



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- Acts 9

begins with

Saul of Tarsus

arresting and imprisoning
Christian.

- However, that is
about to change.

- This enemy,
the persecutor,
the relentless
pursuer of Christians,
is now to be
arrested by
Jesus Christ.

- In Acts 9
we have the
most famous
conversion story
in history.
- Let us as far as we can
enter into Saul's mind.

- Something about the stoning of Stephen lingered in Saul's mind and would not be banished.

- How could a man like Stephen pray for those stoning him?

- But still
Saul of Tarsus
plunged into the
most violent action
possible.

- First he persecuted Christians in Jerusalem.

- This only made matters worse because once again he had to ask himself
what secret
these people possessed.

- What made them face peril and suffering and loss serene and unafraid.

- So then, still driving himself on, he went to the Sanhedrin.

- **The judicial writ** of the Sanhedrin extended to wherever there were Jews.
- Paul had heard that certain of the Christians had **escaped to Damascus**
 - And he asked for letters that he might go to Damascus **and extradite them.**

- **But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.**

(Acts 9:1-2 RSV)

- The literal Greek says he was "breathing in threats and murder,"
- He lived in this climate.
- He was dedicated in terrible bloody zeal to eliminating what he regarded as the cult of the Nazarene.

- He was breathing in an atmosphere of hate, violence, death.
- Few men, young or old, have been so furious in persecution as was Saul

- **A man's opinions** are a part of himself, and become as **dear as life or liberty.**
 - They are the measure of his **reputation** and **influence**, and are the result of all his experience and studies.

- To attack a man's religion is to attack him;
- To assail that which must be dearest of all to the heart of man,
 - And Saul had his religion.

- The religion of the Jews was sustained by the law of God and had been so for close to 4,000 years.
- And now it was under assault.

- Saul begins his one man war against those **“of the way”**.
- If hatred is in a man’s heart, **hatred will show itself** in a man’s words and acts;
- **“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”**

- In his appearance before King Agrippa, he tells the king how he felt about those of “the way”.
- (Acts 26:9-11 RSV)

- "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison by authority from the chief priests,
 - but when they were put to death
 - I cast my vote against them.
 - And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme;
 - and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities."
- (Acts 26:9-11 RSV)

- Later on, in the city of Antioch, they will be called for the first time, Christians.
- But here they are referred to as "those belonging to the Way."
- Names like this are invariably given by opponents,
by enemies.

- That indicated what others saw in these early Christians.
- It is very descriptive of their lifestyle.
- They were people who operated on a different basis.
- That was what impressed the world.

- There was something about them that reminded them of Jesus, who was himself
 - The Way,
 - The Truth,
 - The Life."
- So they dubbed them "those belonging to the Way."

- The way is for lost wanderers.
- The very expression suggests man's need of a way, of salvation.

- This need arises out of ignorance, errors, sin.
 - Men are lost, and no created power or worldly wisdom can recover them and make them safe.

- Our natural dispositions rarely change;
 - But their direction can be changed.
- Saul, after his conversion, remained the same as before
 - He retained his zeal and energy.

- But the turn which was to come about in his life was not only to affect his life but lives all over the world.

- Much about us can never be changed; but much about us can and ought and, with God's help, will be changed.
- We are all on the road, not to Damascus, but to some goal.

- To every one of us,
as to that of Saul,
that goal will at last
appear in a light
totally different
from what we now expect;
- And on that change
may depend our eternal
happiness or **misery**.

- **“I am the Way,”**
- **“The new and living Way.”**
 - Every way leads
from
some place
to
some place.

- Christ leads from the land of bondage, darkness, death.

- He both makes and shows a way out of sin and condemnation.

- The first words that Jesus speaks to Saul of Tarsus are most significant.
- In the Garden of Eden God addressed a question to man.
- That question was very significant.
It was,
"Adam, where are you?"
(**Genesis 3:9**).

- That is the question God is still asking men today.

- You cannot know the way back until you know where you are.

- **The first question**

God asks men who are without Christ is, "**Where are you?**"

- Where are **you** in life?
- When you **answer** that you are on the way **back**.

- But this question asked of Saul of Tarsus is also very significant.

- The Lord Jesus says to him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

- What is behind it,
- What are your motives?
- What are your reasons?
 - What do you hope to accomplish?
 - What is this that is driving you like this?
- Why are you persecuting me?"

- Surely, in those hours of darkness that followed in Damascus, Saul of Tarsus debated that question many, many times.
- In the answer to that question he would come to a great understanding of himself and of human life.

- The next thing
Jesus says to him
is also very significant.
- "Arise and enter the city,
and there you will be
told what to do."
 - That is a
tremendous reversal
of this man's whole
approach to life.

- He is now experiencing the **lifestyle** which belongs to a Christian.
- **1Corinthians 6:19**
Know you not that ...
you are not your own?
- **6:20** **For you are bought with a price:**
therefore glorify God
in your body,
and in your spirit,
which are God's.

- You will be **told** what to do."
- That is what **conversion** is:
- It is **a change** from thinking that you can run your own life,
 - To an acknowledgment that God has the right **to tell you what to do.**
- Here then is where many **rebel!**

- **Conversion**
results in a radical
change in behavior.
- That is what happened to **Saul**.
 - He was put on
a wholly different lifestyle.
 - He was **told** to
go into the city.
 - And he **obeyed!**

- No longer giving the orders.
- No longer directing men and women sending them where he wanted them to go,
- But he would be told what he was to do.

- Acts 9:9.

And he was three days
without sight, and neither
did eat nor drink.

- Saul was blinded
that his heart
might be enlightened
with an inner light.

- Now,
he was able to
gaze on Jesus

- The thoughts of his own cruelty and violence,
- That last look on the face of Stephen,
- All these things crowding into his mind during the three days of solitude,
- Allowing him to think on that question
“Why persecutest thou Me?”

- So into Damascus he went a changed man.
- He who had intended to enter Damascus like an avenging fury was led by the hand, blind and helpless.

- Saul is sent into Damascus to the house of Judas.
 - Two unknown, obscure Christians are sent to him.
- First is a man named Judas.
- That is all we know about him.
 - Saul is led to his house whom he has never met before.

- While he is there a man named Ananias is sent to minister to him.
- Two names which are tainted elsewhere in the New Testament, Judas and Ananias.
- Receive a new glow honored and used of God.

- To Ananias came a message from God that he must go and help Paul;
- When that message came to Ananias it must have sounded mad to him.
 - He might well have approached Saul with suspicion, as one doing an unpleasant task;
 - He might well have begun with accusations;

- But no;
his first words were,
"Brother Saul."
- It is one of the
sublimest examples
of Christian love.
- In Christ,
Paul and Ananias,
the men who had been
the bitterest enemies,
came together as brothers.

- But the Lord said to Ananias,
"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."
(Acts 9:15-16 RSV)

- **Two things**
Saul was told
about his ministry:

- Where it would be preached.
 - To three groups.
 - # 1 First, to the Gentiles, that great body of pagans outside of Israel who knew not the name of God and who were involved in pagan practices and worship.

- **# 2 He was to minister to kings.**
 - He was to penetrate **the power structures** of the day in which he lived.
 - He was to minister to those who were **in positions of authority and influence** and finally even the **emperor** himself.
 - He was to witness **to the up-and-outs,** as well as to **the down-and-outs.**

- **# 3** He was to be a minister to the **sons of Israel.**
 - That was **last** on the list.
- Although he had great impact upon his own nation, the sons of Israel, **as seen in his letter Romans.**
 - He was primarily the **minister to the Gentiles.**

- Then the Lord revealed how he was to make his impact.
- "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."
- He was called to suffer.

- There is a word we do not like -- suffer.
- Yet the Christian life invariably involves suffering.

- Paul will write to the Philippians and tell them that they were called not only to believe in Jesus but also to suffer for his name's sake.

- Why is that?

- Christians are called to love,
therefore
they must suffer.
- Love is hurt in
the process of loving.
- That is why,
in this fallen world,
love must always suffer.

- Why is suffering a part of Christian life?
- Because suffering is the activity of love.
 - It is love that bears hurt.
 - Love suffers.
- It takes the blame,
it takes the hurt,
it is willing to endure.
 - (1 Cor 13)

- Saul's calling
will cause him to suffer.

- His love for
his Jewish brethren
will cause suffering,

- “I could wish myself accursed...”
(Romans 9:3)

- Jesus suffers because
He loves fallen mankind.

- John 3:16-17.

- **But he cannot redeem** without being hurt in return.
 - So this man, **Saul**, is also called to be hurt.
 - How much he suffered in order that he **might manifest the love of God** for a lost and wicked world.

- When we are called to follow Jesus Christ, we are called to suffer.
- We have to forgive.
- That hurts, doesn't it?

- We do not want to forgive;
 - We want to hold out and take vengeance.
 - We want our ego to be fed a little and our pride satisfied.

- But God has called us to suffer and forgive.
 - That is part of the Christian life.
- But finally, this man is not called to do this in his own strength.

- **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 that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."**
- (Acts 9:17-19 RSV)**

- **And suddenly,**
something like scales
fell from Saul's eyes
and his sight was restored.
(Acts 9:18)

- Immediately it
changed his outlook on life.

- I think this is both
literal and **symbolic.**

- All the bigotry, pride, prejudice that twisted and distorted his view of the Gentile world;
- All of it disappeared in one moment.

- This man saw the whole world,
Jews and Gentiles alike,
as men and women
bearing the image of God
and needing to be redeemed
(**Galatians 3:28**)
 - He never again
looked at them
as Jew and Gentile.

- Then, finally, he was **baptized**.
 - He took his place **as a Christian**.
 - He identified himself with those who bear the **name of Jesus Christ**.
 - God has now prepared **his instrument to carry the gospel** out to all the nations of the world.

- Is it not true that **you and I** are here this morning because of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus?

- We have **all been blessed** through the conversion of this man.

- His life has **made great impact** upon every one of us.

- He immediately bore his witness in Damascus.
- In Damascus there were many Jews and consequently there would be many synagogues.
 - It was in these Damascus synagogues that Paul first lifted up his voice for Christ.
 - That was an act of the greatest moral courage.

- It was to these very synagogues that Paul had received his letters from the Sanhedrin.

- It would have been much easier to begin his ministry somewhere else where he was not known.

- Already he is proclaiming
- **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**
(Romans 1:16)

- And now he strikes out on a mission that will bring him into conflict with all the world.
- And, what is that conflict?

- The plan of the **Prince of darkness** has been **to secure the human heart** for the evil.

- Hence to attack **vice, ungodliness** was to array himself **against the Prince of Darkness.**

- The message of salvation would then become an **“offense”** to one class,
 - And a **“stumbling block”** to another.
- Thus, assuring that **the battle for souls had begun.**

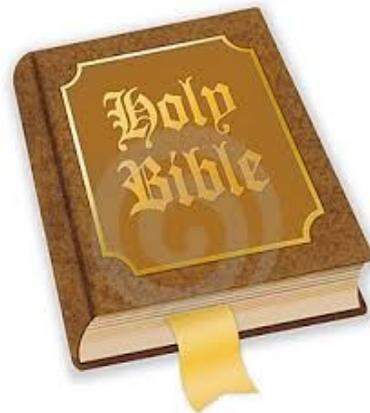
- It has long since passed into a proverb that

**“the blood of
the martyrs
is the seed
of the Church.”**

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17



- 08-25-2019 Tryon, NC