



Confronted by Christ

Acts chapter 9 tells us the story of Saul (soon to become Paul) on a path from Jerusalem to Damascus with a mandate in his hand. Charged and empowered by the High Priest, Saul was set to hunt down, arrest and bring the followers of Jesus to Jerusalem. Once in Jerusalem, it would seem Saul's intent was to question, persecute and quite possibly, execute, the followers of Jesus, as he had done with Stephen (Acts 7:4 - 8:1). In telling this story, the book of Acts paints a picture of Saul as a man who was, in a word, *diligent*, in following his path, and in seeing his commission through to its end.

Not far from the gates of Damascus, Saul was suddenly and forcibly confronted. With a *light from heaven* shining down all around him, Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?* Without a moment's delay, Saul asked the only question any of us would've asked if we faced such a direct **confrontation**: *Who are you, Lord?* The Lord's reply was immediate: *I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

From that point in the story, we read of a period of confusion and blindness, a series of specific instructions, a name change, and the assignment of a new commission (Acts 9:1-31). Paul had been confronted by Christ and, as a result, would follow a new path. That new path would change everything.

One of the most interesting people in history to me would have to be the second-century Roman emperor, philosopher and warrior

king, Marcus Aurelius. Known as one of the five last great emperors of the Roman Empire, Marcus Aurelius ruled the vast Roman world from 161 – 180 A.D. A man of uncommon clarity, one of Marcus Aurelius' most famous wisdom writings states: *what stands in your path, becomes your path.* These words, and the wisdom therein, can be considered and applied to our lives in Christ Jesus: *As Jesus stands in our path and confronts us, and as we follow him, Jesus becomes our path.*

Jesus confronts us with the depths of his never-ending love and care for us.

I had a conversation with a friend not long ago as to how our lives in Christ Jesus can be far more of an experience, a **confrontation** if you will, than a mere pursuit of knowledge.

For me, life in Christ has taken place on a path, a specific path, and began with a **confrontation** of sorts to be sure. It all began with my eyesight falling apart at the age of 18. How I began to deal with the reality of that challenge and live my life despite, trusting in him, has been central to my path. In my own way, I'd been **confronted by Christ.**

Have you ever put yourself in Saul's shoes and wondered what that experience, that **confrontation**, must've been like? To be confronted so directly and unmistakably, in such a personal way, must've been truly something to experience. Yet, as Christ-followers, we don't often experience a "road to Damascus" type of **confrontation** in our daily lives.

More-often-than-not, we can be **confronted by Christ** in far more subtle, and no less meaningful, ways.

We can be **confronted by Christ** as a still, small voice that gently transforms us and leads us to experience the wonders of his grace, love and mercy. We can be **confronted by Christ** as we seek to forgive the wrongs done to us, or to make amends for the wrongs we've done to others. We can be **confronted by Christ** as we feel his comfort and tender mercies in the loss of a loved one, or in our own failing health, or in any other life circumstance or hardship that leaves us kneeling on the ground.

We can be **confronted by Christ** each year as we approach the Easter season. Jesus once again steps into our path and confronts us with the reality of his life, death and resurrection. Jesus confronts us with the depths of his never-ending love and care for us. He shines his light all around us. Our lives in him, and his indwelling life in us changes everything. We are transformed, and his life, his path, becomes our life and our path.

We can wonder about a sudden and forceful **confrontation by Christ**, such as the one Saul who became Paul, experienced. We can even make the mistake of believing that a "road to Damascus" type of **confrontation** is somehow better or more desirable. The truth is, Jesus confronts us everyday with his love and grace. Jesus steps into our path and calls to us, personally, in a direct and unmistakable way we need. As we yield to and follow him, Jesus becomes our path. As he does, Jesus changes everything. □

—Ed Dunn