



Table Talk NL

By Rev. Timothy J. Swenson • I.L.T. Dean of Chapel



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The Third Sunday of Easter | April 19 2026

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THE NARRATIVE LECTIONARY - NL441

**ACTS 9:1-19A
(MATTHEW 6:24)**

Paul and Ananias, each called into Christ's service.

In this text, Luke presents the dramatic reversal of Saul of Tarsus—not as a story of human decision or gradual spiritual growth, but as the total, unilateral invasion of the crucified and risen Christ into a life utterly dead in religious zeal. God's Word, Jesus Christ, confronts Saul and has its way with him. This is the first distinction of Law and Gospel: God's Word kills and makes alive (Dt. 32:39). It brings the death of the old being and the creation of the new ex nihilo—out of nothing. God alone works this... God alone acts... The Law slays, the Gospel raises, and the external Word and Sacrament deliver everything.

"And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4)

confident in its own righteousness (cf. Phi. 3:4-6). This is the universal human condition: every sinner, even (especially) a devout one, is an active enemy of the living God.

But... God lies in wait! He ambushes Saul. "Suddenly a light from heaven shone around him" (v. 3). Jesus does not wait for Saul's consent or offer an invitation. He confronts this pious sinner: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (v. 4). This confrontation delivers the Law in its most radical form—not a gentle nudge, but a killing blow. Luther puts it this way in his Antinomian Disputations: Paul is first "thrown down by the law" before he is raised by the Gospel. The voice does not debate Saul, seeking his intellectual assent, nor does it appeal to a decision of Saul's free will. The voice identifies Saul's crusade against the church as an attack on Christ Himself. >>



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