



SERMON NOTES

US N^o. 107

Date: July 14th, 2013

Title: Zeal & Miracles

#15 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

1. Review

a. The Damascus Road experience

2. Paul

a. Immediately goes out, Acts 9:20-21, *"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?'"*

i. Spirit inspired zeal

1. For His Kingdom and glory.

2. For the salvation of men from their sins. Conviction of sin & judgment, and the compulsion of love for others.

b. Departs for Arabia; Gal. 1:15-24, *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me."*

i. Prophetic parallels

1. For Paul, Arabia would have meant Mt. Sinai like Elijah (see Gal. 4:25, *"for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia..."*) then in 1 Kings 19:15, *"Then the LORD said to him [Elijah]: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus;'"*

2. Paul's zeal of Galatians 1 parallels that of Phinehas (cf. Num. 25:7-13) and Elijah and the prophets of Baal (cf. 1 Kings 19:14)

a. One of the major identifying characteristics of the Maccabean period (164-63 BC) was zeal; heroes like Phinehas and Elijah were very well respected. Paul would have been raised in such an atmosphere...

b. Thus we find that Paul probably saw himself acting out the model of Phinehas and/or Elijah. His zeal led him into physical violence against those whom he saw as the heirs

and successors of the compromised Jews of Numbers 25 and the Baal worshipers of 1 Kings 18 (cf. Acts 22:3-5).

- c. Paul may have doing what a puzzled, newly commissioned prophet might do, complaining (like Moses, Jeremiah, and others) that he is not able to undertake the work he has been assigned. And whatever still, small voice he may have heard, it was certainly not underwriting the land of zeal in which he had been indulging up until then. His zeal was now to be redirected (cf. Gal. 4:18; 2 Cor. 11:2). He was to become the herald of the new king.

- 3. Paul describes his call in “*prophetic*” terms: “*the God who set me apart from my mother’s womb . . .*” (cf. Gal. 1:15; Is. 49:1; Jer. 1:5). Even though the Hebrew scriptures are silent about Elijah’s birth or call, this locates Paul firmly within the prophetic tradition of which Elijah was one of the supreme members.
- 4. Paul concludes that we are saved by grace, therefore it is no longer by works, otherwise grace would not be grace (cf. Rom.11:6). In other words, the parallel with Elijah must be understood in a way quite different from how Saul of Tarsus would have read it. The true, loyal people of YHWH are not, after all, defined by their allegiance to “*the works of Torah*,” the badges of Israel’s distinctiveness but by their relationship (or grafting) through faith and grace.

ii. Zeal

- 1. Gal. 4:17-18, “*They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.*” And 2 Cor. 11:2, “*For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*”

iii. His call

- 1. Elijah was then sent back to anoint Hazael king of Syria and Jehu king of Israel; Paul goes back as the herald for the new King.

c. Returns and preaches in Damascus

d. Rejected

i. At Damascus

- 1. Acts 9:23-24, “*Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.*”
- 2. 2 Cor. 11:32-33, “*In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.*”

ii. By the disciples in Jerusalem

- e. Regeneration is instantaneous, but the readjustments of character and convictions are slow and progressive. Arabia
- f. Accepted by Barnabas and brought before the apostles and spends about 2 weeks with them.

- g. Continues to preach in Jerusalem, preaching to the same Hellenistic Jews whom Stephen was speaking too before his death at their hands. Paul picks up where Stephen left off.
 - h. Flees to Tarsus and works in Cilicia.
 - i. Acts 22:17-21, *"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, **"Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me."** So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then He said to me, **"Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles."***
3. Peace; Acts 9:31, *"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."*
- a. Evangelism has been taking place. The story of Philip going to Samaria is well known, but we read that there are now churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria... and obviously Damascus.
 - b. There was a lull in the storm of persecution. Around 39-40 AD, Roman Cæsar Gaius (Caligula) ordered that his image be erected in the Temple, which may have diverted the attention of the Jews for a season.
 - i. Caligula reigned from 37-41 AD and whose behavior was a blot on Roman history. He formed a strong friendship for the Jewish king Agrippa, who, as the Romans thought, influenced Caligula for the worse. Caligula professed belief in his own divinity, and ordered altars to be erected to himself and worship to be paid to him. Caligula's madness almost caused calamity to the Jews of Palestine. The heathens of Jamnia, a seaport largely peopled with Jews, provoked the latter and exhibited their own loyalty by erecting an altar in honor of Caligula. Forthwith the Jews demolished it. Herennius Capito, the procurator, reported this to Caligula, who, infuriated, sent an order that his image be placed in the Temple at Jerusalem. Petronius, the governor of Syria, was ordered to mobilize half of his army in Palestine in order to enforce this command (39-40). Petronius, anticipating a serious conflict, endeavored either to gain the assent of the Jews to the imperial command or to secure the revocation of the latter. When the news of Caligula's intention spread through Palestine, it occasioned general mourning. A large delegation appeared before Petronius and said, *"We offer sacrifices twice a day for Caesar and for the Roman people, but that if he would place the images among them, he must first sacrifice the whole Jewish nation."* At this Petronius was astonished and had sympathy for them on account of the inexpressible sense of religion the men were under and their courage which made them ready to die for it. Petronius immediately sent a letter to Cæsar. However, Agrippa had arrived at Rome in the meantime, and at a banquet given by him to the emperor, he succeeded in wheedling the latter into a revocation of his order. Later Caligula was incensed at the audacity of the governor, and

regretting his former action, laid plans for introducing his statue into the Temple surreptitiously, and sent an order of immediate suicide to Petronius. This message did not reach its destination until after the receipt of the news of Caligula's assassination at the hand of Cassius Chæreas. It is possible that the day of his death (**22 Shevat**) was instituted as a memorial day at Jerusalem.

- c. Edification, or building up, of the churches.
- d. Fear of the Lord. Prov. 1:7, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* A moral reverence and awe is required to be a learner.
- e. Comfort of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is described as the *"Paraclete,"* come alongside to console and help.

4. Peter

- a. Should start by saying that there is no formula to miracles and healings. There are common denominators, but to that there is a method, system or formula would be untrue.
- b. Leaves Jerusalem
- c. In going, finds... There are many opportunities for ministry if we would go and look.
- d. Æneas
 - i. *"Jesus heals you..."*
 - ii. *"Arise and make your bed."* Roll up your mat & get going, tidying up after sleeping, or preparing a couch to sit at the table in order to eat (cf. Luke 8:55)
 - iii. *"...all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord."*
 - iv. Parallels Jesus' healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:17-26
- e. While our faith should be based upon the completed work of Christ on the Cross by His blood for us, miracles do also engender salvation. In Acts, miracles accompany about half of the occasions of effective preaching of the gospel (2:4/14-41; 2:43/47; 3:1-10/11-26; 4:29, 30/33; 5:12-16; 6:8, 10/7:1-53; 8:5/6; 9:34/35; 9:40-41/42; 13:10-11/12; 14:1/3; 14:10/15-17); on the other occasions they do not (8:35-38; 9:22; 9:28-29; 10:34-43; 11:20-21; 13:16-41; 16:14-15; 16:31-34; 17:1-4; 17:22-34; 18:4-5; 19:8-10; 20:18-21).
- f. Dorcas
 - i. Famous for her good works among the poor, especially widows. She lives in fear of the Lord and placed a right value upon material blessings. Luke 12:23, *"Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing."* Nonetheless, she died.
 - 1. 1 Tim. 5:3-10, *"Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of*

one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work."

- ii. Her body had been prepared for burial, it had been some time. We perceive that the Christians had had faith that there would be a resurrection because they had called for Peter after she had been laid in the upper room.
- iii. Parallels Jesus' healing of Jairus' daughter in Luke 8:41-56.
- iv. Peter send everyone out of the room, prays and then speaks; *Tabitha cumi* and *Talitha cumi*
- v. *"...it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord."*

g. The Tanner

- i. An occupation that would have been considered unclean by someone with Pharisaic principles who would have avoided contact with them. Is Peter becoming more liberated in his thinking?

5. Take-aways

- a. The urgency to preach the Good News
- b. The risks; the unsleeping vigilance of our enemies whose intent was to kill. Zealous preachers of Jesus Christ, if not murdered, are commonly disliked by the world.
- c. Heralding the King of kings
- d. Men like Ananias and Barnabas.
- e. Going and finding
- f. Miracles and healings. We cannot base our faith on miracles, or lack thereof. Must be careful to keep our eyes on Jesus and the Word.