

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conversion of Saul: A Lesson on Suffering **Acts 9:23-31**

Keywords: Paul, Conversion, Suffering, Affliction, Trials, Perseverance

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: While the account of Saul's conversion is a beautiful and powerful example of God's sovereignty in action; it is also an example of the reality of what it means to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus said we are to take up our cross and follow Him and part of that pathway is one of suffering for the name of Christ. In fact, a mark of true conversion is a willingness to suffer for His name's sake. This message is designed to unfold this part of Saul's conversion and understand the subtle differences of trials, suffering and disciple and what they accomplish in the life of God's children.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 9:15-16, 23-31
- B. We come to a key shift for this man Saul.
 1. A blasphemer of God to a faithful teacher of God.
 2. And a man committed to causing suffering for those who follow Jesus Christ to a man suffering for the name of Jesus Christ.
- C. Suffering is a part of the call to discipleship.
 1. *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:24-26).”*
 2. *“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (Matt. 10:38).”*
 3. How often in your evangelism are words such as these included?
- D. This sermon is one of those that is hard to preach because too often those who listen will insert themselves where they ought not. This is a sermon to simply hear. Hear it and then ponder it. Let it wash over you and flow through your soul
- E. A few clarifications:
 1. The suffering I speak of is not that of sickness or financial hardships.

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2. It is not suffering from the discipline of the Lord as described in Hebrews 12.
3. And it is certainly not suffering for wrongdoing.
4. This is suffering for the name of Jesus Christ. It is connected to being identified as a man or woman who follows Jesus as Lord over all things.
5. So do not allow yourself to try to fit one of these other sorts of suffering into this message for it will not fit well and in doing so you will miss the points being made.

II. Nine lessons from the suffering of Saul.

A. #1 Suffering is not something for later in life for the believer (22-23).

B. #2 Suffering is directly tied to the proclamation of the gospel (22-23).

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G. #7 Suffering for the sake of Christ is something that will help confirm your claim of faith.

H. #8 Suffering should not silence the believer (28-29).

I. #9 Suffering can be in one Christian's life and not others at any given time (30-31).

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III. Conclusion.

- A. Beloved, envy works in the strangest of ways for each of us. And a bitter spirit can easily arise as we look around and wonder why us and not them. But this is not the way of a Christian.
- B. Some simple counsel for those suffering;
 - 1. God has promised that though you might be like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick, He will not extinguish you.
 - 2. Nothing brings you closer to understanding your Savior than suffering. In it you are drawn closer to Him and it gives you opportunity to marvel and die to self as you then consider how He suffered in your place for your salvation
 - 3. Suffering teaches you to not cling to things that pass away but only to hold onto what is eternal. It turns your hope from folly to the one true anchor for the soul—Jesus Christ your Savior.
 - 4. You cannot truly know the peace that surpasses all understanding until you sit under this sort of suffering. In it you find He is ever faithful and truly sufficient.
 - 5. When you find yourself weeping or fearful in the midst of this suffering you can have full confidence that your Savior understands your trembling prayers more than even yourself. For He has gone before you and He promises to be with you in your time of suffering.
 - 6. Finally, you will find that He is truly sufficient for all things and in that you will find yourself thankful.

Benediction

May our merciful God and Father open our eyes to the glory and vastness of His love toward us through Jesus His Son. May we see ourselves seated with Him in heaven as recipients of His grace. And may God grant us through the Spirit, eyes to grasp the many good works He has called us to love and do. Amen