

Acts “Church on Fire” summary

Acts is a book about people who thrust their feet into sweat stained sandals and march out to conquer the world. They had no visible sword they had no visible shields, no visible commander; nonetheless they marched with matchless unconcern into the gates of prison through the valley of persecution and even into the jaws of death.

Chapter 1 Verse 8 you shall receive power (**Dunamis**... Force... miraculous power... dynamite) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.

WE have a mission Church! Our mission? **To be “His witnesses.”** The mission’s extent? “In Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” **The mission’s power?** “When the Holy Spirit comes on you.”

Vance Havner was right on the money when he said, “We will move this world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it—but by combustion *within* it... lives ignited by the Spirit of God.”

Chapter 2 They obeyed Jesus’ instructions and made their way back to Jerusalem. There in the upper room 120 followers of Christ waited for the promised **“Baptism of the Holy Spirit”**.

THEY WAITED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH EXPECTANCY... PERSISTENCE and in **UNITY**.

We can’t and never were intended to walk this walk in our own strength. So with great hope and joy we cry out to you our wonderful King and Savior. So we hoist our sails and say come Holy Spirit... we are hungry, we are thirsty for more of you.

Matthew 3:11 ... John the Baptist prophetically speaking of Pentecost said, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

And so God did! When the Holy Spirit came **“upon”** them they exploded with **Dunamis (Force, miraculous power, dynamite)**. It’s this **“upon”** experience that turns **“wimps”** into **“witnesses”**. It creates so much more than **“spiritual goose bumps”**. **It gives spiritual boldness!** Power to be His witnesses!

1000’S FROM ALL OVER THE KNOWN WORLD WERE IN JERUSALEM TO CELEBRATE PENTECOST. Luke says the **“Multitude came together”** - came together because they heard the wind.

Then they heard the disciples praising and worshipping God in their own languages.

AT LEAST 20 DIFFERENT LANGUAGES BEING SPOKEN These were languages that they were never taught.

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

13 Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.” **The joy and celebration was so rich some thought they were drunk...** They were **not** drinking “spirits” but filled with the **“HOLY SPIRIT”**.



Fresh from the Baptism of the Holy Spirit **PENTECOST PETE** gives the sermon of his life. He was always first in everything – *first out of the boat and on the water, first to open his mouth only to switch feet, first with the sword. NOW FIRST WITH A SERMON!*

Yes, we remember Peter... the man who **proved chicken** before the **rooster crowed**. He now preaches with power. What a difference the baptism of the Holy Spirit makes! Peter is bold and fearless. He is a wonderful example that failure is not falling down but staying down... **PETER DIDN'T STAY DOWN!**

Peter under the anointing of the Holy Spirit has quoted from 3 different portions of Scripture, and has built this sermon on the person of Jesus Christ.

THAT'S GOOD PREACHING!

ACCORDING TO VERSE 41 OF CHAPTER 2 3,000 gladly received Jesus and were baptized; **42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.



Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to the Word – teaching.

Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to each other – koinonia.

Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to God – worship, communion and prayer.

Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to the world – evangelism.

Terror and attraction met as the early Church was in Awe of their awesome God... and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.



The power of God is evident here because Jesus became much more important to them than their possessions. What each had became what everyone had.

They were marvelously balanced. The early church was both formal and informal, “in the temple” and “in their homes.”

- They met daily Acts 2:46
- Cared daily Acts 6:1
- Won souls daily Acts 2:47
- Searched the Scriptures daily Acts 17:11
- And increased in number daily Acts 16:5

Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once in a while kinda thing.

Chapter 4:1... Persecution and rough seas are ahead! They will learn that, **“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.”** If you want the rainbow, you have got to put up with the rain.

Jesus promised persecution... **The primary reason the Church expanded was persecution.** *Christians who were forced to flee from Jerusalem,* saw many come to Christ in Samaria. Others preached in Antioch, which was then the largest city in Syria and the nexus of **Hellenistic culture.** From there Christianity spread around


the shores of the Mediterranean and around the world. **PERSECUTION, RATHER THAN SHUTTING CHRISTIANITY DOWN, AIDED ITS EXPANSION!**

 Persecuting the apostles was like trying to destroy a dandelion by blowing on its head. Each attempt to silence their witness only strengthened their resolve and increased their boldness.

Chapter 4 verse 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, **The early church didn't pray that they might have a break from persecution, but that they might have boldness in persecution.**

In essence, the disciples pray, "Lord, deal with their threats, and make us a greater threat! Pour some fuel on our fire." Rather than lay low, they want to intensify their efforts. Rather than protection they desire a greater impact. Phillips Brooks once said, *"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."*

The early Church was unified in one heart and one mind. Unity is a big deal to God... **The opposite is division... WE MUST FIGHT FOR UNITY!** Luke's portrait of the great apostolic church still inspires believers today. I love what St. Ignatius said later of the church in Rome, which applies so beautifully to YOU!:


 *"It was a church worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of congratulation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy in purity, preeminent in love, walking in the law of Christ and bearing the Father's name."*

WHEN THE CHURCH IS GREAT, there is mega power, mega unity and mega Grace...
May Calvary Oceanside continue in being a **MEGA CHURCH.**

~~You might say Acts 5 is a real drop dead passage – a killer of a Bible Study – a knock'em over chapter. Ananias and Sapphira were just dying to get into the Bible.~~

Satan is a strategist... Now He will attack the Church from within... **HIS AGENTS** a husband and wife. The wife's name was "Sapphira," Aramaic for **"beautiful,"** and the husband's name was "Ananias," which in Hebrew means **"God is gracious."** Few people's lives have contradicted their names more dramatically...

HYPOCRISY They lied to God... 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, kept back means **to misappropriate...** Embezzle or steal.

 **LEARN THE LESSON: HYPOCRISY KILLS.** Ananias and Sapphira's ruse was not a mere miscalculation in their checkbook but premeditated deception. **This was pious pretense - religious sham - simulated holiness - Christian fraud.**

HEIGHT OF HYPOCRISY

WHEN PETER CALLS THIS COUPLE ON THE CARPET, THEY NEVER GET UP.

11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. **The church went from "great grace and great power" in Acts 4:33 to "great fear" in Acts 5:11.**

It seems, God used a higher standard in the infant church in order to protect its purity. He did a little housekeeping to enhance its power and witness. We learn from Acts that purity and power go hand-in-hand.

THEY WERE QUENCHING THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
Never remain in your deception... repent NOW! While there is still time!

Forgiveness, restoration, cleansing and a clean heart for a fresh start **PSALM 139:**

23 Search me, O God... **CALL SIN SIN... NO EXCUSES**

CONFESS YOUR SIN... 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

PSALM 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. **11** Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. **12** Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. **13** Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S FORGIVENESS... God can, will and does forgive.

FORGIVE YOURSELF

ENDEAVOR TO SHOW FORTH FRUITS OF REPENTANCE... STOP IT

GO TO OTHERS AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS... LIVE WITH A CLEAN HEART!

PERSECUTION CONTINUES ... BUT THE APOSTLES WERE NOT ONLY ENDURING THE WAVES OF PERSECUTION - THEY WERE SURFING THEM

Satan is relentless in his attacks... Satan is discovering persecution brings less rewards than division... so he pounds the Church from within...

The complaint... You love the Hebrew widows more than the Hellenist widows...

The Hebrews thought the Hellenists to be compromisers... the Hellenist thought the Hebrews were "holier than thou" snobs. Satan is a strategist... He will search and search for any possible weak spot and then exploit it to the max!

Deacons are put into place... Possible division is averted... The **7** chosen men did the right thing: They accepted the call to unglamorous service.

The apostles did the right thing: They responded to the need without distracting themselves from the teaching or God's word and prayer.

Satan's attempts to divide the Church are thwarted by unity and love.

In Chapter 7 Stephen challenges the three pillars that the Jews had placed their trust in **the land, the law, and the temple** – three false bases for confidence before God. As Hughes notes: “He not only attacked those three sacred cows – he took them by the horns and turned them belly up.”

Stephen's sermon was his death warrant but he was standing tall. He had lived for Christ... he had spoken like Christ... **AND NOW HE WOULD DIE LIKE CHRIST.**

Stephen's example shows us how to live and how to die. Never do we see the meaning and worth of life more clearly or more poignantly than in the final moments of a faithful Christian's life on earth.

Hughes, “Following the church through Acts is like following a wounded deer through a forest. Drops of blood mark the trail. Stephen's blood was the first to be spelt... “The blood of the martyrs becomes the seeds of the church.”

Step on a “church on fire” and sparks are gonna fly... and they did; setting fires all across the land.



Phillip left to preach the gospel in Samaria... Samaria received the good news and **verse 8 says**, there was **GREAT JOY** in that city.

Luke introduces a man named Simon... a sorcerer. **Not simply a clever magician? He was a conduit of demonic power.**

THE SAD STORY OF SIMON TEACHES US: IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE WITHIN IN AN INCH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND NOT BE IN.

The abiding truth is: **convictions not acted on, die;** truths not followed, fade; lingering can become a habit; and we can either go in or go further away.

Chapter 8 verse 3 says, As for Saul, he made **HAVOCK** of the church,

the root word describes the results of *wounding a wild boar*. When a boar is wounded, he goes on a rampage and loses all sense of sanity—which is exactly what happened to Paul. And now we see Saul as relentless, traveling throughout Judea, Samaria, and northern Israel—even across the border into **Damascus, 140 miles from Jerusalem**—to hunt believers down and bring them back bound.

And yet as he was standing there cheering on the death of Stephen... God's word was preached. Stephen gave both barrels, reloaded and shot more.

Saul heard it! *And the Word of God does not return void (Isaiah 55:11). Scripture is like a time bomb.* As Jon Courson says, “Share the Word. Even though the person you're talking to might look at you as if you're crazy, you're planting little time bombs in his inner man. Share the Word with your kids, your co-workers, your friends and wait for the bombs to go off, just as they did in the heart of Saul.”

So now With Paul tucked away in Tarsus, the focus returns to Peter

Peter ... **So well intentioned... so full of zeal and passion... The Bible is full of Peter!** No disciple is spoke of as much or as often as Peter. Jesus spoke to Peter more than any other disciple. Peter received more **STERN REBUKES** than any other disciple.

→ Peter was the only disciple who risked **REBUKING JESUS...**

→ **Impulsive, loud, opinionated, fearless and pretty self reliant.**

The list of disciples is found in a different order in all 4 gospels... but Peter is first on every one. Safe to say he was the most prominent of the 12.

Come on Jesus aren't washing my feet! "Lord even if everyone else denies you, I will NEVER".

Peter learned firsthand the emptiness of fleshly dependence and the necessity and sufficiency of being filled with the Spirit.

Peter was different now! The Holy Spirit had made him a giant of a man. But Peter was still Peter... **"WHEN YOU ARE THROUGH CHANGING... YOUR THROUGH"**

Peter is on the potter's wheel and God is doing some major molding and shaping... 8 years after Pentecost the gospel is still by in large only a Jewish gospel. God needs to break down generational **PREJUDICE**

Hughes points out, "Peter was heir to a strong tradition of prejudice that went clear back to Abraham and was exemplified in men like Jonah, who resisted bearing witness to the Gentiles and was actually angry with God when the Ninevites repented and escaped judgment. During Peter's time, Jewish midwives were forbidden to aid a Gentile woman in childbirth, for they would thereby help propagate Gentile scum."

Pastor Sandy Adams modernizes Peter's vision...

It was noon and time for lunch, but Peter didn't like what God placed on the menu. God gave Peter a vision - a giant picnic blanket descending from the sky. It was full of **incredible edibles...** but not for **a pious Jew**. This was not a kosher picnic. Everything on the menu was off-limits to Peter's culture and religion and upbringing - yet God commands him in verse 13, to **"Rise, Peter; kill and eat."** Peter's response is the ultimate contradiction, "Not so, Lord!" The word "Lord" means boss. How can He be Lord when you refuse to do what He requires? Peter still carries some of his old man with him... Not, so LORD!

Understand, this is no small matter for Peter. Diet was big deal to a Jew. He'd been trained and conditioned from childhood to consider certain foods clean and others unclean. To change would force him to ditch long held beliefs - throw tradition to the wind - uproot conviction. He would have to violate his conscience. This would be like God asking your very traditional grandparents to wear shorts to church - or commanding a diehard vegan to pig out on a chili cheeseburger. Hey, Peter is in a rooftop wrestling match with his conscience. Understand our conscience is an interesting organ. It can be trained by either **TRUTH OR TRADITION**. The conscience can fight against the Spirit, or be His ally. In this case, Peter's conscience supported a prejudice that needed

to be pinned. God is teaching Peter that He was doing a new work. **WHAT ONCE WAS CALLED UNCLEAN WOULD NOW BE OKAY - AND THAT NOT ONLY INCLUDED PORK CHOPS, BUT GENTILES.**



Hughes again notes, “In Christ there is no basis for discrimination of any kind. Prejudice or elitism on the lips of a believer is an obscenity – whether it be racial, national, cultural, or social.”

Christianity was the first religion to disregard racial, cultural and national limitations.

Herod put James to death. Now he plans to do the same to Peter. Never are we out of His sight nor his might!

Chapter 12 Verse 5 says Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.



Peter is in prison but there are two forces at work: 1) **The seen**... Herod and his trained guards and the power of Rome. 2)

The unseen... Prayer made earnestly by the Church.

God sends an Angel to rescue Peter for our battle is not in the seen world but in the unseen world. Ephesians 6

If we ever think God does not understand or cannot or will not help, we have bad theology. May your eyes be opened right now, wherever we are or whatever is going on around us, we would say, **God is working. God's Got It!**



R. Kent adds... “**There is a cost to sincere service for Christ.** Never share your faith and you will never look like a fool. Never stand for righteousness on a social issue and you will never be rejected. Never walk out of a theater because a movie or play is offensive and you will never be called a snob. Never practice consistent honesty in business and you will not lose the trade of a not-so-honest associate. Never reach out to the needy and you will never be taken advantage of. **Never give your heart and it will never be broken.**

Biblical truth . . . Being a Missionary is tough stuff... Being a Christian is tough stuff... **really tough stuff.** Expectations are crucial. Jesus told us straight up we would suffer persecution, that we are engaged in a war. **Yes, a tough life but the only one worth living.** There is no trial or difficulty Christ cannot see us through. Paul wrote the triumphant words, “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (**Romans 8:37**). And yet **WE ARE CALLED TO WAR!**

Onward, Christian soldiers! Let us not go to war with glorified expectations. War is difficult, but through Christ we are more than conquerors!

PAUL SHARES THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST . . . Jesus is the gospel!

A Man May Go to Heaven... Without **Health**... Without **Wealth**... Without **FAME** Without a **Great Name**... Without **Learning**... Without **Big Earnings**... Without **Culture** Without **BEAUTY**... Without **Friends**... Without **10,000 Other Things...**

But He Can Never Go to Heaven Without Jesus Christ!

✚ **ACTS 4:12** Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

many accept, and many reject. We all must make a choice.

- Acceptance: Justification Heaven
- Rejection: Condemnation Hell

In Acts 15, we encountered the Judaizers. These villains had supplemented grace with good deeds and religious rituals. They believed Gentiles could never be part of God’s family unless they conformed to Jewish law and were first circumcised. **IN ESSENCE, THEY TAUGHT YOU’LL NEVER “CUT IT” WITH GOD UNLESS YOU’RE CIRCUMCISED.** The Jews labored to keep the Law for 1500 years. Through diligence and discipline, they carved out their own self-righteousness. It didn’t seem fair to them to watch the Gentiles enter the family of God while not making any attempt to keep the Law. They agreed that faith in Jesus was fine – **but it couldn’t possibly be enough...** the believer needed to add a little of his hard work and diligence. In essence, righteousness according to the Judaizers included the blood of Jesus – **ALONG WITH A LITTLE OF A PERSON’S OWN BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS.** Paul and Barnabas disputed the doctrine of the Judaizers. They insisted nothing can add to what Christ has done. Faith alone makes a person right with God. Rules and rituals are needless baggage!

The decision was clear and irrefutable. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus alone. Anyone who says you must keep the law in order to be saved is unbiblical and wrong.

The gospel goes to Europe for the first time... A divine appointment happens as Lydia and her family come to Christ.

Thrown in prison Paul and Silas praise God! They are not praying for deliverance... but praising God through the fire! **verse 26** Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed. **"Instead of cursing men, they blessed God."**

THIS PRAISE CONCERT BROUGHT THE HOUSE DOWN

THE JAILER ASSUMES THE JAILBIRDS HAD FLOWN THE COUP, SO HE IS ABOUT TO KILL HIMSELF WHEN PAUL STOPS HIM.



It’s after midnight the jailer gets saved and so does his whole family. They even get baptized.

Chased out of Thessalonica they head to the small town of Berea. Luke claims the **BEREANS**

WERE MORE FAIR MINDED THAN THE TTHESSALONIANS . . .

TWO THINGS EARNED THIS COMPLIMENT FOR THE BEREANS
FIRST they received the word with all readiness.

2. **SECOND** they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

In verse 24 of chapter 18 a Jewish man named **APOLLOS IS INTRODUCED TO US, THE MOST PROFOUND THING LUKE TELLS US ABOUT HIM IS THAT HE WAS "Mighty in the scriptures" CALVARY CHAPELITES... MAY YOU BE "MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES!"**

Do you know any bored again Christians? **NO SPARKLE OR POP!** WORSHIP IS A DRUDGE AND WITNESSING A CHORE. **Maybe it's YOU!** Paul would probably echo the same question he asked of the Ephesian believers: *"Have you received the Spirit since you believed?"*

How's this for a definition of a Christian?

Completely fearless,
 Continually cheerful, and
 Constantly in trouble. That was Paul!

Ephesus was home of the idol Diana. Pagan pilgrims flocked to her temple, and took back silver trinkets as souvenirs. This was big business. But the Jesus movement was cutting into profits. Idol makers were idle. Sales were **down because salvation was up.** A silversmith named Demetrius starts a riot. He wants the world to rid itself of Christians.

God once again comes to the rescue!

Paul, **knowing he was scheduled to leave the next day - he decides to feed the believers the whole enchilada in a single sermon. 6 hours... 9** And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, Eutychus had probably put in a full days work... the room was hazy with smoke, it was hot, oxygen deprived... **the hypnotic flickering of the flames did their work.** slowly Eutychus goes out **like a light**, then goes out the window **like a rock!**

HE DIES, PAUL EMBRACES HIM AND SEEING HIS LIFELESS BODY RECEIVE LIFE FROM JESUS THE GIVER OF LIFE.

Dearest Church don't ignore the lessons. Those who fall asleep spiritually set themselves up for a serious fall. **We must wake up! Hear the alarm sounding!** If you are asleep in the light... wake up and live! May you fall on those who are asleep and call them back to life!

This was one of the darkest nights in Paul's life. Paul must have thought... What a blow it I am! "I went into the temple to try to appease James and the other brothers—and a riot broke out. I shared my testimony on the steps of the Fortress—and people wanted to kill me. I came into the Sanhedrin—and created chaos and confusion. **I FAILED.** Bottom line he wanted his old buddies to know Jesus... he wanted his old crowd to come to know Him. He loved them... when you love someone

you want what's best for them... Jesus, salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life... no hell is always what's best... so Paul must have felt like a real blow it! **As Morgan says Bold courageous fearless during the day the night of loneliness finds the strength spent and the enemy is never slow to take advantage of that fact!**

JESUS APPEARS IN PERSON AND SAYS BE OF GOOD CHEER PAUL IVE GOT YOUR BACK!

40 plus plot to kill Paul and are so serious about it they vow not to eat until it's done. Roman leadership is informed about the plot and send Paul out of town in protective custody.

Paul left on horseback surrounded by 470 soldiers. **HE LEFT TOWN MORE LIKE A KING THAN A CRIMINAL!** Meanwhile, his assassins were left in town fighting insistent hunger pains.

As we read Acts 24, it seems that Felix was genuinely intrigued with Christianity and wanted to hear more. Sadly, Felix was content to tiptoe around truth. He was never willing to take a stand. Verse 25 says he looked for "a convenient time" to make a commitment to Jesus. There is no such thing as *a convenient time* - but the crucial time is now! 2 Corinthians 6:2 Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

Repetition dulls truth's potency Some who have heard the good news for years and years greet extraordinary truth with a yawn.

CRITICAL OBSERVATION: Felix's mind was enlightened (Acts 24:22), his emotions were stirred (Acts 24:25), but his will would not yield.

NOTE WELL: Jesus Christ is either your Savior or your Judge.

"Procrastination is the thief of time". Really "Procrastination is also the thief of souls."

The best time to trust Jesus Christ is—NOW! Best time to be completely surrendered is NOW!
The best time to tell others the Good News of the Gospel is — NOW!

Paul's life, Daniel's life, Joseph's life, **your life** teaches all, that *our disappointments are really God's appointments*. The merciful providence of God can cause us to rejoice tomorrow in the very same circumstances that today, may be causing us to mourn.

Why did the Jews want to kill Paul? Because he preached repentance!

The message of Noah and Daniel, Amos and Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, was singular. The message was: **REPENT.**

As Courson says, "The message of repentance is not a popular message because it says people who think they've got it together—**don't**. People who think they're okay—**aren't**. People who think they'll make it to heaven on their own—**won't**."

Chapter 26 verse 24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"



Hughes again adds, **To be earnest about wealth or power or science or pleasure or athletic championships is not crazy from the world's viewpoint. But to be fervent about spiritual things is called madness.**"

Call me Crazy, but anything short of full surrender is not surrender at all. Jesus is either Lord of ALL or not Lord at all.

Paul would make it to Rome – no doubt about it. However, God did not promise smooth sailing along the way. As we serve Christ, there will be storms, hardships, high seas, breakdowns but also the sustaining presence of God.

Acts 27 gave us some pretty awesome anchors to steady our ship while in the storms of life....

The anchor of God's presence. He is with you – NEVER will He leave you or forsake you... He is in the fire with YOU!

The anchor of Gods' ownership. You are his possession – You are the apple of His eye... Nothing happens to that which belong to Him without His permission.

The anchor of faith. "So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happened just as he told me."

Without modern technology or studies on church growth the "Church on Fire" expanded throughout the known world... HOW? through the Word of God – through prayer – through the power of the Holy Spirit – and through faith – they turned the world upside down.

The Church today needs to recapture the fire and spark of the Church in Acts. May we be a Church on fire! We all now live in the continuation of this wonderful book... We live in Acts Chapter 29!

Soul on Fire...