

Acts 9:1–19 // “Paul” // SENT

#12

Update from the Weekend

- LAST WEEKEND was ridiculous, we had **more than 1000** of you commit to go on a short-term trip (in addition to those already going), which means we’ll probably have close to 1100 of you going on short-term international trips this year
- As of last weekend, **400** of us are pursuing a mid-term assignment (1 month to 2 years)
- And **143** are pursuing a long-term (2+ year) international missions or overseas work assignment (44 of those are set to go out within the year!)
- **22 new people** began pursuing our DWELL initiative (explain) last week, and with the **58 that have already relocated**, that brings out total to 70.

Summit Church: We say we believe we should **judge our success** by our sending capacity, not our seating capacity! God is **giving to us exceedingly abundantly** above all we can ask or think!

Could we thank God for this together?

Never knew we had so many excited about leaving!

Introduction

ACTS 9: We’re still in cold and sickness season... and one of the things I hate the most is when I first feel the oncoming symptoms of a cold—*know what I’m talking about?* I think I hate that more than the actual cold, knowing it is coming (the tickle in your throat, cloudy head).

- Then I always face the dilemma: **ZICAM**. Some people swear by it...

- On the other hand, I have medical friends who mock me when I use it: “Might as well be **rubbing crystals** on your body or sprinkling moon dust on your food,” or, whatever. Essential oils; snake oils.
- Just out of curiosity... **HOW MANY?**
- In fact, **all my kids are sick right now...** they’ve been a handful to deal with... running fevers, throwing up, diarrhea... V and I couldn’t wait to drop them off at childcare this morning so someone else could deal with them. Just kidding. Don’t bring your kids when they are sick.

I TELL YOU THAT BECAUSE This weekend I want to give you **4 signs** the Spirit of God is at work in you and you are about to be converted...

- **FOUR symptoms** you’re coming down with a case of regeneration... signs you are about to get sick; these are signs you are about to get saved
- **They are in this story of Paul**

Acts 9:1–19

[9:1] But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

[3] Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. [4] And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

- First of all, notice how Jesus takes persecution against his church. “*Why are you persecuting ME?*”
- **Jesus does not see the church as an “it,” or a building, but as “me.”** He has so united himself to his church that they are one and the same.
 - That’s going to throw Paul off... he’s going to say in a minute, “Uhh... wait, who are you? I’d never persecute someone as ‘bright’ as you.” But, see: there is no so separation **between him and them.**

- Here's what I want to say to you:
 - ***There is no separation between love for Jesus and commitment to his church.***
 - Jesus calls the church his "**BRIDE.**" **You can't love Jesus and hate his bride**, any more than you could tell me, "J.D., you're great, we'd like to have you over for dinner... but I hate that skank Veronica."
- I say that, because I am talking to many people in our community that say they love Jesus but are only marginally involved in the church.
 - **I'm telling you, there is no question at all, based on the Bible, that you should be very involved in a local church.**
 - You need to join, and get involved in ministry. Be a contributing member.
 - And I know a lot of you **consumers don't like that** because you prefer "fast food," "**one night stand**" spirituality, but you're in sin...
 - You say, "**Well, the church embarrasses me.**" It embarrasses Jesus, too. And so do you. **If he identifies with** embarrassing, broken things like you, and the church, why would you think you're too good to identify with the church?
 - **1st sign of God at work in you:** disgusted with the church
 - **2nd level:** disgusted with yourself
 - **3rd level:** you re-enter the church, not as a Pharisee to condemn but a fellow beggar in desperate need of grace

[5] And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. [6] But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

- Later, when Paul recounts this moment in Acts 26:12–18, he reports something else Jesus said right there, inbetween those two phrases. Here's how he said it: "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.**" (Acts 26:14)
- **Goads:**
 - A goad was this **prod jabbed into the back** of an ox's leg. Kicking against them.
 - **What had been prodding against Saul?** The death of Stephen. Unanswered questions about Jesus. The way Christians died. It didn't make sense.

- These goads were bothering Paul, wounding him, so he was kicking against them. (Getting more violent)

[7] The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

- You see, **that's what happens in conversion:** people around you encounter the same things, but they can't hear the voice of God in it!
- They read the same books, hear the same sermons, encounter the same questions... but it just sounds like noise to them... but in these things **you hear the voice of God.**

[8] Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. [9] And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- Get the picture:
 - Saul **the mighty**, now kneeling before God.
 - Saul, the **one who thought he saw so clearly**, now being led by the hand because he is blind.
 - Saul, the **one who seized others**, now seized himself by the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Saul, **the hammer who broke** others, now himself broken on the anvil of Christ.

Saul would soon change his name to "Paul," which means "small."

- "Saul" was a strong Jewish name, the name of the first, mighty king of Israel.
- **Saul the mighty has become Paul the small.**

[10] Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

[11] And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,

- At this point, Ananias said, "Say what? For a minute there I thought you said, 'Saul of Tarsus.' Yeah, **good one, Jesus.**" That would be like Jesus, about 5 years ago, having to you, "**I want you to go down to the 7-11**

because I've got a guy I want you to meet and take to church and let stay at your house. His name is Osama bin Laden. Tall guy, turban, ZZ Top kind of beard. You can't miss him."

for behold, he is praying [12] and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." [13] But Ananias answered, "Lord, (I don't mean to object, but) I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. [14] And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."

[15] But the Lord said to him, "Go (It's amazing how much time church leaders in Acts spend arguing with Jesus), for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. [16] For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

[17] So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [18] And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. And when he opened his eyes, everything looked different.

Then he rose and was baptized.

4 signs that you are being converted

(4 realizations you have that show the Spirit of God is working in you)

1. God has been pursuing you

- Paul had the goads prodding him...
- Some of you have those things. Maybe **unanswered questions** about life, death, or God. Maybe you've seen the **joy** in a Christian friend's life as they've gone through pain, and you've thought, "I don't have that." **Love** in the Christian community. You're **here**

this weekend and it happened again in worship, and it's no accident.

- **Sometimes these goads are painful**, and you resist them, kick against them.
- **C. S. Lewis was an atheist literature professor at Oxford** when he came to faith in Christ. One of the things he'd write a lot about after that was how he could see how God had been pursuing him the whole time.
 - And sometimes it was really painful... He called himself "the most dejected, reluctant convert in all of England... drug into the kingdom kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape."

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (Chronicles of Narnia)*, he tells this story about Eustace, one of the main characters, who is this young boy who has developed an **evil heart** and **becomes a dragon**. He wants to escape being a dragon so Aslan, the Lion who represents Jesus, leads him to this fountain of pure water to bathe in. (Lewis writes this in Eustace's voice, but literary scholars say this is Lewis talking about his own experience):

The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain. But the lion [Aslan] told me I must undress first.

So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and, instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bathe.

But just as I was going to put my feet into the water I looked down and saw that (the skin on my feet was) all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as it had been before.

¹ *Surprised by Joy* (ch. 14, p. 266).

[So Eustace then repeats the process a second and third time, growing increasingly despairing.]

Then the lion said, 'You will have to let me undress you.' I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it.

The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.

Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off – just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times, only they hadn't hurt – and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly-looking than the others had been. Then he caught hold of me – I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I'd no skin on – and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone. And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again."

- He's ripping away skin from you. Prodding you.
- And it's **painful**, but listen... it's **not punishment!** It's not because **God hates you**; it's because he loves you.
- The way we say it: "God is not trying to pay you back, but bring you back." It's not **retribution**; it's **restoration!**
- **Are you feeling these goads? Are-you-listening?**
 - (BTW, ladies: the theme of our conference for you...)

2nd realization...

2. You've been blind

- Paul's blindness is given as a picture of all people separated from Christ. There are primarily **two forms** of spiritual blindness:
- **The first is IRRELIGIOUS blindness:**
 - You believe that your way is better than God's, or you don't need God.

- And so you pursue what the Bible calls "sin." Sin's **middle letter is "l."** I'd rather be in charge because I probably know better than God.
- And usually, at first, **things are great.** Sin can be a **lot of fun.** (When I was a teenager there was an **old, country preacher** who used to preach at our youth group that would be like, *"Sin ain't fun!"* and my thought was, "Well, you ain't doing it right.")
- But **then you wake up** and realize you've got a string of **broken relationships**; you're **unhappy**; (you never can meet the **right guy**, maybe if you moved to a **new city** everything would be better, life seems to be getting more complicated...)
- Finally, you realize, **I've been blind.** I've been treating God like the enemy and he's not.
- Some of you are in that category, and I hope you see that and quite kicking against the goads this weekend.
- **The second form of blindness is religious blindness.** You think you can be good enough to earn God's approval; that if you just try hard and keep the rules good enough than God will accept you.
- **Quick theology lesson:** two things happened to us when we sinned...
 - **Spiritually, we died:** Our love for God died, and we began to worship all kinds of things in the place of God
 - The human heart, as John Calvin said, became an idol factory, **constantly coming up with things** that matter more to us than God.²
 - **The result was that God's laws** to love and serve and glorify him became unnatural to us.
 - We **resist them**, and when we do try keep them we **chafe against them.**
 - **Think of it like a METAL BAR: ORIGINAL SHAPE; SNAPS** (Hypocrite. Snap spiritually.)

² Our desires were corrupted. We began to desire the wrong things.

- ~~If you try to change your heart through the law, like Paul did, it won't work.~~
- **Naked:**
 - **In reality**, naked before we sinned. Athanasius: clothed in love and acceptance of God.
 - **Now shame. Guilt. Something wrong.** So what do you do when you feel naked? Seek to clothe.
 - The **place we turned** was good works...
 - *Which means that, really, our good works are done for self-justification, which means that we're ultimately **self-interested** in our works (Spurgeon's horse)*
- The problem with our good deeds is that they are **hypocritical** (covering up the actual shape of hearts) **and they are ultimately selfish.** *And they're often done for pride—to prove to ourselves, and to others, how good we are.*
- *This is what Luther called the “evil of our good deeds.”* (He said we know we need to repent of our sin, but we also need to repent of the bad motives for our righteousness)
- Well, good works, done from a spiritually dead heart and as an attempt to self-justification, *leads to weariness... and constant comparison: how am I stacking up?*
 - **Comparison leads to either pride or despair**, pride when you're doing well; despair when you aren't, usually in cycles;
 - Which **leads to jealousy**;
 - **Jealousy turns into hatred and fear** (they threaten me); hatred and fear lead to violence.
 - That's why **some religious people like Paul are the meanest people** on the planet.
 - Paul was really “good,” you see, but he is not very nice.
 - When atheists talk about the problem religion causes I often say, “You're exactly right!”

In contrast to this is the gospel. A gift of grace. Jesus Christ dying in our place, paying the penalty for our sin, clothing us in his righteousness, giving us in his resurrection the power of new life and a new heart.

- GRACE: God's Riches At Christ's Expense

And when Paul experienced that, it changed his heart. He was blind, but now he could see. His spiritual sight consisted in 3 things:

3 characteristics your eyes are opened:

A. A sense of **WONDER** (~~instead of entitlement~~)

- **Instead of a sense of entitlement and pride**, “*Well, of course, God accepts me and approves of me; I'm better than everyone else,*” Paul was filled with wonder, saying, “I can't believe God saved me.”
- My wife and I heard **Elyse Fitzpatrick** speak at an event last week was also speaking at. She said that one of the signs God has really awakened you is you **spend time laughing** at your Christian experience. “Laughter?” she says... “Well, *what's the joke?*” “I am the joke.” He chose me!
- **I want to tell you something:** I'm kind of a **disappointment to myself**. I thought that by this point in my life I'd have progressed farther in the Christian life. But I haven't.
 - I'm not a man who loves to **pray**
 - I struggle with **self-control, materialism**
 - I am surprised, sometimes at the **jealousies** of my heart
 - **Love for God**. Half the time the love is weak, cold
 - Sometimes I ask, “How can I be saved?”
- *I have been reading the letters of John Newton... As an old man, he said, “By this point I thought I'd be different. Always love to pray. Not jealous. Not controlled by money. Love for God is cold.”*
 - I thought, “This is me!”
 - He said, “The reason God allows us to continue to struggle all of our life with indwelling sin is he wants us to grow ever more amazed at his grace.”
 - DMLJ says: “**The ultimate test of our spirituality is our amazement at the grace of God.**”
 - **Most people measure their spirituality**, you see, by some perfection in a spiritual fruit: how **patient** they are; how

long they pray; how often they **share Christ**. (Paul's was how well he kept the law!)

- The problem is that on **this side of heaven**, we have our sinful flesh, which is always at work in us, and we'll **constantly be discouraged if we look within**.
- **God always wants us** looking outside, to the **finished work** of Christ, **not inward**, to our progress in righteousness.
- **So God allows us to struggle all our days** with indwelling sin so that we will grow **ever more wondrous** at the grace of God.
- DMLJ says: **"The ultimate test of our spirituality is our amazement at the grace of God."**
- **Most of us, you see, think of Christian growth as getting to a place where we don't need the grace of God that much. *Isn't that right?*** Look how **patient** I am! How **generous** and **kind**! But we're never going to make final progress on these things on this side of heaven.
 - **On this side of heaven, spiritual growth is not getting to a place where you don't feel like you need the grace of God, but growing ever more wondrous of it.**
- **Paul would from this point on be filled with that wonder**—he would laugh, I'm the joke! 1 Tim 1:15: *Christ Jesus came to save sinners! (that's me, I am one!)... of whom I am chief!* And so instead of hypocrisy, Paul became characterized by **B. TRANSPARENCY (instead of hypocrisy)**.
 - Paul would from this point on **constantly admit his failings**. "I am the chief of sinners. The law tells me not to covet, I covet. I find then a law, what when I want to do good, evil is present with me... (Romans 7)."
 - He doesn't want people, you see, **admiring his flesh**; he wants people **running to his Savior**.
 - I'm **tired of listening to preachers** and teachers who make me think they have it all together all the time. They can't

help me, and I can't help you if I'm not honest about the evil of my own heart.

- (Like I've told you: One **beggar telling other beggars** where to find bread.)
- when I cease to be a beggar, I can't help you!
- And after that happened Paul became a man characterized by **C. GRACIOUSNESS and GENEROSITY (instead of hatred and pride.)**
 - The man who wrote **1 Cor 13** (*love is patient; kind; bears all, believes all*) was once a murderer.
 - Paul said in **Romans 9**... I would die and go to hell for you I could! Think of that! Previously he'd **bound his enemies** in chains, hauled them off to prison and told them to go to hell; now he is saying he would gladly **go to hell** for them!
 - **Those who believe and behold the gospel become like the gospel.**
 - I told you Saul's new name, "Paul," meant "small." Ananias, means "the Lord is gracious!" Paul would spend the rest of his days talking about himself as a small man who was the recipient of the lavish grace of God!
 - **Eph 2:8**: "It is by grace," Paul would teach, "we have been saved by faith" in what Christ has done.
 - **You don't have to be good at being good for God to love you; it's not about trying, but trusting; not about your success in doing but your faith in what has been done.**
 - It is by grace you have been saved through faith, Paul would say, and **nothing is of yourselves**. Not according to our works, so there's no reason to boast."
 - And as you **remember that grace of the Lord Jesus Christ** toward us, Paul said, that though he was rich, for our sake became poor, so that we could become rich, doesn't that make you want to be that way to others?
 - We who have received **Christ's unspeakable gift**, Paul says, won't we become **kind one to another**, tender-hearted, forgiving one another...

- **Instead of fear**, Paul, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...”*
- Instead of **jealousy and pride**, we *“let this mind be in us which is in Christ Jesus, who though he was God took upon himself the form of a servant...”*
- Instead of **anger and wrath**, we’d put away all **malice, wrath and evil speaking**, never **avenging ourselves**, refusing to repay evil for evil and overcoming evil with good, the way that God overcame us.
- Instead of **picking up the sword to repay**, we’d pick up the cross to save. Instead of our **rights to demand**, we take up the towel to serve.
- **Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I’m found; was blind, but now I see.**
 - That was Paul’s experience.
- The gospel **did what religion could NEVER do**: it changed Paul’s heart.
 - Religion can make you conform, but only gospel can transform
 - Religion can make you obey... but God is not just looking for obedience
 - Not by exhortation, but revelation

3. Your past does not disqualify you from God’s grace

- Paul was a murderer. His **conversion scandalized Ananias**, and the church. Jesus had to say, **vs. 15, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine...**
- **Real grace is always scandalous.**
- John Newton: A slaveship trader. He said he looked up on those slave ships with horror! He said, *“That was me! I did it freely.”*³ He

³ “[There is no] commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, as the African Slave Trade [of which I was involved]. The slave trade was always unjustifiable; but inattention and personal interest prevented me, for a time, from perceiving the evil. . . . [But now] I am bound in conscience to take shame to myself by a public confession, which, however sincere, comes too late to prevent or repair the misery and mischief to which I have formerly been accessory. I hope it will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me, that I was once an

never got over the scandal of grace that was extended toward him! And so he wrote: *“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I’m found; was blind, but now I see.”*

- In some hymnals, people have changed the words, “Wretch like me,” to **“saved and strengthened me”** or “saved and set me free.” If you do a **little research** why it was changed, you’ll find out it is because some churches didn’t like the concept of being wretches that needed to be saved. That’s too humiliating.
- **But the Bible teaches you are a wretch.** You are spiritually dead, and naked. You **don’t need to be strengthened** or improved.
- I’ve told you before **my problem with the word “saved”**: improved or enhanced?
 - Remember **Aslan’s claw**: it’s got to go deep! TO THE HEART!
- And here’s the thing: *if I am not wretch, God’s grace is not that amazing.*
- God has determined to glorify himself in the saving of sinners and the deeper the depravity, the greater God’s glory in showing grace.
- There are **two things about the gospel** that are really difficult to believe. *That you are so bad that Jesus had to die to save you; that he was so gracious he was glad to die to save you!*
- Which do you have more trouble believing?
 - **That you were so bad** he had to die? Here’s how you know: does hell offend you? If so, it probably because you don’t think you’re that bad. My question: “do you think you deserve to go to hell?” YOU ARE THAT BAD
 - Or is it that he was **so loving he was glad** to die to save you?
 - **Conversion is a dual realization: I’m worse than I ever dreamed and he is more gracious than I’d ever hoped.**

active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders.” (From “Thoughts on the African Slave Trade”)

- Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a *wretch* like me... **Jesus saved Saul the murderer**. He saved John Newton the slave trader. He can save a wretch like you.

4. Your past does not disqualify you from future usefulness

- Look at vs. 15 again, **vs. 15** “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles *and kings* and the children of Israel.” To stand before *kings*!
- God took the **greatest enemy** of the church, with the **blood of God’s saints** on his hands, and put him **before kings**, with the **salvation of the world** on his lips!
 - Never forget that the church’s greatest missionary was once it’s greatest enemies.
- Here is one of the **greatest mysteries of the gospel**: **The greater the damage of sin, the greater your usefulness in redemption!**
- It’s as if God loves to take **greatest brokenness** so that he can show off his **great power to save**.
 - Again: The **greater the need for grace**, the greater God’s glory in bestowing it.
- So, to Paul, he says, “**Get up, you murderer, I have a plan for you. You’re going to save the lives of millions.**”
- **Question: What makes you feel disqualified?** Some horrible, embarrassing **mistake** from your past? Been in **prison**? Bad **marriage**? Continual **struggle** you have with the flesh...
 - **THINK YOU’RE BAD, too bad for God to use...? GOOD NEWS: YOU’RE WORSE!**
- **IN FACT**, those things that make you bad are the very things God intends to use as **instruments of redemption!**

- Paul said (2 Cor)⁴, “**God allowed us to be afflicted so that we might comfort those with the comfort wherewith we were comforted.**”
- *I think of it like this*: When Israel sinned, and was **bitten by the serpents**... God told Moses to take a bronze serpent and put it on a pole... those who looked in faith at the serpent on the pole were saved. Don’t you think those who had been healed immediately began to help others? They knew the pain and urgency.
 - **That’s why God saved you** from the circumstances he saved you from, so you would be able to better help those in the same circumstances.
- Sometimes the **sin you struggle with** and the **pain you go through** make you **uniquely qualified** to speak redemption to others in the same condition.

Conclusion (music)

Let me end this by saying, 1st of all, a couple of things to the church, and then something to those of you whom God is drawing to himself, maybe for the first time:

To the church:

- **Have you lost the wonder of God’s grace?** Maybe we are like **Ananias**. The church is always like Ananias, unsure if God is that gracious or powerful.
 - **Whom are you looking for to be saved?**
 - Do you believe God’s Spirit can do this?
- **In your life: have you lost the wonder? How often do you reflect** on your own salvation? Have you **heard your story** again in Paul’s?

⁴ 2 Cor 1:4

- The **fountain of the Christian life** is the experience of grace. You never move on from it! You keep coming back here.
- **Luther:** “To progress is always to begin again.”
- You don’t **grow as a Christian** by moving on from the gospel, but by constantly going **deeper into** the gospel.
- *When **we’ve been there 10,000 years** bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise, than when we’ve first begun!*
- *PETER: ANGELS LONG TO LOOK INTO THESE THINGS!*

Now, for some of you, for the first time some things in your life began to make sense. Questions about God. Unsure if you are right with God, if you died if you’d be accepted by him...

- Do you see how **God has been pursuing** you?
- That you are **blind**... you are a wretch?
- **Do you believe Jesus can save** you, like he said he could, and that **he has a plan** for you?
- He stands today with **outstretched hand:**
 - *Come, all you who are **burdened and heavy laden** and I will give you rest.*
 - ***Come every soul by sin oppressed**, there’s mercy with the Lord, and he will surely give you rest, by trusting in his word.*
 - ***Come, EVERYONE WHO THIRSTS, COME TO THE WATER; HE WHO HAS NO MONEY, COME BUY AND EAT***
 - ***SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY COME; LET HIM WHO HEARS SAY COME; LET HIM WHO IS THIRSTY, COME; WHOSOEVER WILL, MAY COME!***

Invitation

LEAD IN PRAYER

SHOW OF HANDS

I’M GOING TO ASK YOU TO GET UP

Bullpen:

- **If you are too good for the church, you're probably too good for Jesus, too.**
- Nero beheaded him. A year later, Nero, out of fear he'd be assassinated, committed suicide. And today people name their dogs Nero and their sons "Paul." If your name is Nero, my apologies.
- Saul, the murderer, would say, "There is therefore no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus."
- Saul, the Pharisee of the Pharisees, would say, "I count all things as loss for the excellency..."
- Saul, the one who dragged off families...
-
- Very religious, but blind.
- Paul had been a Pharisee; he had a lord and master—it was moral righteousness, and he was meticulous about his keeping of the law, but it had turned him into one who was covetous and without love, murderous
- Philippians 3?
- Jesus Storybook Bible?
- See Arthur Glasser, Paul and the Missionary Task, in *Perspectives*, 127–34
- After Paul is converted: he spends 3 years in Arabia/Damascus (there are 3 years between Acts 9:23 & 26, see Galatians 1:17–18)
- He flees for Jerusalem, then again from there (Acts 9:23–29)
- Paul really disappears off of the scene until Acts 11:19–21. It was during this period he evidently a) had the vision of the temple

confirming his apostolic call to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17–21); and perhaps b) underwent significant persecution (2 Cor 11:23–27); and c) had the ecstatic experience of 2 Cor 12:1–4

- Paul's real prominent ministry doesn't start for at least 3 years!
- "After God called the Apostle Paul, he stays 3 years before he ever goes to Jerusalem (Gal 1:17–18). Even then they weren't ready for him, and he is totally out of the picture until Acts 11:19–21. God takes time to prepare his people before putting them into the game."

Acts 26:12–18

[12] "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. [13] At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. [14] And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' [15] And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. [16] But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, [17] delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you [18] to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Acts 9:19–22

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. [20] And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." [21] And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" [22] But Saul increased all the

more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.