**Acts 9:1-22 (ESV)**

**1** But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest **2** 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. **3**  Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4** And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” **5** And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. **6** But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” **7**  The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. **8** 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. **9** And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. **10** 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.” **11** And the Lord said to him, “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, **12** 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.” **13** But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. **14** And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” **15** 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 the children of Israel. **16** For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” **17** 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 so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” **18** And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; **19** and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. **20** And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” **21** And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” **22** But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

**“Christ Our Courage”**

 The recent bad weather revealed how much we are at the mercy of electricity for modern day way of life. Electricity revealed we are at the mercy of waiting for utility crews to turn on the lights and other devices that make modern day life possible. Utility crews revealed we are at the mercy of God providing the opportunity, the energy, and the means to return to life as we know it in our modern day. All of this happens so we are not in the dark, sitting in silence, or anxious about what to do.

 Today in the collect we prayed to God for “perpetual gladness and eternal joys.” There was certainly nothing perpetually good and eternally blissful about last week. However, the source for our prayer is not electricity or some other earthly happiness. It is being able to call upon the mercy of God for a sinful world. Calling upon the God for sinners is to believe in the mercy of His cross. To believe in His cross means He shines forth mercy from an empty tomb. For all that we face today, what we lack is courage. Not the kind from weapons, built on money, or won by numbers. Courage is Easter alive and well for us in Jesus Christ.

1. This is courage under fire for a reason.
2. Saul stood in “the way” so there was no other way.
3. Who has the power? (Courage in weakness)
4. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
5. Hidden Savior in suffering so we pray as the baptized, "Our Father in heaven” and confess “Merciful Father we have sinned…”
6. Home Fires dealt Mission from the Cross, “The spiritual growth within the Church is equally as important as the outward expansion of numbers.” (70)
7. This is courage in the Word as a promise.
8. What was impossible with Saul God made possible. The majority of New Testament Scripture is St. Paul!
9. Where is the power? (Courage outside of us)
10. St. Paul said, “Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power.” (Ephesians 3:7)
11. Glorified Lord blinded sight by speaking Law “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” Yet, He spoke the Gospel, “Rise and enter the city, and you will be told…”
12. “The conversion of a person is not always attended with such miracles as in the case of Saul, but it is always as miraculous.” (Lenski 37)
13. This is courage by water with a witness.
14. St. Paul extended the Gospel greater than all others.
15. What is the power? (Courage through other means)
16. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you…”
17. Humble Church showed Christ, while the Holy Spirit spoke forgiveness “Brother Saul…” Baptism witnessed that God was at work.
18. Luther states, “Paul receives his sight, his insight, and the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of Ananias, so that he knows who Christ is, understands the power of baptism, and forthwith emerges as, and is, a changed man.” (Postils 272)

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