

Radical and Immediate

Sunday 5/5 at 8:00 & 10:45 | Monday 5/6 at 7 PM

Third Sunday of Easter – 2019

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: What are some *sharp contrasts*? How about ✦darkness and light, ✦horrible and wonderful, ✦death and life, ✦hell and heaven!!!! When Stephen was stoned to death, *Saul was present and gave his approval*; then many believers dispersed from Jerusalem and told others about Jesus. Now we pick up in Acts chapter 9:

1. **Strong Opposition:** ¹ **...Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way [thus followers of Jesus], men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.** // ✦Some *dislike* others, ✦some *hate* others, and ✦some – like Saul – *actually take action!* In the past Saul had imprisoned followers of Jesus – so that they could be killed, **and planned to continue!**
2. **Strong Confusion:** ³ **Now as [Saul] went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”** // Can you imagine how Saul’s mind and heart must have been running wild with what had just happened?

- a. He *immediately* went from *total sight* to *total blindness!*
 - b. He *immediately* realized that Jesus, *whom He strongly opposed*, IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH!
 - c. He *immediately* realized that he had been involved in putting to death followers of the actual Messiah!
 - d. He *immediately* realized he deserved very severe punishment from the Almighty God!
3. **Strong Thinking:** ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. // Being busy is one way to *take our mind off of things*. Now think about Saul... since he *immediately* became blind:
- a. He was no longer on a mission to hunt down followers of Jesus!
 - b. He couldn't even get to Damascus without others leading him by the hand!
 - c. His mind was completely occupied with **his opposition to Jesus** **and** **the new fact that Jesus is the Christ!**
4. **Strong Request:** ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ And the 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, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many

about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” //

a. Remember Saul’s mission... *to bind and imprison people like Ananias*, who was a follower of Jesus. And Saul was not just any hunter of Christians – *he was a very famous one!* If someone was hunting us down to imprison us and kill us, *we would naturally want to flee*; however, the Lord told Ananias the opposite – *to actually go to Saul’s location!*

b. The Lord also gave Ananias a couple hints of encouragement: (1) Saul is praying; so having heard the truth about Jesus, and knowing his need, *he was calling out to God in prayer*, and (2) Saul has been chosen by Jesus to tell others about Jesus, *especially the Gentiles, but also kings and Jews!*

5. **Strong Action:** ¹⁷ **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.”** ¹⁸ **And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;** ¹⁹ **and taking food, he was strengthened.** // Ananias had a choice: Listen to his own common sense... *and flee*, or listen to Jesus... *and go to Saul*. Amazingly, Ananias went to Saul – *without any delay!* During Saul’s time of blindness, *the Holy Spirit gave Him faith and spiritual*

sight; then the Lord worked through Ananias to restore Saul's physical sight; then Saul was baptized and received the Holy Spirit! *The Lord worked those radical changes!*

6. **Strong Transformation:** For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹ 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?" ²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. // As we think about Saul, a.k.a. Paul, he – *by the* **call**, **power**, and **work of God** – went through a radical and immediate transformation! Note this sequence of events:
- Wrong info ➔ dead in sin ➔ opposing Jesus; and then...
 - Right info ➔ alive in Christ ➔ proclaiming Jesus! Does that sequence apply *only to people like Saul* OR to all *believers*? Peter wrote this to *all believers*: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9 NAS).
As God radically changed Saul, *so He has changed us!*

This Week's Challenge: Tell someone about Jesus!

Let Us Pray: Dear Jesus, as you worked a radical and immediate change in Saul, *so change us in every needed way!*