderful plan for his life he's ambitious he's moving up the ladder he's going to do something that some of his contemporaries have not been able to do fully he's going to stamp out this Christian thing but then he sees the light the light he saw was divine majestic glory of the risen son of God this light boom shines around him it must have been like you walk you're walking to a you're going to a dark room you get up in the middle of the night it's dark and you can't see and you're trying to get your eyes and then somebody turns on a light even the roaches get upset and the light comes on what happens to your eyes oh man when you turn the light down my wife always tells me dim the light

Kevin that's what happens this is even worse than that when this light exploded in his eyes it blinded him it took his eyes out it was so powerful that he fell to the ground it's a picture of the fact that God dwells the Bible says in unapproachable light and he's now in the presence of the risen Christ in all of his majestic glory and he just can't take it and now the holy one in that glory has come to do something he would never have expected Saul that is would never have expected he's come to claim Saul Saul had tried everything to stamp him out and now he's going to get claimed wow the apostle

John had a similar experience and he was a follower of Jesus he was in John 1 17 he says when I saw him I felt his feet as though dead but watch this the Bible says he laid his right hand on me saying fear not I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forevermore and have the keys of death and the grave now watch two apostles well two men was an apostle yeah two men have the same experience one's a believer one's an unbeliever what's the difference Jesus said to John fear not he didn't say that to Saul there's no fear not here there's no fear not when a sinner meets Jesus for the first time fear is appropriate don't miss this this beautiful way of experiencing divine love it's one of the ways that we experience divine love

Jesus comes to us with the light of his justice so that we can see ourselves for the first time as he sees us this is love this is love saints he for the first time we can see that we're lost that we're not as good as we thought we were we're actually we're depraved that we're helpless to save ourselves that we're on the wrong side of God and that we need a savior this is holy love this is a loving encounter it's powerful but man it's holy love reaching down and grabbing hold of someone who's lost and notice the question he asks him he didn't have to ask him any questions what did he ask him why are you persecuting me this is a hard question Saul was persecuting Christians but Jesus identifies with his people he always identifies with his people when you mess with

[19 : 48] Jesus people you mess with Jesus when you touch one of his you touch him this question also reveals that Saul really had a problem with Jesus which is why he went after his people Jesus rubbed Saul the wrong way which made Saul more passionate about stopping the spread of the gospel we believe that Saul actually had seen Jesus maybe even met him why because they were contemporaries and the Jews males had to go up to Jerusalem every year three times a year for feasts it's a good chance that Saul actually heard Jesus preach maybe even shook his hand who knows Jesus rubbed in the wrong way what is it about Jesus that rubs people the wrong way he is absolutely holy okay set it start set apart to God but now we're talking about God we gotta go a bit further he's transcendent he's above and beyond us he is morally perfectly pure and when you get around somebody who you know is better than you or if you think they're better than you you know you feel uncomfortable and when you get around

God you get very uncomfortable next to Jesus we wilt and look bad we feel our own insecurities and failures one time when Jesus did a miracle of a fish catch remember he told Peter to go fish him and Peter and the boys went back out again caught all this fish they came back they had tried before and nothing happened now he got all this fish Peter comes back on shore and says to Jesus sign this contract you and I going into business we gonna make some money bro no he comes back and says depart from me I am a sinful man why because he was in the presence of somebody he knew or thought was better than him someone who was holy and that's what's happening Saul is experiencing the holiness of Christ he's been seeing stuff he's been seeing how Stephen died remember in chapter 26 Saul tells the story again and says Jesus said to him something else Jesus said it is hard for you to kick against the goads in other words there was goads in which you used to get an ox moving a pointed stick come on

Bessie get going that's how they would do it and so he says so these goads were Jesus pricking the conscience of Saul he saw how Stephen died maybe he saw the holiness and the goodness of Jesus he was a good guy people seemed to really love him he did good things and then he killed him they had to bother him a little bit maybe possibly we don't know that this Bible doesn't tell us all what was going on but you can figure how does Jesus make you feel do you want to cancel him how does being around Jesus people make you feel you'll know because you'll know something's wrong because all you want to do is point out the failures of the church and ignore the history of how God has used the church in this country and around the world

I'll talk the true church now used the people of God to bless so many people orphanages hospitals all kinds of good historically but yet people always want to talk about the failures of the church maybe that's you maybe you're one of those people too is it possible that what's bothering you is that you recognize there's some good happening in these people and it makes you uncomfortable and really what is out what's happening Jesus makes you uncomfortable it's okay I've been there too but go on Jesus isn't done with Saul takes him into city they take him into the city of Damascus he's blind the one who thought he could see that he knew the truth is now blind that's his real condition that's what he really was blind blind to who Jesus was but isn't interesting he's physically blind but now he knows who

Jesus is he can see who Jesus is this is great first of all I want you to notice this is brief now I'm gonna get to the last point notice now a resurrection mission Jesus sent a holy man a holy servant on a holy mission Ananias Ananias is at home having devotions he's having devotions and Jesus appears to him and says hey I want you to go I got a I got a job for you here I am Lord I love how Jesus calls his name Ananias isn't that beautiful Jesus calls us by name come on people he knows your name it's not just Israel who's saying that it's the truth he knows your name and and here and the response that we that should happen for all of us as the children of God when Jesus calls your name here I am Lord see that's the response of someone who recognizes that they've been first served by Jesus they want to serve him because they know he has served them first he served them best he served them by dying by coming and living the life we could not live and then dying to death we better not die when I recognize that

[25 : 54] I want to serve I want yes Lord whatever you want that's what he's saying I'm your boy like Steve like Steve like Steve Harvey on Family Feud I'm your man he was saying I'm your man Lord what you need what you want a response of love and joy and grace glad to serve not complain but serve behold it Jesus says a new disciple has been born and I want you to go and be a spiritual midwife to welcome him in okay but who is this guy well hold on I'm going to tell you where he's at give his address he's on straight street he's staying with this guy named Judas you go find him and then ask for the guy named Saul I already told him you come in a vision at that point joy left I mean we're okay saying Lord here I am until the Lord says do this hold it you hear the the soundtrack stops the song stops up from the you don't mean that holy terror

Lord you don't mean that guy he was reluctant and afraid even at the command of Jesus listen listen to confront someone he found uncomfortable I think he fit right in with church today we don't like having hard conversations either we don't want to we don't want to we don't want to talk to each other about hard stuff we'd rather say cancel Ananias was trying to cancel a brother a brother whom he didn't believe was really a brother or enough of a brother but Jesus saw who Saul was now he saw what Ananias could not see he saw Saul's heart Ananias didn't know Saul he thought he knew

Saul he heard about Saul he had never had a real conversation with Saul never had a real heart to heart but he says he's a bad person so I ain't going but the Lord knew Saul's heart he knew Saul was a sincere real servant now of his because he is working in him church folk we gotta get over that we gotta let trust in Jesus to work in his servants stop being afraid to have hard conversations with people even though we may not like it Ananias obeys the savior maybe trembling a bit he went and because he obeyed the Lord listen because he obeyed the Lord he got to be part of one of the greatest stories of turnaround in history wow he will always remember

I was there when Saul got converted I baptized him I welcomed him into the family of God he will always remember that he know he didn't save Saul but he will always remember it's a lesson to us in the church I think let God be God in people's lives trust the Lord trust him and don't be afraid to love one another last thing I want you to notice a new resurrection life happens after you have a holy encounter with Jesus you become a holy man or woman when a holy terror meets the holy Christ the holy terror becomes a holy man or holy woman that's the heart of gospel transformation when we meet Jesus his resurrection power becomes active in our life that power that took the

Lord from death to life now takes up spiritual residence in us and we become alive to God now we were dead to him but now we come alive we were unresponsive we didn't care but now we come alive now we may have hated Jesus or were indifferent to Jesus but now we love him we are passionate we can't help it it's what Ephesians 2:4 says but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved made us alive when Jesus came up from the grave all those who believe in him experienced that resurrection it just takes a few years to catch up to us Saul didn't know he went back in God's economy he had already been united to Christ he didn't know that God had laid his hands upon him he's running around doing his thing and doing it to the max baby and the whole time

[31 : 29] God was on his track walking standing in the shadows walking behind and when the time came mine mine and what happens is he's become a new person something beautiful has happened on the inside in his heart this is not religion this is a relationship this is divine power it's what 2 Corinthians 5:17 says therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old is passed away behold the new has come listen that's what happened to Saul and that's what happens to all of us who believe in Jesus is that you if it's not it could be you look at the transformation right away he's baptized and then he gets some food boy had been fasting for three days remember he was fasting why was he fasting he was humbling his soul he realized

I think I've been wrong and guess what he was going to fast until God said something until God said something and when Ananias shows up that's when he ends his fast he would have kept fasting and now he can eat here's a walker eat something you'll be alright baptized my brother he's identified with Christ and his people baptism identifies you with Christ and his people the very people the very person and people he sought to wipe out he's not identified with them and now he begins to do what needs to happen to everyone when you see Jesus you can't help but tell people about him and that's what he spends he's transformed and he's good at it too by the way because he has background training in the Old Testament as a Pharisee he's really good at it and he's preaching and telling and there being people are getting mad and they're being amazed because they recognize that's what should happen when

God gets hold of you in Jesus people will see you're not the same anymore okay how about a few extra takeaways if you don't mind if you're not walking with Jesus because you think you are too bad or too far gone or have too many problems then see in this passage Christ's resurrection power to meet you where you are and turn your life around you see it you see salt look at salt you are not him you are not too far gone if you think you have to change your life or clean yourself up for Christ or his church before you surrender to Jesus then look again at Christ's resurrection acceptance he comes for you as you are like he came for Saul he comes for you wherever you are and he does the changing he transforms you he doesn't ask you to transform your trust me stop trusting yourself and trust me third see in this resurrection encounter that no one no loved one no enemy who is breathing

Easter air is beyond the power and love of the resurrected Jesus to reach that's isn't that right keep praying fourth lastly no service you make in the name of the resurrected Jesus will fail to have the effect that he desires go into the hard places go to the hard people have the hard conversations just go in the humility in name of Jesus if you do he will do what he wants he will bring the fruit he wants your job is not the fruit my job as someone who has been resurrected with Jesus who has behold the greatness of Christ who has been saturated with his love is simply to trust him and follow him

I know many of you have probably heard or seen the news maybe even sadly even experienced a very savage horrible car wreck I hope that's not your story but if you have you know what I'm talking about the driver passengers yourself trapped in the car because it was so badly damaged you just can't get out maybe it was your fault or whoever the driver was fault texting while driving or something maybe it wasn't that person's fault it was victims of someone else's bad choices either way they're trapped can't get out the police will show up and they bring something called the jaws of life these cutters cut through steel like butter and quickly too so that those who are trapped can escape family

[37 : 18] Jesus is the jaws of life in his resurrection power he can cut through what binds you he can cut you out he can cut you free and saints when the church functions as we should we become little jaws of life to help cut people free the question is are we going to be the jaws of life or the jaws of death Jesus is the resurrection and the life let's follow him father in Jesus name oh lord set us free wherever we are in life set us free whether we know you or not we need to be set free help us to walk in the power of your resurrection help us to walk in the newness of life and the freedom that comes through you help us lord to be life giving life