

Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

There are several aspects of Saul’s Damascus Road encounter we all could excitedly go for:

- Saw a brilliant light from heaven.
- Heard an audible voice.
- Spoke directly to Jesus.
- Received revelation.
- Healed of blindness.

Jesus had a grand purpose for Saul’s life. He was “chosen.” He was God’s “vessel;” an empty cup ready to accomplish the Master’s purpose. God was going to show him “great things.” Sounds like an ideal situation. But show him what? “I will show him how much he must suffer for me” (Acts 9:16, *NLT*). Now, wait a minute! Did you mention “suffering”? Surely, this is an isolated case, meant for Paul, and not for other ministers of the gospel (like me). Certainly, we can go for the vision, and bypass discomfort.

Have you ever taken a strong medication and experienced side effects? They are the undesired, unwanted, consequences of taking medication. These include (among others) a headache, rash, increased heart rate, blurred vision, dry mouth, sleepiness, weight loss, a drop in blood pressure, constipation, and diarrhea. Two people can take the same medicine and have different experiences. However, side effects are usually worth the risk, because health is restored. There are also side effects to having a biblical vision and purpose. Success costs! Not all ministers experience the same side effects but all testify, “Ministry is not an easy road.”

Ministry side effects might include:

- Suffering
- Sacrifice
- Surrender
- Submission
- Stewardship
- Service
- Sensitivity
- Steadfastness

Suffering

At times, we suffer persecution because of our faith; for righteousness' sake. Even fellow "Christians" may persecute us when we take a stand on a biblical issue.

Suffering or trouble can be for our benefit because they strengthen us as Christians. "It takes a world with trouble in it to train men and women for their high calling as children of God. Faced with trouble, some people (like Joseph) grow wings; others buy crutches. Which kind are you?" (*Daily Walk Bible*)

Here's a promise in God's Word you may not normally pray for:

- "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

All who live godly will suffer persecution.

- "For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for him in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle" (Philippians 1:29-30, *NLT*).

Check it out. All God's prophets suffered for their faithfulness to Him. Stephen asked, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" (Acts 7:52).

God's call, will and vision may require suffering.

- "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).
- "This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21-22, *NLT*).

You probably have heard enough about suffering, but let us add the following Scriptures:

- "I send greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in the service of Christ Jesus; they risked their lives for me. I am grateful to them — not only I, but all the Gentile churches as well. Greetings also to the church that meets in their house" (Romans 16:3-5, *TEV*).
- "[But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us!" (Romans 8:18, *AMP*).
- "Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And as Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army" (2 Timothy 2:3-4, *NLT*).

- “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life-not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:8-9, *NIV*).
- “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:17-18).
- “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).
- “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

We do not pray to suffer, nor do we rejoice for suffering, but we can rejoice in being able to suffer for His name’s sake.

- “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:20-21).

Paul knew well suffering so he could realize his vision and purpose. Because of his willingness to suffer the gospel spread throughout the known world. Consider this short list of things he encountered:

- “They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along” (2 Corinthians 11:23-29, *NLT*).

Which, if any, of Paul’s sufferings can you identify with?

In a prosperity pleading and success conscious world, suffering for His name's sake is far from popular.

So, what should you do with this discussion about suffering? Warren and David Wiersbe in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service* advise the following:

- Expect it (1 Peter 4:12; John 15:18, 20).
- Accept it as God's gift (Philippians 1:29).
- Evaluate it and yield to God's purposes (Job 23:10).
- Learn to live a day at a time and give your cares to God (Psalms 69:19; 1 Peter 5:7).
- Trust God to turn suffering into eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Surrender

- "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

We choose to surrender what we perceive as our rights, and place ourselves in the hands of a higher power. We give up, so God can take up, and use us for His glory.

An old Nigerian chorus proclaims, "Jesus surrendered His life for me. What have I done for Him?"

At times, even though we may not express it verbally, we feel that we are "owed" something for ministering the gospel. The church owes us for our sacrifice. The people owe us for our work. We sometimes approach giving of our finances the same way. We give to get, instead of give to bless, or extend God's kingdom. This is faulty thinking. We own nothing. But, we surrender everything to accomplish His vision. We must surrender ourselves to the vision that God has given us, to His will, and ways.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is not merely for divine favor, but to honor God. We owe everything to God, who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus' sacrifice accomplished His vision and purpose on the earth. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); give abundant life (John 10:10); destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8); and to build His Church (Matthew 16:18). Sacrifice pays off!

- "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17, RSV).
- "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not

conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Daily one must pull himself onto the altar of sacrifice.

- “[Come] and, like living stones, be yourselves built [into] a spiritual house, for a holy (dedicated, consecrated) priesthood, to offer up [those] spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5, AMP).

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:20-37). Jim George (*God’s Man of Influence*) suggests five areas of sacrificial service.

- Sacrifice of time (he stopped and helped the wounded man).
- Sacrifice of resources (he gave his bandage and dressing for the wounds.)
- Sacrifice of personal transportation (he carried the man to the inn).
- Sacrifice of life (he personally took care of the man).
- Sacrifice of money (he gave money and promised to pay for the wounded man’s continued care).

“Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. If the minister’s life is without a measure of pain and sacrifice, his ministry will be without blessing.”
 (Warren & David Wiersbe)

He closes his study on sacrifice by saying, “The greater the level of your service to others, the greater the level of your influence on others.”

Study Questions

1. Comment on the following statement: “Ministry is not an easy road.” _____

2. List five side effects or results of ministry.
 1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
 4) _____
 5) _____

3. According to the *Daily Walk Bible* what are the two responses to troubles that people take? _____

4. What does 1 Peter 2:21-22 say about suffering? _____

5. What did Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-4? _____

6. Why did the Apostles rejoice in Acts 5:41-42? _____

7. List five types of suffering that Paul endured.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

8. What response(s) should we give to the discussion of suffering? _____

9. What did Jim George say about the level of service to others? _____

10. How often should one pull himself on to the altar of sacrifice? _____

11. List the five areas of sacrifice provided by the Good Samaritan. _____

12. Write out the closing quote used in this lesson. _____
