

SHINE Devotional

Week 26 – Lesson 1



Facing Opposition

Scripture reading Acts 9:1

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,”

Anyone who has ever attempted to do anything for the Lord Jesus Christ has faced opposition. Paul explained that to Timothy. *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12). Obstacles are part of life. They strengthen us and increase our ability to perform.

Several years ago when our children were very young, my wife and I took them to Floyd Lamb State Park, located on the outskirts of Las Vegas. The park had ducks, chickens, and various other animals. While walking near the chicken house, we found some chicken eggs and decided to take them home and see if we could hatch them in an incubator. For approximately three weeks we watched the eggs. Then one of those eggs began to hatch. We got the children around and very impatiently watched as the egg moved back and forth and the baby chick pecked with its little beak through the safety of its shell. When the chick was about three-quarters of the way out of the shell and stretching its wings, we decided to help it the rest of the way. This was a mistake. Because of our assistance, that chick was crippled and struggled for the rest of its life. Pushing its way out of the shell would have strengthened its leg and wings. Through “helping” we had actually hindered its growth.

Struggles in the early church were allowed by God to strengthen the infant church so it could become all God intended it to be. Struggles in your life are allowed by God to help you become all God wants you to be. Submit to His character development. Don’t resist what He is trying to do in your life. Ask Him to help you with the struggle in times of trial. When you complete the trial, you as a believer will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 26 – Lesson 2



Satan's Tools

Scripture reading Acts 9:1

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,”

Notice in this passage of Scripture, some of the tools that Satan will use to discourage you. Satan did not want the early church to shine. Satan does not want any believer to shine. He uses the same tools generation after generation. Victory will come in your life as a believer if you recognize those tools and learn to overcome them.

1. His servants. Saul was a terrorist. His own testimony was *“...I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women”* (Acts 22:4). Again, *“and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities”* (Acts 26:10-11). He used Saul of Tarsus and he will use people in positions of authority in our culture as well.
2. His vain philosophies. There is only one truth but there are a multiplicity of lies. Satan doesn't care which lie you believe. In Saul's day, he used the vain philosophy of legalistic Judaism to convince Saul that Christians were his enemy. Today he uses evolutionary humanism, globalism, socialism, and false religions to fight against the truth of the Gospel.
3. Lies against those who promote life. Jesus said about the devil, *“When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). The lie in Saul's day was that Jesus was a blasphemer and His disciples were spreading falsehoods and could not be trusted. The truth was just the opposite. Satan uses the same tools today to stir the hearts of men and women to reject God's truth and believe his lies.

Don't allow Satan's tools to be used against you. Examine what you believe according to the Word of God. Walk in His truth and you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 26 – Lesson 3



Satan's Targets

Scripture reading Acts 9:1-2

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

God has only established three institutions on this earth. Each one of those institutions are a target for Satan. What is very important for you to understand is that you are part of each one of those institutions. If he can destroy your family, he can control you. If he can cause you to rebel against government, he can control you. If he can keep you from the local church and convince you that you don't need fellowship with other believers, then he can control you.

The high priest that Saul aligned with was in constant opposition to the Roman government. Saul, himself, was doing all he could to disrupt early Christian families, and he persecuted the early church so that they could not meet together. These are Satan's targets. He targets God's institution. He targets God's people. He targets God's doctrine. You and I as a believers need to pray for those in authority, determine to love and strengthen our families, and be in church as often as possible so that we might SHINE for Christ in this dark world.

SHINE Devotional

Week 26 – Lesson 4

Our Champion



Scripture reading Acts 9:3-4

“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

It is true that the Christian will face opposition. It is true that Satan hates the believer. He will use his servants and false teachings to attack institutions of God, the people of God, and God’s philosophies. How then in 2,000 years has the Christian community continued to grow and prosper through great persecution and times of trial? The answer is that we have a great Champion.

In our text today, Saul was on his way to Damascus. His purpose was to kill and destroy Christians. He wanted to stop the advancement of God’s institution of the local New Testament church. Through his leadership the church in Jerusalem had been scattered. He looked at this as a victory, but God used Saul’s evil intent to accomplish his own glorious purpose. Churches were begun throughout Judea and Samaria and the Gospel of Christ began to be spread abroad. Saul was going to Damascus to arrest Christians, but our Champion stopped his brutal attack. On his way to Damascus, Saul met our Champion face to face. Saul had not planned this, Jesus had. When Jesus confronted Saul, the glory of his presence was so bright that Saul had no choice but to fall to the earth. There with his face to the ground, Jesus asked him, *“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”* (Acts 9:4). As believers we are often tempted by Satan to defend ourselves. We need to remember the words of the Apostle Paul, *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Romans 12:19).

Your job and mine is very simply to be faithful to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Live God’s truth, proclaim God’s truth, leave the vengeance to Him, and you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 26 – Lesson 5



The War Against God

Scripture reading Acts 9:5

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”

Saul of Tarsus began a crusade against an institution that Jesus Christ had established. That institution was the local New Testament church, made up of the children of God who had been born again into His family. Saul thought that he was fighting against people, but in reality, according to the words of our Saviour, he was fighting against God. Jesus did not say, “Why are you persecuting my people?” He said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). When Paul said, “Who art thou?” (Acts 9:5). Jesus responded, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:5). To fight against the people of God is to fight against God Himself. Pharaoh found that out 1,500 years earlier. Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, found that out a 1,000 years earlier.

Jesus compares Saul to a disobedient, stubborn ox that would “kick against the pricks.” This was an instrument used to stab an ox to get him to go in the right direction. Jesus basically said, “Saul, you are stubborn ox, but you are my stubborn ox and you will do what I tell you to do. This battle is not a human battle, you are fighting against me.”

There are two very important truths we learn from this:

1. As a believer, when we are walking in obedience to God, we can be confident that He will take care of those who criticize and persecute us.
2. I must remember that when I criticize another child of God, that I am not just attacking His child, I am attacking Him.

Leave the vengeance to God. Refuse to be part of the war against God, and you, as a believer, will SHINE.

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Week 26 – Lesson 6

Helping New Recruits



Scripture reading Acts 9:6-9

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

Meeting God face to face is a life changing event. This event left Saul with a submissive heart, blind, and in desperate need of guidance.

His first question was the question that every new convert asks: *“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”* (Acts 9:6). It is important that mature believers understand that new believers are often confused. We read that when his eyes were opened, *“he saw no man: but they led him by the hand”* (Acts 9:8). When someone gets saved, we need to remember that they do not know the ways of God. We need to take them by the hand and lead them in the paths of righteousness.

Having pastored in Las Vegas for the last forty-two years, I have had the privilege to witness the conversion of many people. It often amazes me what people expect of new converts, especially if they happen to have some notoriety. As a mature believer, you must remember that all Christians, famous, unknown, or infamous, must have an opportunity to grow. Though they have become spiritual beings, they are still spiritual babes. They are blind to much truth and they need someone to guide them. Don't be the person says *“Well, let's wait and see. I believe this guy is a phony.”* Don't be the one rooting for the demise of the Christian. Pray for the new recruit and do all you can to encourage him or her to become like Jesus Christ. Discipling new believers is the responsibility of all mature believers.

When you abandon the attitude of criticism towards the new recruit and adopt the new believer as a friend who needs your encouragement, you will SHINE.