

Sunday, March 29, 2026

The Conversion of Saul

Acts 9:1-31 (NKJV)

- I heard a dramatization before about whenever Stephen entered heaven.
- Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father— as his advocate, paving the way for him to enter into heaven.
- And as that last stone's final blow took the life out of his mortal body, Jesus was standing there to welcome him into the throne room.
 - Jesus gives him a big hug
 - Then the Father says, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Welcome Home."
 - Then all of the Angels and souls of the saints cheer and let out a loud roar of welcoming for the first martyr of Jesus' Name into the Kingdom
- Then as the celebration calms down, the Father says, "Ok, so who are we going to get to take his place?"
 - One of the Angels says, "Well Lord, Philip is already doing an incredible job! He just baptized an Ethiopian Eunuch! He's getting the Gospel to the gentiles all over Samaria!"
 - The Father says, "I agree, Philip is killing it! But I want someone that's going to pick up where Stephen left off, and who is going to get the message to the Ends of the Earth."
 - Stephen asks, "Who did you have in mind? Peter, John, Thomas, Barnabas?...Oooh what about another one of the 7! Yea, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, those are my boys! Any of them would be great!"
 - The Father says, "Noooo, I have assignments for them already, I want someone new."
 - "Who do you have in mind?"
- The Father says, "I want him...."

- Jesus laughs, “Haha, I knew you were going to say that!”
- Stephen looks, “Him?? Saul of Tarsus??”
- The Father, “Yea, he’ll be perfect”
 - Jesus says, “I agree”
- But Stephen says, “Really? The one who held the coats for all the guys who killed me??”
- “Look, he’s on the way to arrest and probably kill more of Your people! And he’s got legal permission to do it? I know You’re God and all, but how do you plan on pulling that off?”
 - Jesus smirks and says, “Put me in Coach!” Taps Stephen on the shoulder and says, “I got this”
 - And we pick up in Acts chapter 9, beginning in verse 1: ***“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of***

Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without

sight, and neither ate nor drank.” -Acts 9:1-9 (NKJV)

- PRAY
- Rachel and I, don't give in to tantrums in our house.
 - And we definitely have tantrums happen in our house, Myers isn't quite there yet, but having a 3 year old you know there have been some tantrums
 - But me and Rachel have always been on the same page that if either of our kids throw a tantrum, they are just going to make themselves miserable, not us.
 - Like I remember when Fletcher was probably a little less than a year and a half, he had just started that phase.
 - And we were at my parents house for thanksgiving and it was time to eat, but he was trying to go outside. But I told him no and closed the door.
- So he did a patented toddler, slow cry and dramatic fall to the floor.
- Now, I was not going to punish him for being barely a year and not knowing how to control his emotions
- But you know what I was not going to do? Let him go outside
 - This was the time where I set the precedent, you can fuss and cry all you want (to an extent)...but you are not going to get what you want by doing it.
 - “You can be miserable all you want, you can stay here and cry, we're gonna go eat.”
- And over the years we have had to deal with those instances in different ways as he grows up and gets older
- But he knows, him getting mad is going to affect him more than it is going to affect us.
- And the other day, he had come to work with me for the day since I had been gone for the weekend. He guilt tripped me hard...

- But when we're getting out of the truck once we got home and I said come on lets go inside and play, and I got my first: Huff & Puff, Scrunched-face, Crossed-Arms, "I don't WANT to do that!"
- MhmmMhmmm...we aint doin that...
- But it was that huff and puff, that initial deep breath in that correlates with this passage
 - It's like the breath that a bull takes before it snorts and takes off...it's the deep breath of anger that describes Saul of Tarsus here in verse 1.
- The word that is used for breathing in this passage, in the original language it has more to do with the breath in that the breath out.
 - So Luke is telling us, that Saul is breathing in threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord
 - This anger within him is rotting away at him from the inside.
- Anger and hatred always affect the angered more than the ones with whom they are angry.
 - That why the Proverb says, "***A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression***" -***Proverbs 29:22***
 - And why David said, "***Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.***" -***Psalms 37:8***
 - And why James tells us to be, "***...slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.***" -***James 1:19-20***
- You see, this is why I believe Saul was so angry— breathing these murderous threats, because deep within himself I think he knew that he was not producing the righteousness of God.
 - While he was present for Stephens sermon, he too was cut to the heart with everyone else.

- The truth of the Gospel pierced him that day, but it went against everything that he has been taught to believe and fight for!
- But like we said the other week, whenever The Holy Spirit cuts you to the heart with the truth of God’s word, your two responses will only be either: Repentance or Anger
- And the more that you fight the repentance after coming to the knowledge of the truth... the angrier you will be
- So what exactly was going on in Saul’s heart and mind during this time? I don’t know:
 - Maybe he was overcorrecting.
 - He felt guilty for almost believing what Stephen was saying, and instead of exploring the possibility that he might be wrong, he instead lashed out at the other’s that believed what Stephen believed
 - Maybe he was confused emotionally and spiritually
 - And because of that he could have been easier to manipulate by the high priests who were sending him out to do their dirty work
 - Maybe he was just doubling down on what he’s always known
 - Still setting out to prove himself that he is the next great high priest in the making
- Whatever it was, because of the wording that Luke uses here, it’s apparent that he wants us to know that the murderous, hateful, and angry threats that he is breathing in, is affecting his soul more than it is those that he is persecuting.
- And this is when Jesus steps in
- In verse 3 it says: ***“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. -Acts 9:3 (NKJV)***
- Now this word for shone can also be translated as “flashed” and this is giving the picture of a lighting strike

- This is something that can outshine the sun
- Have you ever been looking at the sky during a storm and you see a lightning bolt directly and then you immediately being to see purple spots because it was so bright??
 - Well imagine that lightning not being just a quick flash but a continuous shining all around you! Imagine how bright that would be!
- THAT is what Saul experiences here in this moment. So its not hard to understand why in verse 5 it says, ***“Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’” -Acts 9:4-5 (NKJV)***
- **RESISTING JESUS IS DUMB**
- You see, this is why I chose the New King James for this passage today, because most of

the more modern translations leave out that last sentence from Jesus:

- *“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”*
- Now, they leave it out because the newer translations are translated from older manuscripts, that are thought to be more reliable because they are older
 - But those are all kinds of debates that we are not going to get into or bash any translations because at the end of the day, the best translation of the Bible is the one that you’ll read.
- However, adding in this sentence does not take away from the validity of the passage at all because Paul quotes Jesus saying this later in Acts chapter 26 when recalling this encounter.
 - So, the thought is that when the King James translators were working on this passage, they had familiarity with Acts 26 and decided to go ahead and add it in here.

- But I like that they did, because I believe that Jesus was talking directly to the conviction that Saul was fighting against
- You see, if you're not familiar, goads were a tool used to help steer Ox carts on farms in that day and age.
 - Some oxen were very stubborn and if they tried to direct them with straps, whips, and reins like they would horses or mules, the oxen would sometimes kick back and destroy the carts
 - So they would have these goads which were these thick 8-foot poles with spikes at the end of them that they would use to get the oxen to go where they needed to go
 - And if they were to kick against the goads all it would do is inflict more pain...and their anger would just make things worse for themselves
 - And the real dumb oxen, would keep kicking against the goads no matter how painful it would get!
- Now, the ox goad was only mentioned 2 other times in scripture
 - 1. When Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with nothing but an ox goad
 - 2. ***“The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright— words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.” -Ecclesiastes 12:10-11 (NKJV)***
- Come on, does that not describe Stephen? A wise man, preaching the words of truth??
 - And now Jesus, alluding to Ecclesiastes, says that truth that cut to Saul's heart when he heard the words of Stephen were like goads nudging him in the direction that he should go.
- So essentially Jesus says, *“Saul! Ya dumb ox! Stop fighting it! It's only going to make things worse! You're just going to keep getting angrier*

and angrier, your life is going to be miserable!”

- *“Just accept it! I Am Jesus, I Am the Son of God, I Am everything Stephen said about me, I Am the reason you can’t stop this movement no matter how much you persecute!”*
- *“And you may think you’re persecuting these people, but you are really persecuting Me. And that stops today.”*

- You know who the most miserable people on the planet are?

-the one’s who know the Truth about Jesus Christ, but resist Him
- They know the truth, but try to suppress the truth.
- They do everything they can to just push back and lash out, and all it does is make their lives more painful and miserable

- And you know who the most miserable of the miserable are? The one’s who have the Holy Spirit, but all they do is grieve the Holy Spirit.
- There are those who have come to a saving knowledge of the truth, and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.
- They will not be going to hell. But over time, they have allowed bad experiences, negative influences, unhelpful therapy, unnecessary medication, demonic influences, and any other number of factors to keep them from living for heaven.
- And instead of changing the things that they need to change— they rather just get so angry at everyone else and lash out at God, at the church, at other believers, and believe that everyone and everything is to blame other than their own decisions.
- And there will not be a more miserable earthly experience than that
- Because the Holy Spirit will always be there, to remind them of all that Jesus said, all that

Jesus is, to lead them into all truth. Always there—like a goad directing them in the way that they should go.

- And the more they kick against it and resist Him, the more miserable their lives are
- And I know people like that, some very close to me who have just gotten to be so negative and miserable you have to keep them at a distance, you just can't have your kids around them!
 - Even some who have been so influential in my own spiritual formation! It's like how can you not see how miserable you are?!
 - How can you not see how this affects your life, your relationships, your family?! Just stop resisting Him!
- But what gives me hope that I will see them in Heaven one day, is the fact that they are so miserable.

- Because I believe that if the Holy Spirit was not present in their lives, they would not be as miserable as they are

- Because there would be no goads to kick against.

- And how do people get to that point? Well, largely because this Christian life isn't easy.
- So Jesus has this interaction with Saul, then Saul is blinded, and they lead him down to Damascus by the hand because he can't see.
- ***“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” Then Ananias answered,***

“Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” -Acts 9:10-16 (NKJV)

- OBEYING JESUS IS HARD

- I mean first you have Ananias who is just minding his own business, when all of the sudden Jesus just interrupts his day and says, *“Hey, I want you to go visit the most dangerous guy to Christians alive at the moment, and says what’s up!?”*
 - *“And make sure he knows your a Christian and go help him out.”*

- “Ummmm, you serious Jesus?? This man has been wreaking havoc on all of us, I have friends who have no idea where their family members are because of this man!”
 - Not only is Jesus telling him to do something scary, it’s probably something he wouldn’t want to do even if it wasn’t scary!
 - Like Jonah to the Ninevites, There had got to be something within Ananias that wouldn’t want this man who had been breathing these murderous threats over his friends and family to receive any blessing from God.
- But Jesus says, “Go”
 - You know I’ve heard it said that we love it when Jesus says Come to me, all who are weary and I’ll give you rest, but we aren’t so enthused about when He tells us to Go.
 - Because most of the time, He calls us into uncomfortable and scary things
 - In Ananias’ case he was going to live out the commands of Jesus that said to “Bless those

who curse you, and pray for those who persecute you.”

- And God tells Ananias that Saul is a chosen vessel

- That word could also be translated as tool.
- Jesus saw Saul as the perfect tool, to carry His name to the Gentiles, kings, and Israel

- So what made saw the perfect tool?

- Well first, his hometown would have really prepared him for God’s calling on his life.

- You see Tarsus, was one of the most influential, intellectual, and cultural hubs in the Roman Empire
- It was known as a “Free-City” so it was a self-governed town that was loyal to the Roman Empire, and all who were born there were automatically granted Roman Citizenship (which we’ll see later will come in very handy for Saul)

- Tarsus was the major city of Cilicia, which is modern-day Turkey—it was a wealthy trade center that would allow the locals to have constant interactions and dealings with Greeks, Romans, and Jews from all over the known world.

- So Saul would be very culturally well rounded

- And finally, Tarsus was the Learning Hub for Stoic Philosophy. Scholars and Teachers from all over would come to Tarsus to study, to discuss and debate philosophy.

- They would go to Tarsus as much as they would Athens or Alexandria

- So Saul would know all about the Greek rhetoric, philosophy, and tactics for argumentation

- Not only that, he knew the scriptures inside and out, he was the star pupil of Gamaliel—the most respected member of the high council

- His intelligence and cultural experience made him a prodigy in the Pharisaical world
- But then Jesus comes and changes everything...you see, Saul would come to understand that he doesn't need to be a high priest because he just met THE High Priest
 - The Son of God who came to take away the sins of the world
 - Who would illuminate the full truth of the Scriptures to him when he realizes who Jesus really is
 - And he would be an unstoppable tool in the Hands of His Creator when he began to work for the Kingdom of God and His King Jesus.
- And yet, it would be a harder life than most of us could imagine
 - You see, many think it would be easy to follow Jesus if we just had a Damascus Road type of experience as well
 - They say, "Yea, well sure, I'd do whatever Jesus called me to do if He would just show up in a bright light and speak to me audibly from Heaven."
 - But what they fail to understand is that with a Damascus Road experience comes a Damascus Road calling
 - And that calling will be very hard to obey.
 - Let's just look at where this calling would take Saul:
- He would go on to describe to the Corinthians, that since he began to obey Jesus, he says: ***"I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long***

journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches.” -2 Corinthians 11:23-25 (NLT)

- Not many people are willingly signing up for a life like that, no matter how rewarding it may be!
 - Heck, Saul probably didn't even really know what he was being called to.
 - But it didn't matter, he wasn't going to kick against the goads anymore!

- And he would fall so in love with Jesus that he would go through any hardship or trial just to tell more people about Him
- And all of that began with Ananias. Verse 17 goes on to say:
 - ***“And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.” -Acts 9:17-18 (NKJV)***
 - **LIVING FOR JESUS CHANGES LIVES**
 - Immediately and Eternally
 - It makes it hard for that to be motivation enough to live a difficult life of obedience, because we live in an increasingly selfish and individualistic world.

- We are taught to count ourselves more significant than others
 - We are encouraged to look out for our own interests over the interests of others
 - We are pushed to find ourselves and to not let anyone change who we are!
- But like Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously said in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, “*When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.*”
- We are called to die to ourselves— why? Because a call to Christianity is a call to change, it’s a call to new life—because we are not called to a life of a constant rollercoaster of identity confusion and crisis
 - We are called to be children of God and faithful followers of Jesus Christ
 - And when we live out that calling, lives will change— immediately and eternally
- Paul’s life was changed eternally because of his encounter with Jesus and it was changed immediately due to the faithfulness of Ananias
- Who set his fear and pride aside, even called his enemy a brother. Prayed a prayer of healing over him, and baptized him.
- And verse 20 says, ***"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ."* - Acts 9:20-22 (NKJV)**
- It’s always incredible when God does a work in a person’s life that it amazes and confounds people.
 - And that is the greatest proof that Jesus is the Christ, the way that He changes lives.

- My sophomore year of high school was probably the year of my life that I regret the most.
- I always say if I could have a redo of one year of my life it would probably be that one.
- Because at the time I was not walking with the Lord, I had spent the past 3 years in Germany where I really strayed from Him and I was returning that school year to the Christian school in Pennsylvania that I had been at from 1st to 6th grade
- And I thought I was so cool, like I had grown up and learned to have fun, and these Christian school kids didn't
 - I was a jerk, I was arrogant, I just wasn't a good person
- And after the Lord got a hold of me again, I sent many facebook apology messages to some of my classmates from that year
- And I'll never forget a few years into college my brother and I went back up to Pennsylvania for

a wedding of one of our friends and a bunch of people that we went to school with that year were there

- And at the reception I'm talking and catching up with people
- And one of the guys, Stephen Aiken, who couldn't stand me, and I completely understood why— was just looking at me sideways and confused for a while. And I could tell, but I wasn't engaging it...I knew how he felt about me.
- And finally he spoke up and said, "Ok....What happened to you? You're different."
 - And a huge smile came across my face, it was the most encouraging thing that I had ever heard...and I got to tell him all about how Jesus had changed my life.
- I can only imagine how many times Saul would have been able to have those conversations, and how much joy he had whenever he wrote to Timothy saying: **"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He**

counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” -1 Timothy 1:12-16 (NKJV)

- There is no life that Jesus cannot change, if we just stop kicking against the goads, and allow Him to direct us
- And not everyone will appreciate it. In verses 23 -25 we see that some of the Jews were plotting to kill Saul but the disciples in Damascus helped him escape to Jerusalem

- And when he gets to Jerusalem, he tries to connect with the Christian community there, but they are all scared of him.
- They don't believe him. They think he's just trying to pull some covert undercover operation to try and destroy the church from the inside out!
- I can imagine how discouraging that could have been for Saul
- He's had a genuine life change, he's been proving himself, he's been learning, he's been growing, he's been doing all of the right things so much so he's risked his life for it!
- And yet the people who are supposed to be his community now, don't believe him. Call him a liar.
- But when you start really living for Jesus and your life has really changed, the enemy will use whatever they can to try and discourage you. To keep from growing. To keep you from influencing someone else to live for Jesus

- And if you keep your focus on the people, you will get discouraged, and you will stop growing
- But we have to remember. We devote our lives to obedience to Christ, not the responses of men.
 - Like God told Ezekiel, those who listen will listen, those who refuse will refuse, but you are still called to obey. To go to who He calls you to go to, and speak what He calls you to speak
 - And when we keep our eyes on Jesus, he won't leave us alone. He'll send saints like Barnabas to encourage us, help us, and keep us on the path.
- Verse 27 says, when none of the other disciples believed Saul: ***“Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was***

with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.” -Acts 9:27-29 (NKJV)

- This is how dramatic of a life change Saul has had. Not long ago it had been Stephen disputing with these Hellenists in Jerusalem, and Saul held their coats while they killed him.
- Now, the one who had held their coats and approved of their actions, was the one now stepping into Stephen's shoes
 - Picking up where Stephen left off, and now they couldn't withstand the wisdom and spirit with which Saul was now speaking.
 - And they tried to kill him too.
 - The persecutor has now become the persecuted
- But God wasn't going to let Saul's life end the same way that Stephen's did.

- And verse 30 says that when the disciples found out that they were attempting to kill Saul, they got him out of town and sent him back to Tarsus to be safe.
- And this narrative ends with such a beautiful verse, in verse 31 Luke says: ***“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” -Acts 9:31 (NKJV)***
- Now that the lead persecutor had changed teams, all of the new churches that had been birthed since the death of Stephen now had their time of peace and were able to grow like the church in Jerusalem had.
- And the way they were able to grow was by walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit
- Fear & Comfort
- Two seemingly opposite things, working in tandem to help the church grow the right way
- There is a healthy reverence, and awe of God and a healthy fear of the consequences of disobedience to Him
- But at the same time, a comfort from the Holy Spirit that leads us into the truth of how He loves us, and knows what’s best for us.
- You know, I— like most parents I know, went into parent hood determined not to ever say to my kids, “Because I said so.”
 - You know we all hated that, we wanted an explanation, we wanted to know why we were being told or asked to do what we were being told or asked to do.
 - But you know what I found out quickly in parenthood? Sometimes you have to say “Because I said so.”
 - After the 30th “why” and the 30th explanation, or the 30th toddler explanation about how he should do something different

from what I told him to do...enough is enough!

- “No, you do what dad said, because dad said so, because you need to trust and have faith that dad knows what’s best even if you can’t understand right now.”
- I think back over my childhood and there was a time when I did what dad said just because dad said so.
 - There was a healthy fear of the consequences if I disobeyed, but there was always a comfort that I knew how much dad loved me and how he protected me, and how he always wanted what was best for me.
 - And as I got older and came to even more of an understanding of his heart, I did what dad said, not just because he said so anymore, but because I wanted to please him. Because I loved him.
 - My obedience was no longer out of duty, it was out of relationship

- And the same goes for our relationship with God!
- When we are new or young in our faith, sometimes even when we are seasoned in our faith, there are some things that God calls us to do that we don’t fully understand
 - We don’t understand why He would have us bless those who curse us or pray for those who persecute us
 - We don’t fully understand why we are called to sexual purity
 - We don’t fully understand why we are to share His Gospel of Salvation with those we feel don’t deserve it!
 - We don’t understand why we are to turn the other cheek, put others before ourselves, not forsake the gathering, live at peace with all men, honor the rules of the land
- And for a time, we do it, Because God said so.
 - And we do so with a healthy fear of the consequences of being disobedient.

- And not always necessarily a fear of the punishment of God, but rather a fear of the natural consequences of the miserable life that comes from kicking against the goads.
- And we do so with the comfort from the Holy Spirit that leads us into the truth that He knows what's best, He wants the best for us, and there is nothing in or out of this world that can separate us from the love of God
 - And the more that we learn and grow and develop the relationship, the more we understand His Character and His heart towards us
 - And in turn, we walk this walk of obedience to Christ— even when it gets difficult, even when it seems like everyone is against us— because our obedience flows from our love for Him who first loved us.
- And we obey less out of a sense of duty, and more out of a sense of relationship.
- As John said in His epistle, ***“For this is the love of God, that we keep His***

commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith.” -1 John 5:3-4 (NKJV)