

## Exceedingly Mad

Acts 26:9-15

- The Apostle Paul stands before King Agrippa in our passage of the day
- He is facing a series of accusations from the Jews
- Agrippa has given him permission to speak for himself
- And Paul takes that opportunity to tell his story
  
- We enter the text near the beginning of his defense
- And the close of our text comes before the end of his salvation testimony
  
- Today we'll discuss his encounter with Christ
- And his disposition toward Christians before Christ
- When he was "Exceedingly Mad"
- Which is our theme, from Acts 26:9-15
  
- We chose this specific portion of the account to highlight a few key ideas
- First, that we can convince ourselves of all manner of untrue things
- Second, that we can act based upon those untrue things in radical and violent ways
- Third, that our rebellion against the truth can be growing
- When fourth, we have a life-changing encounter with God
- And fifth, we become a lover and promoter of the truth, without apology
  
- These seven verses and the context nearby seem to confirm these things
- And they are definitely worth a closer look
- Once we read the full text...

Acts 26:9-15

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

- We have ended our reading at an inopportune moment
- Just as Paul begins to reveal Jesus' words in more detail
- And explain how he was obedient
- Even to that very moment and his hearing before the king

- He was radically changed
- But, if you have read the New Testament, you understand this
- If we are familiar with the Apostle at all, we "get it"
- I wonder if we have considered some of the details in the lead-up to his testimony of salvation?
- It seems they are worth a closer look...

Acts 26:9

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

- This text is phrased another way in the ESV...

"I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

- How was Saul (which he was called then) convinced?
- Certainly, the crowds of religious people around him played a role
- The council and leaders in the synagogue had something to do with it
- Wider-society might have had an influence
- Many things he heard and observed would have told him
- First, Jesus is not the Messiah
- Second, those who call Him the Messiah blaspheme
- Third, I have a duty to see this blasphemy ends
- It is clear, this was widely believed
- And Saul bought in - fully
- You will have already noted the problem
- None of this is true
- He believes lies
- But, beyond the external influences
- Saul convinced himself
- He became zealous in his opposition
- Violent in his every response
- This required significant effort...

Acts 26:10

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

- He sought permission from the chief priests

- He rounded up Christians throughout Jerusalem
- He personally saw to it they were shut up in prison
- And when they were put to death, he testified against them
  
- Remember their crime?
- Believing and teaching in the name of Jesus
  
- Jesus, Israel's Messiah
- The rightful King of Israel
- The King of all kings and Lord of all lords
- The One who died for - not only Saul - but the whole world
- The One who rose again from the dead
- And who loves us
  
- This, one of the most learned teachers in Israel, rejected Him
- When he should have embraced Him
  
- He did more than just this...

Acts 26:11

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

- Those fellow Jews, which he found believing in the synagogue, he punished
- He displayed a raging fury against them
- Far beyond a simple, legal argument against them
- He hated them
- Wanted to see them eliminated
  
- He tried everything he could to convince them they should reject Christ
- Turn on Him
- Reject His name in public
  
- He travelled beyond Israel's borders to chase and harass them
- And that chase brought him to Damascus...

Acts 26:12

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

- Saul had no good intentions for his trip to Damascus
- His raging fury brought him here
- The disciples of Damascus were in danger because of him
  
- But Saul was not in charge
- God was in charge of this trip
- He had plans for this man

- He would soon discover what great things he must suffer for Jesus's sake
- All the things of which Saul was convinced would soon be washed away
- His fury would be quenched
- His pride would be brought to humility
- The falsehood he promoted and that made him take action would be corrected
- The truth would win out
- He would embrace it
- Bending His knee before Jesus, the wonderful Messiah
- Here's where that story begins...

#### Acts 26:13

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

- The most radiant light he had ever seen didn't compare to the radiance of Christ
- The light of the world
- The only light that can open blind eyes
- Even the blind eyes of a vicious persecutor
- This light - the One behind it - knocked him to the ground...

#### Acts 26:14

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

- This persecutor could not have been confused about the identity of the One speaking
- It could only be Jesus
- You persecute me, Jesus said
- Saul responded...

#### Acts 26:15

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

- For the first time, Saul acknowledges the truth about Jesus
- He responds in the way he should have responded when he first heard of Him
- The way in which every man will respond one day
- Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

- And Saul calls Him Lord
- He will continue to call Him Lord
- He testifies of His Lord even in this hearing before Agrippa
  
- He is changed permanently and gloriously by the Savior
- His sinful fury forgiven
- His past now a testimony to Christ, rather than a condemnation
- Saved for eternity
- Because he met Jesus

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