

Serve

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Acts 9:32-43

As Christians, servanthood is not just an option—it's a requirement, and it's not something we can simply observe from the sidelines. Serving others is an essential part of true faith. As James 2:26 reminds us, *"faith apart from works is dead."* Take a moment to reflect on how this relates to your own salvation. The evidence of our salvation should be visible in our actions today. A genuine Christian naturally produces good fruit.

Throughout the Bible, God's most faithful servants made it a priority to minister to individuals. Their experiences serve as a guide for us. For example, Moses faced burnout until his father-in-law wisely advised him to delegate responsibilities. In Exodus 18:14, we read, *"When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?'"*

Similarly, we see Deacon Stephen caring for widows personally (Acts 6:1-6). In Romans 16, Paul sends greetings to those he ministered to individually, even while reaching large crowds.

Even Jesus consistently took time to care for individuals. His continuous acts of compassion reassure us that we are never too busy to show compassion to a single person (Matthew 9:19-22). In Acts 10:38, it says, *"He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."*

Believers, God is with you too. He calls us to be ministers of His word, compassion, and love to others. As 2 Timothy 2:1-2 encourages us, *"Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."*

I. We Must Engage with Individuals (Acts 9:32-33)

- A. After relating the facts of the Apostle Paul's conversion, Luke now shifts quickly back to Peter and his activities.
 - 1. Peter is in focus throughout Chapters 1-12, and his ministry is mainly to the Jews.
 - 2. Paul is in focus throughout Chapters 13-28, and his ministry is mainly to the Gentiles.
- B. Peter was not locked up in an office in Jerusalem but on the playing field of ministry.
 - 1. We read, "Peter went here and there among them all..." to what does this refer to?
 - 2. Look at **Acts 9:31**, *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.*
- C. In Acts 9:33, we read, *"There he found a man named Aeneas..."*
 - 1. The word 'found' does not suggest Peter was looking for Aeneas but rather he 'stumbled into' Aeneas.
 - 2. This appointment was divine in nature.
 - 3. Luke describes Aeneas as a 'man.' This contrasts Dorcas, who he calls a 'disciple.' (Acts 9:36)
 - a) This distinction suggest Aeneas was likely not a believer.
 - b) Further, we can confidently say Dorcas was a believer.
- D. As we engage we those around us, God opens doors of ministry!

II. We Must be Christ-Exalting in Our Service (Acts 9:34-35)

- A. John the Baptist's knew beyond doubt of Christ's supremacy.
 - 1. **John 1:15**, *John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'*
 - 2. **John 1:27**, *Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."*
 - 3. **John 3:30** John said, *He must increase, but I must decrease."*
 - 4. **John 3:31**, *He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.*
 - 5. **Acts 13:25**, *And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'*
- B. Peter's exaltation of Christ was found in his abiding in Christ

1. **John 15:4–5**, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
2. **1 Peter 4:11**, *Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

C. The healing of Aeneas was instantaneous, complete, and permanent!

III. We Must Make Ourselves Available (Acts 9:36-39)

- A. Making one's self available leads to great opportunities (9:38b)
 1. Aeneas, as a paralytic, was healed of his malady.
 2. Dorcas was raised from the dead!
- B. Who was Dorcas? (Acts 9:36)
 1. Her name means 'gazelle,' beautiful, agile, fast, and observant.
 2. She was a disciple of Christ and served widows and others faithfully (Acts 6:1, 1 Tim 5:1)
 3. She made an impact as a disciple of Christ (Eph 2:10; Col 1:10; Proverbs 31:10-31)
- C. But, Dorcas died, likely 'prematurely.' (Acts 9:37)
- D. Her friends sent for Peter to come (Acts 9:38)
- E. Peter witnessed the love others had for Dorcas (Acts 9:39)

IV. We Must be Prayerful (Acts 9:40-41)

- A. Peter did not 'show off' before a crowd but rather got alone with God.
- B. He acknowledged his dependence on God.
- C. About Prayer:
 1. *Many years ago five young college students made their way to London to hear Charles Haddon Spurgeon preach. Arriving early at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, they found the doors still locked. While they waited on the steps, a man approached them. "Would you like to see the heating apparatus of this church?" he asked. That was not what they had come for, but they agreed to go with him. He led them into the building, down a long flight of stairs, and into a hallway. At the end of the hallway he opened a door into a large room filled with seven hundred people on their knees praying. "That," said their guide (who was none other than Spurgeon himself), "is the heating apparatus of this church."*

V. We Must and Will Bear Fruit (Acts 9:42)

- A. It starts when we abide (remain, stay; reside) (literally take up residence) **John 15:4**, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*
- B. When we abide, we see answered prayer. **John 15:7**, *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
- C. When we abide, obedience is a way of life. **John 15:8-10**, **John 15:10**, *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*
- D. Abiding, prayer, and obedience produce inexhaustible joy. **John 15:11**, *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
- E. Sacrificial love rendered to others becomes a way of life (John 15:12-17; esp. vs. 17) **John 15:17**. *These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

VI. We Must Not Pick and Choose to Whom We Minister (Acts 9:43)

- A. Peter, like every true believer, was being molded and transformed by God's Spirit, Who indwelt him. He would struggle with Impartiality now, and later with Paul (Acts 15)
 1. He witness the conversion and the Spirit-filling of the Samaritans.
 2. Soon, he would experience a greater shock, when Gentiles would enter the church.
- B. As almost a postscript, Luke adds verse 43
 1. Tanners were despised by Jewish society.
 2. Tanners dealt with skins of dead animals and were considered unclean. Tanning was thus considered an unclean occupation.