

**Sermon Notes of  
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on May 1, 2022:**

**"Bless the Broken Road  
(Acts 9:1-20)"**

**[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us that Saul's incredible conversion should remind us of our conversion and spiritual transformation.]**

Introduction:

- Any Rascal Flatts fans in the audience?
- Have any of you like you've walked the broken road?
- Now the Country Music Band, Rascal Flatts didn't write the song, "Broken Road."
- It was written about 10 years before they made it popular, as the # 1 hit song around 2004-2005.
  
- Today, we're going to walk the "Broken Road."
- So, we're going to look at one of probably the most famous, while some might say most infamous conversion stories in scripture.
- And then we're going to think about that in terms of our own conversions and perhaps even more so with our spiritual transformation.
- So, now let's look at the lyrics of "Broken Road."

*"Broken Road"*

*I set out on a narrow way many years ago  
Hoping I would find true love along the broken road*

- Now some say this is a love song while others say it's a metaphor about finding Jesus.
- It's a metaphor about what Paul thought after what had happened to him.

*But I got lost a time or two  
Wiped my brow and kept pushing through  
I couldn't see how every sign pointed straight to you*

- Now, think about the problems we had in life and the relationships we had that perhaps ended in heartache.
- Now the words here tell us that every one of those experiences, as stressful, as challenging as they may be, God uses them to point us to Jesus.
- And so, before we're ready to dismiss the problems, the heartaches, the stresses and the pressures of life, we need to realize is that this is the whole purpose of life.
- It's those challenging moments that make that ever-lasting change in our lives.

- So, we should never be willing to dismiss and get rid of the stress and the trials and the pressures we face, no matter what they are.
- It could be job pressures, financial pressures, health pressures or relationship pressures.
- We need to realize that we're walking that broken road and as we walk it, we need to just accept it and anticipate it, as Paul did.

*Chorus: Every long lost dream led me to where you are  
Others who broke my heart, they were like Northern stars*

- Think about some of the truly emotional pain that perhaps we've experienced – now the words of the song say they are like northern stars.
- What does a northern star do? – it points us in the right direction.
- Now, when we are deep into a lot of emotional pain, we may think that God has abandoned us, because we're not wired to love pain.
- Emotional pain is not something we relish or enjoy.

*Others who broke my heart, they were like Northern stars  
Pointing me on my way into your loving arms*

- Think about Paul, who got very sideways with God as he persecuted Christian believers.
- And yet we could say that his actions pointed him in the direction when he came face to face with Jesus.

*This much I know is true  
That God blessed the broken road that led me straight to you*

- Now, what was Jesus's response to us, when we beat ourselves up, because we could have done better?

*I think about the years I spent just passing through  
I'd like to have the time I lost and give it back to you  
But you just smile and take my hand  
You've been there, you understand  
It's all part of a grander plan that is coming true*

- He takes our hand to lead us into change.
  - It's the greater plan that unfolded in Paul's life and the greater plan that's been unfolding in our lives.
  - Now, not-yet-believers are walking the broken road, too, but without a clue, because they can't relate to Jesus.
- Now, interestingly, *Saul* was the Aramaic name and *Paul* was the Roman and Greek name.
  - Probably, as Saul interacted with the Romans and Greeks, he was known to them as by his Roman name Paul.

**Acts 9:1 (NASB), Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2) and asked for letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus,**

- Now, any person didn't just go and meet the high priest, because there was a certain protocol involved.
- Some scholars feel that Saul was a man of means who had some wealth, which enabled him to do this.
- Damascus was where a lot of Jewish converts had fled to in order to get out of being persecuted in Jerusalem.

**2) and asked for letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way,**

- Now the phrase "the way" was Luke's description of what he called "believers in Jesus."

**2b) whether men or women, he might bring them in shackles to Jerusalem.**

- Paul was an equal opportunity persecutor of anyone who was a follower of Jesus.

**3) Now as he was traveling,**

- Paul was actually traveling the "broken road."
- Now, Damascus was a large and wealthy city

**3b) it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4) and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,**

- So this was an epiphany, which were when God engaged Himself physically in the life of a human.

**4b) "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"**

- Now, had Saul persecuted Jesus, up to that point in time? No, because Jesus was dead.
- What this statement is telling us that when Saul was persecuting fellow believers, he's also persecuting Jesus.
- This tells us what Jesus thinks of us.
- That's why we say we are a family, part of God's family, because of that relationship we have.

**5) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?"**

- That's a critical question for all of us to ask when we defining where we are in life, the "who" question is always important.
- When we start with "Who is Jesus" and then unpack everything around it, it serves as a life changing question.

**5b) And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6) but get up and enter the city, and it will be told to you what you must do."**

- Can we imagine what Paul thought when he realized that all he thought he was doing for God was not right.
- Paul was going to be offered a new job from God.

**7) The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8) Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.**

- Now, we know that God doesn't force a relationship on us, we have free-moral agency.
- We say that "forced love is no love at all."
- But, can someone who doesn't have the desire in their heart to approach God that God can't change the circumstances in such a way to change their heart?
- So, this kind of notion that God is locked out of relationships with people, because He's not going to impose upon their free moral agency isn't true because God has a way to enter into our hearts and change our attitudes without forcing us.
- Now, as God is calling humanity and bringing them into a relationship with Him, He won't force that change, but can change circumstances in such a way, in the right amount of time, that would cause, even the worst persecutor, to change their hearts and minds.

**9) And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**

- During this time, Paul is both fasting and praying to God for answers because of the situation he's in.

**10) Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."**

- Ananias' response means that he will follow what God tells him to do.

**11) And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,**

- During this time of fasting and prayer, Paul's heart was being changed.

**12) 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."**

- Now, when God called out to Saul and called him by name twice wasn't just a coincidence.
- Now, in the Old Testament, when God called out people by name twice, they were being appointed for a special ministry.
- And now Paul has received a vision that he will regain his physical sight.
- And, interestingly, with the regain of his physical sight, Paul receives spiritual sight, as well.

**13) But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints in Jerusalem; 14) and here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name." 15) But the Lord said to him, "Go,**

**for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;**

- So, here, one of the greatest persecutors of the church, at that time, is being changed by the circumstances he's in.
- And, interestingly, in Galatians, we're told that Paul was called to serve God from his mother's womb.
- So, all of his educational training and other things that he experienced was preparing him to share the gospel with so many Gentiles and to turn Judaism on its head, so to speak.

**16) for I will show him how much he must suffer in behalf of My name."**

- Does the broken road lead to suffering?
- Do we have this notion that when we suffer, we're being punished?
- But, we've learned that suffering is part of walking the broken road.
- Suffering is how God changes us, how he converts us, how He transforms us.

**17) So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul,**

- Ananias is welcoming Saul into the family of God.

**17b) the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18) And immediately something like fish scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;**

- Now, notice Paul received the Holy Spirit before he was baptized.
- In this case, his baptism reflected his conversion.
- Now, in Luke's writings, when someone is "filled with the Spirit" that person begins preaching Jesus to others.

**19) and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were in Damascus, 20) and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."**

- This is so amazing, because a week earlier, Paul was persecuting people who believed in Jesus.
- The incredible change in Paul's life is the process of walking the broken road.

Concluding comments:

- So what can we learn from this?
- Well, first we can take on the heart of Ananias.
- There may be some things that we might be a little scared about what God inspires us to do.
- And we take on the heart of Paul knowing that when it's been pointed out to us that we've been on a wrong path, we then make changes and live the life God is calling us to live.

- God is calling us to something so much better than the “American dream.”
- The “American dream” can come and go, but God’s way is forever, even though going God’s way can give us temporary suffering and stresses and broken moments.
- That broken road is going to lead to golden streets in God’s kingdom.
- Can we not take the broken road in this lifetime and exchange it for the golden streets of eternity?
- We need to share this with those who don’t know God, because that’s our role.
- Now, with communion, we participate in our relationship with God.

Communion by Redida Edwards:

- Now, this song is called, “The Table” and it’s by Jonathon Traylor.
- So, let’s read the lyrics.

*The Table*

*There is a table  
Filled with best food  
Can you hear The Father calling?  
There's a seat just for you*

*And at this table,  
all is forgiven  
Trade in your chains of bondage  
For crowns of freedom*

*All are welcome at the table  
There is a place just for you  
No condemnation at the table  
There is a place just for you*

*This is the table of new beginnings  
These cups are full of love  
And it's never-ending  
And at this table, there are no orphans  
Just a loving father  
And his sons & daughters*

*All are welcome at the table  
There is a place just for you  
No condemnation at the table  
There is a place just for you  
Just for you  
This is the start of your new life.*

- This song really resonates with Redida.

- She remembers as a little girl, she would see her parents with green buckets and towels and then head off to church.
- She had always wanted to know what that was about, but no one really explained it to her.
- Then when she got into my teens, she asked again, and it was explained.
- She really felt that the Spirit was calling her to take part in it, but then she was told she couldn't because she was too young and not baptized.
- And this song resonated with Redida because we are not engulfed in laws and rules and regulations that stops anybody from coming to Jesus.
- And, we, as believers, this invitation to the table, is a reminder for what Jesus has done for us and what he is still doing for us.
- And, at the Lord's Table, we experience the fullness of Christ's love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness.
- When Jesus says come to the table, He wants us to remember our identity is tied in Him.
- He wants us to recover our hope, and find unity in fellowship with Him and each other.
- Jesus says come so that we can reclaim our purpose to love the Lord and to serve the Lord and to love others and to serve others.
- In **Colossians 1:26-27** from the Message Bible, Paul writes:

**This mystery has been kept in the dark for a long time, but now it's out in the open. God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you ...**

- Yes, Christ is in you and He is in me – that is the mystery; that is the message that we all need to know and remember.
- That is why we come to the table to take the bread and drink the wine.

**Colossians 1,26-27, Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. (Other translations say, "Christ in you is the hope of glory.")**

- How powerful is this statement especially to those who have no hope and feel they are not worthy to come to the table.
- This statement is so important and powerful to remember that "Christ is in you" and that He gave his life for you and me.
- How powerful is that statement especially to those who have no hope and feel they are not worthy to come to the table as she use to think.
- This is why the lyrics to, "The Table" means so much because in God's economy all are welcome.
- There are no orphans, no condemnation but forgiveness and His love.
- When the Holy Spirit grabs a hold of us and opens our eyes to see that Jesus paid it all for all – it is the start of our new life.

- So, as we take of the bread and drink the wine today, let us remember Jesus' loving grace and His forgiveness.
- So, now, as we take the bread, which represents Jesus' body broken for us, may we remember His loving grace and forgiveness.
- And, as we drink the wine or grape juice, may we experience the fullness of Christ's amazing love.

Prayer:

*Beloved Father, thank you for all that you have done and do for your sons and daughters. You have made a way so that we can spend an eternity with you and yet we have you now because you live in us and your presence is all around us.*

*Jesus help us to hold fresh remembrance every time we come to the table because it is important that we keep hope alive for us and our future generations. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we love you and adore you above all things and we will praise you forever and ever. In Jesus' Name Amen*