A Crazy Thing Happened on my Way to Damascus

When I think I've got it bad, I remember Paul of Tarsus. I've had my opportunities to complain, but Paul always had it worse than me. Most theologians and historians agree that He was probably on the upper crust of the economic scale in the first century but then there was that Damascus road experience, when he met Jesus. Sounds great, but I'm sure it wasn't all that thrilling that the first thing Paul ever heard from the Son of God would be, "Paul, why are you persecuting me?" It was a reality check. He'd spent his life as a religious zealot, only to find out that he was on the wrong team. And then he was blinded. He must have thought, *now I know the truth but how do I find my stuff?*

They charted his travels in the maps section of almost every Bible I own, but the maps are a reminder that Siri wasn't available back then and he traveled by foot, or beast of burden or by ship. But the ship sank. That's bad. He survived. That's good! But he got bit by a viper. That's bad. But he miraculously survived. That's good!

He rode the roller coaster of a church planter like a cowboy on the back of a two-ton bronco. He was done wrong by a lot of friends, but he kept going. No doubt he was on Jerusalem's 10 most wanted list and escaped out of a window in a basket, but he kept on going. He was beaten with rods three times, whipped 40 times minus one, five times. But he kept on going. He was left for dead, but like a cast member of a zombie apocalypse he got up and kept going. He sang in jails, wrote 28% of the New Testament, caused a ruckus in a market, and lulled a guy to sleep during one of his lectures, and somehow the guy fell out of a window, died, was resuscitated and Paul kept on going. He was the Hebrew version of the Energizer bunny. Oy vey!

Oh, and he made tents as a side-hustle. Just a little detail…

Onesiphorus, a contemporary of his day, described him as short, bow-legged, and bald, with a slightly hooked nose and a unibrow! Is there any wonder he was single? He had a dual citizenship, but most of the time, he was a citizen of the road. His story falls into the category of riches to rags. He didn’t leave a lot of material wealth when his head was placed on the block, but I can hear him now as the Roman executioner led him to the place of his death, still making conversation: “Did I ever tell you this story? I was a rich, religious scholar. I had everything going for me. I was the cat’s pajamas. Little did I know something better was in store. A crazy thing happened on the way to Damascus.”