

Sunday Morning Message

June 2, 2019

Following God's Plan

Phil Jr's. Ordination Message

Text – Acts 13:1 - 3

Congregational Reading – Acts 13:1 - 3

Introduction

Today is a very important day in the lives of Phil, Katelyn, and their sons. This is the last Sunday that they will be with us as church members, as beginning tomorrow they will be travelling down to Paradise, Texas to begin the next phase of God's calling on their lives. God has called them to serve in the First Baptist Church in Cottondale, Texas, where Phil will serve as an assistant pastor, specifically overseeing all ministry involving young children, teenagers, up to and including singles and even young married couples.

We are excited for them, but at the same time, we are saddened that God is moving them geographically away from us. We will miss them greatly. They have been a huge part of many our lives, and have been tremendous assets to this church in its ability to minister to people.

In our text this morning, we see a somewhat similar time for the Church in Antioch, the home church of the great Apostle Paul. This church had greatly involved in the training and early ministry years of Paul, and here we see God commanding them to send both Paul and Barnabas away so they could take the gospel and minister to people in other places.

Read Acts 13:1 – 3.

By way of introduction this morning, we are going to briefly examine the early life of the Apostle Paul, including his conversion, his discipleship, and his call to ministry. We will then look into the recognition of that call by his home church in Antioch in Syria, and their support of God's plan for Paul's life.

The ordination ceremony that we see taking place here in Acts 13, along with the circumstances leading up to is somewhat similar to what we will do today as a church in ordaining and sending Phil Jr. and his family out of Jersey Shore Baptist Church so that they can fulfill God's will for their lives in Paradise, Texas.

I The Qualifications of the Candidate

1. Paul was miraculously **saved** on the road to Damascus and was **baptized** immediately following his conversion to Christ. (Acts 9:1 – 18).
2. Paul was submissive to will of God and was discipled.

a. By Jesus Himself

"Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." (Galatians 1:17)

The Scripture is unclear as to what happened to Paul in Arabia, but it appears that Paul spent some time learning directly from the Lord Jesus, and contemplating the Old Testament Scriptures that he had known all of his life, and reconciling them to his new faith in Christ. The other apostles spent three years with Jesus, and so would Paul.

*"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.
(Galatians 1:11-12)*

This is equivalent to spending a lot of time in the Word of God as a new believer.

Peter said:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" (1 Peter 2:2)

b. By the disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:19 – 20)

c. Specifically by Barnabas

Barnabas took a great interest in the young convert, Paul. He defended him when others didn't trust that his conversion was real (Acts 9:26 – 30).

Barnabas eventually is sent to the church at Antioch, and he goes to get Paul to help him (Acts 11:19 – 26).

3. Paul later wrote the qualifications for those who be called into the pastoral ministry. (1 Timothy 3:1 – 7; Titus 1:5 – 9)

He also told the elders at Ephesus:

*"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
(Acts 20:28)*

4. Peter also wrote about some qualifications and responsibilities of a pastor.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

I have the privilege of knowing Phil for 33 years, and Katelyn now for nearly ten years. I know about their testimony of salvation. I know that they have both been baptized. They have both been formally disciplined, and they have both been used many times to disciple others. Phil spent many years under the instruction of seasoned preachers. He completed a four-year program at the School of the Scriptures, and then continued to attend classes there after his graduation. He was personally mentored by Brother Mike and Brother Chalie. We have observed their lives, their children. We have been blessed for many years by their service here in this church. We know what Phil believes doctrinally from the many messages that he has preached, as well as the thousands of Sunday School lessons he has taught.

I submit to you that he is qualified.

II The Recognition of the Call (Acts 13:1 – 3)

Paul was already serving in a pastoral capacity in the church at Antioch, so there was no doubt as to whether or not he was qualified.

In Acts 13:1 – 3, we simply have a recognition of God’s specific calling for Paul and Barnabas to leave the church at Antioch to serve God in another capacity. Paul and Barnabas were called to take the gospel of Christ initially into Cyprus and Galatia, but then God would further take Paul into Greece and Asia Minor, and eventually into Rome.

The Church at Antioch ordained Paul and Barnabas by laying hands on them.

Paul later told Titus

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." (1 Timothy 4:14)

The word, “presbytery,” is a transliteration of the Greek word (πρεσβυτέριον – *presbyterion*), and simply means “a body or council of elders.”

In the case of Phil Jr., we not only have an entire congregation that can say that they recognize his qualifications, but there is also a council of elders (pastors) that have put their stamp of approval on him.

III The Void that was Created

I am going to read between the lines a little bit. The scripture does not specifically tell us this, but I am absolutely positive that the leaving of Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark left a huge void in the Church at Antioch. You just can’t completely replace people like Paul and Barnabas. They were “all in;” they were fully committed to serving God.

For the past eighteen years, Phil Jr. has been “all in,” serving the Lord here in this church.

Phil and Melissa took the trip here with me to candidate for the church.

When I first arrived here, there was just a handful of people. Miss Carolyn Poole was the only Sunday School teacher.

Our visitation program often consisted of me, Phil, Brother Stahl, and Steve Tedesco, and he has been a faithful soul winner for all of these years.

Phil was at one time our youth pastor.

He has been a Sunday School teacher for at least 15 years.

He led our married couples class and ministry.

He is one of only three CDL bus drivers in the church.

He drives a van on Sunday mornings, and drives the bus on Wednesday evening for kid's club.

He has served as my assistant from the beginning, but has also officially served as a deacon in the church.

He is typically the last one to leave the building.

He has always been there to help people who have a need.

He has helped other churches as well; he filled the pulpit for many months for the Christian Bible church when they didn't have a pastor; also for Cardiff Baptist, and Port Norris Baptist.

Katelyn has been with us for nearly ten years.

She has been our nursery director.

She taught in our Kid's club program.

She was a full-time volunteer teacher in the Academy.

The Phil Erickson Jr. family has given tens of thousands of dollars to the cause of Christ here.

They have attended every service faithfully – Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. They are here for everything; every work day; every VBS; every revival meeting.

I submit to you – for a local church - a family like this is extremely hard to replace. Their moving to Texas will leave a huge void in this ministry.

We need to fill it.

I am not saying these things to brag on him; I am merely stating the reality of the situation, and I do want to express publicly our appreciation for all that they have done through the years.

They say that you don't fully appreciate what you have until its gone.

By the way, there are a few others here also that are “all in.” You are just as committed now as Phil and Katelyn are. We appreciate you as well.

There are some of you here that are already serving at full capacity, but there are also some of you who could do a whole lot more.

Conclusion

While we are very excited about what lies ahead for Phil and Katelyn in Texas, we must also be just as excited for what God has in store for us here in New Jersey.

God says that He will supply all of our needs.

I said it is impossible to replace Phil and Katelyn and family, and that’s true, but our God is a God that delights to do the impossible.

My challenge to Phil and Katelyn is to take what they have been given here, and use it and build upon it for God’s glory in Texas. We want to hear reports of great things happening there: people being saved, lives being changed, and members being added to the church.

Don’t change – The church in Cottdonale called you because they liked who you are now, don’t become something else down there.

My challenge to those of us who are still here at Jersey Shore is:

1. Don’t be discouraged. Though this church is certainly going to go through a time of transition, God is certainly not done with us. The greatest days of this ministry are still ahead.
2. Ask yourself, what can you do to help fill the void left by this family.
 - You can start by being faithful to every service and Sunday School.
 - You can determine that you are going to be faithful to soulwinning.
 - You can find a ministry here in the church that needs help, and give yourself to it.
3. We can determine that we are going to appreciate those that are serving at full capacity right now.