

## **Zealots**

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**Summary:** Both Pinchas and Elijah acted zealously when they were confronted by flagrant sinfulness and idolatry in Israel. The zealot is akin to a hammer in God's hand, sometimes necessary but not to be used routinely. In Elijah's encounter with God in the mountain cave, it appears that God was checking whether Elijah could tone things down in the future.

I want to talk about the two zealots that we read about. Of course, the first zealot is Pincus and then the second zealot is Elijah. The question is always, why a zealot? What's the purpose of a zealot? The way I would describe it is a zealot administers shock treatment.

So what we had with Cozbi and Zimri, the Midianite babes come into the camp and they're seducing everybody and Cozbi and Zimri are in your face. They are doing this right in front of the tabernacle. This is a pride parade. I'm not being facetious there. That's what this is. And Moses and everybody else are weeping and not sure what to do. And Phineas says to heck with this and goes in and kills him. And everybody just goes, "Whoa." So you have this shock, if you will, that sort of brings everybody back to their senses.

Same thing happens with Elijah. The passage in Elijah before we read today had to do with the killing of the priests of Baal. You all remember that he has a showdown on top of Mount Carmel. And he says, "Alright, all you priests of Baal; come up and you prepare your sacrifice. I'll prepare one. And the sacrifice that is consumed by fire from heaven, that's the real God." And of course, the priests of Baal jump around and do all sorts of stuff and nothing happens. He then proceeds to mock them mercilessly; then he calls down fire on his sacrifice and is consumed.

But the next thing he does is he turns to the assembled people and says, all right, now round them up and kill them. And he kills all of the priests of Baal. Again, this is shock treatment. Fire falls down from heaven and everybody says, "Oh Lord, he is God. We're all done." So what the next part is, is we have this shock treatment where he kills all of those priests of Baal.

And then today's reading Jezebel says, "You're next." And he hot foots it off to Mount Sinai. And then the thing in the cave is interesting. It's a chiasm. God asks him, why are you here? And he says, I've been very jealous for the Lord and I'm the only one left and so forth. Then we have this display of God's power, the dramatic stuff. Blast wave shatters rocks, and you have an earthquake, and you have a fire, all of the dramatic stuff. And God wasn't in any of that. He whispers to him.

And the message there is there is a time for the dramatic stuff, but there is a time for calm. And then he asks him again, "why are you here, Elijah?" And he gets the same answer. At that point, Elijah is then told, all right, go anoint the next guy.

And the deal is, Elijah is a hammer. And now that we have administered the shock treatment, we don't need a hammer again right now. What we need is something more calm. Elijah, a great hammer, did what I wanted you to do, but right now I don't need a hammer anymore. I need something else. And don't get me wrong, Elijah was sucked up

into heaven and he shows up at the transfiguration and all that kind of stuff. So he was God's man doing what was necessary, but what is necessary changes from time to time. And if the only thing that you have got is a hammer, then things are really disorganized, they're fearful, everybody is walking around in terror and so forth, because they don't know when the next hammer is going to fall.

So what God gives to Phinehas is a covenant of peace. What he says, "Yep, you did the right thing. Yep, you're okay. Now calm down." And that's what he's saying to Elijah. And Elijah can't calm down. Elijah's got one mode and that dials up to 11. "Okay, fine. You're not the one that needs to move forward from here, so I'll replace you with Elisha."

Now, God is perfectly willing to issue correction to his people. He does it periodically. But that's not the preferred way of doing things. The zealot is necessary every now and then, but that's not the preferred way of doing things long term. What he really wants is peace. And he wants his people to follow him in peace; and he wants his people to prosper in peace; and he wants his people to live normal lives in peace as his people. And when they start going off and being some other God's people, that's when we get prophets.

And a prophet is not a zealot. So a prophet is sent to correct. "You folks are off track. You're going in the wrong direction. You need to repent. You need to come back. You need to stop this." And when they don't listen, which is typical, then we do the Babylonians and the Assyrians and the Romans, and you get sent off into exile. But again, a prophet is not a zealot.

A zealot is shock treatment, literally. So one of the problems that we have that applies to us today is just like with the Midianite incident, Cozbi and Zimri were literally having a pride parade. And the whole idea is, let's talk about this.

Now one of the things that Satan really loves is dialogue. How many times have you had a political party in the United States, "we need to have a national conversation about something." What that means is they want to do something which is wrong, and they want to talk you into it. Those are code words. We want to do something wrong. We want to talk you into it. Let's have a national dialogue.

Now Doug Wilson had a piece in Cultural Mind. It's his book. Because the possibility of any kind of creedal discipline is negligible in our day, in other words, churches don't discipline people. Those who have abandoned the gospel are now openly seeking to make their distinction into negotiable items, and want to be held by all as being within the pale. Which is to say these people have abandoned the gospel, they are no longer orthodox, but they want to be still in the church. Thus, we do not have to agree with them, but we have to agree to disagree, and to do so as fellow evangelicals.

They do not resist disagreement. In fact, they welcome it. But the disagreement must come in the form of a continuing dialogue, not in the form of showing them the door.

He's saying the same thing I just said about, "Oh, we need to have a national conversation about whatever." And he says within the church is, well, we can agree to disagree about this, but we need to keep dialoguing. We're all evangelicals in this case, or whatever.

And what he's saying is, no, we're not. You guys are so far outside of the norm that you're really not one of us anymore. But you want to stay here, and you want to keep talking about it with the idea, of course, that you are going to drag people around to your side.

Now, what's the difference between that and Midrash? Because lots of you disagree with me on lots of stuff, but we disagree on things that are not clear in scripture. When God says A, B, or C, I look at that and say, God says A, B, or C. If you don't agree with that, you've got a problem with God, not with me. But if you want to argue about preterism, has everything already happened, or is there still stuff to go? I don't know. You don't know. You think one way; I think another way. That we can argue about.

Another quote from the same book. "We see the lying ways in which we handle our laws, wanting them to be as slippery as our hearts." And that's what's going on in Israel. Our heart is slippery, we want to do what we want to do, so we figure out ways to talk ourselves into it. And it's the function of a zealot to say, "No, kasuk," which is what Phineas did, and it's the same thing that Elijah did. "No, these are not legitimate gods, you will not worship them, I will prove it to you, and then, oh, by the way, I'm going to slaughter all your priests."

That's shock treatment. That's different than dialogue. Scripture is stark. It's black and white. And I believe the reason for that is, if we were given any nuance, we would just jump through that like a circus dog through a hoop.

So God doesn't give us any nuances. Don't steal. Don't take my name in vain. Don't commit adultery. Just don't. What we want is, "Well, how about under these circumstances, if we do this, and what about if we did, you know," That's the way we are. That's the way people are. God knows that. So he gives us these stark rules, and it's sort of like, you know, Yeshua, when he says, "If you don't hate your mother and your father, you don't love me enough." What he means is, I have got to be more important than your mother and your father, not that you should hate your mother and your father, because Moses says you shouldn't do that.

So he's not going against Moses, but he's being stark. He's saying, listen, this is what you have to do. So there's a place for the zealot, but it's rare.

As I say, the zealot shouldn't be an everyday occurrence, because if it was, then you've got the French terror or Nazi Germany or the communist Russia or whatever, where you've got people going around randomly being killed for no reason. But that isn't what God wants. What he wants is peace, and that's why he gives Phineas a covenant of peace. The zealot has done the necessary thing. Everybody is now paying attention. Now, calm down and let's move on.

Same thing is what happened with Elijah. Everybody's now paying attention. I don't need a hammer right now. I need something more gentle. Ah, you're not capable of being more gentle. Fine, I'll take you up into heaven and we'll get somebody else who can be more gentle, because gentle is what the default state of affairs should be.

Where we are right now is we are in the place that Israel was in as Zimri brings the Midianite babe in front of the temple and says, in your face. That's where we are. You have got churches--In fact, I think the Methodist church just split over whether or not they're going to have pride day, among other things. Now, the thing to understand about the devil is he loves dialogue, and when the nation is pretty okay, pretty moral, then what happens is he demands tolerance. Oh, you've got to tolerate these different viewpoints and so forth. When the nation has fallen to the point where evil is ascendant, then there is no tolerance. You notice there is no tolerance anymore. If you don't sign on to this, that, or the other agenda, they will take your bank account away. They will cancel you from social media. They'll put you in jail. In fact, Michigan or Minnesota, one of those M states up in the Iron Range, their legislature has proposed a law that says it's felony to misgender somebody. I don't know that it's passed and been signed, but it's bubbling through the legislature. The point is, once Satan is ascendant, then it becomes coercive and there is no tolerance. The demand for tolerance is when Satan is in the minority. "Oh, well, let's have dialogue. Let's talk about that. Oh, you can't be so harsh. Come on, you've got to be real tolerant and loving. Hate is not a family value." You heard all that stuff? That is when the nation is relatively strong spiritually, but as that dialogue moves to the place where you have a lot of people who have now pride parades, then tolerance goes away.

In Great Britain, somebody took down a pride flag and raised a Union Jack. He was arrested. Now, you can burn an American flag, but you can't burn a pride flag, and that's what is going on in the camp of Israel and at the time of Elijah, and that's when God sends a hammer.

A hammer is not a permanent thing. It's to get everybody's attention and say, whoa, wait a minute. This is not right. God is not pleased with this. So, as you go out, just recognize the technique. Recognize what's being done.

There's nothing new. This has all happened before lots of times, and I will close by citing the second verse in Michael's God Bless America, which for those of you who haven't heard it, it is wonderful, and it will be up on YouTube certainly by Monday. The point is, it's a recognition of where we are, and it's a call for repentance. This is a time for national repentance. This is a time for calling people back. This is a time for saying, no, that's not right. We're not going to dialogue about that. It is just wrong. God says so, whatever it happens to be. It takes a lot of different forms. That's why I say God's word is stark, black and white, so that there's no doubt about what he thinks about something. Now, from there, we tend to fuzz it up and gray it up, and some of that's okay, but we're beyond the point of okay.

So, to quote from Michael's second verse of God Bless America, "God bless America. Keep hope alive."