

Acts 9:10-17

“Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, 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.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” So Ananias went and entered the house.”

When he was 88 years old, the late Supreme Court Justice Oliver Holmes once found himself on a train. When the conductor came by, Justice Homes couldn't find his ticket; he seemed terribly upset. He searched all of his pockets and fumbled through his wallet but to no avail. The conductor tried to ease his anxiety. He told Justice Holmes, "Don't worry, the Pennsylvania Railroad will be happy to trust a Supreme Court Justice. After you reach your destination, when you find your ticket you can mail it to us."

The conductor's kindness did not put Justice Holmes at ease. Still agitated Justice Holmes said, "My dear man, my problem is not "Where is my ticket?" The problem is "Where am I going?"

I don't know about you, but there certainly have been moments in my faith journey when I have asked myself, "How in the world did I get myself in this mess?" "When turn did I make a wrong turn?" "Where am I really supposed to be going?"

I have shut that annoying woman's voice off on my GPS. I use the GPS to help me with directions. The reason I shut off the voice is because I became tired of hearing that annoying GPS computerized woman's voice repeating over and over "Recalculating!"

This means that the GPS is setting up a new route for me to follow that will get me back to my original route as quickly as possible. With one route in ‘mind’ the GPS does everything possible to keep me and get me back on track.

It seems so many of us who start our faith journey often do so with a great burst of energy and usually given enough time we fade as quickly as the morning headlines. What happens to us on this road of life? What happens is we run into unexpected detours, roadblocks, and maybe even dead-end roads. We become disappointed, disillusioned, depressed and defeated. We throw up our hands in disgust, disappointment, despair, and often times we turn around and head back to where and what we considered safe before we began our journey of faith.

Along our way we may experience hardships, we may be ridiculed, or even receive unwarranted criticisms and attacks which quickly turn our dreams into nightmares. Can you identify with any of these situations? How have we, have you allowed these things and/or people to slow up or detour, or maybe even stop your journey of faith?

When we reach this point we may seek solace from the church and in the silence of these few moments your soul cries out to God with anguish and with hurt, “Why have you brought me here and left me with these people?”

Looking at our passage this morning we have an individual named Ananias who was considered by many to be a devout man of God. Which means to me he followed God’s leading for his life. Much like many of us believes we do. Then God led him to do something much like we are led to do things for God. The problem was God was asking Ananias to do something he really did not want to do. Look here in **verse 11** from this morning’s passage “*Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul.*” God was asking more of Ananias than Ananias was willing to give at the time. God was asking Ananias to go in a different direction than he was headed. Ananias heard his GPS saying “Recalculating.”

A young girl we know once told me of her plans to finish high school go to college then on to medical school and eventually become a surgeon. I watched as this young girl grew into a young woman and all the while her eyes were on her goal. She eventually graduated from Dorman High School,

and decided to attend Wofford for her first four years and then select a medical school near the end of her time at Wofford. It was during her second or maybe third year a Wofford something happened. The young woman was asked by one of her roommates to go on a Summer Mission trip with her. Reluctantly she went it was during this mission trip she heard God say “Recalculating.”

This young woman came home still with a desire to finish college and still with a deep seated passion except her direction had changed and her passion was now to work for a company or group which raise funds for those who are giving their lives to work in the mission field. Big change from her plans to be a surgeon.

I’m not saying everyone is led to some far off mission field God could be leading you to work right here with children or youth. He could be leading you to help coordinate spirit filled and spirit led worship services. He could be redirecting you to lead a music program for the children or young people. That’s between you and God. The question is, are you open to that leading or have you, like we discussed last week, closed that road?

But I can't just change my life's direction abruptly. I just can't head off in a different direction I have obligations. Ever heard of the Chicago River? This river is an unusual river, anyone know why? Because it flows backwards. Engineers reversed its direction over a century ago because the people in this city were using the river as a dump. Dishwater, sewage, and industrial waste all were being funneled into the river, which emptied into Lake Michigan. Since Lake Michigan supplied drinking water for the city of Chicago, thousands grew sick and died before city authorities decided to redirect the river to flow backwards, away from the lake. Basically the engineers redirected the path of the river. So it now flows backwards from its original direction.

We lay out plans for our lives and in many cases our children's lives; does Scripture say anything concerning this? **Proverbs 16:2-3** "*All one's ways may be pure in one's own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*" Are the plans we have, the plans you have committed to God? Or are they all about what we want? Are they our plans or God's plans? Maybe some recalculating is in order?

Proverbs 3:5-6 *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”* Again do we fully trust in God? If we do and our plans are of Him then all will work out for *“His purpose,”* as found in **Romans 8:28** *“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”* Do we truly love Him and are our plans according to His purpose?

Something we should remember about changing directions, things do not always work out as we want them to. What kind of ideas and/or dreams do you entertain in your lives today? How do these ideas and/or dreams move and inspire your activities today and in the future? How do these dreams and/or ideas measure up to God’s dreams and visions for our world and for our life as a community of faith?

Sometimes it may even feel as if God has brought to the brink and then just abandoned you. You feel all alone, left out on some limb and someone is cutting the branch off behind you. You’re not alone Jesus had the same feelings especially as He was hanging on the cross. We read of His cry to God in **Matthew 27:46** *“And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud*

voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus at this moment, believing He was following the path God had chosen for Him, felt abandoned. So we are not alone in feeling that way, but it’s what Jesus said before He cried out those words, when He was feeling the weight of what He was doing we need those words seared into our memories **Luke 22:42**

*“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, **not my will but yours be done.**”*

Do we as a body of believers, do you as a faith believer require “recalculating?” Dr. Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta, Georgia, often calls to his memory an incident in his life in which an unlikely person shared a biblical truth and principle that he has never forgotten. He says it still provides bread for his journey! Dr. Stanley was in a time of great turmoil and opposition in one of the churches he served. A dear lady, who only had a small apartment, invited him to lunch. It wasn’t going to be lunch with his head Deacon or lunch with the President of a Fortune 500 Company but instead it was to be lunch with an elderly woman who later turned out to be a living saint. He reluctantly went — expecting her to give him an old-fashioned tongue-lashing about what he was doing.

She said, “Pastor, look at this picture and tell me what you see.” He looked at the picture and saw it was of Daniel standing in the lion’s den. He described a few other details and became quiet. The elderly woman then said, “Anything else, Pastor?” He said, “Not that he could see.” She lovingly placed her hands on his shoulders and said, “Pastor, what I wanted you to see and never forget is this: Daniel does not have his eyes on the lions, instead his eyes are focused in on God.”

Daniel in the lion’s den felt the weight of what he was doing; Paul in prison felt the weight of what He was doing; Jesus in the garden and again on the cross felt the weight of what he was doing, but all three did the same thing they kept their eyes on God.

When God is recalculating the direction of our lives, and the He redirects our lives there will be times if we are following His leading and directing when we will feel great about what we are doing, but then there will be those times when it seems everyone is against the direction we are headed and when life’s direction seems to be wrong, remember: Keep your eyes focused and fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ and not on ourselves!