

The Scales on Our Eyes

Acts 9:1-20

May 5, 2019

In this morning's reading from the ninth chapter of Acts, we heard about the miraculous conversion of the persecutor Saul, later to be known as the Apostle Paul.

But, before we talk about his conversion, I would like to give a little background on Saul. First off, I want to make it clear that Saul was not an evil man, he was not an immoral man. In fact, by the standards of Jewish law of the time, Saul was one of the most righteous of men.

He tells us as much in his letter to the church in Philippi when he says "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless." (Phil 3:4b-6)

So, when Saul was working to persecute, imprison and even execute the Christians of the early church, he was doing exactly what he thought he was supposed to be doing. He was doing what his religion, at that time, required of him. He was defending his own faith, protecting his religion from what he believed was heresy and blasphemy.

I think it is safe to say that Saul just could not see the error of his actions. He could not see the truth of Jesus. He could not see the salvation that is Jesus Christ.

I think it's safe to say that Saul was a little blind long before he lost his sight during his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. That some of the scales that fell away from his eyes when Ananias laid his hands on him had been there for a very long time.

But that makes me wonder, what “scales” were covering his eyes before the Lord took his sight away? It also makes me wonder if we have some of the same “scales” on our eyes today.

So, let’s take a look at some of the possible “scales”, some of the things that might have blinded Saul. And as we do I would encourage you to ask yourselves “do I have some of these “scales” on my eyes”

I would start with the most obvious, because I think Saul suffered from this one the most, and that would be pride.

Saul’s pride kept him believing that what he knew to be true was immutable. It could not be wrong and it could not be changed. Anything that contradicted it must be eradicated and certainly could not be believed. He had pride in his intelligence, his authority and his righteousness.

I’m gonna be honest for a second folks. I know that I have some of the “scales” of pride on my eyes. Pride is one of the things that I struggle with the most and it has gotten me into trouble on more than one occasion.

Now let’s take a look at pride’s partner in crime, prejudice.

If you don’t think Saul suffered from prejudice, think again. He was certainly prejudiced against followers of Jesus. He never looked past the fact that they were preaching about Jesus and the salvation that He offered. He did not listen very closely to what they were saying or look very closely at what they were doing. He simply heard the name Jesus and assumed that the person preaching was a heretic and a criminal.

I know that this is a tough question, because prejudice is a very inflammatory word today, but I’m going to ask you to consider “do I have any “scales” of prejudice on my eyes that might be keeping me from seeing the truth of Jesus Christ”?

For our third set of “scales” I would suggest that we look at hate. Hate is such a powerful word. It’s a word that stirs up images of anger and violence, even images of war and devastation. Hate fuels the fires rage.

Did Saul suffer from the “scales” of hate? We can’t be certain, but he certainly appeared to act in hateful ways. I mean, what reason is there to persecute an entire group of people if you don’t hate them?

Of course we must ask ourselves, do we have scales of hate on our eyes? Is there hatred in our lives that keeps us from sharing the Love of Christ?

Did you know that hate has a very close relative named resentment? In fact, resentment is often where hate comes from. We may start by resenting someone for something that they have and we don’t or for something that they can do and we can’t. We may resent them for something that they have done to us, either on purpose or unintentionally. We may hold on to resentment for years and years, without the target of our resentment even knowing about it. And that resentment can eat away at us and eventually grow into hatred.

I think it is a safe bet that Saul held a lot of resentment for the early Christian Church. They were disputing his authority, which would damage his pride. They were openly preaching what, to his belief, was blasphemy. And they were beginning to gain momentum.

Do we hold resentment for some of the people in our lives? Do we maybe resent some of the things that have happened to us? Could we possibly even hold some resentment toward God Himself for some of those things?

Our list could go on and on but we don’t have that much time so, finally, I think we need to discuss the potential cause of all of the other “scales” we have already discussed. This one is an emotion that, by many psychiatrists, is considered to be the root of all other negative emotions including anger, hate, resentment, pride and even sadness.

Anybody care to take a guess?

It’s fear.

I truly believe that Saul was very afraid of the Christian movement that was taking place throughout Judea and the surrounding area. Many formerly devout Jews were beginning to follow them which meant that the Pharisees, of which Saul was

a member, were beginning to lose control. And that meant that Saul might find himself out of a job.

There was also the fear that these new Christians might become violent and lead an uprising against the established regime, possibly out of vengeance for having their leader crucified.

And there just might have been a fear of God's wrath. A fear that God might punish him for not stopping this upstart church before it got too big and out of control.

Yes, I am certain that Saul was afraid.

I would like you to ask yourself "what fears do I have that are getting in the way of my knowing the salvation that Christ offers"? Are we afraid of failure, loss of a job or financial status? Are we afraid of being persecuted by others for our faith? Are we afraid of death, not being certain of our salvation? There are a lot of things that we might be afraid of.

So I propose that Saul had some if not all of these scales on his eyes long before The Lord took his sight away from him. I also propose that, when Ananias laid his hands on him, all of these scales fell away and he could see more clearly than he ever had in his life.

He could see that Jesus truly is the Son of God. He could see that, even though he was not worthy, he had been offered salvation. He could see that his hate was baseless. He could see past his prejudice. He could see that forgiveness was much stronger than resentment. And, most importantly, he could see that he had nothing to fear.

Hopefully you have been considering which of these scales you might have on your eyes. And I don't want you to be discouraged if you realize that there might be a few because, even though we don't all get to have an Ananias in our lives, those scales can fall away. Just like Saul, even though we are not worthy, we are offered salvation through Jesus Christ. Amen.