

# Live Out Loud!

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[ 0 : 00 ] You know, we live in an age of influencers and YouTube stars and viral sensations. Every day, someone's 15 seconds of fame and sometimes infamy is splashed all across our screens.

But what if I told you that you have a story more captivating than even the trendiest video on TikTok?

What if your life, as you live a life that has been transformed by Jesus Christ, is a life that you live out loudly and boldly for all the world to see with all of your life's twists and turns and all that you go through?

What if that is precisely that someone else in the world needs to hear and to see to change their life forever? Now, let me take you back a couple of thousand years.

There was a guy whose name was Saul. You might know him better as Paul. Now, Saul was not uploading videos to YouTube or snapping photos for Instagram, but he was infamous.

[ 1 : 19 ] He was one who was consistently going out and wreaking havoc and he was terrorizing those within the body of Christ.

And Saul goes from Christianity's most fearsome critic to Christianity's most effective follower of Jesus Christ and to the most fervent follower.

And so this morning, as we go through our time together, let's see from God's word, we are going to be in Acts chapter 9, verses 20 through 25.

And we're going to see how the apostle Paul's Saul's radical transformation. And we're going to see the impact of a life lived out loud for the entire world to see and hear.

And we're going to learn how our transformed life is the world's most compelling sermon and how to live it boldly.

[ 2 : 29 ] Let's take our Bibles this morning and let's turn to Acts chapter 9. And we are going to be in verses 20 through 25. Let's begin this morning by reading in verse number 20.

Immediately. Immediately. Last week when we were together, we learned how God can use a nobody to impact somebody who might just change the world.

Ananias' simple act of obedience in obeying God, even though he was afraid. He stepped out of his comfort zone and he goes out and he meets with this infamous persecutor of the church.

Saul lays hands upon him. Saul begins to see the scales fall from his eyes. He receives the Holy Spirit and he is baptized.

And immediately, verse number 20, he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God.

[ 3 : 44 ] Then all who heard were amazed and said, Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem? And he has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priest.

What we find here is that Saul immediately, the moment that he meets Christ, the moment that he begins to see clearly, he realizes that the very one that he was trying to eradicate his message is the one that meets him on the road to Damascus.

And he says, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He meets Jesus on the road and Saul's life is transformed forever.

And what we find is he didn't wait. He didn't wait to see if, oh, maybe he would learn a little bit more. Maybe he would try to figure out a little more about what this message meant.

No, Scripture says, straightway, immediately, Saul begins to preach Christ in the synagogues.

[ 5 : 03 ] He preached the Messiah, and he preached that the Messiah was the Son of God. This is the only time that term, Son of God, appears in the book of Acts.

But Paul uses it at least 15 times in his other letters that he writes to the church. So immediately he begins to share.

He doesn't wait till he learns more. He doesn't wait for anything else. He immediately goes out and shares the gospel. He doesn't wait till maybe before he's among more people that he feels need to hear the gospel going off into some foreign country.

It reminds me of Dr. Hughley in one of our missions classes at Bible College. One day of class, he asked the class where they felt God leading them, or how they felt God leading them in the future after we graduated.

And there were quite a few who said that God was leading them into missions. And some felt that they knew exactly the country where God was leading them.

[ 6 : 19 ] Some were not extremely sure. They just knew that God was leading them to go and to share the gospel somewhere where the gospel hadn't been heard before.

Dr. Hughley commended each one of us for being willing to step out in faith, to being obedient to God's call on our life. And then he asks a question.

He asks, How many of you have been sharing the gospel right here in Birmingham this week?

Not too many hands went up. The thing is, if we're not sharing Jesus where we are today, what makes us think that we're going to be reaching people for Christ next year or the year after?

And it was all well and good to go off to Bible College to prepare to be a missionary and to one day be this missionary that is impacting and winning people to Christ in a foreign land that has never heard of Jesus before, but we were not willing to share Jesus, go out of our comfort zone, and to go out on Thursday evenings when we would go out and we would share the gospel.

[ 7 : 39 ] And we would sometimes go door to door. Sometimes we would go to the mall and share the gospel and hand out gospel tracts. So Saul immediately, Scripture says, he begins immediately sharing the gospel.

He begins where he was. He didn't wait until he got somewhere else. And the very one that he was speaking against is now the very one for whom Saul is speaking for.

He becomes a fervent follower of Jesus Christ. And then all who heard were amazed. Now there's a reason why all of those in Damascus were amazed at Saul's transformation.

We go on, we read why. And this is what they were saying. Is this not he who destroyed those who called on his name in Jerusalem and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priest.

So what's going on here? They knew Saul before he trusted Christ, before he came to Christ. And now they see Saul's transformed life after he comes to Christ.

[ 8 : 54 ] He is not the same man. Saul is not the same person that he was when he left Jerusalem and when he was on the road. He met Jesus.

Jesus transformed his life forever. And here's the thing that we need to understand, is we need to understand the power of our testimony. You need to understand that you have a testimony to this world that the world needs to see.

Because it's your story that God may use to impact someone else, to cause them to think about maybe there is something to this Jesus and this Christianity thing.

And when they see, especially they know you, especially they knew you before you trusted Christ. Now your testimony may not be as dramatic as the testimony of Paul.

Your testimony may be such that you were nurtured as you were growing up in the church and you came to know Jesus Christ as a young child.

[ 10 : 03 ] And you don't have a dramatic conversion testimony like Saul did. Or maybe you do.

Maybe your life before Jesus Christ was something that maybe today you are ashamed of. Maybe it's something that you rebelled against Jesus. Maybe it's a life that was lived that was not anything that you would want anyone to know about.

But if those who know you know who you were before Jesus and now after Jesus, it's important.

And just like these people here in Damascus, your testimony will amaze them.

How is it that a life could be changed so dramatically? You may be saying to yourself this morning, well, my conversion testimony is just not that dramatic.

You know, I wasn't living in a life of sin. And I wasn't going to places where I shouldn't have gone.

And I didn't get involved in things that we shouldn't get involved in.

[11:10] And God just didn't have to clean up a mess of my life. But I want you to understand this one thing. That the moment you realized you were a sinner, even if it was a five-year-old sinner, that when you trusted Jesus as your Savior, a miracle took place.

A dead, lost sinner came to life. One who was destined for the lake of fire now is reconciled with the God of the universe through faith in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

And now you have a transformed life. You have a life that has the power, through God's Holy Spirit, to live a life that honors and pleases Him.

And so just like Saul, you have a powerful testimony. So what does this mean for you and for me? This means that your transformed life is the world's most compelling sermon.

You need to live it out so others can see. See, our testimony is not just a gift for you. It's a gift for the world to see because maybe when you share what your life was like before Jesus, and it could be simply, I didn't have any peace in my life.

[12:49] Or maybe I was, I didn't have, my life didn't feel like it had a purpose. Or I just felt that there was something wrong with my life. And then I heard, I read the Bible or someone shared the gospel with me.

And then I trusted Jesus as my Savior. And all of a sudden, things were different. And now I wanted to please God. And when people hear what Jesus did in your life, it may be exactly what they need to see and hear to cause them to question their own life.

And that is what, and that is why your story, your testimony is so powerful. And I encourage you, I challenge every one of you.

We've been through trainings before. Maybe you did then, maybe you did not. But I would challenge every one of you to write out your testimony. And I mean it, write it out.

It's got three components, at least, what your life was like before Jesus. Write it out. Before Jesus, before I came to know Christ, I was whatever.

[13:57] I was afraid. I didn't have peace. Or maybe your testimony is, before I came to Jesus Christ, I was not living a life that was a very good life.

I have things that I regret that I've done. Things that I regret that I did. But someone came to me, or I found the Bible, and I began reading it, and I began wondering if there was more to life then.

And then you trusted Jesus as your Savior. And then after your conversion experience, then is how your life changed after Christ.

So three major components. What your life was like before Jesus, how you heard about Jesus, and when you trusted Christ as your Savior, and how your life was changed after Christ.

Your life, your story is a compelling story, and we need to tell it often. Secondly, let's continue on.

[15:05] In Acts chapter 9, verse 22, but Saul, so here is Saul, immediately where he was, started sharing about the Messiah, that Jesus Christ was the anointed one, that He is the Son of God.

His transformed life confounded and amazed everyone because of the radical transformation in Saul's life.

But Saul increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Not only should we understand the power of our testimony, but we should also understand that it's important to grow our faith. We shouldn't stay where we were when we first came to know Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of church members, there are a lot of Christians across the world, a lot of Christians across America, that trusted Christ as their Savior.

[16:14] They warm a pew on Sunday mornings, but they could not show someone from God's Word what it means or what to do when they have a decision to make in their life.

They don't have a clue when it comes to what should we be doing with our resources and our money. They don't have a clue when someone asks, well, what about what's going on in Israel with Hamas?

What's all this about? They're clueless, just like the one who called me two weeks ago. They're a member and they attend a local church down the road.

And they said, well, what's with all this Israel and Hamas stuff? I just don't understand. I don't necessarily blame the preacher. I don't necessarily blame the church.

It's our own responsibility to take and spend some time in God's Word and learning and studying and growing closer to Him.

[ 17 : 20 ] So we need to be growing our faith. Saul wasn't dissatisfied with what he knew having sat under the rabbi, under Gamaliel.

He wanted to learn more about who this Jesus was. But Saul increased all the more in strength. And he confounds the Jews who dwell in Damascus.

Now, one of the things that takes place here, and we see it in the book of Galatians where the Apostle Paul tells part of his life story, what we know is that Saul went for a period of time to Arabia. And if Luke were telling the whole story here, he would probably tell about what happened in Arabia, and he would place that account between verses 21 and verses 22.

I don't have it up on the screen, but in the book of Galatians, Galatians chapter 1, when Paul is speaking to the believers in Galatia, he talks about his call to apostleship.

[ 18 : 31 ] He talks about why he can be an apostle, because we know that those who were called apostles needed to have spent some time with Jesus Christ, walk with Jesus Christ.

In verse 15 of Galatians chapter 1, Paul says, But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.

He says, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. We're going to see back in Acts chapter 9 that he does go to Jerusalem.

But before he goes to Jerusalem, he says, But I went to Arabia and returned to Damascus.

So what Paul does, and what we see in Paul talking about in a different passage, he talks about sitting under the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself.

[ 19 : 36 ] So he goes to Arabia, he learns more about how to share his faith, how to be an apostle, and then he comes back. We don't know exactly how long the apostle Paul stayed in Arabia, but we know that what he says in verse number 18, three years later, he goes back up to Jerusalem.

Verse 18 in Galatians 1, Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and I remained with him 15 days. He didn't see any of the other apostles except James.

Paul was willing to be taught. Paul was willing to sit at the feet of the very one whom he had been persecuting and who he had been trying to eradicate the name of.

What does this mean for you and for me? It's not enough just to read your Bible. It means God wants to transform your life by what you are hearing, by what you are experiencing, and he wants to grow your faith.

See, growing your faith is more than just reading God's Word. It's about letting the Word of God dwell in you richly, like we see in Colossians 3, in verse number 16.

[ 21 : 00 ] And in order for God's Word to dwell in us richly, we need to spend some concerted time with God in His Word, some quiet time.

God, what are you teaching me? What are you telling me? It's always good to take your Bible and a notepad and a pen. Write down your questions and ask God, what is it that you are trying to teach to me today?

Back a number of years ago, I learned an acrostic that I've used and I've taught many people with and I used it myself for years. And for those of you who wear spectacles, you know how important they are and they help you to see.

And the acrostic is simply specs. And I would write S-P-E-C on my sheet of paper in a straight line up and down, leave a few lines between.

And as I was reading, if it's a chapter, if it's three or four verses, whatever it is, I would ask myself, am I learning something new about God?

[ 22 : 09 ] That's the S. What am I learning right now that's something new about God? And I would write that down. And then the P. Did I read any promises of God?

Did I read a promise to claim that I can write it down and I can memorize that verse and I can practically use it when there are challenges in my life that there's a promise to claim?

Or maybe I'm reading something about Ananias or maybe I'm reading something about Moses and is there an example to follow? Am I reading a narrative that's talking about someone that I need to follow that example?

Or sometimes in the negative. Is it an example that I don't need to follow like Judas or someone else? And then the C.

Is there a command to obey? Is there a command to obey? Is God telling me something that if I don't go out right now and do it, that I'm disobeying Him?

[ 23 : 13 ] So are there commands that I need to obey? And then is there something else that you sense God teaching you through your reading of His Word?

So it's that personal time that we spend with Him going deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper. But we don't only grow solo.

You and I were meant to be in community. In Hebrews chapter 10 verses 24 and 25. In Hebrews chapter 10 we're told that we need to be spending time with one another.

And the way we do that is by living out our lives together in community. You know, and as much as I value preaching, as much as I value teaching, true life transformation does not come through hearing a lecture.

All that does is that imparts knowledge into our heads. It's as we wrestle with Scripture together. It's as we put into practice together.

[ 24 : 34 ] As Larry is going out with the boys and as they're praying for our civic and our government leaders. It's putting God's Word into practice. You know, they learn in Sunday school.

They learn in school what God's Word says. They learn through the preaching of God's Word. But preaching is not just for information, imparting information.

It's about life transformation and we live it out together in community. We support one another and we do that. Verse 24 of Hebrews chapter 10. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.

And then he goes on to say, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the matter of some but exhorting one another so much the more as you see the day approaching.

And so we, together, we grow and we learn together. And we can encourage one another. That's how our life is transformed more and more and more so that when you go out and you share your testimony, you can share what God is doing in your life this week.

[ 25 : 51 ] Not what God did in your life 30 years ago, but you can share what God is doing in your life this week. So understand the power of your testimony. Understand that we need to grow our faith in order to be able to reach more people for Jesus.

But understand this, that it won't all be rosy. Because the closer we grow to Jesus Christ, the more compelling our testimony becomes and the more actively and the more loudly we're living out our faith, the more boldly we're living out our faith before others, that's when we're going to see some opposition.

Let's look at the next verse. Verse number 23. Now after many days were passed, so what's happening is Saul receives his sight, he's baptized, immediately he begins sharing the gospel, he goes up to Arabia for some period of years and then he goes back up to Jerusalem, but before that he comes back in another section, he says he came back to Damascus, and so he comes back to Damascus and things are going well.

people are getting saved, but after many days were passed, there was some opposition.

The Jews began to plot, just like the Jews plotted to kill Jesus, the Jews plot to kill Saul. So we need to get ready to face opposition as we see in verses 23 and verse 24.

[ 27 : 33 ] He says, But their plot became known to Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. So here he was, he was in this walled city, and every single day they had spotters out there, they had people waiting.

If you see Saul, we want him dead. Bring him to us. If he tries to leave town, let us know, because we want to kill him.

Now this is only the beginning for Saul's, for what Saul was going to have to suffer for Jesus Christ, because we know from Acts chapter 9 and verse number 16 that Ananias was told that Jesus appeared to Saul in a vision and told him all things he would have to suffer for Jesus' name's sake. But Saul knew that God, as he wrote later in 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 12, Saul knew, ultimately his, Saul was his Hebrew name, Paul was merely his Greek name.

And so Paul understood that God was able to keep that which he had committed to him until that day. Saul knew that God was with him. So we need to understand that we are going to face opposition.

[ 28 : 52 ] Now you may be saying, well you know what, I'm not facing any kind of physical opposition like Paul was. But opposition may come in many forms. It could be, maybe a co-worker

that just says, oh, I'm not into that stuff and they put you down for being, as they might put it, a religious person.

And so that's an opposition. Or maybe you have family members who don't know Jesus yet and maybe they're putting you down for your life choices. Or maybe it's the temptation to succumb to the social peer pressures or social norms out there.

There is going to be opposition. And you know sometimes, now this may come as a complete surprise that might blow your mind, but sometimes judgmental Christians might oppose you from doing what God's calling you to do.

It happens. And it happens on a regular basis. You do what God's calling you to do. Because He's the only one that you need to please, not anyone else. And so we may face opposition for sharing our faith in Christ.

We may face opposition for going out and doing something and serving the world in order that we may show the love of Jesus Christ so they could come to know Him as their Savior and we could begin to see their life change just like Saul's life was transformed.

[ 30 : 18 ] And so know that there is going to be opposition. But understand this, you need to stand firm. You need to stand firm because the same God that was with Saul is the same God that is with you and with me.

And Paul in another place says that we need to take up the whole armor of God that we might be able to withstand and bear up under all the things that Satan is throwing our way.

So get ready to face some opposition. Maybe it's only the beginning. But be ready with your testimony because your life's transformation is the most compelling sermon that the world might hear.

Live it out boldly. And then we go on. We need to value. Lastly, we need to value the support of our faith family. Look what happens in verse 25.

The Jews were plotting to kill Saul. They had a watch on the walls to make sure that if they found Saul they would kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and led him down through the wall in a large basket.

[ 31 : 38 ] Imagine this. Saul the hunter becomes the hunted. Imagine being led blindly by others into the city and being lowered out like a common criminal to escape in the middle of the night.

Imagine what that was like for Paul. But understand this. It was his brothers and sisters in Christ who was willing to risk their life for him.

Do you realize that they risked their life in helping Saul? Do you not? Because they still had to live in Damascus. And so his faith family when they heard about what was going to happen to Saul the plot to kill him they said Saul your message is too important to die with you.

we need to do what we can to help you. And so they took him at night they found a hole in the wall somewhere and they let him down in a large basket.

The Christian life was never meant to be lived solo. This is a shared pilgrimage. We're here in this life together.

[ 32 : 53 ] Galatians chapter 6 verse number 2 tells us that we're not just in this for ourselves but Paul says in the book of Galatians in verse 2 he says bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Bear one another's burdens. Who in your life has supported you when you needed it most? Who has come to you and helped you when you needed it?

But now let's flip the script. Whom have you been serving? Whom have you been supporting? Whom have you gone out and who have you been supporting?

Because the important thing is for us to be able to be bearing one another's burdens. What we see here is Paul through a beautiful showing of Christian unity.

The body of Christ Saul's faith family at this time in Damascus risked their life to further the gospel. Because everything that happened to Saul later when he became known as Paul, everything that happened to Paul, all of the opposition in Paul's life, the beatings, the imprisonments, everything that happened to him, Paul said, God used it to further the gospel.

[ 34 : 33 ] people. So don't say, oh, woe is me and stop living your radical transformed life just because people don't want to listen to you or just because you get opposition.

Because it may be through your opposition that God can use to reach more and more and more for him.

So know and understand the power of your testimony. Be willing to grow in your faith, for your life to grow deeper, for God to transform you, that the word of God may dwell in you richly and understand that there is going to be opposition when we begin living for Christ, but also understand the value and support of your faith family.

The disciples took it by night, led him down through the wall in a large basket. Know this, your transformed life is the world's most compelling sermon.

Live it boldly. Let us pray. Father, we thank you. Thank you for being a God who is with us. Thank you for being the God of transformed lives.

[ 35 : 55 ] that we do not have to stay the way we are, but when we, when Jesus comes into our life and the Holy Spirit comes in, you give us the power for our life to be transformed, that once we come to know Jesus Christ, that we are a new creation.

All things are passed away and all things are becoming new. Father, we thank you that just like the transformed life of Saul amazed those around him, that the power of our story can have an impact in the lives of others around us.

So, Father, help us to live out our testimony boldly and help us to tell it more often. We thank you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.