

## Parson to Person Acts 9:1–8

Now

You

Change!

Acts Chapter 9:1–8

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

"Before and after." Those words conjure images of diet ads, fashion makeovers, and workout regimes. Have you, yourself, ever been the subject of a before-and-after display?

I have not. I actually can't imagine, myself, what kind of change in me would be so drastic, so stark, as to make such a contrast possible. 2009 Jason looks relatively similar to 2019 Jason and, barring future events only God knows about, will likely look somewhat similar to 2029 Jason if the Lord tarries and the rapture holds.

I do know, however, that such a before-and-after scenario exists. It's real, and God sees it. It's the heavenly, God's-eyes view of what changed when I was born again by faith.

Everything changed.

Not all of it tracked immediately. But change immediately, everything did—and the tracking began in earnest. I was “delivered from the dominion of darkness” and “translated to the kingdom of His Son” (Colossians 1:13), but delivered and translated as a believer in the Messiah—“Born again” and “born from above,” “born of the Spirit” (John 3).

Saul of Tarsus was a before-and-after display for sure.

Collating the relevant passages from the testimony of Saul, specifically I Timothy 1 and Philippians 3, and combining them with Acts 9 above, we find by the admission of the Apostle Paul about himself that he had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, a reviler, a violent man, who at the same time was also utterly convinced of his righteousness before God as well as his earned respect in the eyes of his established society and peers. He was a Jew of Jews, a Pharisee of Pharisees, blameless in the eyes of the law, and yet his heart was unmistakably and irrefutably that of an evil man.

“But I was shown mercy,” Paul says in I Timothy 1, “because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.” Further, Paul pronounces, God showed him mercy to make an example of him: an example of change.

From self-righteous blasphemer to confessor, worshipper, and servant.

From arrogant reviler to kind, well-spoken pastor and teacher.

From an emissary of rage to the Apostle who wrote the famed Love chapter in I Corinthians 13, and whose heart was so deeply tied to one of his churches that Luke wrote of their last parting in Acts 20, “we tore ourselves away from them.”

What a change!

Sometimes our carnal focus on ourselves misleads us, combined with our fear lest God rightly condemn our flesh, combined as well with our sometimes lack of faith in God’s propitiation for our sins, the Lord Jesus Himself. This fear and lack of faith mislead us into forgetting two realities concomitant to the Gospel.

One, we who need to change the most can do nothing to change ourselves.

Two, Christ has paid it all and done everything to change us into the image of His Son.

What is true of the Apostle Paul is also true of us:

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (I Cor. 3:18).

Changed, once for all having been born again by grace alone through faith alone;

Changed, from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord into “the same image.”

The image of Whom?

Christ.

Can we stop God from changing us, if that is what He planned to do when He called us to become saints? Assuredly we cannot. Should we, by grace through faith, cooperate when He changes us?

Assuredly we should!

And we will. In the Lord Jesus' Name!

I love you all,  
Pastor Jason