

# Threats and Promises

## Acts 9:1-19

(Texts are from the First Nations Version of the New Testament)

I would never hire a mass murderer to be one of my primary public relations representatives. I wouldn't ask someone I cared for to be part of their rescue. I still have a thing or three to learn about God's ways – and about faith.

*Man Who Questions was on a rampage, breathing threats and murder against the followers of our Honored Chief, Creator Sets Free. He went to the chief holy man and asked for written documents to give to the tribal gathering houses in the village of Silent Weaver. This would permit him to take any followers of The Way, men or women, bind them in chains and take them to the Village of Peace.*

I find this short section packed with irony. A “man who questions” was seemingly without them in his focus to murder. A chief holy man was anything but. Mass murder by legal document turns the notion of law upside down. In a rare time where men and women are equal in Biblical writings it's because they are victims of conscience. The Village of Peace has become a place of terror.

1. What's it like for you to read this introductory section?
2. Do you think Saul was questioning anything?
3. Do you think Saul's focus on both men and women is part of his later belief that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female...” as part of his description of the community of Jesus; hate turned upside down?
4. Where does this fit into your understanding of theodicy?

## Acts 9: 3-9.

1. Why do you think Saul fell to the ground?
2. Why do you think the voice in the vision made Saul's actions personal to Him? What does this say about Heaven's knowledge of Saul's psyche?
3. What do you think is the significance of the Voice in the Vision telling Saul to stand up?
4. What was the purpose for Saul's blindness (I think it was cataracts by the way)?

## Acts 9: 10–16 (Jim, would you mind reading this section for the group?)

In our readings for this week there are two parallel vignettes where God talks to people directly. The name Ananias means *Creator shows Kindness*.

1. What do you think was the message to this follower of God when a vision that will address dealing with a mass murderer begins with “Creator shows Kindness”?

I find it interesting that Saul's vision focused on Jesus as the Persecuted One and the vision of Ananias begins with a focus on showing kindness.

2. Do you think Luke had a purpose in setting up this parallel?

One of my favorite interactions in the Bible is this one with Ananias's interaction with God.

3. What does this tell you about Ananias's relationship with God?
4. What do you think were the reasons God told Ananias Paul would suffer "in order to represent who I am"?

### Acts 9: 17-19

1. Why do you think Ananias placed his hands on Saul?
2. Do you think there is a reason why Ananias used the nomenclature for God of "Creator Sets Free" to describe who sent him to visit Saul?
3. What do you think is the significance of Saul becoming baptized immediately?

I find it an interesting parallel in Luke's story that the baptism of the eunuch and the baptism of Paul are told back to back.

4. Do you find any significance that those stories of baptism are sequential?

### To Wrap Things Up

1. Were there aspects of this story that are lessons for you?