

FROM KNOCKED DOWN

Acts 22:1-16

Acts 22:15 “You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.”

Proposition: Paul moved from an encounter with God to become a witness to Jesus as Savior

Purpose: To inspire us to witness.

Introduction:

1. This story is what movies are made of— drama and the dramatic.
2. From murderer to missionary; from knocked down to great church starter; from Saul, the demanding one, to Paul— meaning small.
3. Paul’s conversion is real but not the Tinseltown.
4. Paul’s conversion is not normal for all of us by which to measure our experiences.
5. However some common threads are apparent between Paul’s encounter with God and ours.

I. Confronted by God

- A. God called to Saul
- B. God questioned Saul, “Why do you persecute me?” (7)
 - 1. God’s pain comes from watching His children hurt.
 - 2. Sin against God’s people hurts the heart of God.
 - 3. Our treatment of people affects how God views us.
 - 4. How we treat the church impacts God’s dealings with us.
- C. How could a religious man become so hardened against other people?
 - 1. He misused his power.
 - 2. He was educated, but arrogant and angry.
 - 3. He was driven, but directed his motivation toward destroying the church.
 - 4. He was well connected with political and religious leaders, but misused his influence.

Early in his career as a surgeon specializing in the rehabilitation of lepers, Dr. Paul Brand checked into a cheap New York hotel prior to giving a lecture at the American Leprosy Mission. That night he became violently ill with nausea and fever. For six days he did not leave his room.

Finally, on the sixth day, his door opened. There stood Dr. Eugene Kellersberger of the American Leprosy Mission. After determining that Brand was suffering from nothing more than a bad bout of influenza, he cared for him the final days he was in the United States. Though weak and unsteady, he decided to keep his scheduled sailing of the *Ile de France* to England. He was still so sapped of his strength when the ship docked at Southampton six days later that he could scarcely

cope with his luggage. He hunkered down in his train seat and didn't move until it arrived in London.

As he pulled off his shoes that night at his aunt's house, a terrible awareness hit him with the force of a wrecking ball: he had no feeling in half of his foot. He sank into a chair, his mind whirling. "A dread fear worse than any nausea hit my stomach," he recalls. "Had it finally happened? Every leprosy worker recognizes insensitivity to pain as one of the disease's first symptoms. Had I just made the leap from leprosy doctor to leprosy patient?" He rummaged in his suitcase and found a sewing needle. He pricked a small patch of skin below his ankle. No pain. He jabbed a little deeper, probing for a reflex, but there was none. "I put my face between my hands and shuddered, longing for pain that would not come." He did not sleep that night as he contemplated the tectonic changes that were bound to occur in his life now that he, too, was a leper.

He decided to check the affected area once more in the morning. As he jabbed the needle deep into his heel, he yelled with pain. "Never have I felt as delicious as that live, electric jolt of pain." What had happened was that the blood supply to the main branch of the sciatic nerve in his leg had been blocked during the long train ride, causing temporary numbness. Overnight, the nerve had healed. "That single sleepless night became for me a defining moment. Thank God for pain!"

Oh God, fill me with a dread of "spiritual numbness," of becoming insensitive to attitudes and actions that hurt people and break your heart, that if unchecked will destroy my soul.

Grow Magazine, C.S. Cowles

D. God confronts us.

1. He may use a flickering light rather than a bolt of lightning.
2. Our day may be interrupted by a pain report from others reminding us to evaluate our relationship with others.
3. God might use circumstances to jar us to attention—circumstances health or economics.
4. God deals with us through internal questioning.
5. He may simply present Himself to us so obviously that we know He requires new ways of thinking and acting.

II. Chosen

A. Light means spiritual insight

1. A lightning bolt is unnecessary if we respond to a flickering light..

I observed a tiny light impulse on our carpet near a chair. I became curious and then alarmed as a switch in the electrical cord to a lamp was sparking under our swivel rocker.

2. Attention to spiritual insight keeps God from ramping up the charges.

B. A voice spoke to Saul.

1. Faith comes through hearing

2. An audio message was necessary to break through.
 3. The voice asked a question and made an introduction.
 - a. “Why are you persecuting me?” (7)
 - b. “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.”
 4. Saul from that moment on called God, Lord. (8, 10)
 - a. A new found respect revealed through addressing God with reverence.
 - b. “Lord” attributes power and authority to God.
- C. Sight was restored.
1. Blindness was lifted.
 2. Saul saw the resurrected Lord.
- D. The human part of the divine encounter.

1. Ananias confirmed the significance of this abrupt encounter with God..
2. “You are chosen to know, see, hear, and do.”
 - a. God uses the church to confirm God’s calling.
 - b. The church sends people into ministry.
3. The church exists as God’s agent on Earth.

III. Commissioned.

- A. “You will be His witness to all men.” (15)
1. The job could have been considered overwhelming.
 2. The assignment lacked specificity—what and how were missing.
 3. Too much of the unknown could have paralyzed them.
 4. Fear could have buckled his knees.
- B. “What are you waiting for?” (16)
1. “Get up!”
 2. The task is important.

Conclusion:

1. Our encounter with God should send us telling.
2. Have you encountered Jesus?