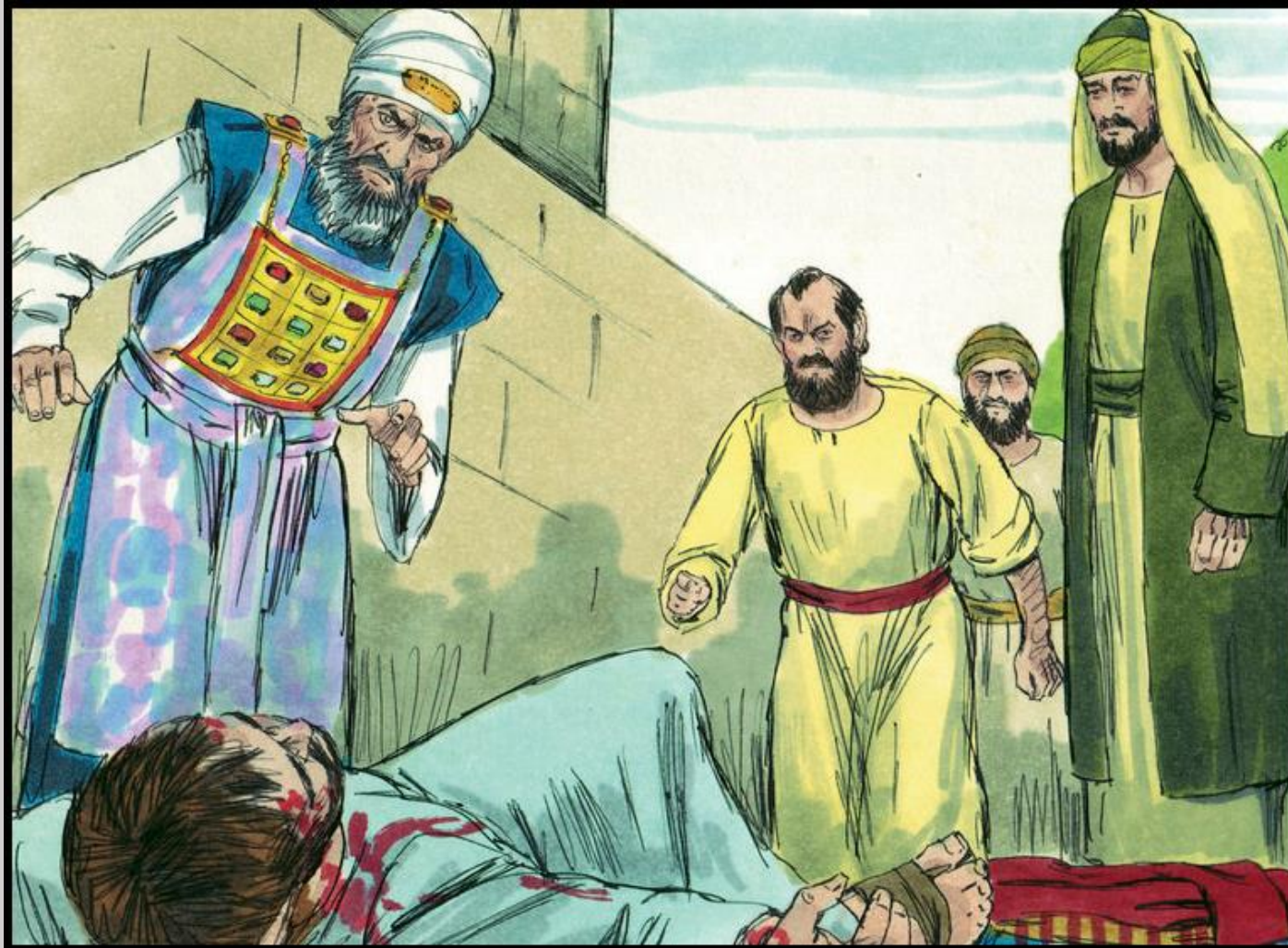


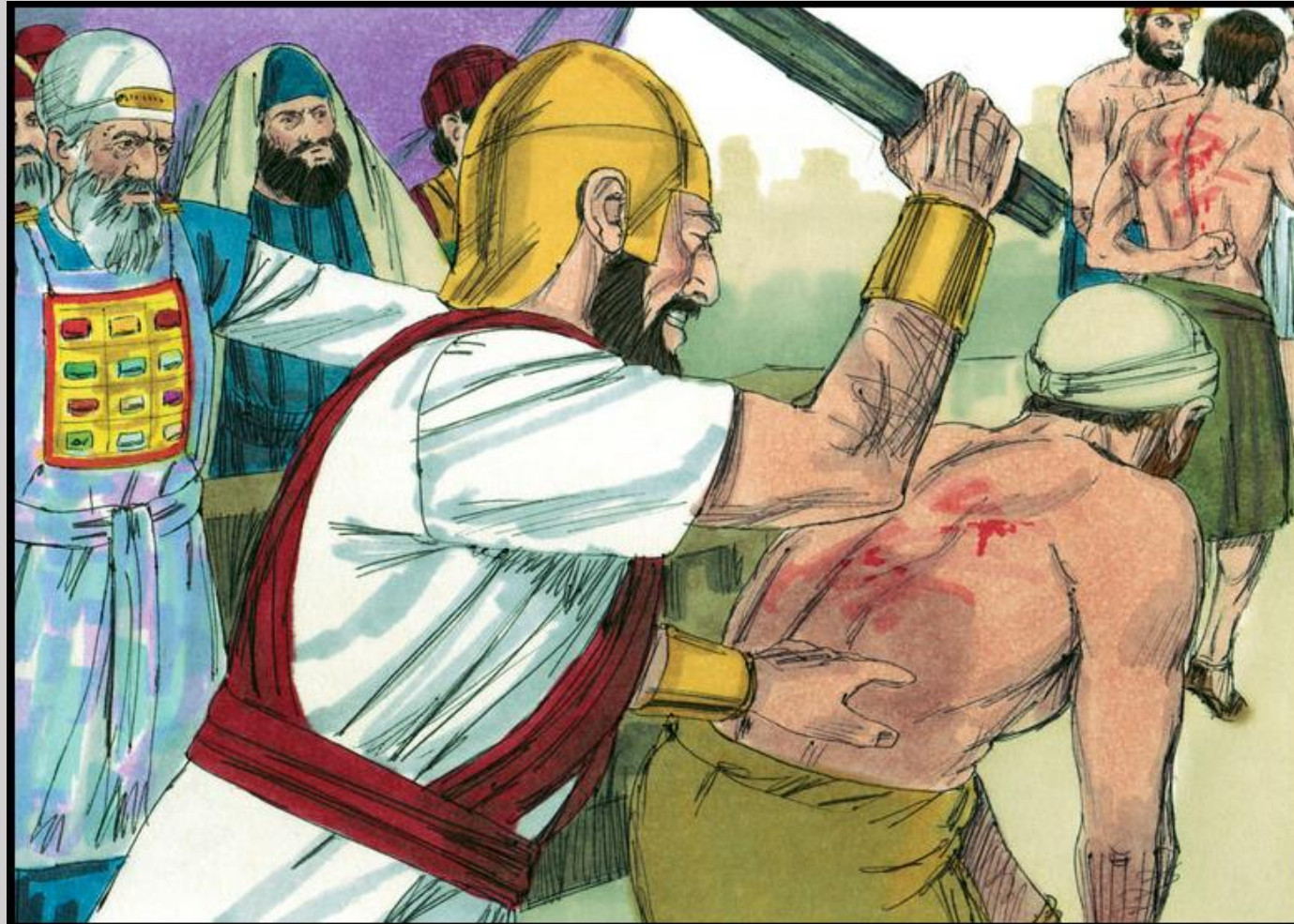
From Saul → to Paul



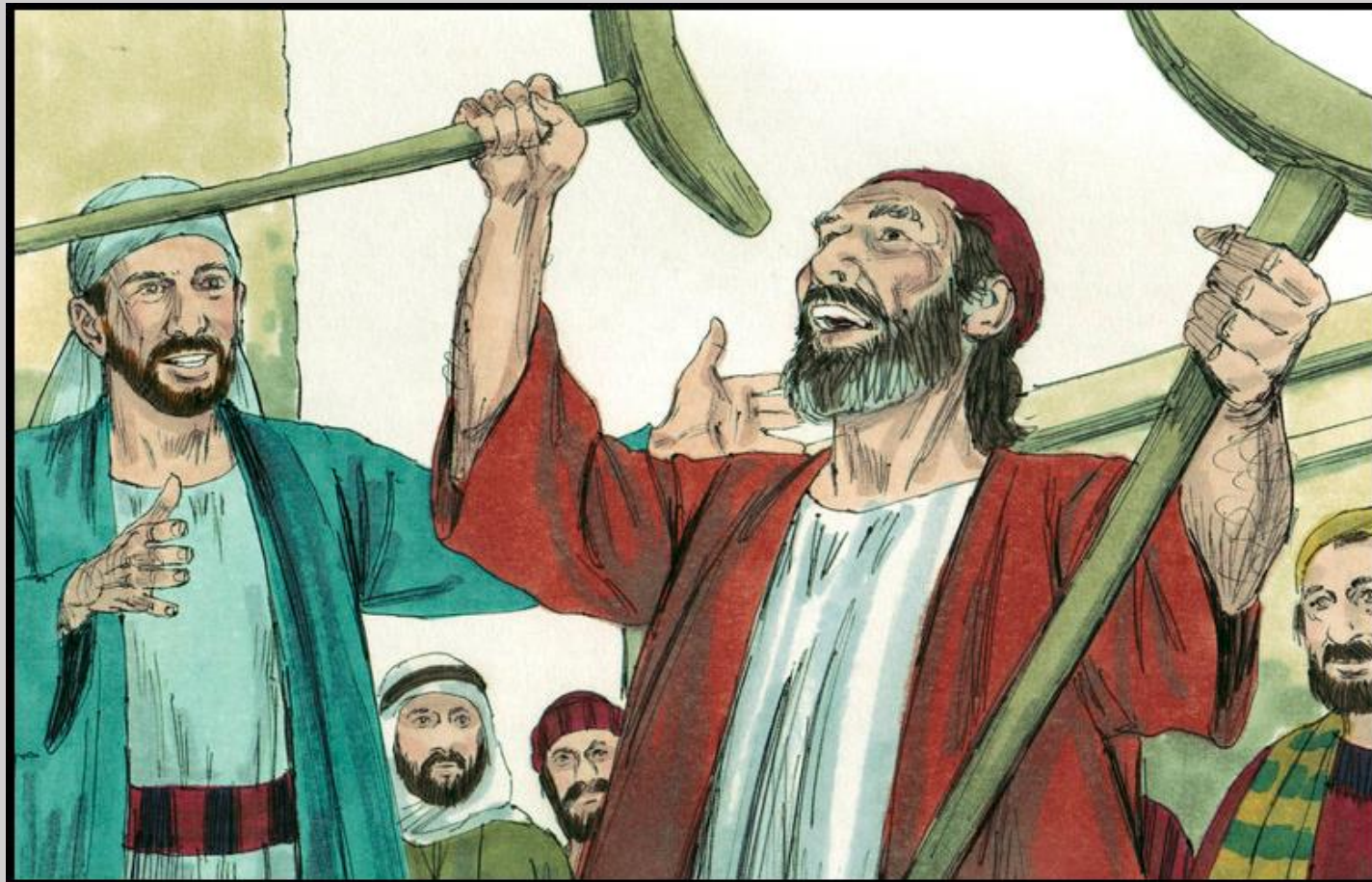
Then they cast him (Stephen) out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. (Acts 7:58)



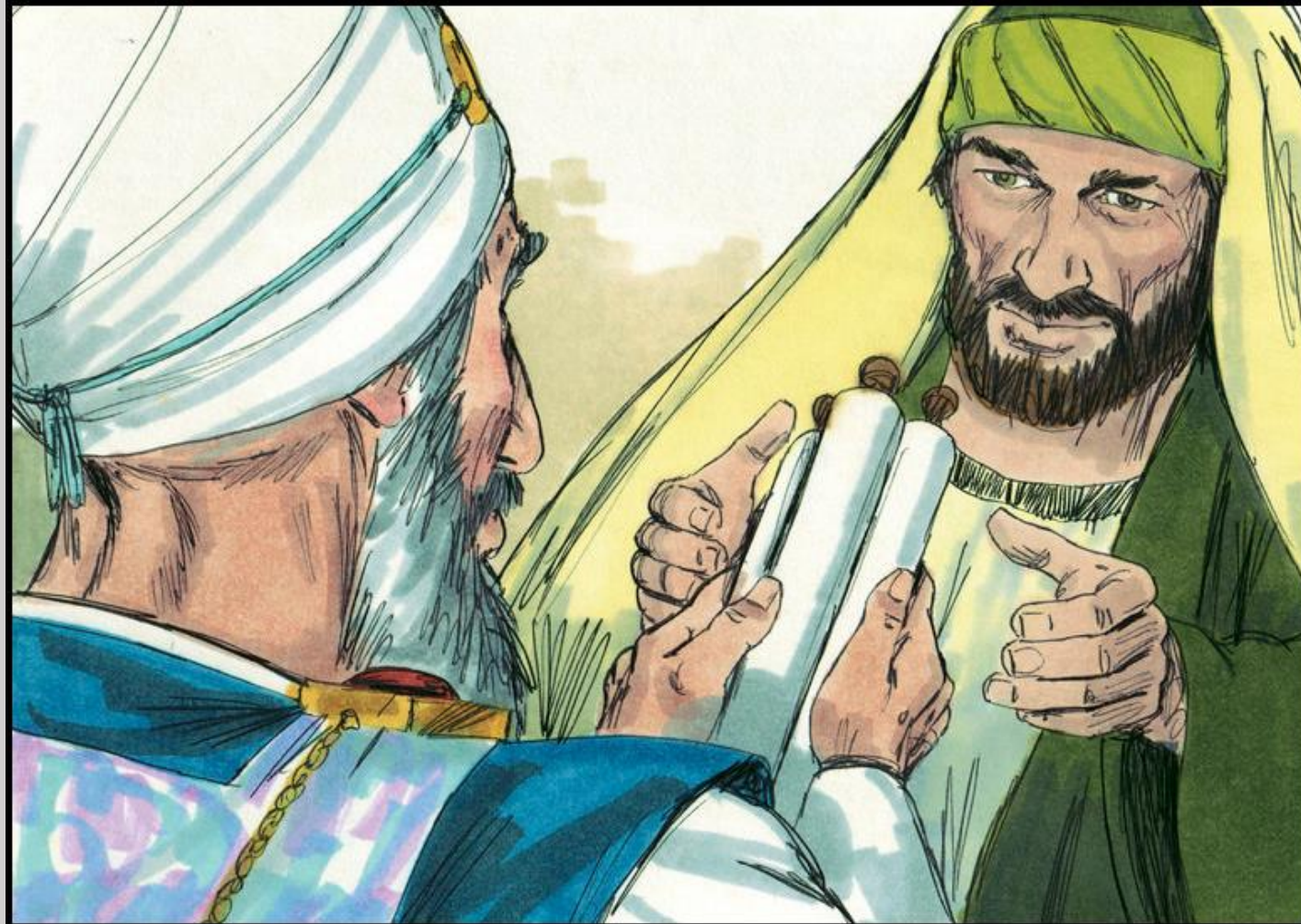
Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (Acts 8:1-3)



Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city. (Acts 8:4-8)

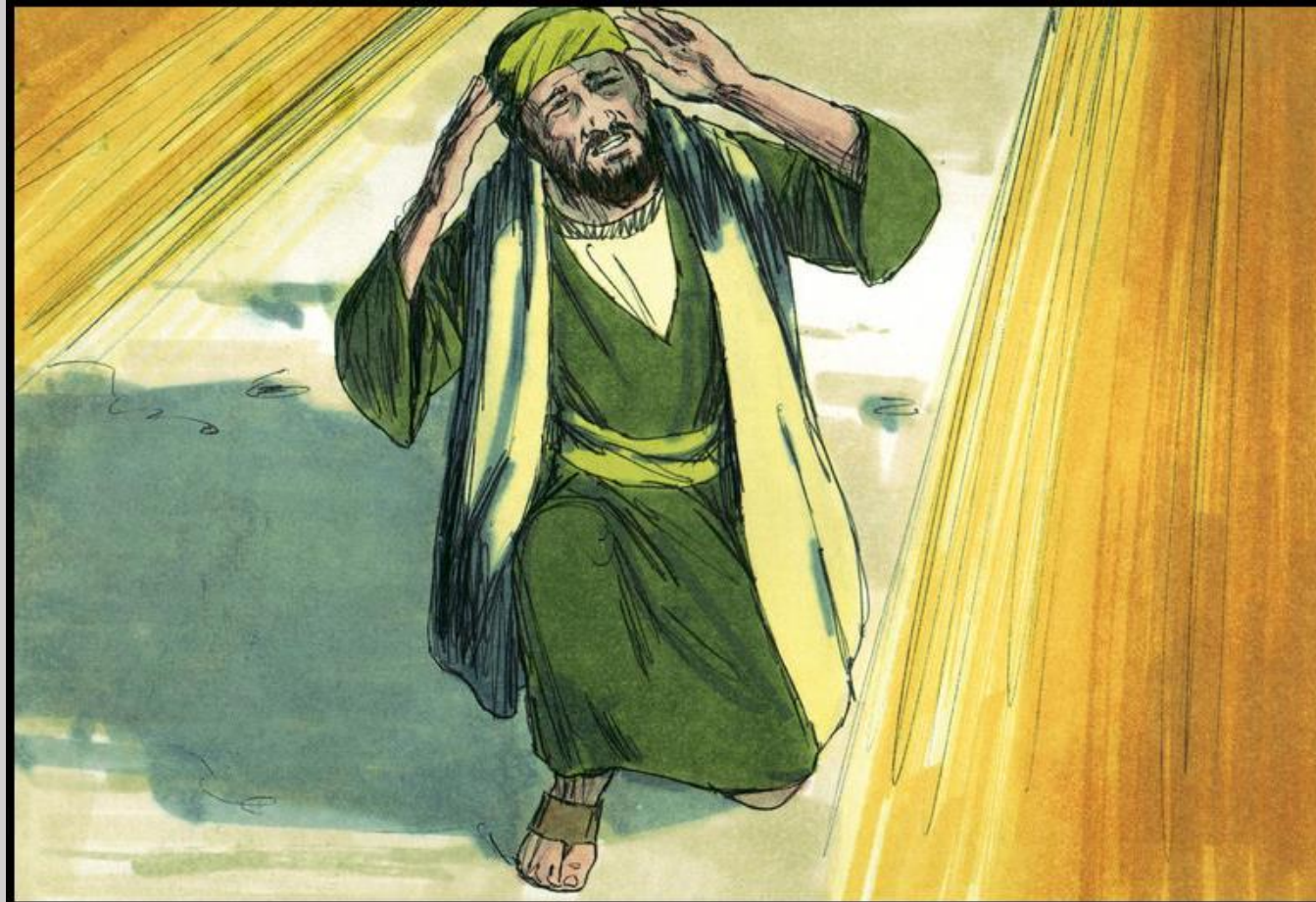


But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2)



Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

And he said, "**Who are you, Lord?**" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (Acts 9:3-5)



But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. (9:6-8b)



So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9:8b-9)



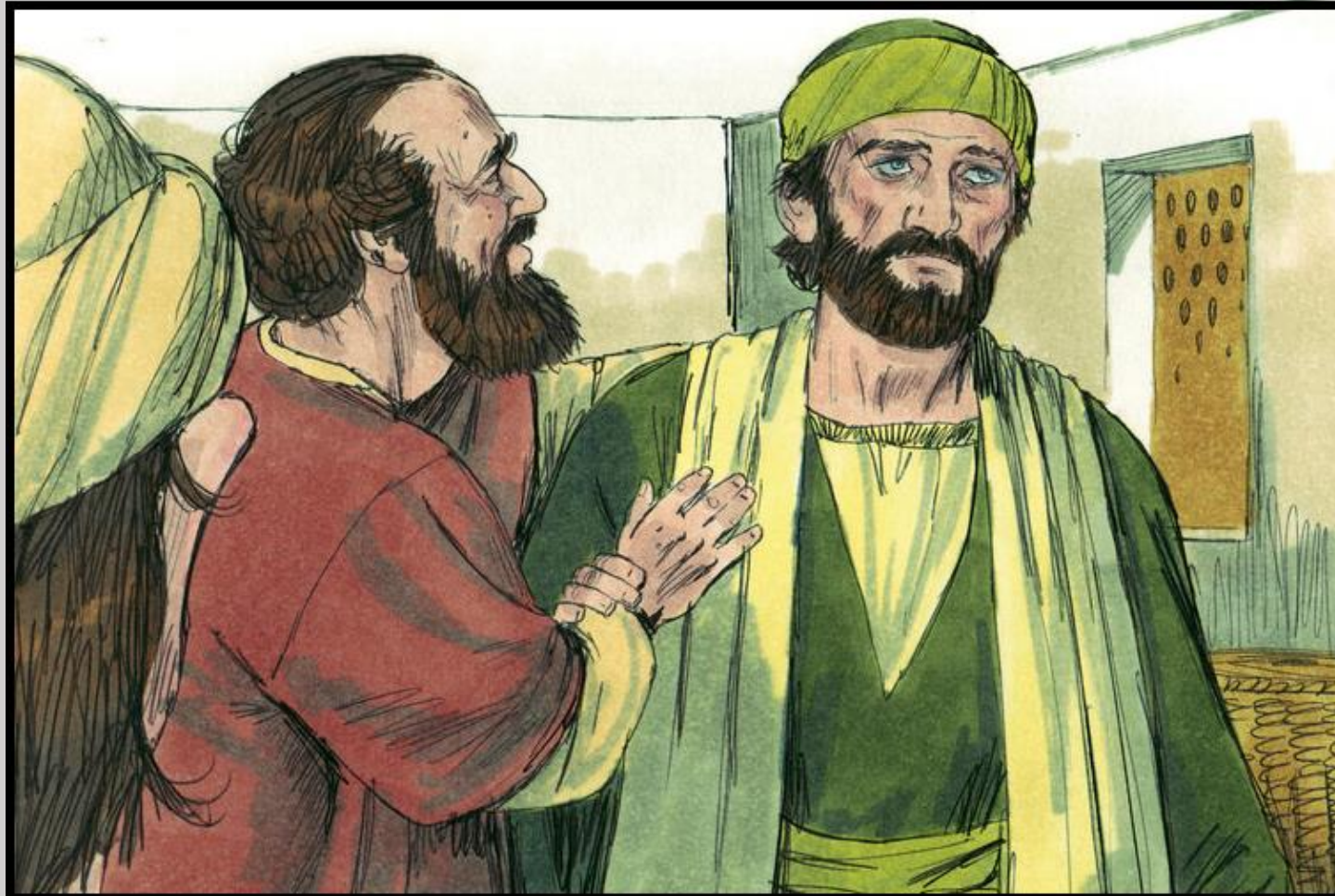
Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."

(Acts 9:10-12)

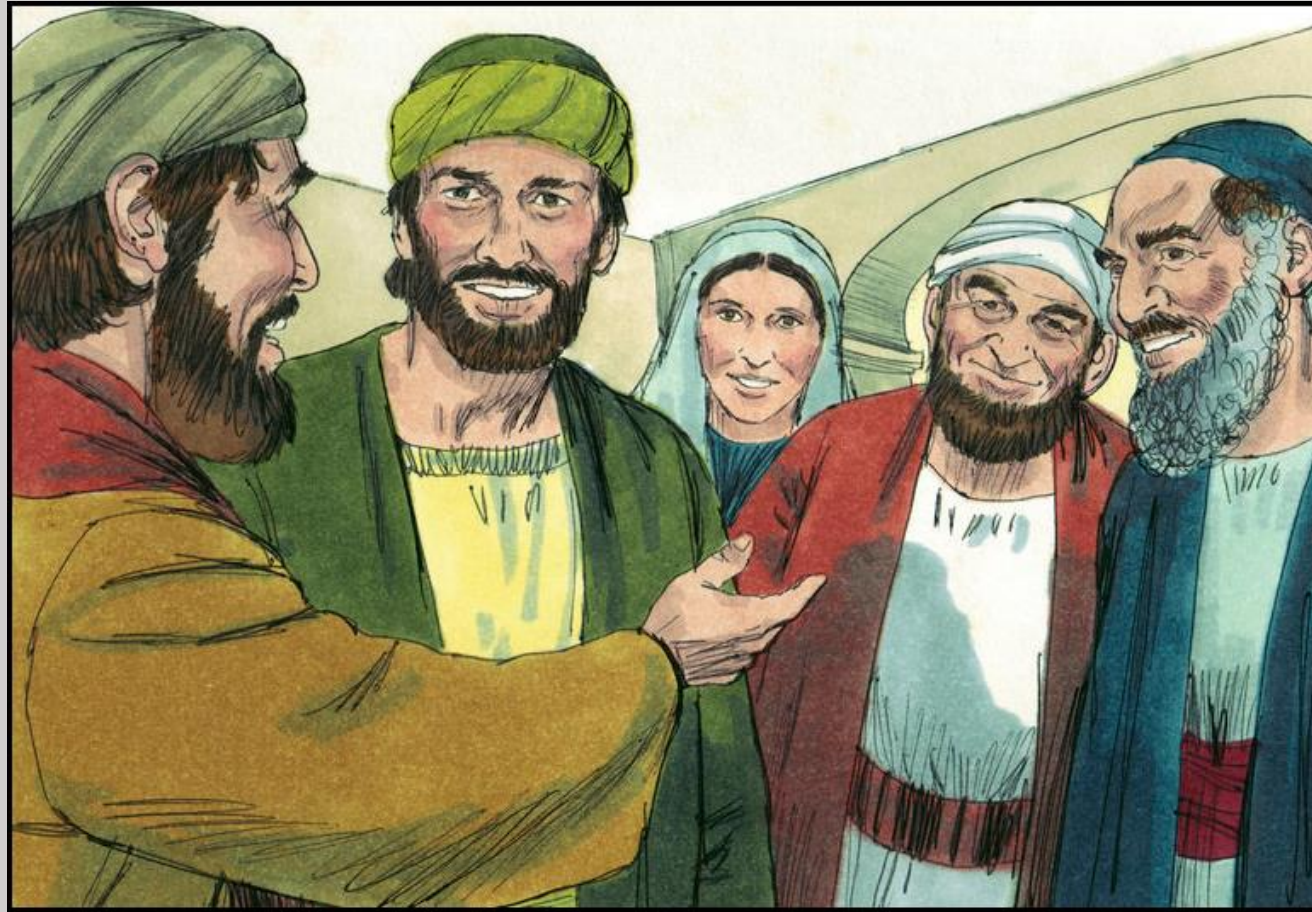
But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

(Acts 9:13-16)

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. He rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. (Acts 9:17-19)



For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, **“He is the Son of God.”** And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts 9:20-22)



This account is very important for many reasons. But the **six** that we will primarily focus on today are;



It is during great difficulty and much persecution that the gospel regularly has it's greatest impact.



“...there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions...”

“Saul was ravaging the church, entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”

“Now those who were scattered went about
preaching the word...the crowds with one
accord **paid attention** to what was being said by
Philip...**there was much joy** in that city.”

How do I apply?

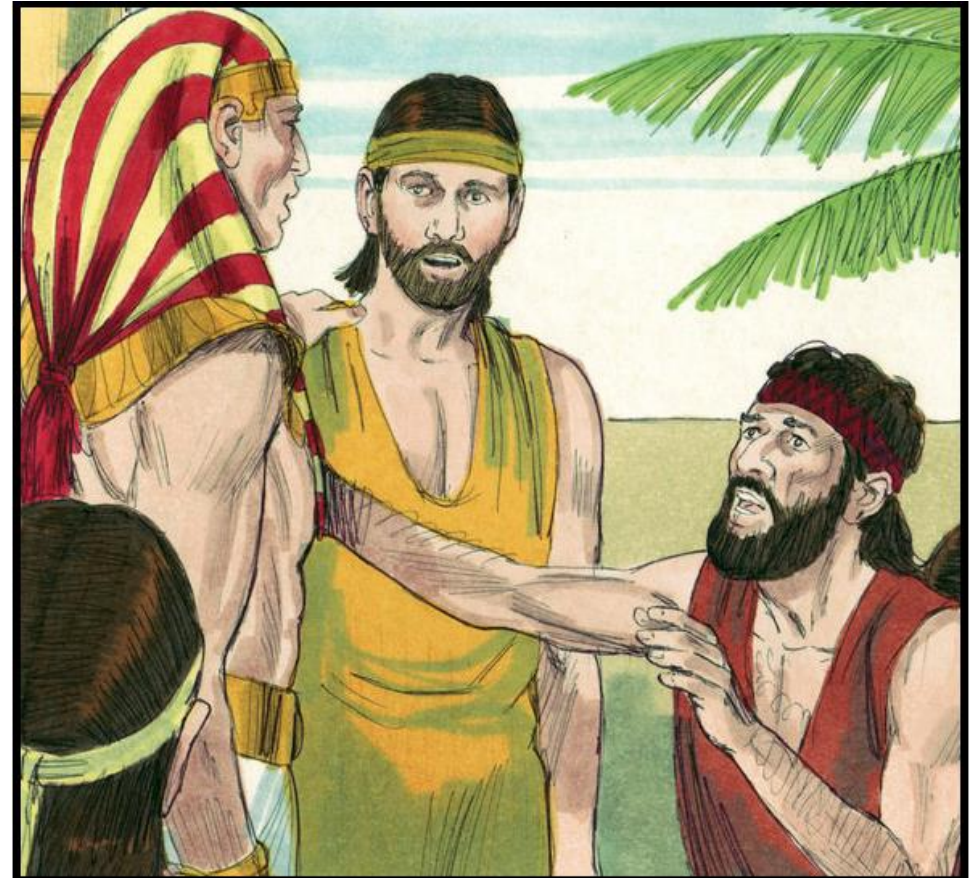
- When things go from 'bad' to 'worse' have your antenna up, ready to spot what God is up to.
- Expect for things to get worse in our country and in the world. The Bible predicts it.
- Ask God to help you raise your head above the situation you are in, so that you can discover what he is wanting to do.

God is often most active when he
appears most inactive.

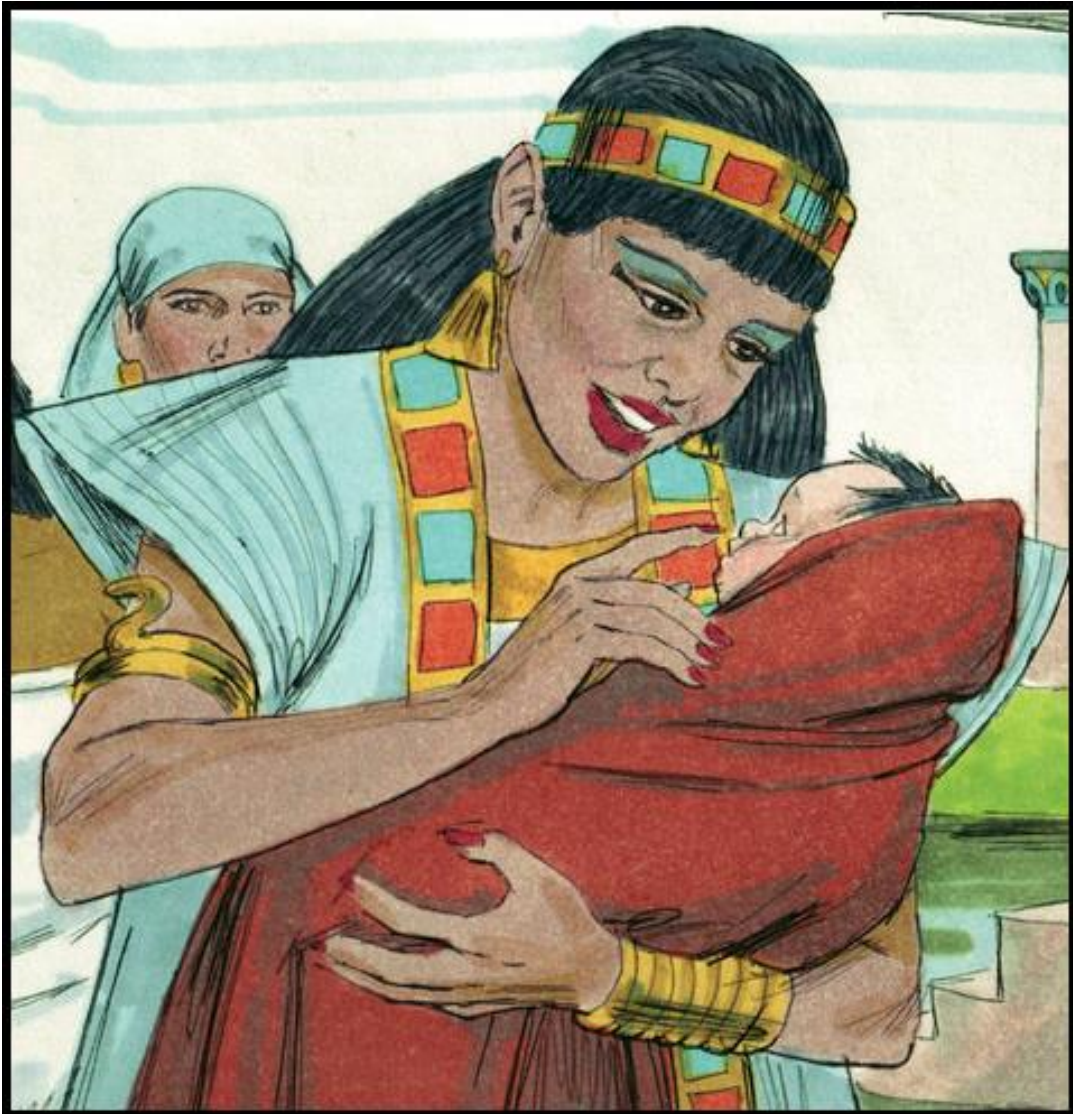


Consider the ‘inactivity of God’ in Joseph’s life...

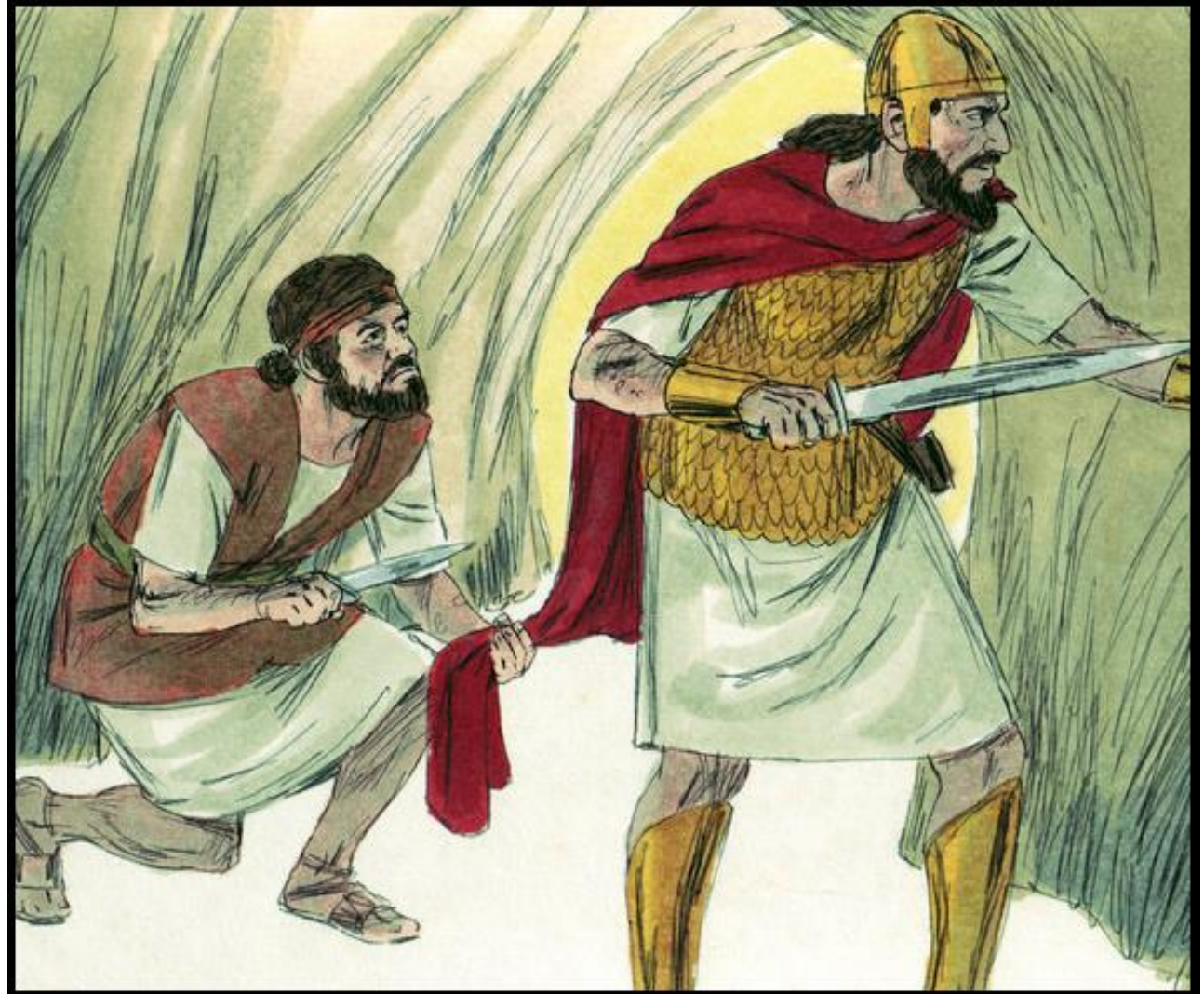
“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”
(Gen 50:20)



Consider the 'inactivity of God' in Moses' life...



Consider the 'inactivity of God' in David's life...



“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, **but is patient** toward you, not wishing that any should perish...”
(2 Peter 3:9)

“Perfect faith is not faith that moves God...it is faith that moves us to trust God when He doesn't seem to be moving.”

Andy Stanley

How do I apply?

- When it appears that God is not answering your prayers and is inactive in a situation...trust that he is up to something good.
- Make Romans 8:28 (“all things for good”) a hallmark of your theology and your daily routine.
- Review God’s timing in the past. (In the Bible and your life). Remind yourself of how he often works.

There is great danger in comfort,
ease and prosperity.



“The **land of a rich man** produced **plentifully**, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have **ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.**”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’” (Luke 12:16-20)

Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them...this is the one who hears the word, but **the cares of the world** and the deceitfulness of **riches choke the word**, and it proves **unfruitful**. (Matthew 13:7, 22)

How do I apply?

- Don't grow accustomed to luxury and ease. **Don't have comfort as your number one goal.** It isn't God's goal for you.
- **Be aware** that quiet often, soon after mountain top experiences of success & faith is a valley of testing or **hardship.**
- **Actually** pray for God's refining fire in your life...because you know that by it perseverance, character and hope are made.

Adversaries can become advocates. Even the most far away can be brought near.



“...the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul...Saul approved of his execution...Saul was ravaging the church...entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”

“...he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’”

How do I apply?

- Don't consider anyone 'too far gone' or beyond the reach of the gospel. God can save anyone. Don't give up praying.
- Actually target those that seem well beyond repentance, God often loves to use the 'foolish' to shame the 'wise'.
- Pray for God to give you strength as you try to reach the most difficult of society. An extra dose of grace is needed.

God always uses human means to reach the lost with the gospel, even in the most sovereign of situations.



“...there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision,
“Ananias, rise and go...to the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul...”

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear **without someone preaching?**”

(Romans 10:14)

How do I apply?

- Don't believe that God will save people by 'mysterious means'. God has sovereignly willed that salvation come by human messengers.
- As you pray for the salvation of the lost, recognize that many times you will be intended as God's answer to the prayer.
- When things get harder, your comfort is shattered, enemies are getting closer...anticipate that God is setting you up to be the human means of the salvation of someone else.

Being able to correctly identify Jesus is the way that the lost are saved, and it should be the aim of all our evangelical efforts.



Saul is only credited with having
said **two things** during this
incredible conversion.

““Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”” And
he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’”

“...immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the
synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’”

“...on the way Jesus questioned His disciples, saying to them, **"Who do people say that I am?"** They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." And He continued by questioning them, "But **who do you say that I am?**" Peter answered and said to Him, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**
(Mark 8:27-30, Matt 16:14-17)

Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, **"Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"** Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." And he said, "Lord, I believe."
(John 9:35-38)

How do I apply?

- Always keep in mind that the battle is over the willingness to correctly identify Jesus as the Son of God and Lord of all!
- In your all efforts in evangelism always try to nudge things towards Jesus. Who he is and what he came to do.
- Regularly, yet graciously, model through your speech and actions who you believe Jesus to be.



Group/Follow Up Questions