

“SERVICE WITH A SMILE”

Acts 9:19b-30

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INTRODUCTION

A Changed Life, Surrender for Service (“Here Am I Lord”), now *Energetic Service*.

We want energetic service in the spirit of I Cor. 3:6-7: “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.*”

I am committed to the ministry of this church regardless of the consequences; **so are many others who are involved deeply in this ministry:** *pastors, deacons, secretaries, treasurer, church clerk, teachers for adults and children, care group leaders, fellowship group leaders, pianists, singers and musicians, children’s church workers, ushers, nursery workers, cleaners, building and grounds workers, visitors, social committee, missionary committee, etc.*

Now I have a question for our members and regular attendees:

- **How are you serving?**
- **Are you involved in any service?**

YOU MUST SERVE GOD ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

“Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” (I Cor. 15:58)

In this passage we see Saul’s testimony, his increased strength, his persecution, his misunderstanding by both believers and the world, yet his continued faithful service.

OH THAT WE MIGHT HAVE MORE CHRISTIAN WORKERS LIKE SAUL—WHO DON’T QUIT, GET THEIR FEELINGS HURT, GIVE UP, OR WALK AWAY, BUT JUST KEEP ON SERVING THE LORD FAITHFULLY!

I. THE SERVANT’S TESTIMONY

A. The Time

- “Immediately”—That’s when he began serving the Lord after being saved!
- He was “with the disciples who were at Damascus for several days”—then began serving.
- He was discipled and was not “a Lone Ranger”.

B. The Topic: “Jesus is the Son of God.”

- C. The turf—Jewish synagogues! The place of his former allegiance. **The place of persecution became the place of testimony.**
- D. The testimony—his **dramatic change of life** (v. 21)

Why can't people see a change in us?

Saul served enthusiastically; but he did not "peter out" after a short ministry. He continued consistently to serve, increasing in strength.

II. THE SERVANT'S INCREASED STRENGTH (22)

We are too quick to get discouraged and to give up serving the Lord.

A. Saul Increased in Strength

- He had spent time in Arabia—See Galatians 1:17-18—three years later, after his conversion, he went up to Jerusalem. He must have been in Arabia a considerable time.
- He undoubtedly was searching the Scriptures and spending time alone with God.
- This was his Christian **seminary program.**
- He became solidified in God's Word.
- **The lack of careful study and preparation will ruin any servant of God.**

B. Saul "Confounded in argument the Jews who lived at Damascus".

C. Saul proved "that this Jesus is the Christ—even more powerful than his earlier message." See 18:28. Also see Acts 26:22-23

Saul not only testified and increased in strength, but he began to experience persecution. We servants of the Lord today can expect the same.

III. THE SERVANT'S PERSECUTION (23-25)

A. Saul's persistence (23)

- "Many days"—part of the 3 years of Gal. 1:17-18.
- Note that Saul did not stop serving when the going got rough!

B. The Jew's plot (23)

C. The believers' plan (25)

1. Saul became aware of the plot and did not deliberately expose himself to their plans.
2. The "disciples" protected Saul by helping him escape.
 - **Saul was now officially "a basket case."**
 - Saul later remembers this extremely humbling experience: II Cor. 11:32-33.

But *persecution* did not destroy the testimony and powerful service of Saul. If he was chased out of one city, He would go and serve the Lord in another city.

However, he did not pick a safer city; he picked the city where the highest Jewish authorities lived—the very city from which he had been commissioned to go to Damascus, the place where he would be in even greater danger! There he would have no better treatment than he had had in Damascus. He would be misunderstood by all.

IV. THE SERVANT’S MISUNDERSTANDING (26-30)

A. By the Believers (26-27)

1. Shunned by the church.

- “They were all afraid of him”—even the apostles!
- None of them believed that Saul was a genuine disciple—he was “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” waiting to do them harm.

2. Accepted by Barnabas (27-28)

- Once again **Barnabas was true to his name:** “Son of Consolation.”
- Saul remained with the believers (28) and he “moved about freely in Jerusalem.”
- Again, as in Damascus, **he spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord.**

But, if the believers misunderstood Saul, what do we expect of the unsaved Jewish leaders?

B. By his former companions (29)

- Again, they would not acknowledge reason—instead they “were attempting to put him to death” (29).

C. By his family (30)

- Once again it is the brethren who take action to protect Saul.
- In neither case did he escape on his own.
- They brought him to Caesarea—a city on the coast built by Herod the Great and under Roman control—safe from the attack of Jews.
- Then they sent him to his home town—Tarsus.
- Undoubtedly his own relatives—staunchly Jewish—would have rejected his **changed life** and **preaching service.**

If anyone had a right to quit serving the Lord it was Saul! **But Saul kept on serving there in Tarsus. AND WHEN YOU SERVE THE LORD WHERE YOU ARE, THE LORD WILL EVENTUALLY GIVE YOU GREATER OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE.**

CONCLUSION

We must have dynamic, powerful service;

- Meet the risen Christ.
- Spend time with Him in the Word and prayer.
- Be strengthened by Him.
- Testify to Him.
- Suffer for Him.

Why should we grow tired in serving Jesus? We don't want or need **Carnal servants; only Spiritual.**
Are you serving in the flesh? Get right or get someone else to do it!

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OH THAT WE MIGHT HAVE MORE CHRISTIAN WORKERS LIKE SAUL—WHO DON'T QUIT, GET THEIR FEELINGS HURT, GIVE UP, OR WALK AWAY, BUT JUST KEEP ON SERVING THE LORD FAITHFULLY!

Are you willing to serve the Lord in a practical way? As a teacher, Kids for Truth worker, children's church worker, Nursery worker, cleaner, usher, visitor, grounds worker, etc.

I am willing to serve in the Spirit. How about you?