



14 April 2008

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The Roads Best Travelled Part Thirty-one - The Road To Straight Street

(Based on Acts 9:1-19)

Have you ever felt compelled to do something which on rational inspections seemed rather risky? There are times in every person's life when there is a conflict of interest between the mind and the heart. Some people, of course, are natural risk takers and relish the thought of pushing out beyond comfort zones into uncharted waters and places of adventure. Some want to flirt with failure in an attempt to gain greater success or seriously rock the boat to see if treasure falls out.

But there is another kind of challenge which is inherently dangerous: one which carries such high margins of danger that it may be too overwhelming to consider.

Such was the challenge of the road to Straight Street . The most notorious of Christians has arrived in Damascus . What he had done in Jerusalem he now proposed to do in Damascus and he had the paperwork to authorise him to do it. His purpose was not to form an evangelistic encounter group to debate the meaning of life or the classical trilemmas of Christian thinking. He was in town to arrest, torture and arrest anyone who got in his way by belonging to the Way.

One such member of the Way was minding his own business when he had a vision. If his understanding was right he was being asked to go visit a home belonging to a man named Judas (not the greatest of associations) and ask for the murderer from Jerusalem by name. A certain reluctance on his part was understandable. This was a possible journey that could end badly – in fact it could end everything. He knew this was a big risk, but the vision, if he had got it right, included the information that this murderer was a changed man and was in fact the heir apparent to the title "Leading Messenger to the Rest of the World".

This change had to be recent because Ananias knew that Saul's journey from Jerusalem only started a few days ago. His task was to go meet this Saul and pass on a Divine commission.

The road to Straight Street must have been a road of anxiety. The vision seemed clear enough but what if he had misinterpreted? The information was at best concerning, at worst terrifying. In the battle between fear and courage Ananias chose to obey what he had seen and take the risk.

The steps to Judas' house on Straight Street were taken in faith responding to a vision. God still gives visions to us – not just in

churches but in the marketplace. It may be a vision for the kind of company you want to grow or the kind of job you want to pursue. It might be for the kind of employer you want to find or the dream you want to fulfil. What ever the vision it will take heartstopping steps of faith to follow it through and prove the truth of your original insight.

Ananias discovered that his overcoming of all his fear brought him into a bigger story. He was instrumental in releasing a human force full of the Spirit into the world that would change his own group "The Way" into an international movement.

Saul's road to Straight Street was also full of vision – so blinding he could not see. In their own ways both men were reluctant visitors to this house. But this meeting was the start of something big.

Maybe as you reflect on that something that you know you have to do which contains built in risk, you will test the vision but then take the same heartstopping steps of faith to follow what you must. I don't know whether your job will be to change the world or change someone who can change the world. Either way the challenge is to go straight ahead and obey the vision – eventually the scales will fall from your eyes.

Work well,

Geoff Shattock

If you would like some help reviewing your life, work or career path, we offer one-to-one coaching sessions for just such purposes. Please email comms@worknetuk.org for details.

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Here is some Biblical background for this week's Wake Up Call

Acts 9:1-19 Saul's Conversion

1Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called

to him in a vision, "Ananias!"
"Yes, Lord," he answered.

11The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

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