

The Stories We Tell (Part 1): Breaking In

Introduction

The Text

- A. We finished up last week with Philip and the eunuch and now we come to, perhaps, one of the most compelling stories in all the book of Acts, in all the Bible really: the conversion of Saul—whom we know better by his Roman name, Paul . . .

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

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, 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 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, 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. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened. 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.” (Acts 9:1–20)

Everybody Loves a Good Story

- A. Everybody loves a good story—stories of adventure, or fantasy, of science fiction, or history.
1. You see it from an early age, in young children, begging their parents to read to them before bed. Or when they’re bouncing on grandpa’s knee, asking him to tell them yet another tale from his days as a younger man.
 2. My family and I recently visited Disneyland, and I think is why the place has the allure that it does. It’s not just about the rides. It’s about the stories that the rides immerse you in.

- a. That's why people are willing to shell out thousands of dollars just to come in.
 - b. That's why, when they do come in, they enter through the gates with mouse ears on their heads; or masks over their faces; wearing long, sparkly princess dresses; or waving around their glowing lightsabers.
 - i. And, of course, to be clear: if you've ever been, you know, it's not just kids doing this. There are a good share of adults who are engaged in this sort of questionable behavior as well—people who should know better, right? ;)
 - (1) You're a tech exec every other day of the year.
 - (2) But when you're at Disneyland, suddenly you're a Jedi or a Sith or Mr. Incredible or Jack Sparrow or whoever.
 - 3. But, you see, we don't really grow out of this. Stories are not just for kids. Adults enjoy them too.
 - a. That's why we're captivated by the movies and the theater, and we're always streaming shows on our various devices—probably more hours than we should.
- B. Everybody loves a good story. But I wonder if you realize:
- 1. You and I, all of us, we're not just story-listeners, we're also story-tellers.
 - 2. And we don't just tell stories about others. We tell stories about ourselves.
 - 3. And we don't just tell stories about ourselves to others. We tell stories about ourselves to ourselves. All the time.
 - a. This is part of what builds into our self-image, and starts to fill out the way we see and perceive ourselves—who we are, what we're about, why we do what we do.
 - b. We're always interpreting, re-interpreting, putting our spin on things, telling stories.
 - i. "I'm a hard-worker, I'm a family-man, I'm a good person, I'm a victim, I'm smart, I'm funny, I'm right . . . and here's why . . . [insert story here]."
- C. Now, I begin this way, because I think that's what's happening with Saul in our text. He's been telling himself a story for quite some time—about God, about himself, about others.
- 1. And he believes it. He wants to believe it. His identity and self-worth are wrapped up in it.
 - 2. But it's false. It's not true. And it's keeping him from seeing the truth.
 - a. So Jesus is here, in mercy, going to break in.
 - i. He's telling a different story—one that's initially offensive to Saul, and he doesn't want it to be true, but it is.
 - ii. Nevertheless, by the end of our text, wouldn't you know it, Paul will be telling that same story too.
 - (1) Because he comes to see: it's not just true, it's good.

D. So this morning, as we look at this text, we're going to identify and move through three phases with the apostle Paul: (1) Vain Imaginings; (2) Bright Confrontations; and (3) Open Eyes.

1. And it's my hope that, in some way, Jesus will move all of us through these three phases here today as well.

(1) Vain Imaginings

Returning to Saul

A. We haven't seen Saul in a bit. It's been kind of a nice reprieve. The last time we did see him, it was much of the same: he was hunting for Christians.

1. He was there at the execution of Stephen in [Acts 7](#) and in [Acts 8:1](#) we're told that he "approved" of it.
2. It seems, really, that he was, in many ways, the catalyst for the great persecution that arose from there. For Luke goes on to write: "¹ And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" ([Acts 8:1-3](#)).
3. As the people scattered about the region, we'd like to have thought that maybe Saul would lose some steam—as if perhaps just cleansing Jerusalem of this "Christian filth" would have been enough for him.
 - a. But now, as we come to the opening verses of [Acts 9](#), sadly, we realize that he's not seemed to have slowed down in the slightest.
 - i. If they're running away, he's running after them . . .

B. Look again at [vv. 1-2](#): "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."

What Was the Story?

A. And I just want to know: What was the story Saul was telling himself to justify the harshness and the brutality?

1. Because this guy's a Pharisee. He's deeply religious (or superficially so, depending on your perspective). He seems to care about truth and morality and love.
 - a. He's not a member of Hell's Angels or something, where you might expect okay he's going to be violent, he's got a temper on him. He's not a thug.
 - b. He's a man of the cloth. He's a man of God.

- i. So what in the world is he doing—chasing after people “breathing threats and murder” (v. 1)?

(1) What story is he telling himself that makes all this seem okay?

- B. Though it may not be particularly plain in our text here, the answer to this becomes quite clear elsewhere.

1. The fact is, it seems to me, he imagined that, in all this, he was actually serving God. That’s what he told himself anyway.
2. He imagined God would be well-pleased with his efforts to stomp out such an heretical reinterpretation and recasting of the Jewish Scriptures and religion.

- a. “These Jewish Christians are threatening the very heart of our historic faith. They’re blasphemers. They’re worshipping a mere man. They’re putting him on par with God, calling him the Son of God. We’re monotheists.”

- i. Every day, the good Jew, like Paul, would rise and recite those well-worn words of the Shema, which begin there in Deut. 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

(1) He is one. He is not two.

(2) If you want to worship Jesus, you leave YHWH.

(a) And you deserve to be punished for your error.

(b) And I will do so, lest it spread to others. This Christianity, this “Way” (v. 2), it’s a cancer. And I will not let it metastasize.

- C. Perhaps he imagined himself something along the lines of Phinehas in the OT (cf. Num. 25). Do you remember him?

1. There was sin in the camp, idolatry, syncretism with the people around them, compromise.
2. And as a result there was a plague brought on them from God.
3. And Phinehas—brave, courageous, righteous Phinehas—he saw some of that going down in their camp there and, in his zeal for God, he hunts down one of the perpetrators and drives a spear right through him.

- a. And, here’s the kicker: God doesn’t condemn him for that, he commends him. And the plague stops because of what he did.

- i. And I imagine Paul was living in that kind of story. “This is who I am. This is why I’m doing what I’m doing. YHWH would be pleased.”

- D. Later, when he looks back and talks about this season of his life, that’s certainly the impression that we get. He gives us windows into the motivations of his heart and we get a sense of the kind of story he must have been telling himself in it all.

1. So in Acts 22, when he's defending himself before that Jewish mob, he says: "³ I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women,⁵ as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished" (vv. 3-5).
 - a. Don't you hear it? I was educated by the best in Israel, strict in the law, zealous for God, so zealous that I was looking to punish these Jewish Christians. Why? Because of their blasphemy.
 2. In Gal. 1:13-14, he writes this: "¹³ [Y]ou have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers."
 - a. He didn't see himself as going backwards in this. He was advancing. He was zealous for the traditions of his fathers. He was defending the faith. He was standing for YHWH, for the Lord.
 3. In Phil. 3 (which we shall return to later), he writes: "⁴ If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (vv. 4-6).
 - a. How do you know I was zealous for God? I persecuted the church. Because they seemed to me to be aberrant, dangerous, a threat.
- E. So he didn't feel bad as he chased them down, tied them up, and even killed them. He felt justified. He felt good about himself.
1. He imagined God would give him a hearty "Well done, good and faithful servant" . . .
 2. . . . when, truly, were he to die that day on the road, he would hear "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Woven Around Our Eyes

- A. And that's the danger with the stories we tell ourselves.
1. Sometimes we weave the narrative so tightly around us, that it actually starts to block our eyes. We don't see things the way they really are anymore. We're not open to it, because it threatens our self-image, our self-worth.
 - a. And if ever someone does try to come and say: "Hey I don't think that's right," or "Your story isn't true"—like Stephen did with Paul—we plug our ears, we gnash our teeth, we rush at the naysayers—we kill them if we have to.

B. Another thing we do: we call in for reinforcements, and we circle the wagons.

1. We can always find some others who will tell us what we want to hear. So we surround ourselves with people who will agree with us, and reinforce our preconceived ideas.

a. This is Paul going to the “high priest” there. Did you see it?

- i. He’s got a whole community of folks, who agree with him, who support him, who look up to him and are inspired by him.
- ii. The religious authorities endorse his mission. They’re telling the same story about God, about themselves, about these Christians. How could he be wrong?

(1) But they’re all trapped in the same self-spun web. And they can’t get out.

C. And, you know, we’re all prone to this sort of thing in one way or another.

1. We tell ourselves stories that, perhaps unbeknownst to us, keep us at a distance from God, because they keep us from facing the honest truth about him and about ourselves.

- a. I don’t know what it may be for you.
- b. But I do know what you need if you’re ever going to get out of it: You need an intervention. You need a collision with the truth, something that will jar you enough that you wake up and you’re willing to face it.

i. In other words, you need Jesus to break in!

D. If we’re going to move from our Vain Imaginings we need a Bright Confrontation . . .

(2) Bright Confrontations

A Sovereign Smackdown?

A. Look at vv. 3-4 again: “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?’”

B. How amazing is this chain of events! Did you notice?

- 1. Paul is not seeking this out. He is not opening on his own to Jesus. He is running in the opposite direction. He is telling a different story.
- 2. But, no matter. Jesus just speaks over him. He interrupts him, you could say. He stops him dead in his tracks. He knocks him down. It’s like Saul just runs into a brick wall—named Jesus. And he just falls to the ground.

- a. And we might think, at first glance, this seems a bit hairy for Saul. It looks like Jesus is about to give this poor man a whooping. He's literally "laying the smackdown." He throws him to the floor . . .
- C. But there are a couple details here that immediately push against such an interpretation.
 - 1. For one thing, this light that's shining—"brighter than the [noonday] sun," Paul would say later when recounting the event in Acts 26:13 (cf. Acts 22:6)—it's not just a picture of Jesus in his glory, it's a picture of new creation.
 - a. God begins the first creation how? Gen. 1: "Let there be light . . ." (v. 3).
 - b. Well, that's what he's doing here for Paul. As he says in 2 Cor. 4:6: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
 - i. This isn't the end of the road.
 - ii. It's a new beginning. It's a new day. It's a new creation.
 - 2. But, secondly, the repetition of his name here—"Saul, Saul"—it's called a double vocative, and, grammatically speaking, in the Scriptures, it's a common way of expressing more intense emotion.
 - a. In other words, Jesus' heart is involved in this. There's affection. There's compassion. He's not so much scolding Paul as much as he's calling out to him.
 - i. You might think of how he wept over Jerusalem just days before he was to face the agony of the cross: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matt. 23:37).
 - (1) Don't you see? There's kindness in his voice. There's a warmth. A longing: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (v. 4). "It doesn't have to be this way. Let's take a turn. Let's make a change. Let's tell a different story . . . a true and better story!"
 - b. I imagine he might say something similar over some of us right now. "Why are you going there? Why are you doing that? Why are you resisting? Why are you running? Why are you turning from the fountain of living water and trying to get your drink from broken cisterns that can hold no water? I'm right here. Come home!"

"Who Are You, Lord?"

- A. But, now, look at Saul's response—it's perfect, v. 5: "And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?'"
- B. And I love this because, it seems to me, it contains both a question and the answer.

1. On the one hand, it's a question. And don't you see how significant this moment is for Paul?
 - a. Here he goes from being so sure he knows the Lord. He knows who God is and what he would have him do.
 - b. But then suddenly he's struck to the ground and he's just left asking: "Who are you, Lord?"
 - i. Now, I recognize that technically the word translated "Lord" here (*kurios* in the Greek) it can mean simply "sir", as a term of respect or something.
 - ii. But it can also mean "Lord" as in YHWH. In fact, this is the very same word used to refer to God all throughout the LXX.
 - (1) And so I can't help but see at least a hint here towards this deeper meaning: Saul is, for the first time maybe, coming to the realization that he doesn't know God like he thought. "Who are you, Lord?"
2. But then, on the other hand, the very answer he seeks is tucked within his question, is it not?
 - a. Because here, talking to Jesus, he doesn't just ask: "Who are you?", he asks: "Who are you, Lord?" "I don't know who are, but I have this sense that you must be the Lord."
 - i. Again, I think there's a hint here towards a deeper meaning. Jesus is the Lord. Jesus is YHWH. Jesus is God. "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3). He is the Father's only beloved Son.
 - (1) And Paul would very soon come to see this. The question leads to the answer. "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus . . ." (v. 5).

Three Days in the Dark

- A. But, now, notice, there's a bit of a pause in action at this point.
 1. We would like to carry straight on to talk about his changed life, but he's not quite there yet.
 2. Part of what happens as a result of bright confrontations like this is, somewhat ironically, you often go through darker days.
- B. Look at vv. 8-9: "⁸Saul 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."
 1. Though he saw a great light, he's plunged into darkness.
 2. Indeed elsewhere he says it was precisely because he saw this bright light that things for him, initially at least, went dark (Acts 22:11).
- C. And it remained as such "for three days . . ."

1. That's a loaded number isn't it? You know who else was left in darkness for three days? Jesus, in the tomb.
 - a. So this darkness pictures a sort of death.
 - b. But, because of its connection to Jesus here, it also anticipates a sort of resurrection, and new birth!

D. This is how it always works with God.

1. You have to die before you can truly live.
2. You have to lose your life for his sake before you can truly find it.
3. You have to be humbled before you're really ready to be lifted up.
4. Just as you're brought to questions before you get answers, so too you first go blind and sit in the dark before you really start to see.
 - a. I've quoted it often, but this is precisely what Jesus is getting at when he says to the Pharisees in [John 9:39, 41](#): "³⁹ For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. . . . ⁴¹ If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."
 - i. Do you understand what he's saying there?
 - (1) So long as you think you see, you're blind.
 - (2) And when once you recognize how blind you truly are in your sin to the things of God, wouldn't you know it, you're starting to see.

"Behold, He Is Praying"

- A. So here Paul is struck blind by the light. He's sitting in the darkness. But what do you think is happening with him in these moments?
 1. He's rethinking God—"Maybe I missed something about YHWH in the Scriptures. Maybe things have been pointing to Jesus all along."
 2. He's rethinking himself—"Maybe I'm not as righteous as I imagine myself to be. Maybe I truly am on the wrong side of this. Maybe instead of serving God, I've been opposing him."
 3. He's rethinking the story he's been telling.
 - a. He's starting to see.
- B. But more than that, did you notice? He's starting to pray . . .
 1. What an interesting thing for Jesus to say to Ananias there in [v. 11](#): "[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 . . .](#)"

- a. Now, we know Paul was not just a Jew, he was also a Pharisee. And, as such, it's safe to assume he was always praying.
 - i. Ah, but he was never really praying. Not like this. Not for real. Do you know what I mean?
- C. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to the empty prayers of the merely religious and he contrasts them with real thing. Instructing his disciples on the matter, he says: “⁵ And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:5–6).
 - 1. Don't you see? Paul here is moving on from the empty prayers of the merely religious, the hypocrites—where it's just a show, it's a part of that self-righteous story you're telling.
 - 2. And now in the darkness, in the closet, it's just him and God, and he's getting real—he's starting to truly pray.
- D. Again, this is how God always works.
 - 1. He interrupts the false, self-serving stories we're telling, he breaks in through the webs we're weaving, and he brings the truth in love.
 - 2. He knocks us down, blinds us if he has to, to help us see, to help us open up to him.
 - a. It's disorienting at first. It's disruptive. But it's kindness. It's rescue.
- E. Maybe he's doing that with some of you even now.
 - 1. If he's plunged you into darkness, learn from Saul here. Humble yourself. Ask questions. Let him answer. Don't hold up a fist, open up your heart . . . pray.
 - 2. I'm telling you from experience: One of the sweetest things Jesus ever did for me was tear the idols from my hand, interrupt my self-oriented story-telling, and plunge me into darkness for a few days.
 - a. It hurt like hell, but it readied me for heaven.

(3) Open Eyes

“Something Like Scales”

- A. All of this ultimately leads Paul to the place of seeing again, or perhaps better put: of seeing truly for the first time.
 - 1. Look at vv. 17-18: “¹⁷ So Ananias . . . 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.”

B. It's such an intriguing little detail: “something like scales fell from his eyes . . .” (v. 18). Why does Luke use this language when trying to describe what's happening here?

1. Well, to be brief, while this word “scales” is used in the Bible with reference to fish of the sea and things like this, it is also used with reference to serpents and dragons and the arch-enemies of God and his people.
 - a. So of Pharaoh, for example, in [Ezekiel 29](#), God likens him to a sea serpent, or dragon, and speaks of his many “scales” (vv. 2-4; cf. [Isa. 27:1](#)).
 - b. Of Goliath, that great champion of the Philistines, we're told in the Hebrew of [1 Sam. 17:5](#) that he came out to stand in opposition of God's people wearing “scale-armor.” He was covered in a coat of metal scales.
 - c. And all of this, of course, reminds us of the ultimate enemy of God's people, Satan, who when he first makes his appearance in [Gen. 3](#), we're told that he comes in the form of a “serpent” (v. 1). But, no surprise, elsewhere he's also referred to as the “great dragon” (cf. [Rev. 12:9, 14-15; 20:2](#)).

C. So what's the point of these “scales” falling from Paul's eyes? I'll tell you what I think it means.

1. It means that Paul has been on the wrong team. Even as he thought he was serving God, he was truly acting in opposition to him—on the side of Pharaoh and Goliath and the devil. He was of the serpents and the dragons.
 - a. He stood as an enemy of the cross, a part of the “synagogue of Satan” as Jesus so scandalously refers to it in [Rev. 2:9](#) and [3:9](#). He thought he saw clearly but he was blind.
2. But now as the Holy Spirit is given, as a new day dawns in the grace of Jesus for him, “something like scales fell from his eyes” and, at last, he can truly see:
 - a. “I've been wrong. I've been in grave error. I'm not the ‘Hebrew of Hebrews.’ I'm the ‘chief of sinners’ (cf. [1 Tim. 1:15](#)).
 - b. All along I imagined myself to be standing with Phinehas—driving my spear through the hearts of idolaters, to abate God's wrath, and stop the plague.
 - c. But truly I'm the idolater, and I've been driving my spear, not through the hearts of men, but through the very heart of God, through Jesus himself: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (v. 4).
 - i. Now I see. Here's how the plague is averted. God let us drive our spears through his only beloved Son, as punishment, not for his own blasphemy, but for ours. He died in my place. He makes atonement for my iniquity. He averts the plague. He lifts the curse.

- d. What kind of God is this? As Paul himself would later write: “⁸ God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . .¹⁰ [W]hile we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son . . .” (Rom. 5:8, 10).
 - e. I don’t want to be an enemy of the cross any longer. I’m ready to embrace it!”
- D. I said we’d circle back to Phil. 3. I want to do that now as we draw things to a close. Listen to the radical shift in his way of thinking, his way of life, after being confronted by Jesus, after the scales fell from his eyes.
 - 1. Let’s begin again back in v. 4 and this time we’ll carry on to v. 12: “⁴ If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish [“to convey the crudity of the Greek . . . : ‘It’s all crap’”], in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” In the Greek: “because he “pursued,” because he “overtook,” because he “seized” me.” “He grabbed me for himself on that road to Damascus and I will never be the same.”

“He Is the Son of God!”

- A. It’s the true story of the gospel. It’s a better story. And from this day on it’s the story Paul will never cease to tell.
 - 1. Look at v. 20: “And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’”
 - a. Vain Imaginings . . . Bright Confrontations . . . Open Eyes.
- B. This is what Jesus wants to do with you too.
 - 1. It doesn’t matter how far off you’ve been to this point. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done. Paul murdered Christians and he made him an apostle.
 - 2. I assure you, if there’s room for Paul, there’s room for you, there’s grace for you—at the foot of the cross!
 - a. So let’s go there. Pull up a seat, or just get on your face, and let’s let Jesus tell us a story!