

Twelve Lessons

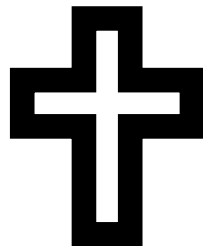
on

Acts II
(Chapters 9-19)

Compiled and Written

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A PREACHER'S PREPARATION – LESSON 1

Acts 9:20-43

Introduction: In this lesson we will see a preacher's preparation in the lives of Paul and Peter. One prepares by retirement and the other by remembrance.

Lesson Goals:

1. See how God prepared Paul for his ministry.
2. Understand the methodology of God in training Peter for his ministry.

Definitions of Important Terms/Phrases:

1. The Churches had rest – The persecutions subsided for a time after Saul's conversion.
2. Edified – Built up, increased, and strengthened. The idea is of growth, spiritual and numerical, and maturity.
3. Palsy – Paralysis affecting part of the body. It was characterized by extreme loss of the power of motion dependent on some affection either of the motor centers of the brain or of the spinal cord.

I. PAUL'S PREPARATION – Acts 9:20-31

A. His Retirement – One might think, reading Acts 9:20 that Paul began to preach immediately after he was saved, but Galatians 1:17-18 shows this is not so.

1. Gal. 1:17-18 – *“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.”*
2. Those three years must be read between the lines of Acts 9:19 and 20, in light of Gal. 1:17-18.

B. His Removal – vs. 21-25 – Paul preaches with such strength in Damascus, the Jews took counsel to kill him but he was removed from the city at night by the disciples. They let him down by the wall in a basket.

1. It is amazing how the Devil's strategies never change. What the Devil cannot defeat by argument, he will resort to another strategy, which is to eliminate the enemy.
2. It is amazing that Paul never tells about his “over the wall in a basket” experience. Too many preachers try to deal in sensationalism but the Bible says it is the “gospel” that is the power of God unto salvation. It is not “experiences” or our “persons” that needs to be preached but Christ.
3. Note: This basket was the same kind used by the disciples in conserving the food left over after the feeding of the four thousand (Matt. 15:37). You could say Paul was a “basket case.”

C. His Return – vs. 26 – This was the first time he had been to Jerusalem in three years time.

1. His Acceptance of the Brethren – vs. 26-28 – The disciples were skeptical of him but Barnabas helped this new convert. How we need some Barnabas' in the church today! Isn't it amazing that even the most spiritual believers can be prejudiced. Where was Peter, John, Andrew or Nathaniel?
2. His Action in Jerusalem – vs. 29 – “spoke boldly” and “disputed” against the Grecians. The mantle of Stephen had fallen upon Saul.
3. His Allocation to Caesarea and Tarsus – vs. 30
 - a. Paul spends three years in Arabia.
 - b. Paul spends nine years in Tarsus (his home town)
 - c. Paul then spends two years laboring in Antioch with Barnabas as recorded in Acts 11:25-26. It was from Antioch that Paul and Barnabas returned to the famous council at Jerusalem, given in Acts 15.
 - d. Between Paul's first and second visit to Jerusalem; or which is the same thing, between his conversion and his coming to Jerusalem as seen in Gal. 2:1 and Acts 15, which both refer to the same occasion. This is a total of fourteen years.
4. Note: Paul was out of the public eye for about 12 years after he was saved until he entered into what we call today “full time service for the Lord.” All these years were spent in preparation for his life's work.
 - a. Moses spent forty years of college in the desert.
 - b. Elisha humbly waited on Elijah as a common slave.
 - c. Jesus, the greatest of all Preachers spent thirty years as an unknown.

D. His Revival – vs. 31 – Many revivals have broken out when the preacher or evangelist came, here is one that broke out when the preacher left. Note the consequences of Revival:

1. Rest – *“Then had the churches rest...”* The Devil sometimes takes a leave of absence but he always comes back, but thank God for the breaks. (Note: This is the first time in Acts we read of “churches”

outside of Jerusalem. The believers were getting away from the superintendence of Jerusalem or any connection with the Temple (where the saints first met), and we see assemblies of believers meeting after the New Testament pattern, later made known in detail through Paul's ministry.) There is no such doctrine in the Bible of Associations, Conventions, Associational Missionaries, or Church Letters to some hierarchy or ruling body. The church is not a tree where black-winged birds bring their false doctrine and roost but mustard plants scattered everywhere (Matt. 13:31-32).

2. Edification – "...and were edified..."
3. Fear of the Lord – "...and walking in the fear of the Lord..."
4. Comfort of the Holy Ghost – "...and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost..." "Comfort" is "cheerleading" by the Holy Ghost. Note: "...walking..." denotes "going on its way". This word suggests purpose of life. Only as we "go on" do we experience the "fear of the Lord (awestruck) and the comfort (the cheerleading) of the Holy Ghost." It is when we stop that we are void of these. If the Church is to be missionary, she must be spiritual; and if the Church is to be spiritual, she must be missionary.
5. Multiplication – "...were multiplied."

II. PETER'S PREPARATION – Acts 9:32-43

A. His Path – vs. 32 – He ventures out to Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa, the very route Philip had followed, as we have seen already in our study of chapter 8. Perhaps Philip's preaching of the gospel had prepared the soil for the eager response under Peter's ministry.

B. His Preparation – He learned from imitation. There is an evident similarity between the miracles of this chapter and those done by the Lord Himself.

1. The Healing of Aeneas – vs. 33-35
 - a. Similar Sickness – Palsy
 - b. Similar Saying – As Jesus told the man who was borne of four to take up his bed and walk (Matt. 9:2) so Peter tells Aeneas, "...arise, and make thy bed." Although there is a similarity there is also a difference.
 - 1) Jesus told the palsied man to "take up his bed". This man was to prove Christ had given power to conquer the old habits.
 - 2) Peter told the palsied man to "make thy bed". The second man was told to leave a good testimony behind.
2. The Raising of Dorcas – vs. 36-43
 - a. Similar Death – Mark 5:35 – Jairus' daughter was dead.
 - b. Similar Command – Mark 5:40 – "*But when he had put them all out...*" Acts 9:40 – "*But Peter put them all forth...*" Peter had learned from the Saviour that doubt and faith have little in common.
 - c. Similar Resurrections – Mark 5:41 – "*And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.*" Acts 9:41 – "*And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up...*"

C. His Preeminent Preparation

1. While it is important that a man get training and speaking abilities, it is not the most important. Although these are great assets for any preacher, nothing can replace the power of God, which alone is able to change sinners into saints.
2. Note: Here is an example of the exercise of a sign gift. Both Paul and Peter are recorded as having raised at least one person from the dead. Both were Apostles and had apostolic gifts. Today we do not need sign gifts. The issue today is doctrine. Proof: Toward the end of Paul's own ministry the record clearly shows that Paul did not exercise the gift of healing. For instance, notice that he left Trophimus at Miletum sick (II Tim. 4:20). Why did Paul not heal his friend Trophimus? Because at this time the sign gifts were disappearing from the church.

D. His Pastoral Preparation – vs. 43 – A tanner used an acid in tanning animal skins. He was made to work on the outskirts of the city.

1. God's preacher must be willing to work and live with the lowest as well as the highest.
2. God help that preacher that thinks too highly of himself to work with the lowest.

Conclusion: To be prepared for the ministry, a man must have two assets: ability and anointing. Ability comes through training. Anointing comes from God.