

Joseph Carty / General

Acts / Conversion and Call of Paul / Acts 9:1–18

Punching Holes in the Darkness

Interesting part in the story about Robert Louis Stevenson growing up in Scotland... In those days, streetlamps didn't just come on automatically; people were hired to light each one individually.

One evening, as the lamplighters did their work, climbing their ladders, lifting the glass lid, lighting the torch, shutting the lid, climbing down, and moving on to the next lamp, young Stevenson was enthralled. As dusk settled into night, one light would be kindled, then another, and another. He turned to his parents and said: "Look, they're punching holes in the darkness!"

- Today's Sermon,
 - Learn about
 - Light of Jesus...
 - Holes punch in darkness...
- Specifically,
 - the conversion of Paul.
 - Darkness to Light

The Zeal

[Acts 9:1-2](#) (ESV)

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to

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the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

- Chapter 22 says:
“the high priest and the whole council of elders”
- Went to Sanhedrin
 - for special permission.
- One thing you have to
 - commend Saul for
 - is his zeal.
- Whether serving

- God or Satan
 - was most zealous.
- Special permission,
 - to kill Christians.

Confusion

- Paul is Zealous
 - but wrong.
- Then and now,
 - people confuse
 - zeal for truth.
- Just because an
 - individual is doing
 - something with passion
 - doesn't mean right!

"Sincerity is no test of truth, no evidence of correctness of conduct. You may take poison, sincerely believing it the necessary medicine, but will it save your life?"

Sincere, But Sincerely Wrong

Acts 9:3 **ESV**

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.

- Chap 22 says:
 - noon
- bright light at noon
 - different than at twilight.
- Chapter 22 says
 - blinded by the brightness
 - of the light.

- Saul's Problem...
 - already thought
 - walking in light
 - when in darkness.

Bedtime Light Sensitivity

- Had to make
 - the light
 - extra bright

Meditation in the Toolshed

C.S. Lewis, God in the Dock.

I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place.

Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it.

Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences.

- Paul thought
 - on trip to Damascus
 - he was in light.
- Reality,
 - he was in darkness.
- He need a change
 - of view
 - see light
 - more accurately.

John 3:19 ESV

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

- › Brother and Sister,
 - › I ask today
 - › Are you in the light?

- › Or, you just assume you are
 - › because you are here?

- › My prayer
 - › We can choose
 - › to be saved
 - › to be lost

- › But let us not be
 - › **self-deceived,**
 - › thinking we are saved
 - › when we are lost!

- Continue Story

[Acts 9:4–6](#) (ESV)

And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said,

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“Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

- Of all things,
 - Paul never thought
 - Jesus could be God.
- The light
 - shines
 - dark recesses of his mind.

Acts 9:7 ESV

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

- heard voice
 - understood?

Acts 22:9 ESV

Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

- Companions were there,
 - heard a voice
 - but didn't understand!

› Today,

- many people
 - hear God's voice
 - but don't comprehend.
- Hear truth spoken...
 - Words of Life...
 - don't apply/live truth.

Jeremiah 6:10 ESV

To whom shall I speak and give warning,

that they may hear?

Behold, their ears are uncircumcised,
they cannot listen;
behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn;
they take no pleasure in it.

Acts 9:8 ESV

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.

- Imagine..
 - there to arrest and kill
 - now confused
- For the first time,
 - realized how
 - blind he had become.
 - SPIRITUALLY

Time Out

Acts 9:9 ESV

And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- Jew companions
 - not listen
- Christian
 - afraid..
- He is alone...
- What can he do?
 - pray
 - seek God
 - humble
 - open minded
 - scripture comes to mind
 - maybe they are right.
- Maybe elders are wrong...

[Acts 9:10–12](#) (ESV)

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.” And the Lord said to him,

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“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, 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.”

- What would you think
 - if you were Ananias?

Questioning God

[Acts 9:13–14](#) (ESV)

But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

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And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”

- It’s kinda funny

- to question God...
- We do it all the time.
 - why this God?
 - why that?
 - are you sure God?
- God knows all things.
 - yet somehow,
 - we think we can advise.

Abraham and Isaac

doesn't make sense.

- We must learn
 - the life of trusting
 - obedience to God.

[Acts 9:15-16](#) (ESV)

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

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the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

- God is say,
 - I don't need a counselor,
 - I need a willing follower...
 - Please Go...
 - It will work out.
- God says,
 - go rescue my child
 - stranded in darkness...

Afraid of the Dark

Sigmund Freud tells the story of a three-year-old boy crying in a dark room of a home he was visiting one evening. “Auntie,” the boy cried, “talk to me! I’m frightened because it is so dark.” His aunt answered him from another room:

“What good would that do? You can’t see me.” “That doesn’t matter,” replied the child. “When you talk, it gets light.”

- Many around us,
 - that need
 - hear a voice in dark.
- Need to know
 - someone out there
 - that is not
 - enshrouded in darkness
 - dark
 - disorientated.
- Continue

[Acts 9:17-19](#) (ESV)

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

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by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately

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something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened...

- No longer in darkness
 - Physically
 - Spiritually
- He can see,
 - see truth of God.
- Jesus Christ
 - is the Messiah!

Paul's Calling

- He had sight but what now?

[Acts 22:14-16](#) (ESV)

And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be

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a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Our Calling

- Paul Later Said:

Ephesians 5:8 **ESV**

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

- Closing Story

What is the Meaning of Life?

The writer Robert Fulgham tells the story of one of his professors, a man named Alexander Papaderos, who once taught Fulgham a two-week course on Greek culture. Towards the end of the last session, his teacher opened the floor for questions. Fulgham boldly asked “Dr. Papaderos, what is the meaning of life. After a few moments Papaderos pulled his wallet from his pocket, removed a tiny, quarter-sized mirror, and replied:

When I was a small child, during the war, we were very poor and lived in a remote village. One day, on the road, I found the broken piece of a mirror. A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that place.

I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but it was not possible, so I kept only the largest piece. This one. And by scratching it on a stone, I made it round. I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine-in deep holes and crevices and dark closets. It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find.

I kept the little mirror, and as I went about my growing up, I would take it out in idle moments and continue the challenge of the game. As I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not just a child’s game but a metaphor for what I might do with my life. I came to understand that I am not the light or the source of light. But light-truth, understanding, knowledge-is there, and it will only shine in many dark places if I reflect it.

Appeal

- Walk in Light.
- Reflect Light.