

Patterns of Grace and Gratitude Week 4

Tuesday, May 4



Photo Credit: Tim Kreps

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. Acts 9:1-9

Have you ever been in a situation where God said, "Why are you persecuting me?" It is a heart stopping moment when we realize we are on a path that has diverged from what God had imagined for us. We think we are on the right path...responsible, passionate, dedicated, successful...and yet that voice in our heart says God is being persecuted. It may not be that we are doing anything flagrantly wrong but we are not loving, forgiving, or offering grace as God would want us to do.

Saul, who became the apostle Paul, encountered this very situation. Recently, in studying this passage from Acts, the idea of "deconstruction" emerged. In order to understand why God felt persecuted, Paul would have to deconstruct everything he had learned, believed and relied upon to "reconstruct" his life in the image of Christ. For Paul this was a very dramatic transformation. He was blinded so he could not continue to see in the ways he had seen before. He did not eat or drink anything which was the spiritual discipline of fasting. This allowed him to be totally open to God's leading and guiding. In essence, he began to be receptive of God's grace, instead of trying to earn God's favor.

The building in the photograph will need to be deconstructed before a new structure can be unveiled. Are there any beliefs or behaviors that you want to deconstruct to draw closer to God and receive the grace God freely bestows upon you?