The Book of Acts Lesson 19

Acts 9:23-31

“Saul on the Road of Great Resistance”

Introduction: In the last lesson we looked at the purpose that God had for Saul’s life. Today we are going to look at how that purpose worked out in his life. I don’t know if Saul was a strong man, but while he was on the road to Damascus his life took a turn that would require much strength in his life. We can actually look at many of the athletes in this world and see that they go through training regimens that are similar to the regimen that Saul would go through. In order to get stronger an athlete trains usually with weights that increase the resistance upon their muscles. That is for a very simple reason:

1. A burden develops strength in the bearer of it.
   1. Years ago scientists discovered in a bio-dome that the resistance of the wind is what allowed trees to grow tall and strong. In the shelter of the dome the weight of the limbs was too great for the tree and they would break just by the force of gravity. The continual beating of the wind, even the storms that trees in nature face cause the trees to be stronger than if they did not face that.
   2. Saul experienced great resistance in the course of his Christian life.
      1. The Jews wanted to kill him.
      2. The disciples rejected him.
      3. The Grecians sought to kill him.
      4. These difficulties are what God used to work in the life of Saul so that he would be used in a great way.
   3. In our lives we will encounter difficult things and even go through some seemingly overwhelming storms.
      1. Friends, family, and co-workers may reject you for your faith.
      2. You will face the constant struggle to keep your spiritual life a priority in the busyness of life.
      3. You may face ridicule at the role that God has called you to fulfill.
      4. You will find yourself surrounded by people who want you to diminish the importance of God.
      5. We may become ill or face tragedies that break our hearts. In all of these things it is important to remember that God did not promise us that we would have a life of lemonade in the shade. Because of the curse of sin on this world we are still subject to go through things that are difficult.

Transition: In these difficulties people find many things in life that help them go through difficulties; friends, family, spouse, church, upbringing. The greatest help we have in life’s difficulties is the one we tend to overlook.

1. In the difficulties of life God is with us.
   1. God worked in Saul’s life
      1. God worked to deliver Saul from the Jews. v.24
      2. God worked in the hearts of the believers to help Saul. v.25
      3. God used Barnabas to introduce Saul to the believers in Jerusalem.
      4. God used the believers to get Saul safely away from the city.
   2. God is working in your life
      1. He died for you to save you from your sins
      2. He has brought you to church to be around godly people.
      3. He has given us a godly pastor who preaches the Word of God faithfully.
      4. He has given us access to Him through prayer.
      5. He has revealed Himself to us through His Word.
      6. He has clothed us and fed us.

Transition: The natural thing to do in the course of life is to avoid all difficulties. This is not necessarily wrong, but the difficulties in life are actually part of God’s purpose for our lives.

1. Suffering is a necessary part of spiritual development.
   1. Some would have looked at the life of Saul and concluded that it would have been better for him to have stayed a persecutor of the church. That way he would not have had to run for his life and face rejection. The adversity that we would naturally avoid was the very thing that God wanted to use to make Saul a blessing to the churches in the area.
      1. V. 31 Here we see the result of suffering in the life of Saul. The churches were edified. Through the bold preaching of Saul and others they were driven to live lives that honored God and were directed by the Holy Spirit.
      2. They were also multiplied. God used the suffering of Saul to be a catalyst to the effort of evangelism so that many people who saw God’s people going through adversity came to know Christ.
   2. You may be going through some difficulties in your Christian life that are causing you to question whether the decision to follow Christ was a beneficial one or not.
      1. Remember that the purpose of God involves these difficulties. That is not to say that God causes everything that is difficult in our lives, sometimes the difficulties we experience are a result of our own poor decisions. God does however use all difficulties to our benefit, Romans 8:28.
      2. Remember that there are Christians who will come after you that God can use you to encourage because of the difficulties you may be going through. As difficult and overwhelming as your problems may be, think about the people that you can help if you just keep trusting God and gain a wonderful testimony for His name.
      3. Remember that there are lost people all around you and they pay special attention when you go through something difficult. If you strive to honor God in your trial it may be the very thing that God uses to reach through the excuses and obstacles in a person’s heart that keep them from trusting Christ.

Conclusion: Christ suffered more than we really understand on the cross. He left us an example that suffering can bring about much in the lives of others. If there are things in your life that you just wish were gone. You may think that your life would be so much better if just this person was out of your life, if you just had a different job, if you were just healthy, if you had a better mind, if you looked a certain way, we can begin to think that the grass would be so green if our life was rid of some difficulty. Just remember that that which you would like to get rid of most is the very thing that God has a purpose for in your life. His purpose is to help you become stronger, to make you a help to other believers, and to use your life as a witness for His saving grace.

God wants Hillcrest Baptist Church to grow. He wants to use you to help others here grow spiritually by seeing your example. He also wants to use you to bring others to Christ. Though we would not choose to go through difficulties in our lives, sometimes getting on the road of great resistance will lead to our good and to God’s glory.

Teacher’s note: Galatians 1:14-24 is a passage that deals with this point in the life of Saul. He was trained and preached for 3 years in Damascus and then went to Jerusalem.