

Presbyterian Church of Henderson

Worship Service 10:00 AM

August 15, 2021

Life of Paul Series

Ringing of the Bell

Welcome and Announcements

Organ Prelude Susan Thomas

*Call to Worship

The God of wisdom sent Jesus Christ, the bread of life,
to teach us his ways, feed us with his flesh and blood,
and fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God!

*Hymn PH 150 "Come, Christians, Join to Sing"

1 Come, Christians, join to sing	He is our guide and friend;
Alleluia! Amen!	To us He'll condescend;
Loud praise to Christ our King;	His love shall never end;
Alleluia! Amen!	Alleluia! Amen!

Let all, with heart and voice,
Before His throne rejoice;
Praise is His gracious choice;
Alleluia! Amen!

3 Praise yet our Christ again;
Alleluia! Amen!
Life shall not end the strain;
Alleluia! Amen!

2 Come, lift your hearts on high;
Alleluia! Amen!
Let praises fill the sky;
Alleluia! Amen!

On heaven's blissful shore
His goodness we'll adore,
Singing forevermore,
"Alleluia! Amen!"

*Call to Confession

Let us confess our sins to the all-wise God who is gracious and merciful and keeps covenant with us.

*Prayer of Confession (unison)

Merciful God, we confess that we have not been faithful children. We have not lived by your law; we have not refrained from deceit; we have not followed in the way of peace; and we have not honored all that is true and good. We have been foolish and immature people who resist the holy wisdom you graciously offer. Forgive us our sin, O God, and lead us to sincere repentance through Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news: Christ offers himself as bread of life to all who would receive him. This proves his love for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

***Gloria Patri** (PH 579)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

***Passing the Peace**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

And also with you!

Let us share with one another a sign of Christ's Peace.

Prayer for Illumination

Great God of steadfast love, we study your works and delight in your ways. Illumine our understanding by your Holy Spirit, that we may reverence your name, grow in your wisdom, and discern between good and evil. Amen.

First Reading 1 Kings 19:1-15

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3 Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." 8 He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. 9 At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

11 He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; 12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 13 When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking

my life, to take it away.” 15 Then the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus

Special Music Betty Norment, soloist

Second Reading Galatians 1:11-24

11 For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; 12 for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; 19 but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother. 20 In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22 and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; 23 they only heard it said, “The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.” 24 And they glorified God because of me.

Children’s Sermon Pastor Eric

SERMON “The Refining of a Person Used by God”

Selected texts

August 15, 2021

- One of my favorite ways to waste time is to watch detective movies.
- In every crime scene, data is collected, a timeline is constructed to determine the sequence of events
- This morning when we look at the Scriptural evidence or bits and pieces of what happened to Saul after his dramatic conversion.

1. After Paul’s Conversion

- Last week we concluded Saul’s conversion with this text.

Acts 9:19-20 For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, 20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” All who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

- A few verses later—

Acts 9:23 After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

- Confirmed in a letter from Paul to the Corinthians

2Cor. 11:32 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

- Basic questions: what happened during “after some time passed?”
- We get a hint looking at—

Galatians 1:15-17 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

- Paul says “at once” he went to Arabia.
- He must have preached in synagogues and then made a decision to go to Arabia.

2. Where is Arabia?



- Arabia was part of the Nabataean kingdom ruled by King Aretas.
- It included a wide range of territory with Damascus in the North, but also included Sinai peninsula in the South.
- Do you know what historical significance is on the Arabian peninsula?
- According to NT Wright—
 - Mt. Sinai was where
 - God had come down in fire and had given Moses the Torah;
 - it was the place of revelation, the place of law, the place where the covenant between God and Israel, established earlier with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was solemnly ratified.
 - Sinai, the great mountain in Arabia, was, in that sense, the place of beginnings.
 - It was the place to which subsequent generations looked back as the starting point of the long and checkered relationship, the often shaky marriage, between this strange, rescuing, demanding God and his willful, stiff-necked people.
 - Sinai was where Elijah had gone when it all went horribly wrong.
 - Sinai was probably where Saul of Tarsus went—for the same reason.

(Wright, N. T.. Paul (p. 63). HarperOne. Kindle Edition.)

3. Why did Paul go to Arabia?

- From Saul's brilliant knowledge of the Old Testament, his journey is similar to the story that was read in our OT passage with Elijah.
- Elijah had a very zealous victory over the prophets of Baal.
- If there was one character in the OT that Saul probably was able to identify with was Elijah.
- Elijah is first found in the OT where he appears and challenges an evil king Ahab who ruled the Northern kingdom.
- The zeal of Elijah is demonstrated when he faced off with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18.
- After an embarrassing defeat for the false gods and their prophets, Elijah kills the prophets of Baal in accordance with *Deuteronomy 13:5* *That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.*
- I wonder if the model of Elijah inspired Saul's passion for purity and zealousness to eliminate the people who inhibit God's purposes.
- But notice what happens to Elijah after his greatest victory over the false prophets, his life is threatened, and he goes into a depression and hides from God under a broom tree.
- 1 Kings 19 God calls to him and sends him on a journey to Mt. Horeb to meet with God.
- Many scholars say that Mt. Horeb is the same mountain as Mt. Sinai, or at least the labeling of two sides of the same mountain.
- At Mt. Horeb, God meets with him in 1 Kings 19: 13-15
- *1 Kings 19:13-15* *Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.*
- Think with me,
 - Young Saul studying this text about Elijah
 - Convicted by the zealousness of this man to use violence to stamp out heresy.
 - Studied how Elijah ran from someone who was after his life
 - Yet finds God call and purpose that has a brand new assignment
- Could it be that Saul had trouble in Damascus preaching about how Jesus was the Messiah in Damascus?
- Could it be that in his new found faith, he lacked the skill and persuasive ability to win people to Christ that only led people to anger?
- Could it be that because of his lack of fruit proclaiming about Jesus there was a threat upon his life?
- I believe Saul fled to Arabia, in the footsteps of Elijah to find God's new call and assignment upon his own life.

- NT Wright explains, “This, then, is why he went to Arabia: to hand in his former commission and to acquire a new one. His loyalty to One God of Israel was as firm as it has always been.”
- Let me take a moment to apply principle, there comes a point in all of our lives where we need to
 - Remove ourselves from our current situations: through a personal retreat, mountaintop or desert experience, or even a half day of prayer
 - These times are essential to realign, rediscover, reaffirm, and hear God voice in a fresh new way.
 - It is a time of confession and vulnerability before God with no distractions
 - In order to align ourselves more clearly with God’s redemptive plan for our lives
- Q: When was the last time you did that?
- We all need those times where God does His work in our lives, and meets us exactly where we are.

4. Back to Damascus

- Saul returns back to Damascus, but on his way from the South going North, I am sure he had to pass through the capitol city of Arabia, Petra.
- This is where King Aretas resided.



- Here is a coin of King Aretas IV in full military dress.
- By the way, King Aretas’ daughter was married to Herod Antipas, who divorced her for a new wife Herodias mother of Salome.
- Does that sound familiar?
- This is the same marriage that got John the Baptist beheaded.
- Saul, zealous about his new calling, did something to get King Aretas to chase him down to Damascus.
- *2 Cor. 11:32 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.*
- After his escape from Damascus, by the same people he had originally intended to persecute, were the ones who protected him and let him down the wall.

5. Down to Jerusalem

- Saul went to Jerusalem—
- *Acts 9:26-30 When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He spoke*

and argued with the Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill him. When the believers learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

- Saul is in Jerusalem, the disciples are afraid of him.
- Saul probably had no friends in Jerusalem because could no longer be connect with the Pharisees that he knew in Jerusalem, and Christians were afraid of him.
- He was in a very lonely spot.
- A man named Barnabas, took him under his wing, befriended, supported, and defended Saul while he was in Jerusalem.
- Everyone needs a Barnabas in their lives who can come along and support you through thick and thin.
- Do you have someone who does that for you?
- Have you ever been a Barnabas for someone else?
- As you will see, Saul and Barnabas become traveling companions on most of the Paul missionary journeys.
- Notice Paul's ministry in Jerusalem.
- Acts says he spoke boldly in the name of Jesus most likely to other Jews because he knew their beliefs and Scriptures.
- The text says there were Hellenists who wanted to kill him.
- Hellenists were Jews who lived in Greece under the rule of Alexander the Great.
- Rather than living a Jewish culture in a foreign land, they chose to adopt and live a Greek culture as Jews.
- Notice the ministry of Saul in Jerusalem.
- Did he win any converts?
- Are there any listings of believers under Saul's speaking ministry?
- I would imagine, if there were converts, Saul's accomplishments would have been written down.
- But everywhere Saul went, in Damascus, Perta, or Jerusalem, his bold speaking style brought up anger from his listeners, and they wanted to kill him.
- Saul's evangelistic style was not perfect and needed refining.
- So the believers, which probably included the Apostles, brought him to the costal city of Caesarea, put him on a boat and sent him home to Tarsus.
- If you were Saul, what would you be feeling?



- People use by God are not perfect, and success in their ministries do not last forever.

***Hymn** PH 280 "Amazing Grace"

1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

3 Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Offering

Christ, our living bread, has given his flesh for the life of the world. Filled with the Spirit, let us offer our gifts of thanksgiving to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessing flow. Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise him above the heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

***Prayer of Dedication**

Receive, O God, the fruits of our labor and with these gifts accept the offering of our lives. Unite us with Christ that we may share in his ministry and glorify you. Amen.

***Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed)

Minister:

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what do you believe?

All:

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the

Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Let us pray to God, saying, You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Faithful God, you are ever mindful of your covenant Ps. 111:5, 8 and invite us to ask gifts of your goodness. 1 Kgs. 3:5 In your steadfast love, receive our requests 1 Kgs. 3:6 for the well-being of your church, your world, and your people. You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Ps. 111:9 Grant your church understanding and discernment to faithfully carry out your mission in the world. You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Cause us to walk in wisdom concerning your creation, mindfully stewarding its provision for all living creatures. You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Give those who govern wise and discerning minds, 1 Kgs. 3:9–12 that your way of justice and compassion may prevail among the nations. Ps. 111:6 You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Provide food for the hungry, hope for the despairing, and wisdom for the wandering. You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Help us make the most of the time, Eph. 5:16 walking in your ways, filled with your Spirit, living out your will. 1 Kgs. 3:14; Eph. 5:17–18 You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. In your steadfast love, let your wisdom uphold 1 Kgs. 3:6, 9 those we remember now aloud and in our hearts. [Names may be called forth from the assembly.] You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. We give you thanks for our ancestors, the great people you have chosen 1 Kgs. 3:8 in all generations, who now rest with you. 1 Kgs. 2:10 You have redeemed your people. Holy and awesome is your name. Holy and awesome God, you are the answer to our prayers; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Long, Kim. Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2 (p. 124). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Long, Kim. Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2 (pp. 123-124). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

And now, with confidence as children of God, let us pray:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

***Hymn** PH 438 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"
1 Blest be the tie that binds

Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

2 Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

3 We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

4 From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin we shall be free;
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity.

***Benediction**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give
you peace both now and evermore.

***Organ Postlude** (please be seated for the postlude)