

## Viral Messages #16

### A Ruined Life

July 26, 2020

#### **Ruined**

1: to reduce to ruins: to devastate

#### **Devastate**

To lay waste

1: to bring to ruin or desolation by violent action

2: to reduce to chaos, disorder, or helplessness: to be overwhelmed.

With those two definitions in mind I have a question for you?

Can God use a ruined and devastated life?

I want you to know that our God desires to share His holiness with us. To take our ruined lives and create one that is altogether new. This does not happen in a vacuum. It is messy and it happens as our lives bump and collide into other lives.

Let me show you.

**(Turn with me to the book of [Acts chapter 9](#))**

We find Saul a learned and important man travelling on a dusty Judean road to a city called Damascus.

Beginning with verse 1, let's acquaint ourselves with this Pharisee and then join him on his journey to Damascus.

I want you to know that he, Saul has important orders to carry out and is in a hurry to reach his destination; and he's gonna get there, just not the way he planned.

**[\(Read Acts 9:1\)](#)**

For those of you who don't know much about Saul, he was a highly educated, high profile Pharisee, and was one of the religious elite of his day. He had a passion for his ancestors' faith and became a "Jew of Jews".

And one more thing, he absolutely hated the followers of Jesus.

From the time of Stephen's stoning (Acts 7), Saul began a persecution of the church as

**[Acts 8:3](#) states: "Saul, began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."**

Commentator A. T. Robertson adds, "Every breath that Saul breathed, was so that he might threaten and slaughter the church."

Saul was not just satisfied with persecuting the church at Jerusalem, but his lust for blood drew him to pursue those who had fled his persecution into the neighboring areas of Judea and Samaria.

So he went to the High Priest and asked for permission to seek the Christians out.

**(Read vs. 1-2)**

This was a man on a mission. Damascus was a hundred and forty miles away. Saul packs his bags and sets off with an accompanying police force to haul back all of the fugitive believers he could find.

**Vs. 3a "and it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus..."**

Now I want you to put yourself on that dusty road with Saul and watch as the illusion of his life gets put to the test.

**(Read Vs 3-5)**

I want you to know that for someone whose life was spent reading and studying Torah, nothing could be more horrifying than to be struck blind. You need to know that blindness was now Saul's reality. His old life is about to come to ruin. Once a proud Pharisee, now he is a helpless newborn believer. Saul then begins his walk with the Savior.

**(Read vs. 6-9)**

Saul now waits...and I want you to see how Saul's ruined life impacts someone who must now give up his fear and hatred.

**(Read vs. 10-14)**

Ananias is afraid, and rightly so. Christians don't lay hands on Saul of Tarsus; he lays his on them and throws them into prison or has them beaten, or both. Now his life is ruined.

**(Read vs. 15-16)**

Formerly a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent aggressor, now Saul is Christ's **"Chosen instrument."**

What an incredible example of God's infinite Grace.

Now would Ananias have the faith to demonstrate that grace by seeking out his enemy?

Can't you just hear him; **"You want me to do what Lord?" Go lay hands on who?**

Let him stay blind, he deserves it.

His answer is revealed in three simple words in [vs. 17](#). **"And Ananias departed"**.

**Please note here that when we accept the undoneness of our lives...new choices arise from the ashes...with the life of ruin, you have the same choices everyday...same ones everyday...**

Watch as Ananias fulfills God's mission of mercy.

The Greek word for mercy is "eleas". It means "compassion or pity". In our language it has some interesting meanings.

**"Mercy is a refraining from harming or punishing offenders; the power to grant clemency or forgiveness."**

**I want you to know, that in the Jewish mind mercy, Heseb is always something you do. It is a verb. Jesus taught that mercy was loading wounded people on donkeys, running to greet a runaway son, forgiving enormous debts, paying someone who worked an hour as much as the ones who had worked all day. Mercy was giving a party to those who can't pay you back.**

**Mercy is a verb.**

**(Read vs. 17).**

That must have been an incredible moment. The first word that Saul hears is not that of cursing, but of peace. The first word he hears from Ananias is **"Brother"**. The Hebrew word for **"brother"** means **"from the same womb"**.

Can you imagine such a greeting someone that Paul had planned to persecute and to kill. Mercy is a verb.

This new life of the beloved is radically different from that of the ruined life.

**(Read vs. 18-22)**

Look at the changes that happened.

- 1. He immediately regained his eyesight (18a)**
- 2. Shortly thereafter he was baptized (18b)**
- 3. Next, he spent time fellowshiping with the disciples in Damascus (vs. 19)**
- 4. After that, he began proclaiming in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God (vs. 20)**
- 5. He kept increasing in strength and persuasive wisdom, proving that Jesus is the Christ. (Vs. 22)**

From the ruins of an old religious life is born a man that we know as the Apostle Paul. You see, God wants to do so much more in our lives than just expose our sin and our need.

He wants to supply the grace of His Son, to ruin our old lives...heal us and make us whole.

He doesn't just want to expose the broken life within...he wants to destroy it. So that the beloved might arise...

**"Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is an illusion." Brennan Manning.**

**Illusion:**

**1: the action of deceiving b (1): the state or fact of being intellectually deceived or misled:**

**2 a (1): a misleading image presented to the vision (2): something that deceives or misleads intellectually b (1): perception of something objectively existing in such a way as to cause misinterpretation of its actual nature**

Being the beloved is our identity. It is the core of our existence.

The Apostle Paul later told the Corinthians what arose out of his “ruined” life

**[2 Cor. 4:7](#)**

**[2 Cor. 4:7](#) “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.”**

This realization of mercy applied to a ruined life brings Paul to view everything through the power of God...

**[\(Read vv. 8-10\)](#)**

When you read these verses most only pick up on the bad and hard things that Paul spoke of:

**“Hard pressed,” “perplexed,” “persecuted,” “struck down,”**

Somewhere, somehow, Paul chose in the moment that was presented to him, these things;

**“Not crushed”, “not in despair”, “not forsaken”, “not destroyed”,**

**“the life of Jesus” ...**

**Read Messy Spirituality pp. 29-30 M. Yaconelli**

Maybe you know someone who's in the midst of a ruined life. Maybe it's time to listen to God. You know there's something you should do. It's risky, and most of the time it won't be pleasant. Like Ananias, you could think of a couple of reasons not to go...but maybe it's time you listened...and moved. Your undone-ness ...just might change someone's world...and who knows maybe they will finally see God...

Selah.