

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting...”

Acts 9:3-5



Gustave Doré (altered)

THE RIGHT MESSENGER

SOME HEADS ARE HARDER THAN OTHERS. Look how simple it was for the Ethiopian eunuch: An angel sends Philip to him, and the disciple discovers him reading a passage from Isaiah—

“He was led as a sheep to slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He does not open his mouth.
In humiliation His judgment was taken away;
Who will relate His Generation?
For His life is removed from the earth.”

Acts 8:32-33

—and asks him if he understands what he is reading. “Of course not,” the Ethiopian replies. “I would need someone to guide me for that.” So Philip led him from the prophecies of Isaiah to the reality of the risen Christ. And since the Ethiopian immediately believed, he was baptized that same day.

And all that was required to add one more to the fold was a conversation with a simple peasant fisherman from Bethsaida.

Done. Neat and tidy.

So after that profitable visit, why didn't the angel send Philip to Saul of Tarsus to accomplish the same thing? After all, it worked the first time. No, for the future apostle to the Gentiles, this wouldn't do. As J. Parker writes, “Saul must be struck with lightning Divine.”



SOME HEARTS ARE HARDER THAN OTHERS.

Not too long before his conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul (Paul) had probably been present when Ste-

phen delivered his eloquent sermon before the elders and scribes, in which he led his audience—systematically, logically, which should have appealed to the logically minded Saul, Pharisee and student of Gamaliel—from Abraham to the Christ they had just murdered.

“Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it.”

Acts 7:52-53

Yet this lengthy, reasoned argument was insufficient to turn Saul’s heart toward Jesus the Christ. Indeed, just moments later he was complicit in the public stoning of Stephen.

But there was a voice to which Saul would pay attention. It wasn’t more words Saul needed to hear, for the address that finally took was dramatically succinct: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

For Saul, soon to become the great apostle of the Church, a more direct and powerful channel of salvation was necessary. Christ Himself had to open his eyes to the error of his ways—and to the invaluable force into which he would be shaped for the salvation and sanctification of millions.



Who will reach your neighbor for Christ? Who will reach your cousin, your sister, your child? Because some heads and hearts are harder than others, the Lord’s messengers are many and diverse. For some a simple invitation will be sufficient, a casual chat over a cup of coffee. For others it will require a traumatic, life-altering event they will not be able to ignore. It may take persistence, it may

be painful, it may require loss. But in every case the Lord will send just the right messenger to add one more soul to His Book of Life.

Will we answer His call when He asks us to be the one?



Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Colossians 4:5-6