

Acts 9:1-19a

9 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ⁵He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁶But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do. ⁷The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ He answered, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ ¹¹The Lord said to him, ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹²and 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.’ ¹³But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has

done to your saints in Jerusalem; ¹⁴and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.’ ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.’ ¹⁷So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

Saul is a fiercely devoted man of Jewish faith and an influential leader. He was present at the stoning of a Christian deacon, a man named Stephen (the first martyr). From there Saul launched a zealous hunt for Christians (those “God-fearers” who followed “the way” of Jesus and believed he was the Messiah). Later, in Acts 13, Saul is referred to as Paul. While Paul “converts” to Jesus, he does not cease to be a pious Jew and teacher of Israel.

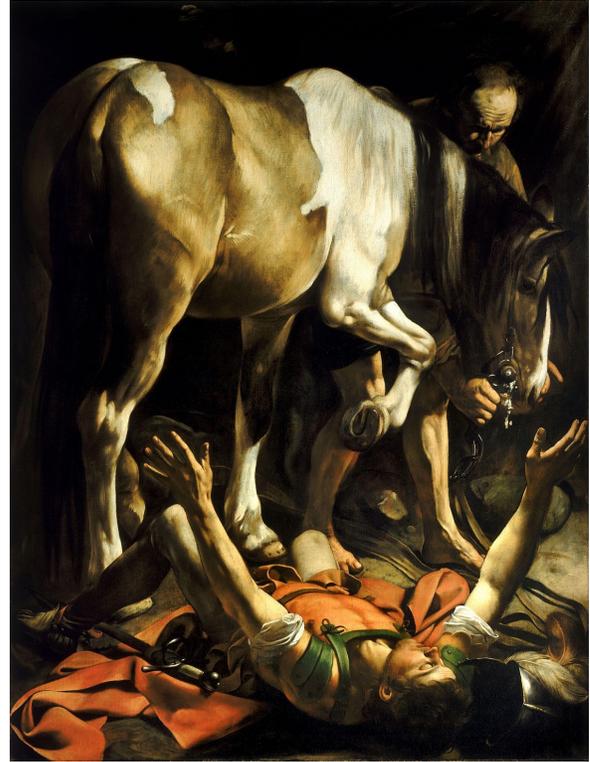
Paul does become a very influential missionary in the Mediterranean world (from Greece to Rome). He will go on to pen numerous books in the New Testament and proclaim the life-saving and world-shaping power of God’s love. His theological influence continues to dramatically shape the Christian Church.

Big Ideas

- **The Way:** The early Christian movement was called “The Way” as a sect of Judaism
- **On the way:** Jesus never finds us at a stand-still, we are always on the way somewhere else and in the middle of things already started, which is what makes change so hard.
- **A Better Way:** God invites us to see what we’ve been missing and re-orient our life

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. Have you ever had a dramatic or profound life-reversal? Have you witnessed a family member or friend go through one? What happened and what did you learn about change?
3. Saul’s new life was made possible by a friend in the faith. Who has been your Ananias and helped you on your faith journey? What did they teach you?
4. What do you think it was like for Saul during those days of blindness? What do you think was going through his mind and heart?
5. What types of people would you assume are beyond God’s reach so that, if God spoke to you about them, you would question God? How might this story challenge those assumptions?



Caravaggio's
Conversion on the Way to Damascus
(1601)

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