

FAITH *Matters*

Written by **Matt Dodrill**, Senior Pastor, Pulaski Heights Baptist Church



Vinny loves to chase squirrels.

Before we moved to Little Rock, my family and I lived on two acres of land inhabited by all manner of wildlife, which gave Vinny, our dog, a few furry friends to play with (though I doubt they thought of it that way).

One Saturday afternoon, I was watching from our back window as Vinny crouched low to the ground and inched his way toward a tree where a squirrel was frolicking about. He's a fast dog, but his agility pales in comparison to these little critters.

When he bolted for the tree, the squirrel skittered across the yard with Vinny in hot pursuit. As I laughed, I turned

to my wife and accidentally said, "Our god is chasing a squirrel."

Classic.

It's a common slip of the tongue, given that d-o-g spelled backward is g-o-d. So we chuckled over the blooper for a moment, mainly because it was so corny and typical. But then I pondered about whether there's some truth to it. Without a doubt, God chases the squirrels, birds, and rabbits — and us, too. We often speak about "finding God" and "seeking truth," neither of which are unworthy pursuits. But in the Christian tradition, we believe that God sent his only Son into the far country to find *us* before we had any capacity to find *God*.

It reminds me of a curious moment in Paul's letter to the Galatians. While reminding his congregation of its blessed identity in the person of Jesus Christ, he interrupts his own line of thinking: "Now that you have come to know God, *or rather to be known by God*, how can you turn back?"

Rather than putting the accent on human agency, Paul reminds us that the agent of salvation is God. It's not our reaching up to God that accomplishes salvation. It's God's reaching down and knowing *us*. Or, as the theologian Fleming Rutledge puts it: "God is the subject of our verbs."

My aunt and uncle once had a dog who would chase tennis balls until he would nearly die of exhaustion. I think that's a fitting parable of God's love. In the cross of Jesus Christ, God is literally *dying* to love us. No matter how much we run away, and no matter how unworthy or unlovable we think we are, God is going to chase us like a mad dog who's relentless in his pursuit.

And for that, I wonder if the angels laugh and say to themselves, "Our God is chasing the children of Adam."



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