THE TURNING POINT IN YOUR LIFE
Acts 9.1-9

ACTS 9.1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” 7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Intro
Your life might not be as dramatic as Paul’s life, but like his life- you have had turning points in your life

- You grow up
- You go to school
- You get your first job
- Maybe you get married
- You have children
- Maybe even grandchildren
- And hopefully- if you haven’t already- you retire

These are common turning points in many lives

- And some of these we plan for
- But there are some we don’t too

Maybe the marriage didn’t work out like you planned

- Or the children- or the grandchildren you hoped for- didn’t come
- A lost job is very common
- Or maybe a car accident- or serious illness that immobilized you

These are common turning points

- We don’t want them, yet we get them

Ques- It’s like a friend of mine who says, you Don’t Always Get Your “Rathers” In Life- Do You?

- We can no more separate them from ourselves even if we would like to
- And since we have had them- they define us too
- Equally as much- and maybe more so- than the ones we had planned all along

1. They Teach Us That Life Is A Journey- Not Just A Destination- That God Gives In Order To Bless You

Imagine you were like Paul

- A very religious man
- Well connected, well educated
- On the move
- A career man

We can be sure he had no intention of embracing the turning point thrust upon him

- The last thing he ever intended to be was a Christian

Illus- Billy Graham
You might recall your pre-Christian days- and you were like that too

I was listening to Billy Graham on the radio the other day when he was telling his own story

- He had mentioned growing up as a Presbyterian
- How his family would go to church every Sunday
- And how he went through a process of confirmation

He had mentioned there were times he was less inclined to go

- Preaching boring
- But he went anyway because his father said he had to go

Ques- So what changed in him?

- What changed in you?

It has been said in the military, *There are no atheists in a foxhole*

Ques- Did you have a conversion experience like Paul’s?

- Maybe God revealed himself to you in a dramatic way?
- Or it could be gradual
- Paul’s as we know- was dramatic

There are times in your life when God arranges turning points for you

- He knows exactly how to get your attention
- What it will take
- How you will respond- and what you need- in order to make you a child of God too

Looking back on it, God was blessing you

- Of course, we don’t see it that way at the time

We have dreams of our own

- We don’t think of God interfering

**Illus-** Career Changes

*According to a January 2018 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average person changes jobs 12 times during his or her career*

Ques- How many job changes have you had?

- Maybe the job you have right now is the job you think you will always have
- Could it be that God has other ideas?

Sometimes a good job closes down

- Or you lose it
- You come to a turning point, and once again you are forced to move

2. **Confusing The Means With The Ends Is The One Thing That God Does Not Want Us To Do**

Even the best of careers come to an end- they are a means to an end- not the end itself

- That is what turning points always teach you
- And that is why we need to see what it is God is leading us to be and to do

ISA 55:8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
**Illus- Novelists**

Some of you like to read, and if you are like me you have several books going at any one time

- Everyone likes a good story
- But some will say, “… it’s gotta me quickly…”
- And others view it differently

I was asking a friend of mine about what they read- and I know they happen to like Danielle Steele

- They told me that they will give it a few pages, but it’s gotta “grab” them
- If it doesn’t, they put it down

**Illus- Cliffhanger**

You might remember growing up in the earlier days on TV

- The best example of this was Batman with Adam West, and Burt Ward as Robin
- There was always a cliffhanger at the end

**Ques-** It causes you to ask, What will happen next?

- But do you always know what is going to happen next?

**Illus- Sunday School**

I was in a Sunday school class once when the teacher was teaching out of the book of Acts

- The full title is the Acts of the Apostles, but we usually just call it Acts

And then the teacher said, *The book of Acts is not finished being written. It continues on in the lives of Christians- like you and me- from generation to generation*

And that is why we never want to confuse making a living- with surrendering our life to Christ

- To do otherwise is to confuse the means with the ends
- For you are not your own, you have been bought with a price

**3. And Our Testimony Is The Same- Just Like Paul’s- So It Is Important That We Go About And Tell It**

Consider Paul. He knew nothing of Jesus except that he was a threat to everything he stood for

- He had no intention of supporting him- quite the opposite
- He hated who he was, what he was, and what he was trying to do
- But Paul was not the writer of his life’s story

**ACTS 22.3** I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, 5 as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify.

But something happened to Paul

- God changed his story- a critical turning point
- And because of his story, our story has been changed too

**I. ONCE YOU BELOY TO JESUS- YOUR STORY IS A GOSPEL STORY TOO (vs. 1-5)**

**ACTS 9.1** Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you
And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

Not too many of us are so delusional as to think we could be compared to Paul

- But it’s not delusional to think we too “…kick against the goads…”

1. To “…Kick Against The Goads…” Is The Same As Persecuting The Lord Who Saved Us

We don’t use this language, but the intent is the same

- To “…kick against the goads…” means to resist going in the direction the Lord is

**Illus- Ox Goad**

An ox goad was used by farmers to prod the ox while plowing

- It was a long stick, and on the end was a metal tip- the farmer used it to keep the ox going- in the right direction
- Whenever the ox disobeyed, he got stuck

Jesus used this analogy to explain to Paul, *Paul, You Are Hurting Yourself. You are not heading in the direction I want you to*

In my life, there are people who fill this role until we reach a higher level of maturity

- It could be parents
- Employers
- Neighbors
- Friends
- Relatives

Jesus said that Paul was persecuting him

**Ques-** We might think, *Why would God choose Paul at all?*

- *Why did God choose any of the prophets?*
- *Why did Jesus choose 12 apostles, one of which betrayed him?*
- *Why did God choose you?*

2. No Person Is So Desperate As The One Who Thoughts He Need Not Change- And No Person Is So Fallen That God Can’t Pick Them Up

For Paul, it was a turning point divinely appointed

- It had to be faced- he didn’t know this, for he never saw it coming

Now we know why Paul was saved- and the apostles were saved- and why God saved you

- It is not because of what you know- or don’t know
- It is not because of what your capabilities are
- It is has nothing to do with what others think of you

In fact, it is quite the opposite

- God’s goal is to get the “you” out of you
- To get the power of Jesus “inside” of you

And as Paul says,
For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand for us to do.

II. YOU HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO TELL YOUR STORY - IT IS GOD WHO GIVES IT TO YOU (vs. 6)

So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

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Up until this time we can see that Paul’s been writing the script
- What he wants
- Where he wants to go
- What he wants to do

1. And Isn’t Paul’s Story - Our Story Too - Or Is It?

Illus- Paul Today

You might recall how some might say, You’re too smart for your own britches
- Sometimes we are too full ourselves
- And only later do we realize how foolish we are

Imagine if you could fast forward Paul up to today- he had checked off all the right tickets in his life
- Religious affiliation- check!
- Proper education- check!
- Jewish and Roman citizen- check!
- Middle class ambition- check!

You can almost make him out in your mind’s eye- like a lot of middle class guys…
- Nice house
- Pillar of the community
- Probably has a couple flat screen TVs
- Got a subscription to Netflix
- Lay-Z-Boy chair
- A pick-up truck
- Probably a lifelong member of the NRA

Paul was so out of touch with God that when God did reveal himself he didn’t know who he was
- But what Paul didn’t realize was how soon his life was to change

2. And If This Is Paul’s Story - What Is Your Story?

Notice what Paul says when God reveals himself,
6 “…trembling and astonished, Paul said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Look what Christ says to Paul,
6 Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Ques- When you consider salvation, what did you say?
- What is God saying to you?
- If you are not hearing from God - then whose voice are you listening to?

Illus- The Check Is In The Mail
The advanced disciple is not necessarily the one who “knows” more—rather, it is the one who “obeys” more
- That is how you get your beliefs right

It is foolish to listen to someone who knows the Bible but doesn’t live it
- It’s like saying, “The check is in the mail”
- Or the politician who says, “Trust me, I didn’t inhale”

You’ve got a story to tell, and that is why the turning points are given to you
- They are there to bless you

**III. GOD IS DOING HIS WORK BY GIVING YOU THE STORY HE WANTS YOU TO TELL (vs. 7-9)**

7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Some will argue, “Well, that’s fine for Paul. But I am not Paul. His life doesn’t apply to me. God has never revealed himself to me on anything like his Damascus Road experience”

God chooses what’s best for the individual—not what you think is best for you
- You are not a clone

1. **Just Do Your Best- Jesus Will Do The Rest**

God’s aim is to stretch your faith
- The advanced disciple is not the one who “knows” more
- It is the one who “obeys” more
- To walk by faith—not by sight (2 Cor 5.7)

Ques- So what’s the story of your life?

**Conclusion**

If Paul had listened to the people in his life he would have remained a nobody
- But he was ambitious, and God used that ambition to tell a great redemption story

But we have a story to tell too
- There is a story inside you
- It is God’s gift to me and you
- And it comes by way of the turning points in your life

**End of Sermon Prayer**

March 3, 2019
Fort Barnwell Baptist Church
Fort Barnwell, NC 28586

Reese Blanchett 2019
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Disclaimer: I wish to express my gratitude to all the saints before me who are traveling the Narrow Way. Their love and generosity is reflected in my own humble efforts to prepare sermons for the body of Christ. Grace and Peace.