

Acts Series #19 - "Faith Begins At Home" - Acts 21:7-9

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Roman Sentinel*

1. The Roman city of Pompeii was covered by lava and ash from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD
2. It was rediscovered in 1748 and has been the site of extensive archaeology
3. Archaeologists were stunned to discover the vast number of casts made of people as they were caught in the devastation
4. People were found in the streets, in homes, and even in cellars, as though they had tried to find security there
5. Many were found on the beach; silent witnesses to the futility of trying to outrun an exploding volcano
6. But one cast surprised the workers who uncovered it
 - a. it was a solitary figure of a Roman soldier
 - b. he was found standing at his post by the city gate, clutching his weapons
 - c. though everyone else had fled, he held his ground
 - d. his captain had given him an order
 - e. and nearly 2000 years later, he still stands as mute testimony to his faithfulness

B. *Today*

1. We're going to be taking a look at another example of faithfulness today
2. And like that Roman sentinel, though this man lived a good portion of his life in quiet obscurity, today he shines as a testimony to faithfulness

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 7-9*

{7} And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.

1. Paul has now concluded his 3rd missions trip
2. It lasted several years and much work had been accomplished
3. But it had been some time since he had visited Jerusalem, and like every loyal Jew, he longed to return to the city
4. Pentecost was approaching, and he determined to spend the feast in the city
5. So hurrying away from Greece and Asia, he and his team sailed east and arrived at Tyre
6. Then they caught coastal runners heading south who made short hops from one port to another

{8} On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and

stayed with him.

{9} Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

7. The team had made such good time on their journey east that they had some extra time before the feast,
8. So as it says in v. 10, they spent a while there in Caesarea with Philip

B. Philip

1. It's been many chapters and 20 years in the story of Acts since we read of Philip
2. Philip's story seems to almost explode before us with great potential and power
3. And then, he simply slides into obscurity and doesn't return till this point
4. Now, it seems he is mentioned almost as an after thought -
5. It's his home in which the great Apostle Paul stays
6. But if we take a closer look we see an incredible testimony to *faithfulness* in Philip's life

C. The Tremendous Beginning

1. Luke reminds us that Philip was one of the 7;
2. Meaning he was one of the men selected by the early church in Jerusalem to oversee the daily distribution to the needy widows of the church
3. In Acts 6 we read how there was a dispute because one group of widows seemed to be overlooked in the daily provision
4. The apostles realized it would not be wise for them to personally get involved in waiting on tables because it would distract them from their primary calling of teaching and prayer
5. So they called on the people to select from themselves 7 men
 - a. of good reputation
 - b. full of the Holy Spirit
 - c. and who had demonstrated wisdom
 - d. in other words, they told the people to select men who were faithful
 - e. and to these men they gave the charge of overseeing a fair distribution of the needy of the church
6. Philip was one of those faithful men
7. Note that the reason Philip was brought forward in the very first place was because of his faithfulness
8. He may have thought that no one noticed, but they did
9. And when it came time to select good men for an important task, everyone agreed Philip should be one of them
10. Philip and his fellow deacons *were* faithful to their task and the distribution was set right
11. And once their job was complete, God moved Philip into a new area of ministry
12. Persecution broke out in the city of Jerusalem and became so fierce, Philip and many others had to flee
13. Following the leading of the Holy Spirit, he went north to the city of

Samaria

14. And though the Jews and Samaritans were age old enemies, Philip remembered the words of Jesus just before He ascended into heaven -
15. That His followers would be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth
16. Arriving in Samaria, he looked around and saw hundreds of poor lost souls, so he simply opened his mouth and began to preach the gospel of Christ
17. Revival broke on the city and a multitude were saved
18. Through Philip's simple faithfulness to follow the Lord's leading, the first major barrier in reaching the whole world was crossed
19. He was the first real pioneer in Christian missions
20. But God had more pioneering for him to do--
21. And in the middle of the revival in Samaria, an angel appeared to him and told him to head south to the desert; no further instructions were given
22. It had to sound like a strange command to Philip
 - a. why leave a thriving work in a large and important city to go out to a lonely desert?
 - b. why turn your back on a revival where the power of God was being seen in healings and miracles to go out to a desert populated only by snakes and scorpions?
23. But Philip went, without questioning, because Jesus was Lord and he was faithful
24. When he came to that lonely road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, he met a high court official from Ethiopia who was returning home after visiting the capital
25. The man had purchased a scroll of Isaiah and was reading it, without understanding, since it was a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ
26. Philip asked him if he needed help understanding and the official welcomed him into his chariot
27. Philip then preached Jesus to the man, and he was saved
28. Arriving at a small pool beside the road, Philip baptized him, and when they came up out of the water, Philip simply vanished
29. He re-appeared at Ashdod, about 20 miles away
30. Then made his way north by foot till he arrived in Caesarea
31. We hear nothing more about him till here in ch. 21, 20 years later

D. The Years of Obscurity

1. What a tremendous beginning!
2. What awesome potential we see in Philip!
3. First he crosses the barrier with the half-Jewish Samaritans, then he follows the seemingly pointless direction of the angel and crosses the barrier between Jew and Gentile by leading the Ethiopian to Jesus
4. We would think that it would be Philip who would be the one God chose to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, not Paul
5. We might expect Philip to be the one who became one of the main leaders of the church after his tremendous success in Samaria and after making

- contact with such an influential person as the treasurer of all of Ethiopia
6. But such was not to be
 7. Instead, he passes into 20 years of obscurity
 8. And only emerges near the end of the story of someone else's life
 9. And though Philip has fallen from the limelight, the faithfulness that marked his beginning has not diminished with the years
 10. The spotlight may have shifted to Paul, but Philip has stayed true to his calling
 11. Notice how Luke describes him; he is "Philip the evangelist"
 - a. not Philip who *had been* an evangelist
 - b. not Philip who had at one time had so much potential
 12. No, he was *still* an evangelist
 13. The sphere and stage of his work may not have been as wide or noticeable by man
 14. But he was still faithful, following the Lord's leading
 15. There are many who have had dramatic starts with Christ
 - a. we see great potential in them
 - b. they have tremendous excitement, at first
 - c. and we see them make some huge strides in faith, in the beginning
 - d. but after a time, they fizzle and give up
 - e. once they were in the spotlight and it seemed God's favor showered over them in visible ways
 - f. but as always happens, the spotlight moved and they grew disheartened
 - g. their passion cooled
 - h. and today they are barely hanging on
 16. Philip was content to take the place assigned him
 17. He was determined to be faithful, whether in the spotlight, or in obscurity
 18. And Philip was able to remain faithful because he knew that "great" and "small" have nothing to do with the work of faith
 19. It doesn't matter who knows our work, or who doesn't know it = **The Thing that matters is that He knows it**
 20. Andy Warhol said that in this age of celebrity and instant media, everyone would be a star; *for 5 minutes*
 - a. how true his words have turned out to be
 - b. we see a virtual nightly parade of micro-celebrities who get their 5 minutes to act their part
 - c. they rise from obscurity, shine for a few seconds, then sink again into obscurity
 - d. what's amazing is the large number of people who clamor for such momentary notice
 21. Christians don't live for 5 minutes of fame
 - a. we don't direct our lives to stand in the spot light of attention
 - b. whether we live in seeming obscurity, or center stage, our watchword is the same
 - c. **FAITHFULNESS!!!**

22. After 20 years, Philip was still an evangelist
23. Certainly his sphere of ministry was reduced, but he was every bit as faithful
24. Notice as well that Philip, who may have had a cause to be bitter at Paul's success and calling, wasn't
25. Instead, he opened his home to him and his team for many days
26. In all likelihood, this is where Luke got much of his information about the early years of the church
27. As the elder Philip spoke with the younger man Paul, Luke listened in and recorded what he heard
28. And due to these quiet talks and Luke's record, all the world is given an enduring legacy of the faithfulness of this man, Philip
29. In like manner, though we may live our lives in obscurity and think no one sees or knows about our faithfulness to God --
30. Though our quiet service goes unrewarded and unappreciated, there is One who sits silently by recording the deeds of our faithfulness
31. And one day, the curtain will be pulled back from the quiet perseverance of our lives, and all will see
32. Jesus said the acts of faithfulness we do in secret, God will reward openly^[1]
33. King Henry the III of Germany lived in the 11th Century
 - a. he grew tired of court life and the pressures of being king
 - b. and applied to a monastery to be accepted for a life of contemplation
 - c. in an interview with the monastery's director, the director asked,
 - d. "Your Majesty, do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience?"
 - e. "That will be difficult for you since you have been a king."
 - f. Henry replied, "I understand. The rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ directs you."
 - g. "I will tell you what to do then," the director said. "Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has placed you."
 - h. when he died, his epitaph read, "King Henry learned to rule by being obedient."
 - i. like King Henry, we need to be reminded that God has placed each of us in a particular place to be faithful there
 - j. whether as a plumber, an accountant, a mechanic, a college professor, a scientist, a mother, a father
 - l. where ever - God expects us to be faithful where He has placed us

E. Faithful At Home

1. V. 9 is interesting in that it's a bit difficult to understand why Luke records it
2. And while his *motive* remains a mystery, the message of the verse is clear
3. V. 9 read,

{9} Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

4. The point, I think, is clear
5. Once again we are shown Philip's faithfulness
6. He is called an evangelist
 - a. not because of his reputation in Samaria
 - b. nor because of his success with the Ethiopian official
 - c. nor is it because he had staged huge rallies in Caesarea and across Israel
7. He is called an evangelist because he faithfully led people to faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior *where ever he met them*
8. He wasn't a *professional* evangelist, he was a *real* one!
9. And his faithfulness to share the Lord with others began in his own house, with his own children
10. As a father, before leading anyone else to Christ, Philip knew he was called to lead his own family to Him
11. And he had been so faithful to this task, his 4 daughters weren't just believers
 - a. they were prophetesses
 - b. and they had maintained a commitment to moral purity that would have been very difficult in the cosmopolitan and corrupt city of Caesarea
13. These young women saw the faithful witness of their father and were so impressed by his integrity and personal godliness, when it came time for them to chose to either follow the faith or turn from it, they chose to follow Jesus

F. Us Too!

1. I'd like to conclude today by concentrating on this one aspect of Philip's example of faithfulness
2. When he was single and able to move around, because he was faithful, God continued to lead him into wider and wider fields of service
3. But when he arrived in Caesarea, he settled down, got married and had a family
4. The faithfulness which had characterized his early life but had been seen primarily in ministering *out* to others, when he had children was redirected *in* to them, as the first sphere of his responsibility
5. I hope that this is the principle of faithfulness you and I catch today, both as individual families and as a church family
6. My dear brothers and sisters, listen to me –
7. God has given us a solemn and tremendous charge in the raising of our children
8. God wants us to be faithful, and the first sphere of faithfulness is our home, with our mates and our children
9. Now, I know that we all recognize this when it comes to our children and I even spoke about it at length last week
10. But I'd like to apply this in a bit of a different direction this morning
11. I want to speak about our responsibility as a church for our youth
12. Just as Christian parents need to pass on their faith to their children

13. So the adults of Calvary Chapel need to realize the priority of living faithfully and passing on the faith to our children
14. What message do we send to our young people when there aren't enough people to help in the children's ministry?
15. What do they really hear when virtually every week we make an appeal for people to help in Sunday School, Nursery, and Mid Week study?
16. Shouldn't they conclude that either we don't take the faith seriously, or that we don't care if they come to faith in Christ?
17. Think of it - we could see a powerful revival of God's Spirit leading the adults of this church and city into a relationship with Him that radically transforms our lives and the county
18. We could lay the foundation for an enduring work that could eventually reach the last frontiers
19. But if we don't take seriously the priority of saving and discipling the next generation *WHO ARE ALREADY HERE* - it will all be wasted!!!!
20. The greatest resource for ministry we have is not our worship band, or Lance's teaching, or our new building program -
21. Our greatest resource is the youth of this church
22. And they are waiting for men and women to step forward and commit to them to be faithful to ground them in Christ
23. So important is this issue of stewardship and faithfulness for any church that it's my conviction every adult should be committed to youth ministry
 - a. whether it's in teaching,
 - b. assisting
 - c. or active, informed intercessory prayer
 - d. every one of us needs to become a part of ministry to the youth
24. If we fail in this, I really don't know how we could be faithful in anything else
25. Because what we do will end with us

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Persian Legend*

1. A Persian legend tells of a king who had to find a faithful servant but had to choose between two candidates
2. He took both at fixed wages and told them to fill a wicker basket with water from a well
3. He said he would return at evening to inspect their work, then left
4. After dumping one or two bucket of water into the basket, one of the men said, "What's the good of doing this useless work? As soon as we pour the water in, it runs out the sides."
5. The other answered, "But we have our wages, haven't we? The use is the master's business, not ours."
6. The complainer said, "I'm not going to do such a fool's work;" threw down his bucket and walked away
7. The other man continued until he had drained the well.

8. Looking down into it, he saw something shining at the bottom that proved to be a diamond ring
9. “Now I see the use of pouring the water into the basket,” he said.
10. “If the bucket had brought up the ring before the well was dry, it would have been found in the basket. Our work was not useless.”

B. The Point

1. Much of the Christian life is lived without knowing why we are going through the things we are going through
2. It's only later, as we look back that we see why
3. It's only after we've drained the well that we see the ring and understand why we've been made to endure what seemed like wasted time and effort
4. Our only call is to be faithful
5. But if we *are* faithful, oh what riches await!

[\[1\]](#) Matthew 6:4,6,18