

Series: Acts

Lesson: 47

Title: The Strength of a Witness

Scripture: Acts 13: 44-47

Date: 12-11-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

Acts 13: 44: And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. 45: But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46: Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47: For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

Isaiah 49: 1: Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far;

This is the word of Christ Jesus the Lord, the Son of God, speaking to the Gentiles—the islands beyond the sea. He is the great Prophet, the Light sent forth to declare that in him alone is salvation. He declares his Authority concerning the work he came to do.

Isaiah 49: 1: The LORD hath called me from the womb;...

From the womb of eternity he was called—called to be the Mediator between God and his chosen people, to be Prophet, Priest and King.

Hebrews 5:4: And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron. 5: So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

Isaiah 49: 1:...from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

Matthew 1:20: But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Isaiah 49: 2: And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;

That is he put the word of God in my mouth. The gospel of Christ which Christ spoke is the sharp sword:

Ephesians 6:17: And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Isaiah 49: 2:...in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me,

In his council and purpose

In shadow and type throughout the law and the prophets

In his providence--he spared Israel because he chose his Christ to come of that one nation

Isaiah 49: 2:...and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

Christ the Lord is the Sword to conquer those who are near and God's choice Arrow to pierce the hearts of those who are afar off.

Isaiah 49: 3: And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant,

Philippians 2:7: The Son of God...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many—to make the Divine purchase that only he could make called, redemption. He was the LORD's obedient servant, his willing servant, his cheerful servant, his diligent servant, his faithful servant.

Isaiah 49: 3:...His name is: Israel,

Genesis 32: 28:...for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Isaiah 49: 3:...in whom I will be glorified.

The law of God is this: **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.**

He so thoroughly is the glorification of God's will—that he left heaven's riches to become poor, to fulfill the law as the Representative and Substitute of his people---all because he loved God and he loved those whom God had given him. Thus in Christ Jesus the Lord, the Son of God alone, is God glorified.

He came unto his own—to the nation of Israel—yet they received him not. But the Spirit of Christ moved Isaiah to record God's word to Christ our Mediator concerning this rejection.

Isaiah 49: 4: Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain:

Jesus Christ, is God, he said, **I know my sheep.** Yet, as the servant of God, as the Son of man he trusted the Father.

- He constantly spoke of the Father's will and not his own, as do those he sends forth to bear witness of him.
- His encouragement was, "**All that Father hath given me shall come to me**" which is the encouragement we have as witnesses of him.

- As the servant of God he came forth trusting God to do the work of drawing his sheep to him. He said, John 6:44: **No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.**
- This one who could summons 12 legions of angels at his command, this one who made the world, as a Man, yet spoke as God's servant, as one totally dependent upon God to work a work of grace in bringing his people to himself just like those he sends forth to preach this gospel and bear witness of him.
- Have you endured a contradiction of sinners concerning the gospel of Christ? After the first message the Lord Jesus Christ preached, the people attempted to take him to the brow of the hill and throw him over to kill him. Time and time again they sought to kill him, they brought countless questions all in an effort to exalt man and belittle Christ.
- But the comfort and strength of our Savior is the same comfort and strength of his witnesses.

Isaiah 49: 5: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

In his sufferings God was his strength, so that though he met with all the opposition one might imagine, held in contempt by the very people who called themselves by his name, yet *he did not fail nor was he discouraged.*

The one who spoke as a Man, as one totally dependant upon the LORD of covenant mercy, the one who said, **Matthew 23: 37: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!** This same one had this promise from God the Father all along.

Isaiah 49: 5: And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

God sent forth a deliverer out of Zion who brought back again that remnant left in Israel, but the majority is not a remnant. The majority rejected him proving that they never bowed to God and were never the true sons of Abraham. But listen to the word of the sovereign God of the universe. **Romans 3: 3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?**

Because some rejected God's Christ is the Servant of God less glorious in the eyes of the LORD? No way. Is the faithfulness of God made of no effect because some did not believe? **yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.** There is no strength but his strength. Everything that has ever taken place or is now taking place is happening in perfect accordance with what he purposed before the world began. God was not the strength of those who rejected Christ; but he was the strength of Jesus the faithful servant of God who declared God just and the Justifier as he made his people righteous before God. He is the strength of those who rest in Christ Jesus our Lord to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth.

Isaiah 49: 6: And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

With God, for Christ Jesus to merely bring back the remnant from among the tribes of Jacob and to restore those few elect children whom God preserved in Christ the Holy Seed, from among the Israelites was a light thing. God promised Abraham something far greater. He promised to make him the father of a nation made up of a preserved people out of many nations.

Remember, now, the unbelief of those in Israel who rejected Christ did not surprise God, but this was God's purpose from the beginning—this is the prophecy of Isaiah long before the Son of God ever came in our flesh.

Simeon knew this: Luke 2: 29: **Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31: Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33: And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. 34: And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; 35: (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.**

BE SURE YOU GET THIS: HE--CHRIST JESUS THE LORD--IS THE LIGHT AND THE SAVIOR--THE LIGHT AND THE SALVATION OF HIS CHOSEN, ELECT ISRAEL WHICH IS MADE UP OF BOTH JEW AND GENTILE. BUT HE WENT FORTH FIRST TO THE PHYSICAL NATION ISRAEL AND SENT HIS AMBASSADORS TO THAT PHYSICAL NATION FIRST:

Matthew 10: 5: These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But the righteous servant of God had the covenant word of the LORD, concerning the Gentiles, so he said, **John 10: 16: And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.**

So when Paul says: **Acts 13: 47: For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.** He is saying that it is Christ the Light and the Salvation who is now speaking through us.

Acts 26: 22: Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23: That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the

first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Christ is the Light and the Salvation of every one which he has bought with his own blood. Paul is not saying he is that light but as it is written of John the Baptist, **John 1: 6: There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7: The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. 8: He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.**

Therefore, just as Jesus Christ trusted the Father, was strengthened by the Father, and waited on the Father to call out his sheep, even so, it was from Christ Jesus that Paul drew all his strength and as Christ Jesus sits enthroned in glory, right now, we who bear witness of him draw all our strength from him.

Christ Jesus is the one of whom believers are sent to bear witness and he is also our strength, and the one in whose hand this work is. We can not bear witness of the Light and the Salvation if we spend our time speaking of man who loves darkness and hates Light, and refuses to come to the Light. If we speak of man that is all we can say of him--he hates light and loves darkness. Our witness is of Christ the Light and the Savior.

Hearing the word of the LORD and of his righteous Servant can we expect some opposition as we declare him?

Application:

1. NEVER LET OPPOSITION DISCOURAGE YOU.

Acts 13: 50: But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51: But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Our Lord and our King, our Light and our Savior, commanded us to shake off the dust of our feet and move on. What the LORD of hosts said of Christ Jesus, Christ says of you: **Isaiah 49: 3: And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.**

2. GOD IS FAITHFUL TO GIVE REASON FOR GREAT JOY TO THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO DECLARE THE NAME OF HIS SON IN TRUTH AND IN SPIRIT.

Isaiah 13: 52: And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Paul, Barnabas, those who believed on Christ, filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

The sinner who has experienced the power of God knows that God is able to save to the uttermost. Therefore we have no reason to be discouraged.

Merely tell others how God freely called you by his grace to behold the full redemption accomplished by Christ Jesus.

After all this time, I think I am just beginning to understand how delightful it is to know that all the Lord has given me to do, as a witness of Christ, is to speak of Christ and expect the Lord Jesus to do as he will.

We are not to look at how well we are able to communicate. You do not have to know everything to say, just ask someone to come hear the gospel of Christ.

We are not to look at the results—whether positive or negative—because truthfully we do not know how the Lord is using his word. We may see what we think are results that are not the results of what Christ has done at all. Or we may think nothing has come of spreading the word when the Lord has used it to call out one of his sheep that we may never meet in this life. The results are not what the Lord commanded us to be concerned with. Believers are merely sent forth to be witnesses of Christ—nothing more, nothing less.

Remember the word of the faithful servant, Christ Jesus, remember in whom he trusted:
Isaiah 49: 4: Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

Knowing this let us tell dying sinners of Christ Jesus our Victorious Redeemer and let us do so expecting him to do great things which only he can do. **For surely our judgment is with the LORD, and our work with our God.**