

April 30, 2017

Help Not Harm

ACTS 16:16-34

You conceal your sense of inadequacy behind a defensive bravado. And so on and so forth. The inner state you end up with is a castle-like affair of keep, inner wall, outer wall, moat, which you erect originally to be a fortress to keep the enemy out but which turns into a prison where you become the jailer and thus your own enemy. It is a wretched and lonely place. You can't be what you want to be there or do what you want to do... Fortunately there are two words that offer a way out, and they're simply these: Help me. — Frederick Buechner (1988).

Acts 9:1 Saul “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” Saul is “ravaging the church” (8:3) by entering homes and dragging disciples off to prison, or even farther than that to Saul’s approving nod as the first martyr, Stephen, was stoned (8:1). Luke’s paints Saul in as menacing a light as possible. It is interesting to trace, how Stephen’s last prayer for forgiveness of his murderers would soon lay hold on the unlikely Saul as well. Can you imagine Paul’s inner turmoil along the Damascus road? Will I be punished? Will I be given grace? Sometimes the call of discipleship beckons us also into uncertain futures. - Jay Wilson (2016).

Paul’s great desire to protect and preserve the glory of GOD prompted his ardent pursuit of those who would undermine the truth he knew from the law and prophets. But the love of Christ stopped him on his way to Damascus and set him instead on a road to help—without harm.

Next week: *Paul’s Last Days*

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THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY

This is a story of God's powerful salvation.

Paul tried to help God's cause by harming people.

Those in authority affirmed Paul's methods.

He was actually persecuting Jesus. Acts 9:4-5

In Acts 16, Paul experienced bondage and violence.

As Jesus' follower, Paul was hurt, but not stopped.

As the two sought the Lord's help, they offered help.

Those who inflicted harm received help.

Paul had been working to stop the Church.

Jesus used him instead to help many find salvation.

Are we helping dangerous people find Jesus?

What blind spot needs healing for me to help others?

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