

Ever been on a road trip? Once to Detroit to see someone, whom I thought was going to be my girlfriend, and on to the Québec Olympic, stayed with a guy who's house was being watched by both the US and Canada police because of the man living in the basement had shot a Federal Marshall on an Indian Reservation at Wounded Knee. Real fun time!

A. Saul, the enemy

Since the time when Stephen was killed, Saul saw that this kind of treatment of Christians pleased the authorities and in his thinking, pleased God.

He found joy in this work—or at least, not a hardship for him. He felt satisfied; he had a mission; a purpose for life; fulfillment. What can be wrong with that? In the sight of his people, he was the hero! AND, he felt he was doing the right thing!

He chose to fight against this group that was called "The Way". Who gave them this name?

It was Jesus' own words, in that "I am the Way..." **John 14:6** to Thomas' question in verse **5**: Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way?" **6**. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Arrogance, on Jesus' part or the Truth?

Saul's threats were more than just words. Action. Jail time, destroying homes, he was given papers giving him THE RIGHT to do these nasty things to the Followers of the Way.

We read "murderous threat" but there were more than just idol threats. Saul helps bring about actual executions as we find in **Acts 26:10** And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them."

He takes action, not only in the capital city but goes to the leaders—to Caiaphas and receives letters of introduction to the Movers and Shakers or Jewish leaders in Damascus.

Saul was experiencing a great challenge within his faith. He was driven to be MORE and more content with himself.

Sometimes, those outside of Christ ARE happier than we are. They may be more content than we will ever be! Why? The Bible calls it blindness. They have blinders on. **John 10:10** "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." But God is not finished with him yet! God **will** have His way with Saul. He is Sovereign Lord. His Grace will capture him!

Do you need to be captured by His Grace as well? **Don't fight it!**

B. Saul's Encounter with Christ

Saul may have joined a group of men but we do not know for sure. The men could have been Temple Guards to aid in the arrest, but they were not the main concern of this encounter.

Have you ever encountered someone famous? Strange feelings. You want to be cool but you may act like a child. When I first met the, then, Crown Prince and Princess, I was somewhat tongue-tied. When I met Faith's parents for the first time...it was –weird. Could not put two thoughts together to make any sense.

But this kind of an encounter was really outstanding. Not an encounter with a UFO or a FBI agent, but with the Lord Jesus.

Let's look at the facts from verses 3-6

Four things to note:

1. On his way to **do damage** in **Damascus**, he was interrupted.
 - a. Sometimes interruptions are good for us.
 - b. Take us by surprise.
 - c. Take our eyes off the problem for a while.
 - d. Frustrates us.
 - e. Refreshes us.

So be careful of those interruptions that have God's Finger Prints all over them. Allow for the change. Allow for His Way with you.

2. He heard a voice speaking his name—twice. Endearment? Knowing the Character of God—this was a voice of Love!
 - a. It knocked him off his feet—not based on real Truth
 - i. Couldn't stand before God's Holiness-no one can!
 - ii. Couldn't be held up on his teachings/belief. Not able to support him anymore!
 - b. Even in his 'fallen' state, he could still hear God's voice.
3. Jesus said: *"Why do you persecute ME?"*
 - a. Identified the Person of Jesus as the Church. The Lord identifies Himself with His persecuted Church!
 - b. You hit the Church, you hit Jesus
4. Gamaliel's worst fears have materialized (**Acts 5:39** But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.")
 - a. Stephen was right: Jesus IS ALIVE! Stephen was telling the truth when he bore witness to the Son of Man standing at God's right hand (Acts 7:56).
 - b. Saul's entire spiritual life is being turned upside down! Saul's life was filled with zeal IN THE WRONG THING! Was it ignorance in unbelief? **1 Tim 1:13** "Even

though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief."

i. Can we express this same condition? I think not.

- c. His first act after the encounter is to obey Jesus' Word to him. **Go into the city and learn what he must do to fulfill God's purposes.**

This all meant that Saul was basically made a ZERO. He counted it all loss—**that would be later, but now**, he was devastated! Saul was spiritual Bankrupt before this encounter.

C. Saul the Chosen Vessel (9:10-19)

1. Physically, Saul was beat up! BLIND. The effect of a Jewish teacher being blind is sobering. The Light of Jesus blinded him so that he could see again. **See 2 Cor 4:4-6**
"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "*Let light shine out of darkness,*" made His light shine in our hearts to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Christ."
 - a. **Is 40:5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."**
 - b. **Lk 3:6 And all mankind will see God's salvation.'**
2. "Guide the blind"-used to describe their own role as teachers of the Truth. Saul had three days added to his darkness.

Note: The pattern of conversion: personal encounter, A witness to the Gospel, Response of surrender in penitence and faith; receive spiritual blessing and fellowship in the Body. Remember... Next week, we will look at Ananias' role in Saul's new life.

If you were one of the Believers in Jerusalem, how and what would you have prayed about Saul?

What impresses you about Ananias' spiritual and emotional battle?