

THE BEGINNING OF PAUL'S WITNESS: A BELIEVER'S LIFE AND TESTIMONY

ACTS 09:19–22

Introduction

The life of Saul, the new convert, is a dynamic example for all. It paints a picture of just what the believer's life and testimony should be.

- I. He cared for himself physically (v. 19).
- II. He joined and became associated and identified with other disciples (v. 19).
- III. He preached immediately: that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 20)
- IV. He stood as a testimony to the community (v. 21).
- V. He was faithful and steadfast, continuing on with Christ (v. 22).

I. Acts 09:19 Self Care

Saul cared for himself physically; he looked after his body. He had spent three days before the Lord, confined to the Lord's presence. He had been...

- shattered spiritually
- drained and exhausted physically
- isolated socially
- made weak physically

He had not eaten, not even had anything to drink (v. 9). He was drained and wrung out. Now note what happened: he received food. It seems to read as though he was so weak he had to be fed. Whatever the situation, he was strengthened both by the food and by the Lord. The Lord as well as the food were actively strengthening him.

The point is that both Saul and God were taking care of his body, strengthening him so he could do what God wanted him to do. God had a task, a special work for him to do. His body had to be strengthened and made fit for the task.

***Rom 12:1** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.*

***Phil 1:20** I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

***1 Tim 4:8** For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

***Thought 1.** Note the strong lessons on eating right, exercising and getting adequate sleep.*

II. *Acts 09:19 Paul Joined the Church*

Paul joined and became associated and identified with other believers. What happened to Paul is critical to note, for it holds a much needed lesson for every generation of men. Paul joined the other believers at Damascus because he was a *true* believer. His old nature, the old man, had truly died; and he now had the new nature of believers. He was *bound* to join those with the same nature as him. It was their presence he desired. He wanted to share in...

- their companionship and fellowship (see *Fellowship*, Acts 2:42).
- their love, concern and care.
- their beliefs and principles.
- their study of the Word.
- their growth in Christ.
- their edifying and building up of each other.
- their witness and service.

Saul associated and became identified with the church so that the world might know that he was a believer. He wanted to openly and publicly declare that he was now...

- a new creation in Christ Jesus.
- a follower of “the Way” which he had opposed and persecuted.
- a true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Psa 119:63 I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

III. *Acts 09:20 Paul's Proclamation of Christ*

Paul immediately preached, not hesitating at all. Note what Paul preached: he preached that Jesus is the Son of God. He was no longer preaching religion, tradition, ceremony or ritual. Neither was he preaching himself or his spiritual experiences, that is, his visions of the Lord, his discipline, his fasting and praying. He preached Christ and Him alone (see *Preaching*, Acts 11:19-30).

2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

1 Cor 1:23 *But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.*

Col 1:27-28 *To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 9:35-37 *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”*

John 10:30 *“I and the Father are one.”*

John 11:25-27 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”*

Col 2:9 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

IV. Acts 09:21 Paul's Testimony

Paul stood as a testimony to the community. The public as well as the leaders of the synagogue were *astonished* (existanto), amazed, astounded, shocked at what they were seeing.

1. They were expecting an inflamed antagonist storming the homes and meeting places of those who “called on the name of Jesus.” They knew he had been sent to arrest and chain not only the men, but the women followers of Jesus, and to drag them back to Jerusalem for treason and death.
2. Instead, they were witnessing a man radically changed, a man...
 - associating and identifying himself with those whom he had come to destroy.
 - preaching like a flaming evangel, proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God.

Luke 12:50 *“But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!”*

John 9:4 *“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”*

Acts 4:20 "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

1 Cor 2:2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1 Cor 9:16 Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

Jer 20:9 But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

V. Acts 09:22 Paul's Steadfastness

Paul was faithful and steadfast, continuing on with Christ. Note two significant facts.

1. He continued to grow spiritually, increasing more and more in spiritual strength. The words *grew more and more* (mallon enedunamouto) mean to become strong within, to gain inner strength, to increase spiritually.

Mat 5:48 "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

2 Cor 9:10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

Eph 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Phil 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

1 Th 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

1 Tim 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

2 Tim 2:1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Heb 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.

James 1:4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Note: the more he grew in the Lord, the more he was able to “baffle” (confuse) those who opposed and rebelled against the gospel. He was able to *prove* (affirm and confirm) it with more and more power as he grew and grew.

2. He continued to preach that Jesus is the Messiah.

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Rom 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

1 John 2:23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ■